Transformation of Sympathies: Gendered Mediation of Jordanian Education Reform for a Knowledge Economy

Rebecca Hodges
Washington University in St. Louis

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Transformation of Sympathies:
Gendered Mediation of Jordanian Education Reform for a Knowledge Economy

by

Rebecca McLain Hodges

A dissertation presented to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Washington University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015

St. Louis, Missouri
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Queen Rania responded in a Conde Nast interview (Hack 2009) that the three most important Bedouin values were generosity, friendliness, and hospitality. I have benefitted from years of kind, generous, good humored, merciful, and graceful hospitality at every stage of my research. To my dearest friends in Jordan, there are not enough words to express my gratefulness and joy having you in my life. I am forever grateful to Na’imeh al-Momani and the al-Momani family, Norma Nemeh and her family, Khitam al-Utaibi and her family, and my dearest Maysoon al-Atoom and her family. I wish to thank Raeeda and Reem, Taraf, Maysoon, Hala, Miriam and Muhammad and everyone at Queen Rania Teachers Academy. I appreciate the hospitality and kindness of everyone at the Women’s Studies Center at the University of Jordan, Dr. Saleem of Amman Secondary District, and every single Fulbrighter in the 2012-2013 cohort but especially Lindsay Conklin.

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parents, brothers, aunts and uncles and cousins, and grandparents especially my grandmother the veteran teacher Sylvia Smith.

This manuscript is dedicated to my spouse Daniel Hodges, habibi, beloved

Note on Transliteration:
I follow a simplified version of IJMES system of transliteration, with all diacritical marks but ‘ and ’ omitted for readability. Arabic translations are from the Modern Standard Arabic (fusha) or Jordanian colloquial dialect (‘amiya) according to the original source. Terms like “taboor” and “tawjihi” are given common English spellings, where applicable.
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Transformation of Sympathies:
Gendered Mediation of Jordanian Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy

by Rebecca McLain Hodges
Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology
Washington University in St. Louis, 2015
Professor John Bowen, Chairperson

In Jordan, teaching is widely considered “the best job for a woman” because it is accommodating and culturally appropriate for a wife and mother. Public secondary schools and comprehensive (K-12) schools in Jordan are predominantly gender-segregated, with female teachers and staff serving as models of professionalism and womanhood for generations of young girls. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan faces rising youth unemployment and pressures for democratization, and has responded with the explicitly transformational Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERFKE) to overhaul the centralized public education system. ERFKE’s curricular goals include multilingualism, technological fluency, democratic participation, cooperation and teamwork, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. The rollout of ERFKE relies on teaching educators and staff new ways of thinking about women’s identities in the present and potential future of a democratizing monarchy.

This dissertation aims to understand how teachers at a typical Jordanian public school navigate the political, cultural, economic, and social changes in their society, for themselves and for their students, during their daily work of defining, transmitting, and assessing culture and truth. Based on fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork with public school teachers and
teacher trainers in Jordan, I argue that the operationalization of education policy reforms relies on state actors to transform teacher sympathies in a way that makes state goals and visions of the future more sympathetic, emotionally salient, and persuasive reasons for action. I explore the ways institutional power constructs and reconstructs the culture of teaching by bringing to bear contributions of educational anthropology to theories of authority and the state. Specifically, I interpret interactions between teacher trainers and teachers to show how state social policy works in lived experience. More broadly, I question how individuals raised within a culture engage in cultural transformation and the ways in which this transformation can be authoritatively engineered.
PROLOGUE: WELCOME TO AMMANI GIRLS’ SCHOOL

The capital city stirs to life slowly in the morning. At 7:20 a.m., the traffic is light until we reach a bend in the neighborhood street in front of Ammani Girls’ School. Cars and taxis crowd around the front gates, letting out girls in blue or green dress uniforms. Students and teachers wind their way up the inclined driveway or stairs to the front doors, around clumps of chatting girls. In the front office, teachers quickly sign their names in the attendance ledger and hustle to their posts for morning assembly. Teachers and staff hug and kiss each other hello, or shake hands and wish a “Good morning” to colleagues who aren’t close friends.

Teachers who have arrived early take the stairs up to the second floor teachers’ lounges. In this school, there are two teachers’ lounges that are home to thirty teachers for nine hundred female students K-12. Teachers enter the lounges under two large photographs of King Abdullah II. Prayer rugs hang on the back of a couple of chairs and teachers work quietly at their desks.

The first thing a teacher will do in the lounge is rifle through her purse or desk for wipes and wipe the gathered dust off the desk. If she’s a fan of Nescafé, the instant coffee-flavored powder, she will make her way to the water tank in the dark-curtained lounge to the right and fill a mug or paper cup with hot water. The eighteen desks in the left-most lounge are shared by twenty teachers, mostly young and infamous for loud laughter that can be heard down the hall. Teachers from the left lounge pull together and hush themselves as they slip through the door of the quieter lounge on the right to use its water tank. As the water is filling, they say good morning to the other teachers in the room. They return as quickly as is polite, to relax and smile as they sit on top of their desks and chat.
If you want to see formal education in action, follow the teachers. Through a mutual friend, Dr. Alif, I was introduced to Miss Noon, principal (or headmistress) of Ammani Girls’ School. Miss Noon listened to my proposed project studying teaching and teacher training with qualitative analysis. Over tea in Dr. Alif’s home, I expressed that this project was not evaluative but descriptive and essentially an ethnography of education reform at the teacher level. Dr. Alif was an alumni of one of the few anthropology graduate degree programs in Jordan and lent the credence of peer review to my approach and project goals. Miss Noon said I was welcome in her school; as I was to discover she made her school very hospitable to visitors. During the fall of 2012, she hosted a multi-day teacher training conference, Her Royal Majesty Queen Rania, the electoral campaign of Miriam Louzi, and other US-funded researchers.

Ammani Girls’ School was just the kind of school I was looking for. Most schooling in Jordan is urban, public, and gender-segregated, so Ammani Girls’ School provided a picture of ‘normal’ education in Jordan. Though majority Jordanian, a substantial number of students were of Palestinian, Lebanese, Syrian, or Iraqi origin. The faculty also mirrored the broader population as they were almost exclusively Muslim, with one Christian administrator. Located in northwest Amman, the school enrolls students and employs teachers from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. To position my experience in a wider context, I also visited several other public and private schools around Amman and across Jordan, interviewing and observing teachers. Though not statistically representative and, if anything, representing only the girls’ school

1 Following ethnographic convention, most references to teachers, trainers, administrators, and schools are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of their emotional and professional lives. Public figures (such as Miriam Louzi and Queen Rania) and state institutions like the University of Jordan and Queen Rania Teacher Academy are not given pseudonyms. Teachers and trainers are given pseudonyms according to the Arabic alphabet (alif, baa, taa, etc) and students are given pseudonyms according to Arabic diacritical marks (kesra, damma, shadda, taa marbuta).
experience, Ammani Girls’ School was a typical Jordanian urban school setting.

The first few days, I found myself repeatedly explaining what I was doing at their school and what I hoped to see during my time there. “Are you a teacher?” was a common question. “Yes,” I said. “I taught K-8 French.” They would nod and smile. “Ah, so you understand.”

Having been a public school teacher myself in the US, I suspected that teacher agency and cultural mediation happened daily, even in a centralized, authoritarian, hierarchical, state-standardized, high-stakes testing, culturally conservative, and religiously-oriented environment like the Jordanian public school system. I wanted to know how teachers at a typical Jordanian public school were navigating the political, cultural, economic, and social changes in their society, for themselves and for their students, during their daily work of defining, transmitting, and assessing culture and truth.

During the first few weeks, I learned who the different teachers were, how teachers addressed each other, the roles of the various administrators, how to explain my presence to teachers and students, why not to be late to morning assembly (they lock the front door so you have to walk in front of everyone gathered in the yard), and that some of the best mornings begin over Nescafé and gossip in the quiet teachers’ lounge. Teachers talked about how hard it was for them to do the “right thing” and how hard it was to know what that was. I had them tell me why it was so hard to figure out. I observed and interpreted their struggles over what is good and right to be and do through close observation and discussion with female public school teachers.

“What are you writing?” I told teachers that I was writing their book, where their worries, joys, questions, successes, jokes, thoughts, and lived experiences would be shared with others. “Yes, but what are you writing in your notebook?” they asked. “I see my name!” I would read to them from the English and occasional Arabic notes in my notebook, and they would laugh. “Ah,”
said one teacher. “You wrote everything!” Yes, I tried to record observed verbal and nonverbal interactions between teachers and others, especially administrators and teacher trainers.

This is a story about teachers as complex people, navigating the role they fulfill in state schooling: teachers who are sensitive when students mock the clothes they wear; who are bored at school assembly; who are exasperated by paperwork that seems to take up all their time; who must teach lessons they don’t fully understand; who attend teacher training in a foreign language; who became teachers to socialize with friends; and who realize they are shaping potential futures of their country by molding the minds and characters of the new generation. This is a story about teachers who daily survive the chaos of hundreds of children; teachers who feel too exhausted to teach; and teachers who are hungry after talking to students all through lunch break… again.

This is a story about teachers who teach in a gender-segregated public school in a conservative, Muslim-majority, Arab-majority, Middle Eastern kingdom. It is a story about teachers in a centralized education system, in a conservative patriarchal culture, in an authoritarian monarchy. It is a story about teachers training for entrepreneurship, critical thinking, democracy, and “21st century skills.” These stories are about competence and incompetence, learning and testing, getting to know students and not knowing what to do to help them—about triumph, failure, and uncertainty.

I have provided extended excerpts from field notes in an attempt to recreate the situations as best I can. Needless to say, although I’ve done my best to interpret data from the research site in a productive way, all claims and errors of fact or interpretation made here are my own. I trust that the men and women who shared their lives with me will recognize themselves and the issues most important to their lives in these pages.
Figure 1: Regional map of Jordan. Public domain image.

Figure 2: School Districts in Jordan. Source: Ministry of Education, 2013:8.

Figure 3: Political map of Jordan. Public domain image.

Figure 4: Photograph of Amman city. Public domain image.
Figure 5: Queen Rania’s visit. Source: *Jordan Times* 2012a; also posted on Queen Rania’s Facebook page and Flickr account.

Figure 6: Two English teachers in a teachers’ lounge, author’s photograph, February 2013.

Figure 7: Main lobby of Ammani Girls’ School, author’s photograph, September 2012.

Figure 8: A teachers’ lounge in Ammani Girls’ School, author’s photograph, September 2012.
INTRODUCTION

When you are talking about Arabic women, you are talking about conflict—as a teacher, a professor, I live this conflict every day. Which is right? Which is the right thing to do?

- Interview with Dr. Alif, sociologist at the Women’s Studies Center, University of Jordan, 2012

This dissertation provides an ethnography of education reform at the teacher level. It includes stories of teaching and teacher training in a context of centralized education reform for a knowledge economy in Jordan, focusing on the women who mediate gendered, ambiguous, and contradictory role expectations.

In Jordan, teaching is widely considered “the best job for a woman” because it is morally comfortable, culturally accommodating for Muslim female modesty, and socially appropriate for a wife and mother (see Chapter 3). With teaching as a career, she will be around children at work, at home during school breaks, able to flexibly enter and exit the profession, and in limited contact with men in public. Public secondary schools and comprehensive (K-12) schools in Jordan are almost exclusively gender-segregated, with female teachers and staff serving as models of professionalism and womanhood for generations of young girls. Female teachers who often became teachers for moral comfort find themselves at the forefront of national negotiations around what it means to be a woman in Jordanian society, tasked with presenting the values embedded in education reforms and making decisions about what to teach, how, and why.

In response to rising youth unemployment and pressures for democratization, the

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2 Male teachers and staff in boys’ schools serve as models of professionalism and manhood for generations of young boys, as researched by Roozbeh Shirazi (2009, 2010a, 2010b). My extended discussion of gender is in Chapter 2.
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan’s explicitly transformative Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERFKE) is meant to prepare teachers and students for new ways of thinking about the present and potential futures. Teachers and trainers alike expressed confusion over the precise meaning of the “knowledge economy” and which precise changes were desired for women’s identities. Though the mandated teaching goals now include teaching for critical thinking, cooperation and teamwork, technological fluency, multilingualism, democratic participation, and entrepreneurship, it is difficult for teachers to figure out how to do this.

ERFKE involves three phases. The first phase (2003–2008) focused on material development of new schools (especially for early childhood), textbooks, national exams, and information and communication technologies. King Abdullah II credits ERFKE Phase 1 for introducing research, critical thinking, group work, and computer skills to all schools in Jordan (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.d). During my fieldwork at the end of the second phase (2008–2013), the royal initiative focuses on new teacher training models to enable teachers to teach the new curriculum. ERFKE Phase 2 “shifts from a centralised to a more community and school-based programme delivery” to more effectively change teachers’ identities and practices (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.d). Phase 3 (2013–2018) will include reform of pre-service or initial teacher education in education departments at public universities. The ongoing education reforms aim to train teachers and staff in new conceptualizations of men and women as citizens and in the labor force, perhaps with broader implications for family relationships and legal rights (Sonbol 2003).

My dissertation project seeks to identify what these experiences mean to teachers. In this context of rapid educational reform, women like Dr. Alif are confronted by confusing and difficult emotional and professional choices. People choose between multiple good things to do
and good reasons for action. What used to be “good” may no longer be appreciated. The operations of ERFKE in Jordan are in a context where proper or traditional roles for women and a sense of normative womanhood are contested and uncertain while at the same time familiar and shared. Thus, in order to understand the cultural meanings of ERFKE, I focus on the gendered mediation (Chapter 2) of modern, Muslim womanhood by teachers working at Ammani Girls’ School (Chapters 3 and 4) and male and female teachers and trainers in the Education Reform Support Program (Chapter 5).

The dissertation is based on fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork with public school teachers and teacher trainers in Jordan in the summer of 2011 and the 2012–2013 school year, informed by a broad study of regional education policy and systems. During the fall semester of 2012, I observed teachers in daily school life at Ammani Girls’ School, a K-12 public girls’ school in the capital, Amman. During the second half of fieldwork, I observed teacher training that was part of the education reform rollout. The goal at teacher professional development was explicitly to “professionalize” teachers out of their personal and cultural understandings of the meaning of being a teacher and into the state’s understanding of the meaning of teaching for a knowledge economy. I use my data to illustrate the way teachers and trainers in Jordan mediate between overlapping, ambiguous, and sometimes contradictory social expectations. I aim to demonstrate that the operationalization of education reform relies on state actors to transform teacher sympathies in a way that makes state goals and visions of the future more “sympathetic,” emotionally salient, and persuasive reasons for action. I analyze the ways state authority is enacted across governmental and nongovernmental academic organizations to change how teachers make ethical choices and prioritize state goals over other sympathies that are often framed by trainers and teachers themselves as more culturally “traditional.”
I argue that the “transformation of sympathies” often puts teachers in the position of justifying behavior according to state goals in contradiction to traditional role expectations of religion, gender, family, and culture. Uncertainty may not be remarkable in itself. Life is full of uncertainty. However, this is uncertainty of how to be good, and it's at the center of national security, youth employment, and international stability. Women like Dr. Alif are trying to figure out exactly what to do and how to do it by making thousands of decisions a day about speech and behavior. Male and female teachers in Jordan navigate this institutional context of education reform trying to resolve youth unemployment stresses, a monarchy feeling the democratizing pressures of the Arab Spring, a Muslim-majority society preaching moderation in the face of Islamic extremism, and changing roles for women in a conservative gender-segregated system.

Warrant for Research

At the intersection of educational anthropology, political anthropology, and the anthropology of morality lies my interest in how people (specifically female public school teachers) mediate ethical sensibilities and how people (specifically state officials like teacher trainers and supervisors) try to change how people mediate ethical sensibilities.

Formal, state-run education is a crucial space for the inculcation, standardization, and policing of national identity and ways of belonging. Most studies of education (From Weber 1976 to Schiffauer et al. 2004) assume the explicit ideology of “modernization” through formal education, from the history of nationalism and the development of the postcolonial international system of nation-states, assuming that the role of formal, compulsory, and universal education is to enculturate the values and practices of equality, democracy, and national identity into individuals now considered nation-state “citizens.” Education development as a field does not
generally problematize the role of education in ‘modernization,’ but rather debates the reforms necessary for education to be more effective at its modernizing mission. The “critical theory” reform movement characterized by Jürgen Habermas argues that the traditional institutional processes and daily pedagogy of education does not go far enough to enact the ideals of equality, justice, and freedom that make up “modern” values (Herrera and Torres 2006).

These terms provide a vocabulary for studying attempts to establish or symbolize social cohesion or membership in groups or communities, legitimizing institutions and relations of authority and structuring certain forms of socialization into systems of value, belief, and conventions of behavior (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:9). These “imagined communities” are “cultural artefacts of a particular kind” that “have come into historical meaning […] and] changed over time” (Benedict Anderson 1991:3). Educational anthropologists look at explicit and implicit semiotic processes as they are constructed and debated through symbols and social relationships of power and performance.

The role of institutionalized, formal education in cultivating a sense of citizenship and belonging has classically been studied by Europeans to explain and contextualize European nationalism. The colonial experience of negotiating belonging and the rise of nationalism has also been widely studied, for example in the Jordanian case by Joseph Massad’s Colonial Effects (2001), Linda Layne’s Home and Homeland (1994), Betty Anderson’s “Writing the Nation” (2001), and Andrew Shryock’s “Dynastic Modernism and Its Contradictions” (2000). However, literature on education in Jordan and the broader Arab world is almost exclusively normative from an international development ideological perspective that sees the expansion of compulsory mass schooling as an unambiguously positive state function. Using Jordan as a case study for studying the cultural mediation work of teaching offers a productive and little-studied case for
testing the analytical benefit of educational anthropology. I have argued for the productivity of education as a field, for its role in meaning making and identity formation as presented by the site for defining and teaching “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and creating “imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson 1991 [1983]). Education as an institution works to codify national narratives (Wertsch 1993), inculcate national identity (Betty Anderson 2005, 2007), and even functionalize religion for the purposes of compliant national unity (Starrett 1998 on Islam in Egypt; Cardinal 2009 on Islam in Syria; and Kapferer 1988 on Buddhism in Sri Lanka). Particularly in Jordan, with its history of colonialism, monarchy, and invented statehood, state education policy illuminates conflicts over community, identity, and moral ontology.

In ERFKE, the national narrative about political citizenship is paired with economic citizenship for a future national knowledge economy. The education reform goals are for teachers to teach students these new cultures of knowledge and work. Paul Willis writes that the struggle over symbolic power and social reproduction spreads from its start in the schools “and steadily moves out to the street and neighborhoods, drawing with it a larger and larger content of working class values, attitudes, and practices” (72). According to Willis, in educational anthropology, “one can interrogate the cultural for what unspoken assumptions lie behind it [by asking] what are the grounds that make this [particular] attitude sensible?” (125).

For Willis, creative cultural acts are negligible at the individual level, and only occur “at the group level” (120, sic). Though Willis argues specifically against creativity as an individual act, in one “particular head” (Ibid.), I would add Fox’s social theory that acknowledges individual creativity that is only later “authorized by group struggle” or “de-authorized by opposition” (Fox 1989: 34). I suggest that more than just class identity operates in basically the same reproduction processes, beginning in the school and spreading to the larger community, for
the enculturation of national and religious ‘values, attitudes, and practices’ are dialogic between school and society. Raymond Williams recognizes that cultural identification is necessarily learned (Williams 1994: 602, emphasis mine). The process of cultural creativity can be “repressed, disorganized and prevented from reaching their full potential or a political articulation by deep, basic, and disorienting divisions” like patriarchy, racism, and epistemology of knowledge (Willis 1977:145). This warning is quite salient in the context of colonialism, neocolonialism, and authoritarian post-colonialism.

Also central to this study is the scholarship on Muslim women and gendered belonging. The overarching theme in women’s studies and feminist theory generally has been the power of patriarchy and women’s adaptive resilience to it (Ortner 1997; Dwyer 1978; Dwyer and Bruce 1988). Women’s bodies and minds have often been central to gendered discourses of national belonging (Abu-Lughod 2000; Kanaaneh 2002). In Jordan, women are also at the center of a public discourse of what it means to be modern and developed, which usually relies on an element of public performance “of what the ‘modern’ Jordanian woman could or should be” (Adely 2010). Across the Arab world and elsewhere, the rise in public education, employment, rights, and political participation for women is creating a new stage of single, employed, young womanhood, affecting family and romantic relationships, producing new behaviors in need of justifications, and offering opportunities for traditional and novel forms of control and resistance (Kawar 2000; Obermeyer 1995; Rabo 1996; Sonbol 2003; Warrick 2009). In the context of Islam, popular media focuses on the oppressive cultural practices and lack of legal rights that have been the traditional foes of the women’s movement in the West. Within anthropology, scholars have complicated both the narrative of liberal, secular western womanhood and the counternarrative of oppressed Muslim womanhood. Specific and complicated stories help
problematize the representation of Arab women as monolithic and passive (Abu-Lughod 2005, 2013).

Within anthropology, scholars have complicated both the narrative of liberal, secular western womanhood and the counter narrative of oppressed Muslim womanhood. Studies within the anthropology of religion have highlighted the processes of self-formation and cultural practices of the religiously devout (Ammerman 1987; Fader 2009; Lester 2005) and particularly of women in the Arab world. Women are central to the debates and performance about what is authentic and legitimate Islam, as well as what is modern and developed (Abu Lughod 1998; Adely 2010; Ahmed 1992; Kandiyoti 1991; Mahmood 2005). The importance of the performance of the social self (Goffman 1959; Kuipers 1990) is augmented by the important role of ritual performance in disciplining women’s bodies (Butler 1988). In Jordan, Fida Adely interpreted various performances of patriotism among Jordanian schoolgirls “to highlight competing moral projects” and to challenge mainstream national narratives of legitimacy and modernity (2010:132). Other scholars have reclaimed devout female piety as agency (Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2005) but as Adely explored, many women in Jordan are not choosing between a known/understood religious illiberalism or a western secular liberalism but rather struggling to negotiate what would or could be good to do, when, and in relation to state, religion, family, economy, and/or education communities (Adely 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2010, 2012a, 2012b).

Many reports about Islamic schooling rely on textbook excerpts to argue that education is militant, anti-Israeli, oppressive towards women, and anti-American in countries like Syria (Landis 2007; Wurmser 2000) and Saudi Arabia (Doumato and Posusney 2003; Prokop 2003). Jordanian textbooks, though not judged among the most intolerant and militant curricula, contained “nefarious conspiracies that just will not go away” and heavily stereotyped girls’ roles
in Jordanian society (Fattah 2005). Anthropological studies of Islamic schooling complicate this interpretation by going beyond curriculum analysis to include participant-observation, interviews, and ethnographic descriptions of education in practice (Hefner and Zaman 2007; Herrera and Torres 2006; Mazawi and Sultana 2010). These studies emphasize that actual practices and the active reasoning of individual Muslims dynamically form and transform the lived experience of schooling. Anthropologists continue to call for ethnographic study of what, how, and why teachers teach (Herrera 2010; Shirazi 2009; Starrett 2006). Research on actual educational practices have emphasized the diversity of teaching and disciplinary procedures (Magableh and Hawamdeh 2007).

Teachers in the Arab world teach the “most schooled generation in history,” are crucial to the political transformations of the Arab Spring, “yet little is known about the everyday functioning of schooling in the region and the ways it prepares (or fails to prepare) the young for participation in economic, socio-cultural, and political life” (Herrera 2010:117). In order to know how education works in particular contexts, it is necessary to have detailed knowledge of the institutional structures and the construction and mediation of ideological messages by teachers who are employed in those structures. Schooling is also a microcosm of broader society, and can serve to illuminate how “social relationships take shape and how they are resisted, negotiated, and potentially transformed” (Herrera 2010:118; see also Levinson et al. 1996; Morrow and Brown 1994; Herrera and Torres 2006) to potentially inform national and international policy, citizens, public intellectuals and academics, and development agencies. Policy intentions can be crippled by a reliance on ideological suppositions or theoretical assumptions about what should or could be happening in schools, without evidence and analysis of what actually goes on in schools.
My research is situated in decades of work by cultural anthropologists emphasizing the ambiguity and active negotiation of women’s identity practices in the Islamic world against political media terminology based on strictly-bounded, oppositional identification labels. Though public discourse on Islamic education tends to treat the process as an impenetrable black box, cultural anthropologists of education, religion, and politics in the Middle East have illustrated local agency, internal pluralism, and constitutive social contexts of institutional practices. How to be a good woman, a good Muslim, a good Jordanian public school teacher, and most complicatedly, how to be a good female Muslim Jordanian teacher all at once?

**Conceptual Framework: Mediation and Affect**

*To try to understand something the people did or do or believe [is to] try to locate the point of reference in social practice from which the beliefs or actions emerge.*

Sherry Ortner (1980:12)

My research goals are to understand the social practice of teachers navigating conflict over the right thing to do, to interpret how trainers aim to “professionalize” and change how teachers act, and to suggest a qualitative shift from a focus on “effectiveness” to *affective* relationships of education reform. In terms of my research scope, I’m interested in local meanings of good or “effective” teaching and teacher training and how my informants deal with ethical issues of their jobs. In bringing together questions important to the study of institutions, agency, ethics, and development, I use an ethnographic approach to better “understand something the people did or do or believe” by locating the social, political, and economic conditions in which such actions or beliefs are sympathetic and affective. I argue that the “point of reference in social practice from which the beliefs or actions emerge” for my informants were
the affective relationships that guide mediation among normative ethical frames.

Public school teachers are actors within the state structure that is most explicitly involved in defining nationalist ideology. However, the authority given by their official roles is more precarious in embodied practice. As a fundamentally problematic social structure, “the key problem here is that the goals of education are often ambiguous, even contradictory, and not universally shared; this can cause confusion in role expectation” (Ballantine and Hammack 2011:152). Teachers are responsible for reconciling for their students the contradictions between national narratives and the state’s economic, military, political, and social programs.

Teachers in this setting do the hard work of cultural definition and mediation. By “cultural definition,” I refer to the classic understanding of formal public schooling as an institution of defining and transmitting information deemed useful by previous generations for successive generations. This function of social reproduction is dynamic, precarious, and undertaken by various actors who have various goals. By “mediation,” I mean the ways teachers actively broker or negotiate between multiple possible discourses about what one should, ought, or must do in order to do the daily work of teaching. These normative discourses delineate a range of possibilities but do not compel particular practices, only possible lines of reasoning. Actors must dynamically mediate fundamental structural ambiguities and contradictions, and people often act ambiguously and contradictorily in that context. To ground this framework in examples, being a good teacher could mean: being nice, giving students even unearned higher grades, smiling and laughing, being serious, being available to chat with students about their lives, spending time socializing with other teachers in the lounge, monitoring hallways to ensure prompt attendance by teachers and students for each class period, donating money to a faculty collection for poor students, disciplining students who break dress code, ignoring a dress code
violation, grading promptly, being late grading after hosting in-laws, spending class time
chatting about topics that interest students, or spending class time focused on techniques for high
achievement on standardized tests. Few studies focus on understanding the culture of teaching
from the point of view of the teacher, daily mediating between different role expectations and
enacting precarious authority in front of a school full of judging students, parents, peers, staff,
and supervisors.

I propose the following conceptual framework to situate the intellectual scope of the
dissertation: Individual agency, within social structures, leads to mediation of conflict over the
right thing to do by relying on (performing, enforcing, and transforming) sympathy and political
affect.

Agency: The particular lens of this dissertation is teacher agency within structure,
including the social structures of formal education, family, religion, state, economy, and gender.
Public school teachers are creative agents within institutional structures, even in authoritarian,
centralized, conservative, and gender-segregated environments. I analyze agency within social
structures by interpreting the micro-interactions (within various formal or informal mechanisms,
processes, and verbal and nonverbal interpersonal communications) of daily professional life.

Mediation: As anthropologist Sherry Ortner wrote of Tibetan Buddhist monks, the
“impact of external forces is internally mediated” (1980:17) and mediation is the process through
which “actors who are so much products of their own social and cultural contexts can ever come
to transform the conditions of their own existence” (14). The term mediation is meant to indicate
the interaction of internal and external as well as the dynamism of a “dialogical self” that
mediates between perspectival positions (Valsiner 2002:251), personal goal orientations, and
ongoing relationships with one’s environment (Valsiner 1999:26).
Teachers must mediate between ambiguous and even contradictory expectations to teach all students and yet rank and stratify them, teach for cultural reproduction and change yet sustain a stable society and prevent revolution, teach for future entrepreneurship and develop respect for traditional values, and meaningfully bridge the past, present, and future. Among these social structures, norms, and expectations are gendered family expectations, the school administration’s expectations of classroom management and grading, students’ and parents’ expectations of the role of the teacher, the government education policies and supervisors’ expectations about progression through the curriculum, and the educational development sector’s expectations about higher order thinking skills in the 21st century.

**Sympathy and Political Affect:** I use the term “sympathy” to refer to shared reasoning over the right thing to do. With this term, I wish to index emotions like care and trust without indexing a sense of pity or sorrow sometimes expressed by the English usage. In the course of my fieldwork, I was struck by the varied use of the Arabic ‘atifa, including the verb for ta’atuf meaning to reciprocally emote, to sympathize or empathize. I find productive analytical weight in the adjective “sympathetic” in terms of shared caring, sentiment, and mutually understood moral ontologies.

The literature on “political affect” explains how states work at the level of personal and relational emotion. Seen through the lens of political affect, the role of state education in “educating consent” (à la Gramsci) operates “by severing some affective bonds and establishing

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3 The Arabic ‘atifa (عطف) translates to “kindness, kindliness, sympathy, affection, or emotion” and ‘atafa ‘ala can mean “to understand or have mercy for.” The word ta’atuf (تعاطف) as a noun means empathy or sympathy and as a verb means “to empathize, to sympathize.” I wish to reference these Arabic forms, but since they are often translated as emotion or affection, I chose not to use the English translations since “transformation of affections” and “affectionate reasons” isn’t precisely what I mean. In English, I use the term “sympathies” and the associated phrases “transformation of sympathies” and “sympathetic reasons” without the implication of pity that sometimes accompanies the word “sympathy.”
others, by adjudicating what constitutes moral sentiments—in short, by educating the proper
distribution of sentiments and desires” (Stoler 2007:9). However, Jenkins notes that “states do
more than control emotional discourse, they attempt to ‘culturally standardize the organization of
feeling’ and produce as well as harness emotional discourse within it” (quoted in Stoler 2007:9).

The very purpose of education puts teachers in the position of mediating social change
and development according to state curricula, goals, evaluations, and discipline through the
authoritative engineering of sympathies, to an audience in the physical building and social
structure of the school that entails practice, evaluation, and performance. The atmosphere of
constant performance produces an environment of precariousness. The precariousness of social
interaction, assumptions, and expectations leads individuals to appeal to the sympathies of those
around them. Specifically, among my informants in Jordan, women appealed to the sympathetic
understanding of the shared experiences and difficulties of being a daughter, wife, mother,
teacher, and (almost exclusively) Muslim woman.

For my participants, overwhelmingly identifying as Muslim in an overwhelmingly
Muslim-majority state, daily life is full of contingency, ambiguity, and difficult decisions
involving ethical justification in general rather than direct appeals to theology. Given the reality
of gender-segregated secondary schooling in Jordan and the corresponding gender-segregated
workplaces for public secondary school teachers, a study of schooling and education reform in
Jordan is also about gender. I don’t presume any predetermined social meaning of Arab family,
modern Muslim womanhood, or Islamic education, but let informants explain their own
references in social practice. We will look at the enactment, interpretation, and expression of
these categories through interaction with each other as well as with state policy, material,
authorities, and curriculum reforms borrowed or bought from non-Muslim majority states such
In the course of the dissertation, I analyze social interactions to explore what is difficult about being a good teacher and why. In general, my close reading of teachers’ emotional and professional difficulties supports the literature on political affect as a lens through which to understand the intimate emotional operations of policy and political systems. Though I originally intended to look for explicit contradictions and focus more explicitly on Islam, I came to realize that conflict over the right thing to do was usually more complicated. Teachers tended to avoid outright contradictions in favor of compromise, reframing, or mediation. In the anthropology of politics and ethics, Bowen (1993, 2003, Bowen et al. 2014) developed language for analyzing “repertoires of justification” and the range of ways people reason through their institutional engagements. In this vein, I do not claim to explicate people’s “real” reasons for action but rather map out the salient repertoires of justification for my informants. After coding for contingencies, judgments, “repertoires of justification” (Bowen 2003), “reference in social practice” (Ortner 1980), integration of trust networks (Tilly 2005), and what, where, and when people care about things, I developed my analysis around the mediation of sympathies and care-based relationships. I seek to explain how and analyze why being a teacher in Jordan is socially, politically, and emotionally conflicted.

My Position and Access

In June 2011, I arrived in Jordan for the first time. I spent a preliminary two months in Amman and Jerash, studying advanced Modern Standard Arabic and Jordanian colloquial Arabic at the University of Jordan (UJ) language center and through a home stay with Dr. Alif, now a sociology professor in the Women’s Studies Center at UJ. I sought a field site where I could
answer my research questions among teachers at a “typical” school setting. Through my host family’s connections, I met Miss Noon, the principal of a girls’ public school that fit my criteria and welcomed my ethnographic research. With the support of the principal and professors at the University of Jordan, I received official letters of invitation from the Minister of Education and Director of Research of the Secondary Education Directorate of Amman. With an official invitation and financial support from the US Department of State through a Fulbright research fellowship for the 2012–2013 school year, I reached out to senior staff at the premier teacher training institute, Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA), who facilitated my participant-observation at various teacher training workshops. QRTA is the main institution through which the government provides training for public school teachers. In addition to these two selected institutions, I also took advantage of invitations I received during the course of fieldwork to visit other schools and trainings in order to get a sense of perspective.

Due to the favorable international relations between the US and Jordan, and the close institutional relationships between US education and development organizations (such as Columbia University, the co-founder of QRTA, and USAID, which funds the Education Reform Support Program), I received prompt official permissions for my presence as an American researcher. As a married woman and teacher, I also received warm welcome from teachers in many public schools. Throughout my fieldwork, I received many more invitations to observe teaching and training than time would allow. At various sites, people would frequently seek me out and ask me to interview or observe them, expressing whole-hearted support for my research goals. Because of the proposed significance of affect and sympathy to multiple, shared role expectations and experiences, it is important to note my positionality as religiously devout though not Muslim and the possible shared understandings that developed from living with a
family for several months. I appreciate that my positionality may have evoked particular responses from these interlocutors, who perhaps wished to communicate a certain narrative to a non-Arab female American. Though I cannot speak to sites I could not observe, I don’t know of any formal teaching or training sites from which I was banned.

There are a number of benefits and detriments to being a non-native Arabic speaker and outside many of my informants’ social structures. As a non-native but with advanced fluency in Modern Standard Arabic and Jordanian colloquial, I am able to ask for linguistic and social clarification that could be more awkward for a cultural and linguistic insider who would assumedly already know. Thus, in addition to context-specific terms, I can sincerely inquire what it means to be *shatira* (clever) and *khafifa* (light-weight) and ask for examples. These conversations with one teacher often drew in other students, parents, or teachers and provided me with a range of possible social meanings. Another benefit to being an outsider is that I was a safe conversation partner, separate from all structural forms of evaluation and performance monitoring. I took pains to verbalize to each person with whom I spoke that I was not doing an evaluation and was not working for any institution within Jordan. Thus, I could be a confidante with whom teachers could share burdens and frustrations without risking a bad performance evaluation or losing social standing. Unfortunately, being a non-native speaker and outsider also means I probably missed or misunderstood many important interactions and references. I did my best to minimize those losses by long-term presence, repeated lines of questioning, and review of applicable literature. In addition, I often asked my interlocutors to confirm my interpretations and even vet my notes and dissertation chapter drafts.

My methodological goals were to record and analyze social micro-interactions to illustrate how informants mediate between and appeal to sympathies in contexts of uncertainty, conflict,
and ambivalence over role expectations. Over fourteen months I followed, observed, and talked with teachers, administrators, and trainers mostly through ethnographic “hanging out.” I was often granted permission to audio-record normal school life in the classrooms and lounges. Then I transcribed and translated the recordings, double-checking meanings with my often multilingual informants. I also wrote down both verbal and nonverbal communication, including facial expressions, hand gestures, and writing on the board. Throughout the dissertation, teachers’ speech will be in quotation marks and students’ speech will be in quotation marks or brackets when they speak over the teacher.

My daily routines were not dissimilar from Linda Layne’s (1994) research in the 1981–82 school year, where she was “observing classes, interviewing teachers, socializing in the teachers’ lounge, and sitting in the principal’s office gossiping, looking at school records, and listening to the parents who visited” in a public high school for girls in Mu’addi village. Nor were they dissimilar from Fida Adely’s (2012a) ethnography based on fieldwork with a girls’ school in Bawadi al-Naseem in the 2004–05 school year. Building on their explorations of the student perspective, tribes, and family dynamics, I base my fieldwork in urban Amman among teachers, teacher trainers, and professors to understand teacher agency and perspectives in education as an institution and education reform as a social process. Although I was occasionally a guest at their homes, most of my study was conducted in their work spaces with an interest in the lived experiences and daily work of education policy and reform.

**Research Sites**

The population of Jordan is overwhelmingly Arab (98%), Muslim (97.2%), urban (82.7%), young (56.2% of the 7.9 million population are under 25 years of age), and publicly
Educational change has been dramatic in Jordan. From almost no formal education in 1921, and only 33% adult literacy and 47% enrollment in the new, free, and compulsory public schooling as of 1960 (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.a), recent figures show over 97% school enrollment with full gender parity and 91% adult literacy, with 70-80% of students transitioning into higher education (al-Saleem et al. 2009:68). Though Jordan reached those educational targets, the proportion of female workers has only grown from 5% in 1975 to 15% by 2007, below the regional average of 28% and far below the average for developing countries worldwide (World Bank 2008). The field of education employs many of the women who do work outside the home.

Seeking to locate “typical” teaching, I chose a school site that is public, female, K-12, urban, majority Muslim, and regularly involved with some form of professional development. To locate “typical” training, I focus on the programming by the premier, national, teacher training institute, Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA). Though not statistically representative of any population, I chose field sites based on my capacity to observe typical teacher interactions. I chose to focus on one school and one training agency in depth over an extended period of time, since I was already aware that scheduled and infrequent observations result in atypical impressions of school life.

A girls’ public school could be considered typical education in Jordan [See Table A, below].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class units</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Ministry of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(44,493)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3,545)</td>
<td>Females in urban capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,188</td>
<td>165,350</td>
<td>8,963</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Females in urban capital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A: Locating the Urban Female Public Education Demographic

school (either academic streams like scientific, literary, and IT or vocational training) are optional and gender-segregated (Ministry of Education 2013). According to the Ministry of Education (2013) report, the government operates 3,545 of the 6,355 schools in the kingdom, including 745 in the capital (138 of which are urban girls’ schools). Public education accounts for 68.5% of all teachers in the kingdom and 68% of all students. Within urban government schools in the capital Amman, there are 8,963 female teachers and 165,350 female students.

Though the most common type of school is an urban, basic (grades 1-10), co-ed school, I chose a girls’ school that includes upper secondary grades where female teachers most clearly articulate the connection of school to life (options like work, marriage, and university). Girls’ schools provide most of the “class units” (meaning separate classes like 1st grade, 9th grade Biology, 10th grade English section A) in public education (18,630, versus 16,780 in boys’ schools and 9,083 in gender-mixed schools). Reflective of national homogeneity, neighborhood schools tend to serve ethnically Arab and religiously Muslim homogeneous populations with notable (Assyrian, Christian) minorities.

After two summer months’ preparation at the Women’s Studies Center at the University of Jordan (July–August 2012), I spent the fall semester of 2012 doing fieldwork at Ammani Girls’ School (AGS) and the spring semester of 2013 observing teacher training workshops run by Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA). I supplemented these two central field sites with visits and interviews with four other public and private, urban and rural schools (from a basic primary school in Mafraq to the elite Kings Academy) and five public and private universities (Philadelphia University, JUST, Tawfila Technical, University of Jordan, American University Madaba). During the spring semester of 2013, I observed more than seven teacher training sessions at QRTA, and one training at the American Language Center, with corresponding
interviews with teachers and trainers and a return visit to Ammani Girls’ School as well as one other school and two other universities.

*Ammani Girls’ School:* Built in 2001 of the same white blocks of Jordanian limestone as the rest of Amman, Ammani Girls’ School (AGS) is home to more than forty teachers and staff who provide education for over nine hundred K-12 students. Like Jordan’s many gender-segregated public schools, all of teachers and students at AGS are female (but for one male custodian and a few male preschoolers) and generally the only males allowed on campus are students’ parents or state administrators. The faculty and staff at AGS are all Muslim except for one Christian administrator. AGS serves a neighborhood student population that mirrors national demographics in terms of socioeconomic distribution and religion. As one teacher put it, “We have the daughter of the landlord and the daughter of the boab (doorman),” meaning that they teach wealthy and poor students. In terms of religious affiliation, the overwhelming majority of students and teachers are Sunni Muslim, and some are affiliated with Shi’i Islam or Christianity.

In the fall of 2012, I spent over two hundred hours observing and interviewing at the school, following at least eight of the thirty-some teachers throughout the entire school day: from morning assembly, to the teachers’ lounges (at least fifty hours), principal’s office, hallways, computer lab, library, and their classes. It is difficult to account exactly for the number of teachers in the school. Although there are official records, the school also hosted occasional substitute teachers, visiting American researchers, Jordanian teachers for training, visiting parents and family members, district or Ministry observers or supervisors, male and female traveling merchants selling clothes or vegetables, a female beggar, and even the Queen. Also, teachers were absent from school for maternity leave, sick leave, vacation, training, a teacher
strike, or unknown reasons.

In AGS, I focused on the teachers’ perspectives and interactions through such events as the Queen’s visit, a training workshop held at the school, differences between two teachers’ lounges, national and student elections, and dress code enforcement. The dissertation will draw material mainly from eleven of the regular teachers, a student teacher, a district supervisor, the principal and two assistants. During the fall semester, AGS hosted a three-day teacher training workshop as part of the Education Reform Support Program (ERSP) funded largely by USAID and operated by Creative through a local partner, ASK for Human Capacity Building.

*Queen Rania Teacher Academy*: In 2009, QRTA was cofounded by Teachers College Columbia University (USA) and the Jordanian royal government as the premier teacher training institute for public school teachers. QRTA campus is next to the Columbia University Middle East Resource Center (CUMERC) and is one of the main channels of teacher training from ERFKE and other royal initiatives. QRTA does work to support ERFKE goals in its own way, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah; however, it is not independent from the Ministry of Education. I spent over fifty hours interviewing and observing QRTA training, including topics such as sustainability, Arabic and English writing, project-based learning, “State of the Art” lectures by Paul Kim from Stanford University and Think Unlimited, and off-site workshops like “Teach Like a Champion” in Karak. I also observed supplementary (voluntary) training undertaken by other agencies including the American Language Center.
Structure of the Dissertation

1: In this history chapter, I locate education reform as a state project through a survey of the institutional pressures on teachers and trainers and establish the setting of the dissertation. I explain how state education produces role expectations that are complicated by those from family and tribe, religion, the economy.

2: This chapter investigates how state, family, tribal, Islamic, and economic dimensions are gendered in Jordan. Grounded in the literature and supplemented with ethnographic anecdotes, I outline major ethical difficulties that could be faced by male and female teachers and trainers.

3: This chapter explores what is it like for the women who daily work at “the best job for a woman.” I provide close readings of micro-interactions in order to interpret how and why female teachers mediate their precarious authority and engage in gender self-fashioning. I have included extended ethnographic vignettes to illustrate the complexities of daily school life and retain the spatial, chronological, and cultural context. Ethnographic interludes provide extended, detailed, social micro-interactions needed to see many things happen at once. Through these teachers’ interactions with their female students, fellow teachers, and administrative supervisors as they try different ways to do “the right thing” for themselves and others, I illustrate the process of “mediation” according to “sympathies.”

4: This chapter follows an evaluation of English teachers Miss Baa, Miss Raa, and Miss Taa by the district supervisor, instigated when Miss Taa appealed directly to the district with her concerns that Miss Baa was not qualified to teach tawjihi students. I explore how teachers understand their professional authority and justify their actions when evaluated, confronted, or challenged.
5: In this chapter, I outline the features of teacher training and education reform rollout that show how state actors try to get teachers to prioritize state goals and gendered role expectations as “the right thing to do.” By analyzing teacher “professionalization” as a state project supposedly desiring modern citizens but relying on obedience of traditionally gendered subjects, I analyze education reform as attempts to transform teacher behavior by transforming their sympathies. Trainers strategize the most effective ways to transform teachers’ sympathies and behaviors for state goals but the state’s ambivalence problematizes the “effectiveness” of education reform for students, parents, and teachers themselves. I analyze the reasoning behind the institutional programming at Queen Rania Teacher Academy, illustrating the impact of international agencies and local reaction against behavioral modification professionalization.
Figure 7: Teach Like a Champion QRTA training in Karak, author’s photograph, March 2013. Author, second row, third from the left.

Figure 9: QRTA workshop, author’s photograph, January 2013. Author at center.

Figure 10: QRTA State of the Art training, author’s photograph, February 2013.
CHAPTER 1: WHAT'S THERE TO MEDIATE IN JORDAN?

In this chapter, I establish the setting of the dissertation and the context in which public school teachers mediate between multiple, ambiguous, interactive, overlapping, and contradictory messages. Jordanian national identity includes three powerful social dimensions: family, religion, and the economy. Schooling is an emotionally and ontologically conflicted space of “educating consent” to the national narrative.

The State

The founding of the Kingdom of Jordan was not a simple affair because many powers claimed the same territory during World War I, and thus modern Jordanian national identity is fundamentally problematic. The state of Jordan was founded by Abdullah I and backed by the British, in return for his family’s support of the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in World War I. Inhabitants within the newly-drawn state borders had previously been Palestinian tribes under Ottoman imperial governance.

“Jordan” referred only to the River Jordan before 1921 when some of the provincial Palestinian territory east of the river was relabeled Transjordan. Before WWI, the territory now known as Jordan was undergoing rapid cultural transformation. In the late Ottoman Tanzimat (Reforms) period (1880s–1900s), Ottoman officials brought in European advisors to reform the education system but in the region now known as Jordan there was mass illiteracy (especially in rural areas and among women) by the 1910s (Massad 2001). Communication and transportation technological revolutions pushed educational expansion in literacy and higher math and science
to cope with societal change. In addition to the technological revolutions, there were also political revolutions across the Ottoman Empire (and across Europe as well) inspired by ethnic nationalism and social contract democracy (Italian unification 1859, German Unification 1871, Greek independence 1821-32, Egyptian independence 1919). In this period, education shifted from private community provision to centralized, state-provided formal education systems strongly influenced by European systems (Fortna 2002).

During and after WWI, there was a struggle between an independent Arab kingdom, British (and French) colonialism, and Zionism. Sharif Hussein bin Ali and his sons (Ali, Abdullah, and Feisal) led the ethnic nationalist movement, the Arab Revolt, allied with the British against the Ottoman Turks during WWI. Hussein bin Ali belonged to the Hashemites, generally honored as the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad’s clan, and served as governor of the Islamic holy cities Mecca and Medina. For their aid during WWI, Britain promised the family of Hussein bin Ali ethnic Arab territory in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. However, the same territory was also promised to France in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and as a Jewish homeland in the Balfour Declaration. In his autobiography, King Abdullah II acknowledges that his great-grandfather Hussein felt these promises were “a betrayal of the Arab Revolt” (2011:6).

In the peace treaties ending WWI (the 1920 Treaty of Sevres and the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, where no Arab representatives were present), the Arab world was divided into British mandates of Palestine (subsequently divided into Jewish Palestine and Arab Palestine) and Iraq and the French mandate of Syria (subsequently divided by the French into Lebanon and Syria). 

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4 In the words of King Abdullah II, his family “belongs to the branch of the Quraish tribe and directly descends from the Prophet through the male line of his elder grandson, Al Hasan” (2011:20).
5 Hussein bin Ali declared himself king of the Islamic holy land but lost to the Saudis, who declared the independence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Hussein’s son Ali became Sharif of the holy cities
Britain labeled the territory east of the Jordan River “Arab Palestine,” which was claimed by Hussein bin Ali’s son Abdullah I as “the Emirate of Transjordan” in 1921. During World War II, Abdullah I declared independence from the British for the “Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.” The independent Kingdom of Jordan founded in 1946 was fundamentally compromised by colonial British mandate politics. For many people, Hashemite and British pressure was indistinguishable until successful nationalist demonstrations in 1955 broke the Baghdad Pact between Britain and its former mandate (Betty Anderson 2005:162). Creating a “Jordanian” national identity without a “nation” of Jordan has been a basic contradiction plaguing education reform since the nation’s founding (Massad 2001).

The project of creating a Jordanian national identity makes school a conflicted civic space because people have different ideas about what Jordanian identity is or should be. The British divided the territory that had been “Palestine” in 1914 into “Jewish Palestine” along the west bank and “Arab Palestine” along the east bank of the Jordan River. In the aftermath of the war establishing the state of Israel from 1948–1949, the king of Jordan offered Jordanian citizenship to people then called “Palestinians” in the “West Bank.” Early political conflicts in Jordan centered on the status of West Bank Palestinian refugees. From 1949–67, Palestinians in the West Bank could get Jordanian citizenship and many well-educated political elite immigrated to urban centers in Jordan (Jansen 2006:478). Outside sources report that “at least half” of Jordanians affiliate as (West Bank) Palestinians although the state considers census data sensitive national information. (Adoni 2010; Shirazi 2012:75).

After the massive immigration of West Bank Palestinians after 1949, they became a

Mecca and Medina. Feisal declared himself king of Iraq and Syria but French troops fought his troops to the border agreed upon by Britain and France, so Feisal was only recognized by colonial powers as king of Iraq.
“state within a state” that the monarchy fought with increasingly militant “Jordanization” (Fruchter-Ronen 2008:247, 255). In 1970–1971, a series of bloody uprisings occurred between Palestinians aligned with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) under Yasser Arafat and East Bank Jordanians (i.e., those not of West Bank Palestinian origins) under the late Jordanian monarch, King Hussein. During “Black September” (September 1970 and into 1971), the Jordanian military forcibly expelled the PLO, resulting in the deaths of 4,000 Palestinian civilians and 950 fighters and a significant decline in the status of Palestinians in the country (Shlaim 2007). After Black September, Palestinians “became a political minority with their centre of identity lying outside Jordan, and to some degree posing a threat to the present Hashemite character of Jordan” (Reiter 2002:139). The regime’s inadequate loyalty to Palestine mobilized the Palestinian assassin who killed King Abdullah I in 1951 and possibly spurred some of the dozen assassination attempts against former King Hussein (Shlaim 2007). After the Palestinian Liberation Organization reached peace with Israel in 1991 as part of the Oslo Peace Accords, Jordan also reached a peace with Israel in 1994. Since then, and especially since the succession of King Abdullah II in 1999, the Jordanian government has worked to establish Jordanian citizenship and identity as distinct from Palestinian citizenship and identity, gradually withdrawing Jordanian citizenship from West Bank Palestinians (Ababsa 2011).

Thus, the description of national education as “Jordanian education” is politically-charged over the relationship of the Kingdom of Jordan and Jordanian citizenship to Palestinian identity. In this context, a reference to “Jordanian education” as such is a political affiliation set against alternatives like tribal belonging or nationalist Palestinian heritage. King Abdullah II (great grandson of the founder Abdullah I) launched the Jordan First (al-Urdun al-Awal) initiative in 2002 early in his reign to “promote the concept of a modern nation state” and use the
powers of the state to construct a sense of Jordanian citizenship (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.b). The category of “Jordanian education” is significant because of its centrality to major state efforts to reshape the substance and value of state citizenship itself and also because of the vulnerability of this project to the influx of Syrian, Iraqi, Palestinian, and other refugees and economic migrants. This category undergoes daily construction as public school teachers (almost exclusively of “Jordanian-Jordanian” background as opposed to “Palestinian-Jordanian”) engage with their students (many of whom identify with other nationalities or from cities or tribes within Jordan) on topics of identity, citizenship, democracy, migration, war, and broad questions of “who we are.” State initiatives like Jordan First and We Are All Jordan (*Kuluna Urdun*) are explicit and top-down state efforts to inculcate a sense of national identity and civic mentality (Shirazi 2009).

Citizenship is problematic, though, since Jordan has only citizen-subjects in a near-absolute monarchy that still bears a legacy of foreign colonialism. Education in Jordan always had an authoritarian, central nature, but is now set the putative task of providing democratic education. Public educators in Jordan navigate role expectations of a monarchical subject and the possibility of future democratic citizenship. Through the frenetic political changes of the Arab Spring (beginning in Tunisia in December 2010), throughout my field work (2012–2013) and as of today (June 2015), the government of Jordan is a democratizing authoritarian monarchy.

The development of civic public space and democracy before, during, and after the Arab Spring has not been a simple progression from less to more democratic. Although ranked first of all Arab countries in a 2010 regional report on human rights (Arab Reform Initiative 2010), the Jordanian government has cracked down on political dissent, demonstrations, unions, and media freedom in the years since. A harsh censorship law in 2013 ensured that Freedom House ranks...
Jordan as “not free” (2015). The king retains the ability to dismiss parliament and rule by decree, which King Abdullah II has done twice, from 2001 to 2003 and from November 2009 to November 2010. Male and female citizens may run and vote for the Jordanian Parliament in multi-party elections. However, in a series of polls by the Identity Center for Human Development after the 2013 elections, 53% reported belief the elections were not fair (Hussainy 2014:5).

The state maintains order both through enforcement and trust. In Jordan, the monarchy has integrated what Charles Tilly (2005) calls “trust networks” like religion, family and tribe into state systems in a number of direct and indirect ways. States intentionally integrate emotional trust networks, which are social groups in which people risk themselves and are willing to care for the interests of other people and property, into state systems in order to develop “trust and rule” (eponymous Tilly 2005). When ruling systems have integrated high trust, people put themselves and their families into the operation of the system. The electoral system “generates inequality in voting power among the various electoral districts,” using gerrymandering, quotas, and a complicated districting system to disproportionately weight Bedouin, Muslim, and tribal votes (Hussainy 2014:3). The Jordanian monarchy also integrates their rule into trust networks through the hereditary Hashemite dynastic succession and many royal organizations, such as the Queen Rania Foundation (co-founder of the Queen Rania Teacher Academy), the Queen Noor Foundation, and the establishment of the Women’s Studies Center at the University of Jordan by Princess Basma. Royal organizations tie state ministries, local NGOs, and international development agencies together to further the interests of the regime.

The founding tensions between colonialism, independence, foreign rule, royal legitimacy and autonomous citizenship still resonate today. As a foreign family from the Hejaz in modern-
day Saudi Arabia, Jordanian royalty balance the needs of centralized state creation with the cultivation of future democratic citizens; balance the ideal of an authentic, independent Arab state with the role of protector of Palestine and the autonomy of local tribes and families; and balance the attempted modeling of modern, moderate Islamic state with strong political opposition from Islamic-oriented organizations. Andre Mazawi argues that the expansion of formal educational institutions in the region was an important mechanism by which states centralized power. As he notes, schools are concerned with the “distribution of sociopolitical power” (2002:68). My reading of Tilly (2005) suggests that state schooling not only distributes sociopolitical power but also attempts to map the state onto existing networks of family and tribe to benefit from preexisting cohesion, trust, and commitment to mutual aid.

Religion

As a Hashemite monarchy, the legitimacy of royal rule is derived not only from Arab nationalism against the Ottomans and British, but plausibly from Islam as well. Although there is no necessary connection between the Hashemite lineage and political governance in (Sunni) Islamic history, the honor and stability of the Hashemite lineage may have provided greater regime stability to the Jordanian monarchy than other authoritarian regimes toppled in the Arab Spring. Religious authority in Islamic tradition is a “bricolage,” as Olivier Roy (2004) calls it, of individual interpretation, local community or mosque leaders, Islamic scholars or judges, shared social norms, and a strong current of obedience to political leaders. Not an Islamic scholar or judge himself, schooled in the US and the UK with a wife who does not wear the hijab (scarf or veil over the hair), King Abdullah II has no more theological authority than the ninety-seven percent of his subjects who identify as Muslim. The strongest political opposition to the regime
comes from Islamic political organizations that provide alternative interpretations of religion and state.

Additional complications in a single state religious claim are possible sectarian differences between Sunnis and Shi’a, the small but politically powerful percentage of Jordanian Christians, and the destabilization of historical demographic balances by an influx of massive numbers of Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Religious minorities in Jordan, specifically Shi‘a Muslims and Christians, play significant educational, political, economic, and social roles under the overarching predominance of official (Sunni) Islam. Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the kings of Jordan have cautioned against the destabilizing regional threat of a “Shia crescent.” Official Islam is supposedly inclusive of Shi’a but with a firm red line against any sectarian activism. Christian communities in Jordan make up less than one-tenth of the population and consist mainly of Greek Orthodox as well as Catholics and other groups. Over the last century, transitioning from the Ottoman Empire to the British mandate through independence, Jordanian Christians have remained part of a prominent and integrated minority. Historically, Christians settled the east bank of the Jordan River in certain towns (Ajlun, Salt, and Karak) and were tightly connected to the Muslim-majority social bonds of tribal affiliation (Chatelard 2010:1). State legislation protects their right to religious liberty and protects them from discrimination, within certain bounds (for example, the bans on threatening public order or morality, or the ban on proselytism toward Muslims).

Since the claim to domestic legitimacy is contestable, the Jordanian government tries to solidify a national identity and civic trust by building onto existing trust in religion. Loyalties to the state, Arab nationalism, the Palestinian cause, and Islam are codified in the education

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6 Dr. Alif reported that the fear of sectarianism and the demonization of Shi’a occurred late in her adult life. She joked about how strange it seems to her to be supposed to fear another Muslim group.
system’s philosophy and objectives on the Ministry website. According to the Ministry of Education, the national education system philosophy and objectives are based on faith in God, the higher ideals of the Arab Nation, and Islam as a system of behavior, ideology, respect, values, and principles (see Appendix I). The stated objectives of the education system outline the multiple and contradicting normative messages for a state educator: to shape a citizen, shape a believer in God, teach state loyalty, teach Arab nationalism, support Palestine, teach critical thinking, teach life-long learning, comprehend technology and skills to serve in a knowledge economy, practice innovation, comprehend facts, balance obligations to the individual and to society, and uphold virtues. The official government position is that “the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is parliamentary, hereditary, and monarchical state where loyalty is for God, the homeland and the king,” (Appendix I) but this juxtaposition does not actually clarify or consolidate what is meant or required by loyalty for God and the homeland.

In the language of Gregory Starrett (1998) analyzing Egypt, Islam in Jordan is “functionalized” for regime stability under the guise of national unity. Fundamental conflicting loyalties are often glossed over when states functionalize religion for national unity (see Cardinal 2009 on such glossing in Islamic Studies classes in Syria). The regime founded and then nationalized authoritative religious institutions in the country, what Robbins and Rubin (2013, 2014) call “official Islam.” Notably, Jordan does not have a history of strong Islamic institutions before its founding (unlike Mali, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, or Saudi Arabia) and for much of its history, Islamic political opposition was supported by the regime in order to counter more threatening leftist political opposition from communists and secularists in the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Robbins and Rubin trace “the regime’s new policy of seeking to manage the public religious space” as an attempt to manage “the rise of Global Jihadism in the
late 1990s” (2013:60). Jordan has seemed to peacefully manage “official Islam,” compared to the violent clashes between authoritarian regimes and Islamic opposition parties in the region from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to the “Arab Spring” and the spread of the Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh).7 Findings from the Arab Barometer suggest that “the Jordanian public supports regime efforts to restrict the political space” and that “the Jordanian state appears to have developed a credible form of official Islam that has effectively controlled the religious space” because the monarchy does not ask “official Islamic” ministries and institutions to condone controversial domestic or international decisions (Robbins and Rubin 2014).

Perhaps ameliorating the contest over the legitimacy of the state, official Islam, and Islamist opposition is the moderate, pan-Islamic “Amman Message.” King Abdullah II gave the Amman Message during Ramadan 2004, charting a course for the Jordanian state and codifying his regime’s official stance on the role of Islam. Through this royal initiative, Jordan facilitated conferences between hundreds of Muslim scholars from many different countries in order to achieve international consensus on three points: 1) to define who is a Muslim and recognize the truth of all major ideological and legal branches, including a wide range of madahab (Islamic legal schools) Ash’arism, Sufism, and Salafism but not jihadism, 2) to forbid takfir (deeming someone who self-identifies as Muslim a kafir or non-Muslim/unbeliever), and 3) to set forth unified guidelines for the issuance of a fatwa (Islamic legal ruling or decision; Browers 2011:943-944). The Amman Message was “subsequently endorsed by 552 leading Muslim scholars from 84 countries in the first manifestation of consensus in hundreds of years” (Eyadat

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7 In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood presidential candidate Muhammad Morsi was elected in 2012 but overthrown by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces after a year, and by the time of writing in 2015, hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members have been arrested and sentenced to death. By 2015, the Muslim Brotherhood was designated a terrorist organization in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates.
The King’s Amman Message proclaims the Jordanian state as a model of a modern, moderate Islamic state in contrast to Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda and extremist, Islamist narratives of Islam and politics (Browers 2011:954).

The regime uses the “Amman Message” of moderate Islam to create a lucrative role for Jordan in international affairs and development, framing Jordan as an attractive recipient of international aid and bulwark against violent, radical Islam (Browers 2011:947). An unnamed professor at the University of Jordan claimed “the Amman Message was a central part of official Arab states’ attempt to define Islam” in order to reclaim Islamic legitimacy from extremists, counter domestic sectarianism, and cultivate international support (Browers 2011:947).

However, Jordanian citizens do not accept the official state narrative of modern, moderate Islam without reservations. Given the state’s proclamations of being based on Islam, fundamental criticism of the regime can come from alternative interpretations of Islamic politics. Although the regime appoints all Islamic judges and controls all mosques and mosque speakers, Islamic activism still “constitutes the most serious political challenge to regime power and legitimacy” (Wickowicz 2001:15). The regime has historically allowed Islamic political opposition by the Muslim Brotherhood—as long as they are not too oppositional and work within the regime (95).

Islamic political organization provides the strongest and best-organized opposition to the monarchical regime, in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood of Jordan and their political party branch, the Islamic Action Front. Active in some form since the early days after Jordan’s independence, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has been called “the only organized group in Jordan that has genuine influence over the public” (Al Sharif 2014). As “loyal opposition” candidates and in popular media, they question accordance with Islam of various parliamentary
and governmental actions (Wickowicz 2001), and even question Islam’s compatibility with modernity (Adely 2007b, 2010; Kupo 2010). Since former King Hussein reestablished the Parliament in 1989, Muslim Brotherhood candidates have been successful in generally peaceful, “free and fair” elections and the Muslim Brotherhood led the Lower House as speaker for three terms between 1990 and 1993. Former Speaker Abdel Latiff Arabiyyat claimed that the “special status” of the MB is because “the movement allied itself with the Jordanian state (Al Sharif 2014). However, opposition to the regime is strictly limited, even if from the MB or even state-employed Muslim clerics, who can be blacklisted, fined, or imprisoned for crimes against Islam, the state, the king, or the Jordanian people (Robbins and Rubin 2013, 2014).

After struggling to receive state permission to organize a teachers’ union, recent professional elections were won by Muslim Brotherhood candidates. Muslim Brotherhood (MB) candidates beat nationalists and leftists for control of the largest professional union in 2012, 2013, and again in 2014 by 70% (Al Sharif 2014). The MB also has strong presence in the University of Jordan Students Union and other professional organizations, but has boycotted recent legislative and municipal elections. Teachers who affiliate with political Islam (possibly the majority given the professional election results) do so cognizant of the tense relationship of political Islam and the state in Jordan and violence in surrounding states.

To conclude, juxtaposed in Jordan are many conflicting messages about moral truth: the demographic majority of Sunni Islamic affiliation; the Amman Message that all Islamic traditions are Islamic; the Ministry of Education compulsion to teach all students to believe in God and understand Islam as a comprehensive system; differences between individual interpretations of Islam, gender, and modernity; and democratic opposition from Islamic political organizations.
Family and Tribe

The history of Jordan is a history of the importance of tribal affiliation and kin-based politics, which places the king as symbolic father of the national family. Of course, teachers and students often experience lived reality that is far more complicated than the national history provided in state textbooks (Betty Anderson 2001). From school textbooks to repeated statements and publications by the royal family of Jordan, the national narrative of Jordan highlights the centrality of tribal life. In textbooks, “the Hashemites placed themselves into the position of the sheikhs of the Jordanian tribes, as father figures for the nation, and, as such, the focus of allegiance” and “Hashemites placed Jordan in the continuum of Arab history and as a logical extension of it” (Betty Anderson 2001:6). In a letter to the Jordan Times in 1985, former King Hussein writes, “I would like to repeat to you what I have told a meeting of tribal heads recently that ‘I am Al-Hussein from Hashem and Quraish the noblest Arab tribe of Mecca which was honoured by God and into which was born the Arab Prophet Muhammad.’ Therefore, whatever harms our tribes in Jordan is considered harmful to us, as this has been the case all along, and it will continue to be so forever” (Layne 1994:105).

The national narrative of king as symbolic father and tribal sheikh is only problematically translated to popular Jordanian sentiment. Layne recounts that tribal leaders who attempt to direct tribesmen and especially women how to vote often come off as offensive and embarrassing (1995:116-8). However, tribesmen, leading tribal candidates, and the king often do consider voting as a form of gift exchange (Layne 1995:118-9). Recent work by Kristen Kao suggests that clientelism and voting as gift exchange is still prolific and intentional in Jordan (2015). Antoun (2000) and Watkins (2014) have argued that tribal trust networks, particularly
dispute resolution, are absolutely foundational to Jordanian civil society. The municipal voting benefits tribes if they work within the system.

The discourse of “tribalism” may be a state attempt to unify tensely competing moral and economic claims among tribes, between tribes and the state, and between urban and rural centers. The legitimacy and unity of the Hashemite Jordanian state relies on the inclusion of these disparate sources of identity and on the marriage of “modernity” with “traditional” sources of community and power based in patriarchy and tribes (Betty Anderson 2001; Massad 2001; Shryock 1997, 2000). “Traditional” conflict management within tribal dispute settlement systems is a space for both conformity and resistance to centralized state control (Watkins 2014). The heterogeneity, mobility, and urbanization of 21st century Jordan is different from the rural kin communities of Jordan’s history (Antoun 2000). The “multiplex relations between the villagers [that] defined the basis of social control mechanisms between them” (Watkins 2014:32) are difficult to map onto relationships in contemporary urban Jordan. Extending the question, what are the ‘multiplex relations’ between Jordanians that define the basis of social control mechanisms between them today?

Although the concentration of power under the centralized government over the past five decades has led to the gradual dismantling of older forms of family-based power and authority, citizens of Arab states still regularly rely on personal networks to evade formal bureaucratic processes. Connections and nepotism, or wasta as it is known in Arabic, are often considered

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8 Here and elsewhere in the dissertation, the terms “traditional” and “modern” refer to the ideological concepts used by my informants. These terms do not refer to historical versus contemporary experience and will be problematized with historical, contemporary, and ethnographic examples to illustrate lived complexity. The Arabic terms used for “modern” are jadeed, ‘asri, and hadeeth, and used for “Western” is gharbi.
essential to accomplishing daily administrative tasks.\(^9\) In a context where *wasta* is an ingrained part of society, people regularly rely on extended family networks to help them withstand risk, survive hardship, and succeed against the odds. Friends and relatives are part of a larger, multi-generational network of connections, reputation, help, and favors. Teachers are well aware of this context, and mediate with difficulty contrasting narratives of *wasta* and meritocracy (Buckner and Hodges, in press).

University admission can be viewed as a form of political patronage. Initiated in 2002, the *makruma* (plural, *makarim* or *makrumat*, Arabic for ‘gifts’ or generosity) system reserves at least twenty percent of university seats for certain tribes through an extensive series of affirmative action programs (Malkawi 2014; Reiter 2010). In 2012, over 28,000 students received scholarships or loans to attend higher education; in March 2013, 5,200 students’ tuition fees were fully covered by the Royal Court, and from a fund that supports northern and central region students studying in southern universities (Al Emam 2013). Scholarships linked to students’ place of residence are one way the government can support certain tribes without saying so explicitly.\(^10\) As a consequence of these policies, the proportion of Palestinian-Jordanians on Jordanian higher education campuses dropped from 95% in 1965 to 50.5% by 2012 (Cantini 2012:para.11 and 24; Reiter 2002:139, 152). Like municipal voting, the *makruma* admissions benefit tribes who work within the system.

Recently, family obligations have violently clashed with state education policies around cheating and campus safety. Jordanian news reports there is often an expectation that proctors

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\(^9\) For more analysis of *wasta* in the Arab world and its role in business, development, and social morality, see Cunningham and Sarayrah 1994; Makhoul and Harrison 2004; Mohamed and Hamdy 2008; and al-Ramahi 2008.

\(^10\) Jordan’s Ministry of Higher Education changed distribution of scholarships by financial need rather than geography in reaction to protests 2011–2012, though the extent of actual, substantive change is still unclear.
will allow blatant cheating and a state investigative committee “acknowledged that some people had used loudspeakers outside examination halls to help students cheat, but said the Ministry was not responsible for preventing this and that only security forces had the authority to do so” (Jordan Times 2012b). By dividing authority through multiple branches, the government largely excuses itself from controlling cheating in order to avoid direct problems with tribes. Thwarted attempts at cheating have resulted in mass anger and violent outbursts. In the winter exam session in Karak in 2012, a mob of two hundred students and family members attacked a police precinct with rocks after a man attempting to help students cheat was ejected from the school (al-Shawabke 2012). Around the same time, in Amman, a large group of students and parents attacked the car of one exam monitor, presumably for not allowing cheating (Azzeh 2013).

In Jordan, the use of violence in educational spaces is not unique to secondary schools. Tribal rivalries and affirmative action policies are largely responsible for the widespread outbreaks of violence on Jordanian university campuses, which are particularly common in the more rural southern governates and map onto a long-standing distinction between urban-Palestinian and rural-Jordanian (Buckner 2013). Jordanian-Palestinians, who are more likely to be urban and (unlike tribes and Palestinian refugees) do not benefit from affirmative action programs, are viewed as less likely to cheat; whereas people from the tribal areas are often viewed as most likely to cheat not only because they are poorly prepared, but also, importantly, because they feel entitled to the security promised by a degree (Buckner and Hodges, in press).

As such, the narrative of cheating in Jordan is that it is a way that tribal groups pressure the centralized government for more space for success within the economic and education systems.

Economics can ease or stress the integration of traditional trust networks from state systems. Contemporary Jordan faces a number of major economic stresses including the global
recession, water and fuel shortages all while hosting regional refugees, “brain drain,” youth unemployment, and the tensions of “waithood.” The Jordanian economy suffers from “brain drain” when highly qualified adults emigrate for work and the economy relies significantly on remittances from foreign labor (Sonbol 2003). The youth population boom and mass enrollment in formal education is concurrent with high youth unemployment. One of the outcomes of this context in Jordan is the development of “waithood” for young adults between school and full adult life in the form of work and marriage (Adely 2012). Waithood is a regional problem where young people can feel their lives disrupted, hopeless, alienated, or trapped and has frequently been posited as a cause of activism, revolution, and terrorism.11

Knowledge Economy

Jordan has relatively negligible natural resources except for its people, so the development of human capital has been of crucial importance and was recognized by former King Hussein as “its greatest asset” (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.c) Though Jordan is not an oil state, the economy is affected by regional oil rentier economies in the form of Gulf tourism and remittances from Jordanians working abroad (Cantini 2013). The government built a mass education system “starting from almost nothing in the 1920s” reaching a literacy rate of 33 percent in 1960, over 85 percent in 1996, and 97.9 percent in 2012 (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.a). Jordan managed the spread of mass literacy and mass urbanization through the centralized, socialized services that have produced nearly no primary school enrollment disparities between urban and rural environments or among male and female students.

Although relatively successful in many educational metrics, unemployment—particularly

among youth and women—has risen dramatically in the last several years. The socialized state, which has been the primary employer for decades, faces growing economic stresses from demographic shifts, influx of regional refugees, and international development agencies. In order to ameliorate these economic stresses, King Abdullah II has sought to unlock economic growth through educational reform. Growing out of the Jordan Education Initiative from the World Economic Forum in June 2003, ERFKE is the latest royal initiative and includes a large role for qualitative transformation. The Ministry of Education’s official mission is to “create and administer an education system based on ‘excellence,’ energized by its human resources, dedicated to high standards, social values, and a healthy spirit of competition, which contributes to the nation’s wealth in a global ‘Knowledge Economy’” (see Appendix I).12

ERFKE putatively aims for student, teacher, and system capacity-building, for a possible future high-tech, democratic, entrepreneurial, multilingual future. Since Phase 1 officially began in 2003, half a billion US dollars were invested in school construction and maintenance, new textbook curricula and examinations, information and communication technologies (ICT) and early childhood education (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.d). The website of the King’s initiative reports that “from 2002 to 2007, new curricula emphasizing research, critical thinking and group work were introduced in all Jordan’s schools, along with two new assessment exams that will monitor progress and provide a framework for future improvements; more than 60,000 teachers have been trained in using the new curricula, and a large proportion has received supplementary training: more than 44,000 have achieved a basic computer skills certification; 24,000 have studied ICT-in-education methods, and hundreds have been trained in early childhood education” (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.d). Now at the end of the second phase, 2008-2013, the royal

12 “Excellence” translates to tamayyuz or تميّز. “The knowledge economy” translates to iqtisad al-m’arifa or اقتصاد المعرفة.
initiative focuses on teacher training that “shifts from a centralised to a more community and school-based programme delivery model” (Royal Hashemite Court N.d.d). The new teacher training delivery model attempts to equip teachers with the knowledge economy skills they are tasked with teaching students.

Demographically, almost fifty percent of the population is under eighteen years of age and over seventy percent is under thirty years of age. As the demographic pressure rises, so does the pressure on debates about political ontologies—or ways of political being, belonging to labels or groupings—that have been well noted in articles about the role of the youth in the Arab Spring (LaGraffe 2012; Mirkin 2013; al Momani 2011). As youth unemployment, the youth bulge, and a straining job market collide, public school teachers in Jordan find themselves on the front lines of national security issues. Since the World Economic Forum in 2003, jobless youth have frequently been referred to as a “time bomb” by the World Bank (Lin 2012), US Institute for Peace (Schwartz 2011), the Economist (2014), King Abdullah II (Defterios 2013), and Queen Rania (Defterios 2010) alike. A critical regional issue, the number of youth under age 25 doubled between 1980 and 2010 and now make up two-thirds of the population across the contemporary Arab region (Mirkin 2013:13). In response to these demographic pressures and the corresponding pressure on the job market, in the last decade the government directed a panoply of major educational reforms, including textbook revision, teacher training and assessment, career planning for students, expansion of private school licenses and ERFKE. ERKFE can be considered the regime’s attempt to use “education reform to defuse the demographic bomb” (Shirazi 2009:66). Given the lack of lucrative natural resources and realities of the service-based economy in Jordan, teachers are tasked with educating youth not just for any jobs but rather for global, “knowledge economy” jobs and the stakes could not be higher.
The “knowledge economy” is elusive. In Jordan, structural reform for a knowledge economy includes not only teacher training and curricular reform but also increased privatization in education and business. Although the government of Jordan paid salaries for over half of the workforce a decade ago (Messkoub 2008:9) that proportion has since become unsustainable and challenges the foundations of the society to diversify and privatize. A potential future knowledge economy would also challenge the historical basis of regime legitimacy. The call for a knowledge economy in many ways reveals a crisis of the socialist meritocratic promise and the authoritarian bargain in which citizens remain compliant subjects under an authoritarian regime that can ensure national prosperity, unity, and strength.

After independence, most Arab nations created a direct pathway from university to public sector employment as part of a larger state-led mobility system (Betty Anderson 2007). During this era, mass public schooling and high-stakes graduation exams became standard practice throughout the region. State-based sorting of youth through testing was justified by meritocratic claims, and claimed to counter colonialist legacies that reserved higher education for the wealthy and well connected. Standardized tests were originally conceived of as allowing the best and the brightest from throughout the country to access university education and public sector positions (Cohen 2004). Although such meritocracy was always a myth, given that the postcolonial school was itself fragmented across class, linguistic, and regional lines, standardized testing was (and is) justified in the popular media on the basis of its practical and universalizing properties (Al-Ahram Weekly 2001; Azzeh 2013). Although education reform in Jordan is “rooted in human capital theoretical approach” leading to investment in information technology, “students and teachers are deeply skeptical of the promises of education in Jordan,” pointing to washta (connections) as more important than educational credentials and rejecting the putative
meritocracy (Shirazi 2009:11). For students and teachers, “narratives show opportunity is still classed, gendered, and determined more by an individual’s social capital rather than his human capital” (Shirazi 2009:11). In a state that relies on integration with traditional trust networks (à la Tilly 2005), a true educational meritocracy would be destabilizing.

Current pressures of rising student populations produce tensions for teachers over the purpose of education—is it to educate all students to a high quality or socially stratify students for society? Pervasive in international discourse about education development is the goal of ensuring access to quality “education for all” (UNESCO N.d.). This language is found in international development conferences, committees, and programs as well as state education reforms. Through this recent history of education reform, the Ministry of Education has made explicit its definition of the purpose and function of education and the state’s priorities for instructing and planning for successive generations. These practical concerns are then passed to teachers, along with larger classes and new curricular content, and passed to trainers tasked with “training” teachers for these goals and for the idealized future knowledge economy in general.

_Tawjihi_

There are many structures in the formal education system that work to produce a counter-purpose. One of the structures that work against quality “education for all” in Jordan are the secondary level tracking leading to the orientation high school graduation exam ( _tawjihi_ or “orientation”) and the public university admission system. Tawjihi is the twelfth-grade high school graduation exam that covers a range of subjects, modeled after the French “baccalaureate” or British A- and O-levels. Testing in particular is a short-term, highly consequential instance of state control and in this sense, represents a concrete and powerful example of state intervention
in young people’s lives (Buckner 2013). Students, teachers, and parents in both nations routinely explained that tests “determine your fate” or “mean everything.” Hussein Khozai, a Jordanian professor of Sociology at Al-Balqa Applied University, has described the Jordanian exit exam as a “social exam rather than an educational one” (Azzeh 2013), referring to the larger socio-political significance of schooling and testing in the Arab region. In Jordan, the public university system has strict requirements for admission into each discipline, and prestigious programs such as medicine and engineering can require nearly perfect high school exit exam scores. The extreme importance of the tawjihi exam is in direct relation to its role as the sole admissions exam for universities in Jordan.

Conflict over the right thing is often directly articulated as teachers and students prepare for the tawjihi high school exit exam. Formal education in the kingdom is compulsory until age 15, and at the secondary level students can choose among a range of vocational and academic tracks. Nationwide, students attempting the three most common academic streams (literary, scientific, and information technology) pass the tawjihi at a rate of 51% (though 58.4% for females). Pass rates have been falling across the board (down from highs of 53% literary stream in 2009, 74.1% scientific stream in 2009, 65.9% IT stream in 2006) and females have had particularly high pass rates (highs of 61.3% literary steam in 2009, 80.5% scientific stream in 2009, and 77.6% IT stream in 2006; Ministry of Education 2013:59). The high school exit exam is also the only university admissions exam, and necessary scores for admission to prestigious departments have risen to over 90% for medicine and engineering. Comparatively, tawjihi scores of 75% were required for education or English departments at the University of Jordan according to my informants in 2012.

Based on student grades, students are tracked into vocational or academic (pre-collegiate)
course loads and specialty secondary schools around age 15. Schools do not offer all tracks, and rural schools are more likely to offer only vocational and lower-level academic tracks. The scientific (‘ilimi) track includes more hours (two hours per week) of science and math courses, weighted heavily (subjects like chemistry, physics, calculus, geology at 100-110 points each) as well as languages and social science courses weighted less (50-70 points each). The scientific track requires the highest grades and enables students to take courses required for admission into college-level medical and engineering programs. The literary (adabi) stream includes more language and social science courses, weighted more, and fewer (one and a half hours per week) science and math courses. The information technology (IT) stream includes language, social science, economics, and computer courses. Notably, the Islamic studies course of “Religion” stays heavily weighted for all streams.

Sample scientific stream tawjihi winter exam schedule 2012-2013 with weights:

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Fall Semester Total: 12.5 hours, worth 610 points

In the 2012 school year, the Ministry of Education gave tawjihi exams in all subjects after each semester. Some courses are only one semester long and are swapped for another course in the following semester. For example, students in tawjihi scientific stream at Ammani Girls’ School take Geology in the fall semester and Computer in the spring. Other courses like English, Math, and Arabic continue into the second half of the year and are thus weighted heavily in the cumulative tawjihi score for the year. Secondary school students are often required to take courses that are not covered in tawjihi exams like physical education and art and such courses are
often dismissed as unimportant by students and teachers alike. The exact composition of the different streams, timetable of exams, and even whether tawjihi exams are offered over two semesters, once at the end of twelfth grade, or over eleventh and twelfth grade are major issues at the Ministry of Education. Students, parents, and teachers regularly complained to me about the inconsistencies in tawjihi administration each year and about the frantic pace of curricular reform in general. Across Jordan, secondary students and teachers often cite the pressure of passing tawjihi exams as their single greatest source of stress (Alghaswyneh 2012).

The public school project in Jordan (like most Arab nations) has been deeply undermined by three decades of neoliberal rhetoric and policy. The neoliberal state is understood by Davies and Bansel as the transformation of “the administrative state…into a state that gives power to global corporations and installs apparatuses and knowledges through which people are reconfigured as productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives” (2007:248). As an individualistic, hegemonic orientation to market principles within the economic and social spheres, neoliberalism reduces the role of the state, encouraging privatization of public institutions and the “conviction that individual efforts are the main possibility of progress in society” (Lee et al. 2006:102). In line with this neoliberal rhetoric, the student is now expected to be independent and entrepreneurial in his or her learning, and educational policies in most Arab nations have been oriented towards a knowledge economy, encouraging critical thinking, teamwork, and entrepreneurship (Hantzopoulos and Shirazi 2014).

One aspect of the confluence of Arab socialist nationalism and neoliberalism is the foundation of the first teachers’ union in Jordan in 2011. Teachers had “demanded financial and administrative autonomy and the right of teachers who are members of the association to demand improved wages” (International Trade Union Confederation 2010). A 1994 decision by Jordan’s
Higher Council ruled that a teachers’ union would be unconstitutional, but it was reversed in March 2011 after two months of protests and a week-long strike. Now the largest professional association, the teachers’ union elections have been won by Muslim Brotherhood candidates each year from 2013–2015 (Al Sharif 2014).

Though public education has dominated Jordan’s history, international pressure to privatize and the logistics of the youth bulge have led to a decade of massive growth in the proportion of schooling provided through private and international institutions. In many respects, since independence the Jordanian government has done everything international education development specialists have urged since the state has expanded the reach of mass schooling to raise literacy rates and reach gender parity even into secondary and tertiary levels. However, elements of education development like privatization and internationalization produce complicated or unintended consequences in Jordanian society. Public school teachers must figure out their role in the growing privatization of formal education and the broader economy and their role in an education development sector that is dominated by foreign aid agencies—including USAID, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Canada International Development Agency, and much funding from the Gulf and especially Saudi Arabia not to mention WHO, UNHCR, UNRWA, UNESCO, and UNDP—and notably English-language discourse and materials.

However, entangled in education reform in Jordan is a number of economic orientations that teachers must mediate—socialism, neoliberalism, authoritarianism, privileging economic citizenship and job placement—while retaining deterministic exit exams and test-based sorting practices that favor certain tribal families over Palestinians. Perhaps working against itself, the line of reasoning that privileges economic citizenship in Jordan unexpectedly but often justifies authoritarian intervention (instead of democratic civil society) in order to improve human capital.
As with the other dimensions of state, religion, and family, many diverse ethical orientations in Jordanian economics are subsumed under the need for compliant unity. Teachers are tasked with simultaneously teaching for monarchical subject compliance and human capital empowerment, for trust in tribes and trust in regime standardized tests, for loyalty to Arab socialism and for a global, entrepreneurial spirit.

**Revisiting Dr. Alif**

This chapter has established the inherent tensions in Jordanian society, focusing on those competing for public educators’ sympathy, loyalty, and priority. According to Dr. Alif, at the University of Jordan Women’s Studies Center, women in particular are burdened by the competing political, social, religious, educational, and economic domains and how they interact to produce hesitant confusion about the right thing(s) to do.

*I know many women now who believe that modernity didn’t give them anything but more burdens. So they think that the proper role for women is at home because modern women still have no power over decisions in their lives—money, travel, work. And you find women at forty exhausted from working and taking care of the home and she doesn’t have anything more than the one who didn’t finish tawjihi—so they ask themselves, What are we doing? We are just bringing illness on ourselves for no benefit, no reason.

When you give power to the tribes and Muslim Brotherhood and not parties, you give power to those who want to reconstruct societal norms and now women are stuck in a kind of conflict between traditional thoughts and modernity and are hesitating. You see women with a veil on her head and stretch jeans. It’s a kind of schizophrenia to me*
because she does not feel that she is doing the right thing. She does not know why she is wearing jeans, why she is wearing the veil. If you search for reasons, these are the reasons: we do not live in a culture that is stable, that has one norm. If you are European, you know how to dress and eat and you do not experience this conflict because you do not live like this. When you are talking about Arabic women, you are talking about conflict—as a teacher, a professor, I live this conflict every day. Which is right? Which is the right thing to do?”

Our generation was dreaming about our future and this generation is not. They just think about.... They don’t want the empowerment that is behind the salary—we are reconstructing the traditional way in the modern way. The modernity didn’t enter into our society deeply. There was no transformation of the foundation of society. (Dr. Alif, interview with author, 2012).

Dr. Alif worries that women in Jordan have a “double burden” of the responsibilities of both a traditional and a modern lifestyle but the rights of neither. “Tradition”—meaning heritage, the way we have done things, folklore and folk life, tribal history—“is now being defied as a source of honor” (Layne 1994:135). The importance of the intentional remembrance of the past is embedded in both Islamic and tribal norms. The revelation is considered by Islamic tradition to be the words of God through the archangel Gabriel in Arabic deserving of exact memorization (hafiz translated as memorize, save, keep, or treasure) and recitation. The prophet’s sayings and doings compiled as hadith and his companions (sahaba) venerable and deserving of imitation. The meaning of tradition for tribal belonging is bound up in a conception of honor that relies on a remembered history of one’s honorable origin or roots (asl), for “[h]onor in the Jordan valley is
‘attained, or maintained, by simple and sincere conformity to the prevailing social norms’” (Layne 1994:135). Although the terms “developed” and “modern” connote goodness or rightness in international development discourse, so does “traditional” in national parlance. With these cultural meanings, although often discussed in terms of a conflict between “tradition and modernity” as discrete and antagonistic wholes, Jordanians have intensely strong reasons for figuring out how to achieve both simultaneously.

Public education is one of the most significant institutions for producing “transformation of the foundation of society.” But how do you teach for a future knowledge economy of critical thinking and democracy when so much of Jordan’s present is about nepotism, corruption, autocracy (Betty Anderson 2007), family and tribal connections (Layne 1994; Shryock 1997), tension between Jordan and Palestine, questions about Islam’s compatibility with modernity (Adely 2007b, 2010; Kupo 2010), the role of Islam in politics (Wickowicz 2001), the right to unionize (Adely 2013), pressure to democratize, et cetera? These social structures shape the distribution of relationships, sentiments, contingencies, and normative expectations for public teachers and teacher trainers. The state is silent on the impacts ERFKE goals and the very objectives of the education system have on the stability of the family/tribe, religion, and silent on the stresses of cultural and economic change. Without any comprehensive reasoning bringing together all the disparate normative messages, educators are left to figure things out in situ. Teachers and trainers draw from their own past (how they were raised and taught) and deal with the needs of the present, hoping the future will work itself out.

How do male and female teachers and trainers undertake “the transformation of the foundation of society”? Chapter 2 looks at all the competing normative dimensions outlined in this chapter through the lens of gender.
CHAPTER 2: HOW IS THIS ABOUT GENDER?

Normative roles are gendered in Jordan, meaning that there are different expectations for what it means to be a good citizen, spouse, parent, Muslim, and employee for men and women. In particular, public secondary schooling in Jordan is gender-segregated, and thus the work of teaching is often in gender-segregated spaces. However, public universities and teacher training are gender mixed. Gender segregation in secondary education is representative of women’s “traditional” roles in Jordanian society, but female teachers’ public employment and advocacy for a knowledge economy are representative of “modern” roles. Without exception, my study of teaching and education reform in Jordan was thus also about mediating gendered role expectations.

According to Dr. Alif, Miss Baa, and in fact every single person I spoke with, the ideological taqlidi (traditional) roles for women referred to domesticity, seclusion in the home and gender segregation in the mosque, institutionalized patriarchy, guarding sexual honor, and as a symbol of the nation, tribe, and religion (see also al-Atoom 2012). In colonial literature and into contemporary times, there is “a persistent and historical discourse about the Middle East, which characterizes its women as oppressed and powerless victims and its culture as retrograde” (Adely 2012:12). Dr. Alif is aware of this discourse and may even agree with it to some extent, but offers a more complicated interpretation of women’s agency and role in cultural change. As Dr. Alif expressed, the combination of being a teacher and an Arabic woman produces ‘conflict

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1 My theoretical approach is based in social performance and semiotic mediation, and does not assume necessary or biological binaries of gender or sexuality. My informants exclusively expressed their experience in terms of binary, cisgender, heteronormative, patrilocal, patriarchal social expectations. In public discourse, ethnographic observation, and interviews, people exclusively used a fixed and binary concept of gender. Informants may have been influenced by my semi-official, state sanctioned role and personal expression as a cisgender heterosexual married woman.
over the right thing to do’ that is at the forefront of the ‘transformation of the foundations of society.’

“Traditional” Gender Roles in Jordan

The massive expansion of formal, free, public, compulsory schooling in Jordan has been a remarkable success story for men and women alike. Education in Jordan is one of the highest rated systems in the region, in terms of quantitative measures like national government expenditure, number of researchers per million people, gender parity in literacy and enrollment, and low illiteracy. Women are well represented in enrollment and academic achievement at primary, secondary, and many tertiary levels. According to the Department of Statistics, Jordan reached gender parity in student enrollment at primary, middle, secondary, and tertiary levels of education as of 2006 (Nasser 2006). The importance of girls’ education is widely accepted in Jordan and statistics related to girls’ education are regularly among the highest in the region (Arab Human Development Report 2005). Gender equality in law and the provision of social services like education is codified in the Jordanian constitution and Ministry of Education charter. However, social policy observers still note, “Jordanian society is predominately a male society in which women play a secondary role to men; gender stereotyping in school curricula still prevails; females are often directed into generalist streams; and vocational training for girls [is] still limited” (Nasser 2006).

Intersections of State and Religion

Central to Jordanian society is the logic of the modern nation-state in the Hashemite kingdom. There is a long legacy in Jordan of male governmental concern with femininity, female
national subjects, and female public school teachers. In the 1920s and 1930s, founding monarch King Abdullah I cited Qur’anic verses to express the ‘un-Islamic’ nature of sufur (revealing the face or unveiling), prohibited tabarruj (self-adornment and makeup) on women, and “ordered the education minister to launch an inspection campaign in all girls schools inspecting the women teachers and ascertaining that they were competent to uphold their ‘religious and ethical responsibility’” (Massad 2001:89). Though he wrote various official missives expressing his concern over Muslim women in public and how female teachers were instructing young girls, none of his edicts prohibiting makeup and unveiling were ever codified into law. Abdullah I gave an interview in 1945 where he insisted that “according to religion,” women should not adorn themselves in public, should not mix with men in public, and should generally stay in the home (Massad 2001:91). During the 2012-2013 school year, female Muslim public educators followed a dress code of muhajiba (literally “female person who is veiled”) modesty which includes covering the hair, arms down to the wrists, and body from the neck to ankles.

Again, though individual action is not necessarily determined or influenced by the predominant religious affiliation in a society, Islam is a significant frame of reference that underscores daily social life in Jordan. The ruling family derives considerable legitimacy from their Hashemite lineage, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad’s clan, Hashem. The Hashemite kings of Jordan have made repeated claims to base national and international policy on Islam and respect for the umma (the pan-Islamic community). Is Jordanian education “Islamic education”? The term “Islamic education” shifts focus away from Muslims as social actors and toward abstracted debates over the Islamic nature of the educational process and content. Though certainly a salient issue for many of my participants, the term “Islamic education” is limited. There will be some discussion of how my informants define and contest the Sunni Islamic nature
of public schooling, but “Islamic education” is not a productive frame for the whole of my work. Instead, I’ll explicate how role expectations in the broader social structure based on Sunni Islam interact with other role expectations and constitute contexts of ambiguity and uncertainty. I do not mean to reference “what Muslims believe,” but rather how they are “Muslims through Discourse” (Bowen 1993), sharing discursive traditions (Asad 2003) and debating what one should do or believe as a Muslim. In this frame of reference, many teachers use religious language to explain their approach to teaching both inside and out of the classroom (“God watches you. God will punish you.”). This broader Islamic social structure was often articulated by those with whom I worked in terms of religious responsibilities to “command the right and forbid the wrong” and da’wa (the “call” to improve morality). Teachers regularly lamented the absence of moral or character education in the state curriculum and said that it was too important a topic to be relegated to one Islamic studies class.

Being a good woman in Jordan (for Muslims and Christians alike) often overlays gendered expectations of the family and religion, where being a good family woman was a strong indicator (sometimes the only necessary indicator) of good morals. Historically, Islamic law and tradition have been interpreted as patriarchal and supportive of controlling women’s access to society through veiling, segregation, and the legal subordination of women (Ahmed 1992; Joseph 2000, 2001; Keddie 2007; Mernissi 1987). This intersectionality often meant that women at AGS were emotionally conflicted over what they “should” do. When religion as a topic came up in conversation, Islamic Studies teacher Miss Waw expressed a sentiment echoed by many other Muslim teachers: “Don’t observe us. We do not follow religion. You should study the religion to learn about it.”

14 The classic “five pillars of Islam” are the shahada (creed or

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14 When I remarked that I had earned a master’s degree in Islamic Studies, I regularly heard from the female teachers, “Then you know more about Islam than I do!” What is remarkable about this interchange
statement of faith), zakat (charity), hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), salat (prayer), and sawm (fasting during Ramadan). In Islam, women are given many exceptions from actions that would otherwise be individual and community obligations. For example, women who are menstruating, bleeding after childbirth, pregnant, or breast-feeding should not fast. Women who are menstruating are deemed too unclean to even enter the mosque. Thus, women are generally exempted from the requirement to fast and attend communal Friday prayer, and it is understood that women can be good Muslims without regularly completing these otherwise fard (obligatory) actions. The rubric for women to be good Muslims in Jordan seemed to be that they believe in God, dress and act modestly, perform no immoral sexual acts, and care for their families. Miss Waw conceded that a woman might be able to be a good Muslim even if she did not regularly give charity, pray, take the pilgrimage, or fast. Miss Waw may be influenced by the ethical inclusiveness of the Amman Message and official messages about moderate Islam in Jordan, as explained in Chapter 1.

In the school (in fact, in all public schools according to the government of Jordan), there was a room dedicated as the prayer room near the washing site for wudu’ (ritual cleansing) and with rugs that school personnel were responsible for keeping clean. In the teachers’ lounges, less than a third of the teachers kept personal prayer rugs hanging over the back of their chairs. The daily school schedule included a half-hour snack and prayer break from 10:30-11am and ended at 1:30pm, which didn’t follow the requisite timing of the dhuhur or noon prayer. In traditional Sunni Islam, there are five prescribed prayer times a day, but they can be missed and made up later if there is a compelling reason. In Jordan, the state has the authority to compel.

The following vignette from Miss Waw, the munaqiba (woman who wears the niqab or
black clothing covering all but her eyes) technology team leader and Islamic Studies teacher, illustrates how she combines state goals, textbooks, and technology initiatives with her own ideas about morals and religion, her volunteer leadership role in the school and interactions with other teachers, and the practical realities of technological problems in the computer lab.

Miss Waw wears a loose, black niqab and is fifty years old. She teaches Islamic studies to grades 5-9 and is also the volunteer technology team leader for the school. She says her son, in twelfth grade at another school, “uses the internet all the time” at her house. She tells me about the dozens of workshops she has attended to learn about Frontpage, Javascript, Flash player, website design, WordLink, e-quizzes, and Powerpoint. In 2009, she went to a workshop with teachers from Tunisia. This summer (2012), she went to a workshop at the King Hussein Cultural Center where she learned how to use e-quizzes and integrate other technology into classroom lessons. As technology team leader, she tries to teach other teachers at AGS how to use various software, design websites, and run e-quizzes but says they are not very interested.

In her Islamic Studies classes, Miss Waw teaches taqlid (tradition, imitation, mimicry) lessons. Taqlid refers to explicit moral injunctions like “do not drink” or “do not commit adultery.” On the main slide, a picture of a parrot stands for the taqlid lessons. Miss Waw flips through slides showing women wearing colorful, tight clothes and colorful hijab. She says that this slide shows that makeup, decoration and such are not in Islam. The next slide is a photograph of women and men, overlaid by a cartoon devil saying in a speech bubble, “What does Shaytan (Satan) say to you?” Miss Waw says that students “act as detectives to find out what the devil says” on each slide.

I ask for an example. Miss Waw says, “Satan says, ‘It’s okay to go out like that, sit with a boy and enjoy him and then leave him.’” She says that it is “like al-jahiliya (the period of pre-
Islamic ignorance or “jahil” before the coming of Prophet Muhammad) now with all the drinking and irreverence. In the next slide, a cartoon devil encourages a young girl to “waste the use of a computer - not to look up information but go to bad sites like Facebook.” The next slide is a cartoon of two men in white jilbab (traditional white full length dress for men) and kufiya (traditional nationalist scarf for men) “as women, with long hair.” On the next slide is a cartoon of a boy with pants “down so low you can see his underwear” in a red khuta pattern that symbolizes Jordan.

Miss Waw treats the setting of a girls’ public school less like the civic space I was expecting. The framing of national citizen-subject of the monarch is ubiquitous, as is the discourse of what the girls will do and be when they leave school, but these civic ontologies are embedded in a thoroughly gendered, religious ontology. The girls’ public school is a space of Muslim sisterhood. Miss Waw is one of many teachers who explained to me that their primary responsibility as a teacher is to raise good girls; and the education of morality and character comes from Islam. She laments the pressure of memorization for high-stakes testing and says that it takes the focus of education away from morals.

Miss Waw is always fully covered in a black dress and veil around her hair. Though she usually also wore the accompanying face veil, she was once surprised in the hallways by male supervisor Dr. Seen and had to duck into a random classroom until he left. She took her responsibility for moral education seriously and did not participate in the bawdy jokes of some of the other teachers. She did not generally reprimand girls for violating the dress code, and never called students out for reprimand in front of the school morning assembly like self-appointed disciplinarian Miss Dal and some other teachers. Miss Waw expressed trust in herself as a role
model of faith and character.

Miss Waw showed me a slide of women wearing colorful hijab and tight clothes, saying that makeup and decoration were not in Islam. I noted aloud that many of her fellow teachers wear colorful clothing. She gave a small smile and nodded. “I do not judge,” she said. “They know what is right.” To a woman, the teachers and staff at Ammani Girls’ School listed “to do what is right” in response to my question, “What are the most important things you teach the students?” It is difficult for teachers and students to know what “the right thing to do” is, especially in a context of social, economic, political, and cultural changes.

Intersections of State and Family

Educational gender segregation, like in the US, was “born out of a desire to provide quality education for women in order to ease their transition into society and the professions, while also striking a balance between modernity and their identity as women” (Al-Lail 2010:62). Occasionally, there are men who broach this female space, including young boy children of teachers who stay in the nursery during the school day, male parents or relatives of students who may visit the school, and male supervisors from the school district or other educational administrators. Social norms for young women in Jordan and often attributed to the “Arab family” in general, idealize marriage, motherhood, and home life but these social norms along with education development assumptions produce “conflicting pressures” (Adely 2009:114-117).

Historically, traditionally, and fundamentally, Jordanian society is structured along patriarchal, tribal family affiliations. Family name and tribal connection are of course variously important for any particular individual, but are still important in the structuring of social

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15 “To do what is right” translates as-suaab in fusha (أفعال أصاب) or ’amal ish-shee is-sah in colloquial (عمل الشيء الصحيح). Cognates for “right” are “sound, true, correct, or upright.”
interactions and institutional processes. The national narrative of Jordan is based on “the interrelatedness between the patriarchal family and the patriarchal state,” referred to as *al-usra al-wahida*, “the united family” (Amawi 2000: 158). The patriarchal family/state relationship historically granted men citizenship and only recognized women through their male family relations (according to the Nationality Act No. 6 of 1954). In recent years, Jordanian women have increasingly agitated for the same rights as men to pass their citizenship to non-Jordanian spouses and their children.

As a frame of reference for social normativity, family gender roles are in competition with job expectations of a public school teacher, state expectations of public servants to nationalist ideology, and Islamic normativity. Widespread in patriarchal family structures, women achieve their primary social identities as wives and mothers. As an extension of this frame of reference, female teachers may treat the school as a pseudo-family space where her role expectations are those of a mother, aunt, sister, or female relative of students, teachers, and other staff. This process could result in marking a student present who was tardy or absent, raising a grade to prevent a student from failing, hugging and kissing a student, offering free private tutoring to struggling students, or other behaviors that would be expected of a nurturing and protective family member but are counter or beyond the expectations of a state employee. Indeed, I witnessed these examples above, each justified by the teacher with reference to what they would have done for their own daughter.

The state education system takes this possible frame of reasoning into account when hiring and assigning teachers and supervisors. On the one hand, I learned that the state encourages new teachers to stay in their home communities (for men and women alike, the
preference is for the natal community until they are married, then patrilocal\textsuperscript{16} once married).

Four university students studying to be teachers told me how the process will work when they graduate; they will submit their names, home addresses, and qualifications to their local public school district and wait to be matched with a school. They said that although they might have to wait for a few years for an opening at a local school, this process was preferred by the district and by themselves since they could stay at home while they wait. One of the young women said her sister had gone through this process and had been assigned as a long-term substitute for a teacher out on maternity leave that turned into a permanent posting when the new parent decided to stay at home instead of returning to the school.

Trying to confirm the presumptions of these university students, I asked district officials in Amman and Karak if they preferred to post teachers in their home neighborhoods, and if that was just for women. In separate interviews, both officials confirmed that they prefer assigning teachers to nearby schools because such a situation will be more stable for the teacher. However, each official said that it is their policy to post new supervisors and exam proctors to a different province entirely, so their family and tribal affiliations will not compete with their duties to the state. Tawjihi exam proctors in Jordan must take an oath that they have no personal ties to any exam-taking students through relation or having been their tutor (Khasawneh 2011). Supervisor Dr. Seen said that the policy of shifting proctors to new governates is meant to counter family and tribal pressures. A female teacher at a rural school in Mafraq said that she is connected to her students in a different way than teachers in urban schools. She said that sometimes she has to help some students more if they are connected to her family or tribe and that sometimes students are antagonistic to her because of tribal antagonism. Teachers and students often assume

\textsuperscript{16} As a patrilocal society, women in Jordan are usually expected to move into the home of their new husband and away from their immediate family.
cheating and violent clashes between students and their parents with state officials around exams will be higher in rural and tribal areas (Buckner and Hodges, in press).

Family role expectations sometimes trumped the expectations of a state educator. About once a week, a teacher would confide to me that she didn’t fulfill her responsibilities (lesson planning or grading) because she “hosted her in-laws last night” or was “very busy with family.” This excuse definitely resonated with other teachers who understood the importance of the family role, but was not universally accepted as a legitimate excuse (as emergency health issues in the family would be). Also, there was no consistent provision of school buses for daily student transportation; and as students got to school by foot, public transit, or dropped off by family, there were some occasions when teachers said they couldn’t get their own children to school that day. Sometimes students at the school were absent because their families couldn’t get them to school, and teachers mentioned it as a reason they could mark students present when absent. Every teacher expressed some level of awareness and frustration over conflicting role expectations from family and teaching.

Some examples of these fault lines are when a teacher leaves school because she is pregnant or to take care of children at home. In order to ameliorate some of the pressure of family responsibilities, AGS and many other public schools operate a full-day preschool on campus for teachers’ children. In the teachers’ lounges, teachers would often bring in homemade food to share with other teachers (a large part of family roles for women in Jordan and beyond). The principal allowed several vendors (even some male vendors) to sell products in the teachers’ lounges that were geared toward women. While I was there, a male vegetable vendor brought fresh vegetables for sale regularly. Female vendors selling clothes, jewelry, and makeup occasionally set up their wares for sale in the teachers’ lounges. In these examples, the public
school building becomes a space for traditional female domesticity. Once, I saw a teenage boy climb up the twelve-foot walls surrounding the schoolyard, with a black hoodie wrapped and tied around his head except his eyes. The vice principal ran to the principal’s office and they called the (male) police, instead of chasing after the boy themselves. He jumped down and ran away before the police arrived.

Idealized “traditional” gender roles for men and women in the religion, family, and society are widely shared and valued. A focus group of Jordanian teachers interviewed by Fulbright researchers from Bowling Green State University found that, mirroring the Ministry of Education official philosophy, “the values considered important for citizens, namely students, to have include an Islamic worldview and patriotism, respect for other cultures and countries, and confidence and cooperation” (Kubow et al. 2009:11). These teachers considered “understanding Islamic values and the importance of family, addressing stereotypes and women’s rights, and providing opportunities for international exchange” important aspects of education in Jordan (Kubow et al. 2009:14). Islam, the family, patriotism, and a wide range of values like politeness, peace, and niceness are interconnected and part of traditional teaching responsibilities.

**Problematic “Modern” Roles**

Recognized by Dr. Alif as a “double burden,” “what seems to have emerged in Jordan is a hybridized citizen identity shaped by cultural markers such as tribal and religious identity alongside liberalization and some rights-oriented discussion” (Kubow and Kreishan 2014:20). Trying to balance “traditional” and “modern” gendered role expectations is particularly difficult for women because of contradictory ethical messages about the relationship between women and men in public society. Although women’s participation in public schooling has been integrated
into traditional values, their participation in the formal work force is more problematic. Women “weight the social consequences of her leaving the home, and its effect on family cohesion, when making their decision” and may consider possible discrimination they might face at work as well as pressure not to take a job from a male in the context of high unemployment (Abu Jaber 2015, see also Miles 2002).

Many international observers are stymied by a “gender gap” between high educational achievement and low work force participation for women in Jordan. Jordan regularly ranks among the lowest in international rankings of female participation in the work force (122 out of 134 countries ranked by the World Economic Forum in 2009). Although upwards of ninety percent of female community college graduates report interest in joining the work force, only 23% of women are economically active and only 62% percent of them have secure employment (World Bank 2010; Vishwanath and Krishnan 2010:1). Unemployment rates for women have been double those of men for the last decade and the highest rate of unemployed women in Jordan were those with a Bachelor’s degree (Messkoub 2008:7). The World Economic Forum “Global Gender Gap Index” ranked Jordan 120 out of 134.

A fundamental assumption of the international development community is that “by closing the gender gap in education, Jordan has created a solid foundation for the advancement of women,” but that low female economic participation creates a “paradox indicat[ing] that a huge investment in women’s knowledge, skills, and abilities is not resulting in increased productivity or innovation in the economy” (Schiff 2012). Fida Adely writes about the

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17 Regionally, unemployment ranges widely: 10-25% for men, 13-30% for women, and 15-50% for young adults under 25 (Messkoub 2008:7).
18 Jordan was narrowly outranked by Algeria, Qatar and Lebanon, and outranked Oman, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, illustrating the resonance of the “gender gap” issue in the Arab and Islamic worlds.
“gendered paradox” (2012a) that Jordan represents and interrogates the assumption that “development” necessarily means women participate in the formal work force in rising numbers. Her ethnographic work among female students in Jordan explores the “tension” and “ambiguities” between claims and assumptions about women’s choices and how young women in Jordan talk about the choices in their lives (2009). Adely (2004, 2009) finds that women have disproportionately low participation in the formal work force because they do not wish to work in gender mixed environments, they cannot find acceptable work, or because the other things they value like family and religion conflict with work life. The causes typically identified for women’s disempowerment - Islam and the “Arab family” - are often structures of the greatest care and empowerment for women in Jordan (Adely 2012a) within which they “[bargain] with patriarchy” (Moghadam 2008:18).

Most of the Jordanian adult population is female, well educated in public schools, urban, married, Sunni Muslim, and Arab; but only few women participate in the formal economy. Although young women in Jordan enroll and graduate school in nearly equitable numbers with young men, as of 2009 only 23 percent of all women were economically active and only 62 percent of that number were able to find employment; and female youth made up only 9 percent of job-seekers (Vishwanath and Krishnan 2010:1). Many women who work outside the home do so as teachers. Although the female labor force participation was less than 37% nationwide in 2013, the largest proportion of working women (43%) were in the education sector, followed by the health sector (13%; al-Sharari and al-Khatib 2015:210). Graduating in 2011 with the Education Sciences and Teacher Training specialization were 4,675 females (84% of the graduating class) and 904 males. According to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research report for the 2010-2011 school year, females made up 82% of the student body in
Educational Sciences and Teacher Training (12,571 out of 14,814 students at government universities and 2,694 out of 3,790 at private universities) and 52% of students overall (Department of Statistics 2011: 161). That disproportionately high number of female undergraduates falls off at the graduate level. The same year, only 55% of students accepted into Masters of Education programs (131 out of 240; Department of Statistics 2011:162) and 41% of students accepted into Educational Sciences and Teacher Training PhD programs (207 out of 667) in government universities were female. Women made up only 23% of the faculty at Jordanian universities by 2011 (Department of Statistics 2011:166).

Ambiguities and conflicting pressures are not isolated to women. Roozbeh Shirazi’s ethnography of boys’ high schools in Jordan captures the struggle over identity and meaning. In the boys’ high schools, the young men confront projects to fashion “authentically ‘Jordanian’ subjects” against tribal, family, or other political subjectivities in contest to the state. Part of this state project is the “Knights of Change” political and educational campaign to “modernize” young Jordanian men and prevent their “radicalization” (Shirazi 2009a, 2012). Policies meant to “modernize” students and teachers are problematic because they are sometimes antagonistic to traditional sympathies but also because they are dissatisfying in and of themselves. Teachers earn a comparatively low salary to other professions, particularly affecting male teachers who are traditionally obliged to earn the main income for the family. Low salary for teachers and high unemployment for young graduates provide no practical, “modern,” meritocratic alternative to family or tribal connections. Since state power is built into and relies on these traditional trust networks, the call to “modernize” is confusing at best and deceptive at worst for those in public education.

Jordanian royals themselves practice an interesting balance of tradition and modernity,
but are problematic role models of hybrid citizenship, since widespread replication is often impossible. The royal women of Jordan have also had a long history of public social philanthropy in fields considered appropriately feminine, including the care of women, children, and the poor (Brand 2003:159-162). King Hussein’s wife, Queen Noor, added music, handicrafts, peace advocacy, and education to her philanthropic pursuits. Brooks writes that “Queen Noor was a contested and changing symbol” in American as well as Jordanian culture and media. When Noor was engaged to the king in 1978, People magazine headlined “I’d be Delighted to Have His Child” and was “full of her thoughts on sports and shopping,” but in 1991, after the first Gulf War, “she spoke at the Brookings Institution and appeared on ‘Nightline,’ no longer asked about hairstyles and child rearing but required to field hard questions about Jordan’s foreign policy” (Brooks 2010:134). The Women’s Studies Center at the University of Jordan was founded and supported by Princess Basma, sister to the previous king, Hussein, and aunt of the current king, Abdullah II. Daughter of former King Talal and Queen Zein, born 1951, Princess Basma founded the Jordanian National Commission for Women, is president of Save the Children’s Jordan branch, founded the Women’s Studies Center at the University of Jordan as the first graduate program in women’s studies in the Arab World, and was awarded a DPhil degree by Oxford University with a thesis entitled “Contextualising development in Jordan: the arena of donors, state and NGOs” (“About Her Royal Highness” 2015). She married, divorced, remarried, and had four children.

Abdullah II’s wife, Queen Rania, is in many respects the archetypical woman of Jordan. Queen Rania uploads videos of her speeches on her YouTube channel and uploads photos on Facebook of her visits to schools and participation in international summits next to family photos. She is a major force behind education development in Jordan and lends her name and
foundation’s support to the sole teacher training institute – Queen Rania Teacher Academy. Rania exhibits sensitivity to traditional expectations, and her “Public Figure” official Facebook page “About” section describes her as “a mother; a wife; a boss; an advocate; a humanitarian; a queen” (“Queen Rania” 2015). She establishes her successful fulfillment of family role expectations as a wife and mother of two boys and two girls. The final trump card, “a queen,” affirms a public, international role that justifies her activity as “a boss; an advocate; a humanitarian.” Her Facebook photo albums are labeled “Family” and “The 9 to 5,” establishing her dual identity as wife/mother and public official. However, her public presence, unveiled except for mosque visits, is kept almost nonexistent in the Arabic-language Jordanian press.

Should teachers, like Queen Rania and other Jordanian royal women, try to balance being a spouse and parent alongside philanthropist, activist, boss, officer, or some other public role? In early October, 2012, candidate for Amman 5th electoral district to the lower house of parliament Miriam Louzi came to campaign in the teachers’ lounges at Ammani Girls’ School. Louzi was “very famous” on campus for being the principal of Jubayha school. Miriam Louzi said that they needed real experience in the education ministry and that if they voted for her, she could be education minister one day. As she handed out cards and pamphlets, she reminded them that the previous education minister was a nuclear scientist and not from education at all. The message seemed to resonate (or the celebrity and fame was attractive) and every teacher stopped by to see her though many eventually kept working at their desks. When she later won the election, one of the few women to win a popular election outside of the women’s quota seats (Hussainy 2014:8), the principal, our mutual friend Dr. Alif, and I were invited to the Louzi victory celebration.

Teachers are often idealized as representatives of the state, and the school as a space of

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19 As of submission (7 September 2015), her “About” section now says “A mum and wife with a really cool day job.”
civic enculturation preparing future citizens (Schiffauer et al. 2004). The identity of a public school teacher is generally delimited by employment in a centralized education system, position in a hierarchy of authority under supervisors and over students, expectation of salary and pension, and obligation to teach the official state curriculum. In this frame of reference, teachers may treat the school as a civic space and/or prioritize normative expectations of the state over other responsibilities. At the start of the school year, it is customary for the home-room teacher (a teacher who is responsible for a particular grade year class for the entire year even if they do not teach them any particular subjects) to ask and record the parents’ names, parents’ jobs and salaries, addresses, height, and weight of each student. Students take turns answering the teacher’s inquiries, audible and visible to the whole class. This is an example of the teacher acting in the capacity of the state, responsible for recording vital information about the population receiving state services. In another example, veteran teacher Miss Dal led a prayer one day in the compulsory morning assembly that Jordan would not go the way of Syria and Egypt in terms of violence and revolution but that the people of Jordan would peacefully follow and trust the Jordanian royal family. Though not compelled by her job, this teacher explained to me that she was fulfilling her obligations to protect and uphold the state and to teach children to do so as well.

**Gendered Mediation of ERFKE**

Teachers mediate role expectations of tradition and modernity, historical processes of educational development, state education goals for an uncertain future “knowledge economy,” the pressures of the Arab Spring, and contradictions that arise through the interaction of normativity frames of the family, state, and Islam. Tensions are “gendered” in that there are
widely shared ethically normative roles for men and women in Jordanian society. Nostalgic, my informants regularly referenced the “traditional” past when school and teachers were of higher quality, students didn’t cheat and respected their elders, and students paid attention to teachers who cared about knowledge. It is doubtful that there was ever a time when women in Jordan knew exactly what to do to be “good” at enacting their gendered roles. However, new expectations have been laid on top of existing expectations in ways that produce complications.

Female education is undergoing rapid, state-sanctioned, and state-wide reconfiguration. As part of the Education Reform for a Knowledge Economy (ERFKE), state institutions of educator professional development bring male and female teachers together for workshops led by both male and female trainers. Increasingly in the last decade, male teachers from other schools come to teacher training workshops held on the school grounds, introducing the female faculty and staff to co-ed working environments.

Many female teachers have a difficult emotional relationship to photos of themselves. Miss Baa and Miss Dal expressed hesitation over seeing their photo publicly displayed but on (female) friends’ and family’s phones it was okay. Some teachers intentionally turned away from photographs at teacher training workshops because there is an important distinction between photos of all women for personal use and photos in gender-mixed spaces for public use that trainers are trying to normalize. Miss Baa didn’t see herself on television because she was busy and had the wrong time but also because it would be uncomfortable for her and her husband to see her image on TV. Her side of the family watched and told her about it. The elementary teacher said she was okay with her photos and videos being in the newspaper because her principal and the queen were there. After workshops, grinning participants generally take lots of photos of their groups, but some abstain or turn their heads in group shots especially if they have
chosen to wear niqab, face veil, and gloves generally.

Gendered role expectations for state educators are quite uncertain in this setting. Absent traditional scripts with predictable consequences, teachers act in contexts of uncertainty over political, social, and religious normativity. Teachers dynamically negotiate what it means to be a woman in Jordanian society by presenting the values embedded in education reforms and making decisions about what to teach, how, and why. The girls’ public school is a space where gender roles come into conflict, since expectations of a female to her family are different than a Muslim sister in the Islamic umma, and different from a citizen-subject in a democratizing monarchy. Overlaid on these gendered ways of being good are new national expectations of a knowledge economy employee or entrepreneur. These terms reference political ontologies, or ways of being in relation to power, which index gendered role expectations, produce conflicting and ambiguous role expectations, and can provide multiple answers for how to do the right thing. It’s not just that some people know what to do and some people don’t. For example, there are particular ways to be a woman in the family (wife, mother, sister) that come with their own tensions (how to balance home life and work life, how to be a good wife and mother with only so much time in the day). Of the relatively few women in the formal work force, many of them are teachers since education is accommodating to traditional values, largely gender-segregated, around children, and work hours are school hours.
CHAPTER 3: WHAT IS IT LIKE TO HAVE THE “BEST JOB FOR A WOMAN”? 

I heard the refrain from male and female students, teachers, and parents that “teaching is the best job for a woman” in Jordan, since she will be around children at work, at home during school breaks, able to flexibly enter and exit the profession, and in limited contact with men in public. In this context, many women became teachers not because they wanted a career as a professional educator but because it was a socially acceptable way to have a life outside of the home. This chapter explores what is it like for the women who daily work at “the best job for a woman.” With a series of ethnographic vignettes, I provide close readings of micro-interactions in order to interpret how and why female teachers mediate their precarious authority and engage in gender self-fashioning.

Ethnographic vignette: Discipline with Miss Dal

School day schedule:
7:30 Morning assembly
7:45-8:40 Period 1
8:45-9:40 Period 2
9:45-10:30 Period 3
10:35-10:45 Break (prayer and snacks)
10:45-11:40 Period 4
11:45-12:40 Period 5
12:45-1:40 Period 6

First thing in the morning, students line up for taboor (morning assembly) in the outdoor courtyard according to their academic class and face the principal, her vice-principals, and the flagpole. While the recorded national anthem plays, teachers walk up and down the rows of their students or duck into the shade along the side of the school building and chat quietly. A constant
at Amman Girls’ School, along with the warm sun and giggling girls, are the sharp eyes and sharper tongue of self-appointed school disciplinarian Miss Dal.

Miss Dal teaches 12th grade tawjihi geology and 10th grade general science. She is fairly tall, middle-sized and middle aged, wears a plain colored (beige, green, or some other neutral color) coat and plain colored headscarf, is married with grown children, and is interested in a possible future administrative role beyond her teacher duties. One administrative duty she commandeers is the management of morning assembly. When school begins at 7:30am, the principal or other administrator locks the front door to protect the empty school while all students and teachers assemble in the outdoor courtyard.

Miss Dal sharply admonishes any errant teacher at morning assembly. Since morning assembly is the first event of the day, dozens of teachers and students straggle in late. Teachers are required to sign in to an attendance book in front of the principal’s office just inside the front door. Although it is technically not her job, Miss Dal will get the key from the administration office (usually from vice-principal Miss Meem or the principal Miss Noon) if the administrators seem busy or too slow and locks the front door so that late teachers will be seen walking through the parking lot, around the courtyard, and pass in front of the assembly gathering to the side door. Locking the front door also prevents students from hanging out unsupervised, but students can easily join their rows in the courtyard even if they are late. If teachers are habitually late or too chatty, Miss Dal calls to them to “hurry” or “be quiet.” Other teachers look or grin at the offending teacher with varying levels of sympathy. Miss Baa is notorious chatty and when she wanders away from her row of students over to me for morning greetings, Miss Dal calls out to her that “it isn’t a social hour.”

Students were expected to stand in straight lines and teachers were expected to monitor
students for noise, trash, and dress code violations. The vice principal and Miss Dal would regularly pick up trash. Sometimes one of the khaki-dressed head girls would help them. One day, the principal picked up trash and puts a handful of trash to a 12th grade girl as she was filing into school to throw away inside. Teachers who talk or don’t pace the rows of students get a glare or call-out from the vice principal or Miss Dal, though she has her own grade row to pace. Many teachers confide in me their dislike of morning assembly and the social penalties for tardiness.

Miss Dal cares very deeply for propriety. During the morning assembly, she leaves her class and walks in front of all the rows of students, looking for tardiness and dress code violations. Early in the fall semester, she pulls an eleventh-grade literary stream student named Marbuta out of line. Marbuta’s father is lower class, and everyone knows it since she, like every other student, has to report her parents’ names, occupations, and income in front of homeroom class at the start of term. She does not wear a headscarf and has dyed her hair an orange-brown color. Miss Dal admonishes her for wearing skinny jeans and pulls her directly in front of the principal. The principal admonishes her in front of all nine hundred students and thirty teachers, saying that it is inappropriate to wear skinny jeans and that she must “respect herself.”²⁰ Out of curiosity, I count at least thirty other students I could see wearing skinny jeans. However, this young woman is a particular problem student, described by one of her former teachers as “a hopeless case” because she failed a school year twice already. The advisor for Marbuta’s class, math teacher Miss Hah, also pulls her aside but this time privately, along the inside hallway wall. Miss Hah says she notices Marbuta’s uniform is too tight and small and asks, “Do you want me to get a larger uniform for you?” Marbuta looks away, shakes her head, but says yes.

²⁰ In Arabic, ihtarami haalik (إحترامي حالك).
Miss Dal is a veteran teacher and would like to be promoted into administration. Other teachers told me that she is very active in the school, serving as a faculty advisor for students participating in a national competition, and in more personal issues like financially helping a teacher who had complications during childbirth. Miss Dal’s strength of personality and pseudo-administrative position made her the informal leader of her teachers’ lounge.

Greeting me as a guest hosted by the school, Miss Dal is the first one in the teachers’ lounge to offer me tea, and starts to lecture the other women in the lounge on comportment and nutrition. She greets me with an extended verbal welcome, makes sure I have a place to sit, and ensures that any food or drink available is shared with me. One day when I come to her lounge after having Nescafé in the other lounge, she says with reproach that she “never has Nescafé after 6am.” She establishes her authority through traditionally feminine means like bringing homemade food in large enough quantities to share with at least two dozen teachers and students. Over Miss Dal’s zaatar (mixed spice) bread, another veteran English teacher Miss Taa told me she is “well known for her generosity.”

Miss Dal also acts as matriarch of the lounge when greeting other guests like parents, merchants, or even campaigning politicians. The school hosts weekly visits from informal merchants selling vegetables, makeup, or clothes. During one of these visits, Miss Dal buys quite a bit of makeup from a female merchant and tells me that it is “much cheaper than in America.” She leads an impromptu focus group of teachers in a discussion of my use of makeup. When she proclaimed that she approved of my lipstick shade because it was “natural,” the other teachers nodded. Miss Taa nodded vigorously and agreed, “It is nice and natural. Minimal.” Of the fifteen or so teachers in Miss Dal’s teacher’s lounge, only one wore colored makeup. The first-year teacher, Miss Raa, wore colored eye shadow and blush at the start of the year, but stops after a
few months. Her coat and headscarf are often brightly colored - the most brightly colored in that lounge. The dress code forbids students from wearing makeup, including on field trips to the Dead Sea or Petra, but I observe that “nice and natural” makeup often passes inspection without remark. As a young, first year teacher, Miss Raa has no wish to challenge Miss Dal’s authority and so quietly complies with the expectations for makeup and comportment that Miss Dal and Miss Taa verbally express in the lounge.

From her seat, Miss Dal slaps at Miss Waw’s passing bottom, saying it [her ample bottom] is because of sugar and that her husband must be happy. Miss Waw smiles and thanks God, but protests that she didn’t like chocolate. Islamic Studies teacher Miss Waw wears the niqab (full black or beige clothing that covers all but her eyes) and is not normally a target of teasing. She smiles and lightly replies she is “heavy because of fruit.” Though she frequently teases and admonishes other teachers and students, I never witness anyone tease or admonish Miss Dal.

The administration allows female beggars up to the teachers’ lounges and Miss Dal took up collections for charities like Syrian refugee education. When these collections take place, teachers generally give something each time but occasionally grumble. Miss Baa looks at me and asks, “What can I do?” When I ask Miss Baa why the teachers are asked for money, she says that it isn’t the causes or even the money she minds but the public way it is done, essentially pressuring them for money in their workplace and in front of peers and students.

In response to a government announcement in late November, 2012 that fuel subsidies will be reversed, which would also raise prices on food, the teachers’ union declares a teachers’ strike. However, at Amman Girls’ School, only a couple teachers were absent and all for purposes like ill health or professional development. No teachers officially went on strike.

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21 See more from al-Arabiya News 2012.
though nationwide some “ill” teachers unofficially stayed home out of union sympathies). One teacher says, “No one, maybe one only, went on strike here because we want to finish. At male schools the teachers went on strike. They are better than us, more active. Maybe 80% and even private schools. At my husband’s private school, the teachers said they would strike and he said ‘Okay, strike if you want and don’t if you don’t want.’” The day of the strike and protests, Miss Dal holds a special prayer at morning assembly for peace in Jordan, “that what happened in Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria would not happen here and there would be no revolution.” Usually, students and teachers listen to a recording and no one leads a prayer. Many students, particularly tawjihi students who often studied at home in the last weeks of each term before exams, stayed home from school during the strike possibly to avoid high fuel prices.

Miss Dal is not a simple rules automaton nor did she simply enact traditional gender norms as a matriarch of the teachers’ lounge, but was rather doing her best to do the right thing in the situation. Sometimes she doubted whether she was doing the right thing. Miss Dal recounts how she caught a girl trying to cheat, and explains that she didn’t report the incident because: “I didn’t want to take off two years of her life.” She explains that she overlooked cheating “because the consequences are so high,” and that she justified it to herself in this context because the girl had only attempted to cheat but did not actually have time to look at the paper.

I ask if she thinks students who cheat are “naughty” in general or if good, clever girls also cheat. Miss Dal sighs and tilts her head before replying, “Yes, anyone might cheat. I think the test is something different. It is outside religion (kharij ad-deen). When I was proctoring an exam at my daughter’s school, no one was trying to cheat but it was not because of religion. Those who cheat are not well bred. It becomes a habit, worse now because of technology. Some
you can’t believe they cheat because they are perfect. It’s the problem of every generation. They want everything without doing anything. Most students would just sit at home. Most families are afraid of the behavior of girls so even if they get 96 or 97 percent, their families want them to get married and live with their husbands. Some students, a few, need private tutoring but some like at our school waste their time and then take private lessons.

Miss Dal shares this story during a discussion in her teachers’ lounge about student cheating and in front of Islamic Studies teacher Miss Waw to no comment. Miss Dal grimaces and gives a little shrug, which is echoed by Miss Waw. Miss Dal says, “I felt guilty for not telling the supervisor and so I called my sheikh, and he said you are doing your best.”

What she cares about and how she cares leads Miss Dal variously to enforce and break rules. Doing her “best” involved taking care of her teachers’ lounge like a tribal matriarch, respecting the rules of the school and prioritizing her vocation, respecting her religion and calling on her fellow teachers to provide charity, but also caring enough for a student’s future to turn a blind eye to cheating. Miss Dal is also trying to ‘respect herself’ and uphold traditional and modern, professional and personal, national and religious, normative ethics. For Miss Dal to “do her best,” she brings together dress, comportment, respect for herself and her place in society, and respect the role she has in upholding personal and social honor. Miss Dal manages a lot of sentiments other than professional educator including those of tribal hospitality and Islamic charity. Part of her job is to care about students and that means she sometimes does things to confound state policy or Islam, like lead a prayer in morning assembly, share homemade food, or forgive a cheating student.

A school wide awareness of class is the backdrop for Miss Dal’s remonstration of Marbuta.
Each teacher is assigned a class for which she is *murshida* (instructor, advisor, guide) and for this class (similar to “homeroom” in the US) she is responsible in various ways throughout the school year. Teachers and students know each student’s personal information from when the murshida records at the beginning of term for each student including name, address, date of birth, height, weight, eye color, parents’ names and occupations, and religion. Miss Dal doesn’t, that I saw, pull aside the richest girls, nor does she only pull aside the poorest, but the ones she sees as the “problem” or “naughty.” Factors that affect when teachers punish dress code violations are class, academic performance, and a combination of personality, reputation, and self-fashioning of the student and teacher. Marbuta is in 11th grade but is older than other students since she has failed two years. She also physically stands out in other ways because of her uncovered dyed orange hair. Not all students wear the headscarf, but only Marbuta and her friends noticeably dye their hair. The principal telling Marbuta to “respect yourself” is not just telling her to obey rules about school dress code but also indexes traditional (see Chapter 2) notions of Muslim women’s honor.

Marbuta is disciplined as a “hopeless case” by Miss Dal, who categorizes her very differently than girls who are *shatira* (clever). Over the course of my fieldwork, I heard teachers, staff, students, parents, and siblings use this term to signify a range of recognized behaviors and attitudes beyond high academic marks. The shatira label is an index of successful enculturation and fluent cultural performance. The competition for and performance of this label is compelling/generative of certain behaviors. A “clever girl” is explicitly described as smart, well-behaved, friendly, likeable, studious, quiet, and all-around “good.” However, being clever is not a fixed identity but rather uncertain and vulnerable to a “bad” performance. For example, a teacher once described

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22 The advising class could be an entire grade or a section of a large grade year. For example, 10th grade at AGS was split into multiple sections and different teachers advised 10A and 10B.
three friends as clever by themselves but “a terror together” because of how much they would talk and disrupt the class. In this context, modesty meant covering all skin but the face and hands but also comportment that did not try to attract attention. Miss Waw also occasionally wore a face veil and gloves. For many of the teachers, this level of modest dress was a way to achieve both traditional and modern success by working in public without violating cultural honor.

There are two teachers’ lounges next door to each other, each with a wall of windows and framed picture of King Abdullah II, lockers, and desks for over a dozen teachers each. Miss Dal’s desk is in the corner of the lounge on the right side, with dark, thick green curtains. Her lounge is home to the older, sedate, and serious faculty who talk about family, retirement, and pensions as well as English teachers Miss Taa and Miss Raa. Miss Dal says the teachers in her lounge “take these responsibilities more seriously than others.” In this lounge are fourteen teachers matched with fourteen desks and the water cooler that they share with the other lounge next door.

**In the Other Teachers’ Lounge**

The behavior of Miss Dal and the teachers in the both teachers’ lounges at AGS illustrate the range of feminine performativity and social negotiation of authority. In the lounge next door, the women cultivate a different sort of atmosphere. In the left-most lounge, lightweight, yellowish-green curtains are pulled open for a bright, sunny ambience. Twenty teachers, mostly young and infamous for loud laughter that can be heard down the hall, share the eighteen desks in the left-most lounge. Teachers from the left lounge pull together and hush themselves as they slip through the door of the right lounge to use the water tank. As the water is filling, they say good morning to the other teachers in the room. They return as quickly as is polite, to relax and smile as they sit
on top of their desks and chat.

In this lounge rest Miss Baa and her friends, including well-dressed English teacher Miss Dod, foul-mouthed Arabic studies teacher Miss Kaaf, and the flamboyant Arabic teacher Miss Lam. Miss Baa wears a plain coat and boldly decorated headscarves and teaches English. Her husband has a master’s degree in linguistics and a career leading the English department of an elite private school. She has three children who are 11, 9, and 3 years old, the youngest of whom stays in the crèche at AGS. Miss Baa, though a committed tawjihi English teacher, told me with a grin that she became a teacher “because she was bored at home” and “teaching is the best job for a woman.”

Miss Lam wears the most resplendently colorful clothes in the school with largest, shiniest, jangling jewelry. Her Lebanese parents raised her speaking French. She’s one of the only teachers in the school to occasionally wear heels. One day, a female merchant brought rolling luggage full of clothes to sell. Miss Lam plucked off her headscarf and rummaged through the clothes. She pulled a black-and-white lined dress over her clothes. In order to stand on a chair, she pulled herself up by holding on to a nearby teacher. Miss Lam tried to see herself in the mirror, yelled at one of the other teachers blocking her view and gently but firmly pushed her out of the way. Another teacher said in Arabic, “Look out the door! The girls are talking about you! You are sticking your butt at poor Shadda (referring to the student who brings lunch snacks for sale)!” Shadda smiles and looks down, blushing. Miss Lam stays on the chair in front of at least a dozen teachers for a couple minutes, turning to see herself from all sides, but especially her backside. Then, she uses another teacher to climb down. She changes back into her shirt because the teachers said the colors were all wrong for her to keep wearing the black-and-white dress with her red and orange headscarf.
Sharing a desk with Miss Baa is the rotund, jovial Miss Saad. Miss Saad is a self-proclaimed expert on fashion, and spends a couple hours every day remarking on the other teachers’ fashion sense. Miss Saad purses her lips as she evaluates how well headscarves match their owners’ dresses and coats. She clucks over my recurring poor fashion and waves to her sailor blue-and-white coat and nautical-themed headscarf. She studied English and French in a private university and has been teaching for four years. She hopes that after her fifth year teaching public school that she can apply to teach in a private school. She wants to teach in a private school because she hopes for a better salary, fewer working hours, and students who are better at speaking English in the classroom. Miss Saad had thought she would work in a bank, medical field, or with cosmetics but her husband doesn’t like her working. She concedes, “teaching is the best job for a woman.”

At the next desk over from Miss Baa and Miss Saad’s corner desk by the window is Miss Kaaf. Miss Kaaf wears a black coat and neutral earth-tone, black, or white hijab. She is well known as a source for gossip, dirty jokes (where I learned the Arabic words for “bitch” and “cunt”), and smoking argileh (shisha, hubbly-bubbly) in neighborhood cafés. Her ribald stories have loyal listeners, but two or three teachers in the lounge regularly remind those listening that they should be working. Once, math teacher Miss Hah asks Miss Baa if she doesn’t have work for tawjihi she should be doing, “since she wants tawjihi so much.” The jab is well placed, and Miss Baa looks quickly at me with wide eyes and a frown, then retorts that she is prepared and is only waiting for students’ tests to grade.

Learning and performing femininity is often modeled for girls by their teachers and can include prioritizing family above work obligations, socializing only in gender-segregated spaces, and learning modest dress and comportment through enforcement of the school dress code. Female Muslim teachers must abide by modest dress, covering at least the hair and body from the
collarbone to wrists and ankles. This level of modest dress is called hijab and a woman who wears it is called muhajiba, but what women wear could vary from a loose dress (with the lighter-weight cloth abaya style or heavier-weight cloth jalabiya style), coat (often referred to as the French term manteaux), to colorfully dressed in other clothes over long-sleeved undershirts. Many teachers expressed personal fashion through matching their headscarves, purses, or shoes together. Students thus have many examples of how modest adult women could dress and are also given a lot of leeway for how they might dress according to code as they develop into young women. When Miss Dal told teachers to make sure they enforced dress code, Miss Raa told her ninth grade students to roll down their sleeves but let identical infractions slide for her younger students. Students could wear their uniform dress over their normal pants, but often wore personal jackets or sweaters over their uniforms. Some students wore the khaki uniforms of the national youth organization, which was perhaps less modest or traditionally feminine since it had slacks and no skirt, and others wore the long coat style, which was considered more modest than the uniform.

If teaching is the “best job for a woman” in conservative Jordanian society, there is still tension over women being alone with men, even a father meeting with the female principal or the male supervisor talking to Miss Baa. The appearance of students and teachers is closely monitored. Teachers and school administrators have the authority to admonish and punish students for dress code violations. The principal and district supervisors have the authority to admonish and fire teachers for indecent dress or otherwise providing an immoral atmosphere for students.

Each school day, one teacher is assigned to the munawaba [shift, rotation] where she is responsible for reviewing teacher attendance and coordinating substitution of present teachers during their planning period for absent teachers, making sure all teachers are in the correct classrooms, and ringing the bell from one class period to the next. One day during the early
weeks of the school year, someone from administration came upstairs and asked Miss Baa why she wasn’t in class. Miss Baa said the schedule wasn’t correct. She had gone to 9th and they said it wasn’t her class but 10th came to get her, so she taught them and now the administrator wanted her to teach them again. She said to me, “I am not cooperative now. It is their mistake.” She was in turns grinning and stern.

The munawaba position meant that teachers took turns having an administrator’s authority to tell other teachers what to do, but as teachers they often reclaimed authority by refusing or negotiating an administrator’s assignments. Miss Baa on hall monitor rotation was very different than Miss Baa the teacher, much more aware of the time and responsibilities of herself and other teachers and actively policing the halls. Once, she got distracted with her hand on the button to ring the bell, and while she was talking another teacher pushed the hand on the button to make the bell ring, making Miss Baa flustered and defensive. First year teacher Miss Raa was scheduled to al-munawaba, but told the vice-principal that teaching 25 teaching hours a week “was too much and she wouldn’t do it.” Miss Raa told this story with mixed frowning exasperation and smiling pride to the teachers in her teacher’s lounge. School administrators and assistants tried to take care of it, but the absence of the munawaba was clear. In one teacher’s lounge before class, students asked for Fatima but teachers who misheard sent them to Miss Waw. A parent asked for Miss Taa the second grade teacher (murabit a-saff thani) but a teacher said the only Miss Taa was an English teacher, not murabit-a-saff. The parent eventually did locate Miss Taa the second grade English teacher. On the way to class, two teachers came up to that floor and seemed lost, unsure where they were to substitute. Since Miss Raa wasn’t doing her munawaba duties, there was no one to confirm where they were supposed to be. Especially in the first weeks of class, but continuing throughout the school year depending on teachers’
pregnancies or illnesses, the schedule, as Miss Taa says, “is not fixed. We get it each day.” The first week of school was for student files, class counseling, and retaking exams to pass to the next grade.

**Discipline and Affection**

Public physical contact between the female teachers and students is a central mechanism for establishing the authority of the teacher as an authority figure and civil servant distinct from maternal family members. However, the interaction between teachers themselves and between teachers and students often blurred the lines between family and civic belonging. In the following excerpt, we see Miss Baa navigate a physical and verbal interaction between herself and students viewed by other teachers.

*Walking in the hall, we pass a girl in a green secondary uniform who blows a big kiss with both hands leaning over on her tiptoes to English teacher Miss Baa. Girls run up to Miss Baa in the hall and hug her waist, shoulders, and face. Miss Baa stands still, not encouraging or discouraging the contact, grinning. Then her face turns serious and rebuking. One student says, “I love you. I love you. You are my teacher, my mother, my brother!” Miss Baa looks to me and says, “You see how they are?” Miss Baa says to the student, “What are you doing? You love me? Show me in class. Who is your teacher? Miss Lam? Go love Lam.” The student initiated physical contact and wasn’t rebuffed until she came back and grabbed lower at Miss Baa’s waist. Miss Baa looks at me and Miss Lam before reacting so it is possible she is considering how it looks to others before she pushed the student away. Miss Baa says to me, “She is a hypocrite.” The student says in English, “She is wonderful. She is a inter--” Miss Baa corrects her, “She is AN interesting*
teacher,” slowly enunciating the words. Another girl walks by and proclaims, “I don’t love anyone!” Then she swings back and says “I love Miss Lam! She is the best teacher. She is the moon (an idiomatic expression for beauty)! She is my heart!” and she puts both hands over her heart and raises them to the sky.

One of the most common mechanisms of enforcement that I witnessed (at least once a week) was the symbolic smack. Corporal punishment is banned in schools (though I heard it was still carried out today, especially in boys’ schools) but it is still legal in the home. The symbolic smack looked like a light slap to the check, back of the head, or upper arm but accompanied with a grin. Sometimes the smack was shocking or forceful, pushing the student’s head or face away, but usually the students grinned back at the teacher. On several occasions, the female teachers slapped each other on the face or behind, both grinning. The symbolic slap is embedded in a playful context, but always carried some form of verbal reprimand. These reprimands included: “Why are you doing your work all of a sudden?”; “All right, class. Quiet! Calm down!”; “Sit down”; “Get to class” (this from a teacher to another teacher). Miss Baa said that sometimes when she is angry at a student, she hits the back of her head with a book. “The students think I am joking,” she said. “But I am actually kind of angry and serious too.” When I asked students what was considered a “good” teacher, an overarching theme was moderation. Nice, but not too nice. Serious, but not too serious. Several teachers warned me about others at the school who were “nice, but easily angered.” Verbal and physical expressions of anger in teachers, students or parents were always remarked upon in negative terms.

**Classroom Teaching with Miss Baa**
To illustrate how and why teachers use practical schemas to strategize the social performance of teaching, we will follow Miss Baa through some lessons devoted to culture in the first few weeks of the fall term and focus on Miss Baa’s appeals to and mediation of student sympathies. Extended ethnographic vignettes are crucial to reproduce how it feels when “…between 300 and 600 interactions take place in one hour of class time” (Ballantine and Hammack 2011:219).

10th grade with a class Miss Baa taught last year in 9th. When she comes in, the girls sit quickly and pay quiet attention to her, even a rowdy girl who had given another teacher trouble in homeroom. Miss Baa says “Don’t sit in groups. Don’t sit in groups. Stand up.” It appears that Miss Baa has higher expectations of behavior for this class than the previous one and begins the lesson faster. The first unit is “Culture.”

Miss Baa: “We are going to talk about the first module. What does ‘culture’ mean?” The rowdy girl says “To me culture means knowledge, about ancient things, the old people who cooks ancient food, not like modern, y’ani (like, you know) fast food.” Another student answers: “You don’t need to have knowledge to have culture.” Students argue back and forth, over each other. Miss Baa sums up, and defers the argument by shifting to the next topic in the book subtitled ‘Traditions and Habits,’ “Maybe you mean by knowledge, habits and traditions we have.”

Miss Baa: “Any culture in the world, what does it have?” Students answer by holding up their hand and waiting to be called on by Miss Baa or by just calling out the answer, “Language.” Miss Baa says, “Bravo, kaman (next, also), what are the parts of a culture?” Students answer, “traditions and habits” and Miss Baa continues, “Where do we get these
traditions and habits?” When students answer, “religion” Miss Baa says, “Religion, sah (correct), so religion is a part of culture.” [food] “Yes, food, because food is different from one culture to another, bardu (colloquial filler word).” [clothes] “Yes, bardu, clothes or the way we wear them. Do we wear clothes the same way as America?” Miss Baa looks to me and smiles, and I smile back. [headscarf] “Religion, especially our religion, has a big impact on wearing clothes.” [art] “Art, bravo. Each place has its own characteristics.” [buildings] “By buildings do you mean architecture? We have our own achievements, we are unique.”

Miss Baa shifts to the book. “Look at the pictures on the first page, what do you see?” [pizza] [mansaf (Jordan’s national chicken and rice dish)] “What are we talking about here?” [culture] Miss Baa, “Only Tanween and Fatha have fingers!” When one girl calls out an answer without being called on, Miss Baa says “I’m asking her, not you!” and laughs. Students around her laugh with her.

A student calls out, “seafood!” Miss Baa replies, “Do you like seafood? I don’t think we have seafood as a main thing here. Why is that?” [Aqaba!] “Why, do you know why? Fingers! Fingers! Aiwa (Okay) ya.... um?” Miss Baa blanks on the student’s name, so the student calls it out. [Fasila!] “Fasila.” [because we do not have sea, a lot of sea]

“Who is this?” Miss Baa points to another picture on the page about ‘culture’. “We don’t know? We will read about it. Fingers ya Tanween, fingers!”


“What is this picture here? [Sydney Opera House] So it is a building. Sah ou wa la? (Correct or not?)” “Everyone knows this picture!” [Petra!] “Ya, Fatha.” [it is one of the seven wonders of the world] “When was it elected?” [2007] “Tanween, Bravo.”
“What do you see in this picture? Describe it?”

“Who has been to Petra? Who would like to tell us about her trip.” Silence. “Are you shy from Rebecca?” she asks students as she waves at me. Fatha raises her hand and tells a story about a trip to Petra.

“Mara tani (col. again, mara thani in fusha), Do you think food is a part of our culture? Our buildings and art? Our religion?” [Yes, sah] “What is the title of our new module?” [culture] “There are three units. What is the title of our first unit? ‘We are what we eat.’ Look at this picture here. Where are they from and how do you know?” [China] “How do we know they are from China? What are they holding in their hands? [two thin sticks, chopsticks] Two thin sticks. Chop sticks. Do we eat with chopsticks? [no!] It is a part of their culture. [Only in Chinese restaurants] Only in Chinese restaurants.”

[Miss! Miss Miss Miss Miss] Miss Baa, in a low frustrated voice but with a calm face says, “Use your fingers!” At this point there are about seven hands up and Miss Baa holds up her pointer finger and bounces it.

“Where are they from? I want many fingers.” About ten hands are up.

“I have here three questions” Many hands are up. [Teacher, I want to read!] “Fingers!” “Where is your book?” Miss Baa inquires of a student who then shakes her head. Miss Baa picks another girl and tells her to “Stand up. With a high voice read the three questions.” After she reads, Miss Baa says “I want from you now, who understands the words. Is there anyone who doesn’t understand?” In pairs, Miss Baa has the students discuss the three questions. “Tayeb ya tasi’ (ninth grade), uh sorry ya ‘ashir (tenth grade). Fatha, read the first question.” Miss Baa interrupts the student reading the question and says, “Will you please listen to each other!??” [We are not talking] Miss Baa goes back to Fatha and says, “Please raise your voice a little bit
please. Stand up. Read.” Sometimes students call out answers without being called on but she still repeats their answer if it is correct.

It’s hot and Miss Baa opened the door for a breeze, but it is too loud so after two minutes, she shuts the door.

In the classroom, Miss Baa performs authority over cultural claims and categories, appealing to students’ shared sympathies. The interaction between the teacher and students in class operates according to behavioral expectations from having the students the year before, meaning that students start class by sitting quietly and paying attention to her directions not to sit in clumped groups. Since students stay in their classrooms most of the time and teachers move between them, the atmosphere in the classroom is influenced by student ownership. Some students organize their seats around their friends. For a teacher to reorganize seats takes time away from class and can result in ambiguous physical confrontation (a teacher pulling a student’s arm or pulling an inhabited chair across the room). In the selection above, Miss Baa merely reminds them that she would like the students organized into orderly rows and columns, not to sit in groups, and tells them to stand up in order to more efficiently move their seats. Miss Baa tells me that she likes having a class from the year before because she knows them so well she does not need to give a diagnostic test. “I could use their grades from last year,” she says. “I can give them their grades right now.” Miss Baa explains that with few, slight exceptions students generally stay in the same grade range from term to term or year to year and at this point, she knows the students well enough to know who might improve or whose grade might drop with difficult course material. Miss Baa even slips and calls them ninth graders instead of their current status as tenth graders but catches and corrects herself.
In the class described above, Miss Baa used one of her more common teaching techniques but one that introduces a level of risk to a teacher’s authoritative knowledge: open question-and-response. With this format, she engages students like Fatha who are regularly talkative and assertive and could be disruptive with a different teaching style. Miss Baa tells me that she likes this technique because she can ask broad questions and get their opinions and thoughts beyond the textbook. Miss Baa gets a wide range of responses with this technique, and usually must confront contradictory or challenging comments as well. In the selection above, Fatha said she thought culture referred to ancient or premodern life, another student wanted to talk about seafood out of Aqaba, and another reminded her that Jordanians still use chopsticks if they eat in Chinese restaurants. Miss Baa has the codified discursive content in the textbook in front of her with its definitions and examples of culture, but she also has her interpretations and assumptions of the same content. Nowhere in the textbook does it say seafood is not part of Jordanian culture, but it lists dishes like mansaf that are “Jordanian foods” contrasted with pictures of noodles eaten with chopsticks as “Chinese food.” When students call out answers Miss Baa thinks are correct, she repeats them even if the student did not have their hand raised. If a student says something Miss Baa thinks is incorrect, she ignores it and moves on (like with Fatha and premodern culture) or corrects the response. When the student called out “seafood,” Miss Baa says, “Do you like seafood? I don’t think we have seafood as a main thing here. Why is that?” She is continuing to pleasantly engage with the student (Do you like seafood?), providing the “right” answer (I don’t think we have seafood as a main thing here), and orienting the student to further language production in English (Why is that?). Miss Baa’s question-and-response style was highly regarded by the English district supervisor’s evaluation later in the semester for eliciting complex verbal responses from students. This style also allows her not to respond to comments if
she doesn’t want to or doesn’t know how to, like that day’s issue of whether “you need to have knowledge to have culture” or not.

In this unit on “culture,” Miss Baa uses the word choice of “we,” “our own,” “each place,” “our religion” to train students in the use of identity signifiers. The presumed identity is variously and ambiguously Arab, Jordanian, Ammani, Shami (Levantine) or Muslim. At one level, Miss Baa could be referring to the “we” who are in the classroom or school, but that definition is often confounded by students with different experiences. A confusing subtitle in the textbook proclaims, “We are what we eat” but students notice that “we” don’t all eat the same things. In this class, Miss Baa explains, “How do we know they are from China? What are they holding in their hands? …Two thin sticks. Chop sticks. Do we eat with chopsticks? [no!] It is a part of their culture.” However, one student reminds the class that it is possible to be Jordanian and use chopsticks “in Chinese restaurants.” In a later class, Miss Baa tries to reconcile differences by saying that different families have different habits and traditions. The distinction between “us” and “them” is unclear in reference to clothing as well. Miss Baa asks, “Do we wear clothes the same as America?” The only student response was “headscarf,” leaving ambiguous the identity of students in the class without a headscarf or Americans who wear a headscarf.

Practical reality shapes teacher-student interactions. Although Miss Baa had these students last year, there are some new students and she asks for her name during the course of the class period. The novelty does not keep Miss Baa from repeatedly referring to the class as a whole as the one she had last year. Another new student doesn’t have her textbook yet in these early weeks of term, possibly a transfer student or refugee, so Miss Baa must decide how to deal with students of unknown academic background and preparation. Usually, she tells such students to follow along with the students sitting around them though sometimes such students, presumably
disheartened or overwhelmed, put their heads in their arms and disengage from class. Miss Baa deals with other practical issues such as the heat, cold, or noise in the classroom though she has limited options. In the excerpt above, she opened the door for a couple minutes to give airflow to the stuffy, chalk-filled room but closed it again when the hall noise was too loud. Miss Baa tries to moderate the noise level in the class, since high student engagement also means high noise level (students calling out answers and yelling “Miss” or “Teacher”). As seen in the previous excerpt, Miss Baa responds to what she thinks is noise by saying “Will you please listen to each other!?” but the students counter with, “We are not talking.”

Another practical issue is Miss Baa’s limited knowledge of some content, such as the Sydney Opera House in this unit. She tells me that she didn’t know what it looked like or how to spell it before reading the information in the textbook during lesson preparation that week and she still avoids writing it on the board because of uncertainty over spelling. There are many lessons in the textbooks that are new to her, like the Irish Potato Famine or Brazilian coffee production. The other English teachers who were listening to this conversation in the teachers lounge chime in that they are the same way. Miss Raa asks me if I know about paella since it is in her textbook as an example of Spanish food, and if I could tell her class about it. I ask why the English textbooks would have such seemingly random information, and the teachers suppose it is because English is the language of international business and students might use it in their future careers in global trade, journalism, education, or development.

In order to show how teachers perform knowledge about culture and truth for their students, next we follow Miss Baa to a particularly difficult group of students in twelfth grade literary stream. Miss Baa and other teachers in the lounge warn me away from this class, as it would not be a good example of student learning. I persist, seeking instead examples of teacher
agency, decision-making, and practice.

Second period, tawjihi adabi (twelfth grade literary stream) with Miss Baa:

Before we enter the class, she asks me, “Are you sure you want to go to tawjihi adabi? If you insist.” We entered a loud classroom to much giggling. On the board is the date in English on the left and Arabic on the right with bismillah i-Rahman i-Raheem (“In the name of God most gracious, most merciful,” traditional Islamic verse said before beginning an endeavor) in chalk at the top of the board. One of the students, in a long gray coat instead of her uniform, was sitting in the teacher’s desk studying. When we entered, a girl swept up and one erased the board and wrote <<Migration - to leave your home country to another country>>.

Miss Baa spoke in short, clipped Arabic with a stern facial expression, “Don’t talk. I want you to be quiet. I want you to open your books. What is our chapter title? [migration] Why do people leave their countries? [to visit] [find a job] Economic situation, tourism, yes [natural disaster] Starvation or famine. What about animals? Why do animals leave to find shelter? [Miss, what means shelter?] Or to move north to south or to raise their young. Look at the pictures here. We have explanations under the pictures. Read the explanation under the picture.”

“Would you like to emigrate to America for studying? for work? because you know they have a better economy than Jordan afikra (by the way, ‘ala fikra in fusha). I want you to look at the questions and work in pairs. Work, ya Marbuta! If there is any new word, I want you to memorize it.”

“That’s enough!” Miss Baa points at a student who starts to answer: [success] Miss Baa interrupts her, ‘That’s enough now! Ok, success. What part of speech is it? <<succeed success (n) successful successfully>>"
<<development>> What does it mean? [process of ...]” Loud group in back right, one girl facing away from the board. “Hilla (now)!” Four hands raised.

<<deteriorate>> [to get worse] “Yes, deteriorate means to get worse. What is the noun? It ends in -ate, What do we think? [deterioration] Thank you. Thank you for LISTENING!” Six hands are raised. Miss Baa writes: <<emigrate emigration>> Miss Baa berates students in the back right corner in Arabic, asking them why they don’t listen. “Okay, emigration. Why do we emigrate? What is the new word? I said it at the beginning of class. [sar...stav--] starvation. Ok, last word. Industrialise. Yalla Miss! [walla23 (by God) ya miss!] What do you mean walla ya miss??” Miss Baa releases angry, exasperated phrases in Arabic. “I will write some questions and I want you to read silently. READ SILENTLY. I don’t mean to talk to your friend. Read silently with your eyes."

Miss Baa writes on the board from handwritten sentences in her lesson planning notebook, reading aloud quietly as she does. The girl who swept up went up and asked a question. Miss Baa answered and looked back. A student waved her over. “Try to answer these questions by reading. Imagine you are in the exam.”

“These questions are from Text A only,” Miss Baa looked around to see if she’s heard. “A only.” “Tawjihi, I want you to answer these questions” She gives a pointed look to the students on the right side of class, “You have five minutes. Yalla ya Marbuta! I’m going to have marks in participation.” One of the consistently participating students waves her hand and calls, “walla ya miss” but Miss Baa says, “Ma’ lish (it doesn’t matter; don’t worry about it).”

All but one girl are in groups of two to four. Near the front of class, one girl wearing her hair loose, a kufiya bracelet and double earrings works alone.

23 Fusha Arabic phrase is و الله “[I promise] by God.”
Miss Baa answers questions of two girls in the middle. The talking I overhear is not on topic. A girl up front with a red bow and braces and long hair writes on her neighbor’s desk and grins. Students on the left call ‘Teacher! Teacher!’ Miss Baa, “Ok, are you finished?” “Not yet,” says one girl in front right who works when Miss Baa is looking. Miss Baa raises her finger and asks, “Who would like to read?” A girl in the back right calls, “Teacher!” and is selected to read. A girl in the middle is leaning over in her chair. As the girl reads, Miss Baa repeats pronunciation of different words. Girls around her giggle at every misspoken word. The reader collapses in giggles. Red bow comes up front and says “Teacher!” Miss Baa, “Ok, enough. Go on.” The student asks, “What’s this?” Miss Baa points to where they are on the page and says, “Starvation, disease.” As the student is reading, one girl from the middle comes up and asks a question. Miss Baa ignores her and carries on, “Ok, we are going to answer question 1. I will choose randomly. Ya Kesra, what kind of work did the Irish people do in the 19th century?... What kind of work? teaching? working?” Kesra answers, “agriculture.” Miss Baa presses her, “What does agriculture mean?” A different student gives the Arabic term, “zira’a” but Miss Baa says, “I did not call you.” Another student calls out, “farmers!” “There was a potato famine ya Marbuta ya hala (affectionate term), so they didn’t find food to eat so there was a famine.” Five hands are raised. “Listen to Shadda!” Shadda reads from the book, loudly over the din, “Because they had - they could earn as much in America.” Miss Baa asks, “Why did some people travel to America? I have two reasons: Because...?” A student reads directly from the textbook, “They heard that they could earn up to four times as much in America.” Miss Baa continues, “And? [there was a famine] that killed up to 350,000 people.” Miss Baa writes on the board, looking over the seven raised hands. “What did they grow?” [Potato!] “5. Quote a sentence that indicates that 75% of the population stayed in
Ireland.” [potatoes] “No, we are not talking about potatoes anymore [25% had left for America]
Yes, 25% or one quarter had left so that indicates 75% had stayed!” Miss Baa says, directed to
students who answered the last question.

Miss Jeem, the student teacher, comes to the door and talks to Miss Baa. Students talk quietly but Miss Baa has to talk over them to restart class.

“Tayyeb (Okay). Give me a word from the first paragraph that means to get worse [deteriorate] Give me a word that means industrial activity [industrialize] What does agriculture mean? [zira’a] Let’s read the second paragraph.”

Front right students raise the left side of their lip in a sneer and say “Khalas!” (Enough!) and tell her to leave because it’s time to end. Miss Baa is very upset to be roughly dismissed by disruptive students and tells a student as she leaves the classroom, “Ana z’aalana” (I am upset). Miss Baa goes directly to the counselor Miss Meem’s office to complain in Arabic about Marbuta and the other girl on the right that it is “unfair to the class that they are so disruptive.”

Outside Miss Meem’s office, Marbuta and a couple of the loudest girls wait for her. Miss Baa says she told Miss Meem about Marbuta’s negative behavior and recommended she be transferred to a different class or even school. The students follow Miss Baa to the teachers lounge and yell at Miss Baa that “God will punish her because of what she did and that her conscience will tell her what is right.” Miss Baa says the same back to her. “Shame on you,” says Miss Baa. “It’s not good behavior to say such things about a teacher.”

Later, to me, Miss Baa said Marbuta was upset to be singled out of all the girls but Miss Baa said the class would be more manageable without her. Miss Meem tells me later that given Marbuta’s low economic class family background and low grades, she has little chance of passing her tawjihi exams and will probably withdraw from school soon. The counselor tells me
that girls in Marbuta’s circumstances stay in school only to socialize with friends and keep from being bored at home.

As an observer of behavior, I did not note any discernible difference in behavior of students in this “vulgar” class from other classes. However, the tone and atmosphere were distinctly different. “Khalas” [enough!] from one student might be in a plaintive and playful tone but from the student in this class it sounded disrespectful and dismissive. Miss Baa’s teaching in this class focused on reading aloud, memorization of vocabulary, and answering “what” and “why” questions using vocabulary words. To confront the constant stream of talking and gigglng in friend groups, Miss Baa calls for quiet, thanks students for listening (sarcastically emphasizing the words while looking at talking students), and threatens “marks in participation.” The balance of “quiet” and “participation” is a constant negotiation for teachers. As Marbuta and other students protest later, many students already read the book in private tutoring lessons, know they will get the tawjihi score they need, are not planning on college and career, or just don’t care about Irish potatoes. Teachers like Miss Baa are aware of this possible range of reasons for disruptive behavior, but are still expected to “manage” the class.

In awal tawjihi adabi (eleventh grade literary stream), Miss Baa is late climbing the stairs because of talking to Marbuta and so resident disciplinarian Miss Dal glares at her tardiness. When we arrive, the students stand and say “Good Morning” while one student sweeps the floor and picks up trash. Miss Baa writes <<Festivals>> on the board. Fattha, a student with uncovered long hair in front, asks Miss Baa “why she is angry” and Miss Baa says, “I’ll tell you after class.” The student looks at her and me asks in Arabic, “What?” Miss Baa says to me in
the hearing of the class “Tawiji adabi, they are vulgar, right?” I shrug twice as they watch and the student says, not looking at Miss Baa, “Well, it’s not for us to say.”

Miss Baa tells the girls to come up with questions “As if you are the teachers now, not me.” Most students are in jeans and sneakers (some walking, some running, some without socks, some brightly colored) under their uniforms. Miss Baa moves on, saying, “Who wants to read?” Fattha, who earlier said she “didn’t know English,” volunteers to read.

Another student comes to the door, knocking first, but leaves without needing anything.

“First of all, I want you to find the new words. What is a new word?” [annual] “What does annual mean?” More than 10 hands are raised. “I think you have prepared the definitions like I asked. Very good. It means every year.” A student says another vocabulary word, “sacrifice.” Miss Baa calls a student to write the definition on the board, while the student continues the Islamic saying, “sacrifice to Allah subhan allah (“glorious is God”).”

Miss Baa points out that there are adjective, noun, and verb [A student incorrectly says, “sacrify” without being corrected] forms of the words. [community] Miss Baa says it is another word for society and the adjective is communal. [hardship] [forgiveness] Miss Baa says, “What does it mean, forgiveness?” Students respond, “stop being angry,” and “if you ask for forgiveness you ask for something wrong you have done.” [remembrance] Miss Baa points out the suffix -ce as “something we add to nouns” and -ual to “some adjectives.”

“Let’s move on to your questions.” [When do we celebrate Eid al Adha (Islamic holiday Festival of Sacrifice)?] Miss Baa repeats the question and calls on a student with her hand raised for an answer, “at the end of pilgrimage.” Miss Baa waves at another raised hand for another prepared question, “What do Muslims consider Eid al Adha?” Miss Baa queries, “What do Muslims in the Arab world, or the Islamic world, what do you mean?” A different student
restates the question, “what does Eid al Adha represent for Muslims?” A student answers, “a new start” and Miss Baa diplomatically says, “It represents many things.” A student reads an answer directly from the text using the keywords ‘remembrance’ and ‘hardships, “a remembrance of all the hardships in the world.”

A first grader comes in the class and hugs a student, her sister, then exits.

The intrusion made Miss Baa forget the line of thought, so was confused when a student says, “a time of forgiveness.” “What?” Miss Baa asks. The student answers, “what it represents!” Miss Baa laughs. “Oh, yes.” The student continues that it represents, “unity among Muslims.”

A student reads, “What do families do in Eid al Adha?” At this, fourteen hands are raised! Many students answer: prayer, new clothes, visit family. Miss Baa says, “We should all go to communal prayer. Even children. We know this, sah ou wa la? Then we go home, and wear our finest clothes, our new clothes, and then visit family. Not only our nearest relatives, but our farthest relatives! One student says, “My family goes from Amman to Irbid!” Miss Baa reads from the textbook, “We have dinner with our relatives” then she adds, “I advise you not to go to restaurants. Why? Because it is crowded and the food is not good, anjad! (really!) so make it at home.”

Miss Baa asks, “What do we cook?” Everyone cries, “mansaf!” One student reads, “Most Jordanian families have a special breakfast (referring to the evening meal breaking the fast) with meat and tomato and for dinner barbecue” and Miss Baa responds, “Ah yes, I know this. It is good.” One student offers an alternative, “Teacher, we don’t go out. Family visits us and we go out for fast food and if we have meat from a sheep we freeze it.” Miss Baa tries to handle this alternative relationship to family, holiday, and food by repeating, “It is different from one family
to another. It is different from one family to another.”

In this class, Miss Baa is able to expect discipline (students cleaning trash and following a script of “Good morning, Teacher!”) even when she is late. They also “prepared definitions like she [Miss Baa] asked.” Miss Baa tells me later, “Preparation for me is the most important thing.”

Given these fulfilled expectations, when students socialize, giggle, or speak out of turn, she is not quick to anger as in the “vulgar” class but instead waits for them to notice and quiet on their own.

Broad conceptual questions like “Muslims in the Arab world, or the Islamic world, what do you mean?” are introduced but left unresolved, a possible attempt to accomplish national goals like “critical thinking” without the answers to such questions in the textbook or society at large. Miss Baa is also confronted by the student whose family does not go visit extended family members for home-cooked meals but rather hosts family and “goes out to fast food” restaurants.

In response, Miss Baa repeats twice, sounding a little vague and ambivalent, “It is different from one family to another. It is different from one family to another.” Perhaps in her repetition, searching for a resolution to different answers to a textbook question and wondering which will be “correct” according to tawjih examiners. Miss Baa also takes the teacher’s prerogative to share her own advice, as she frequently does in class on everything from religious dress to the proper time of day to drink different kinds of tea. She expounds, “We should all go to communal prayer. Even children. We know this, sah ou wa la (Isn’t that right)?” Additionally, she tells the students, “We have dinner with our relatives. I advise you not to go to restaurants. Why? Because it is crowded and the food is not good, anjad! (really!) so make it at home.” I record that Miss Baa is more generous with her advice in the “good” classes and rarely offers misbehaving
students advise other than to listen and behave.

Thus, Miss Baa knows very well that ideas in the textbook are negotiated through spontaneous, risky, interpersonal discourse and are often ambiguously related to students’ lives. Practical schemata for teachers are based in this precarious social performance and mediation of knowledge and identity. The social performance of teaching, though supported by increasingly specialized higher education, lesson planning, and professional development, is mostly spontaneous, immediate, and practical. The student audience introduces a range of unknowns, even possible contradictions to textbook content.

As a final word on the determining influence of student audience, let’s hear Miss Baa discuss her teaching methods, preferences, and practical concerns, particularly for eleventh and twelfth grade in preparation for the tawjihi graduation exams.

*Miss Baa said that when she was in her second year of teaching, the headmaster was male and told her she should follow the book only and let the girls talk in groups, “even in grammar!” and not do anything. Miss Baa said she maybe was a better teacher back then because she was new and wanted to prove herself and prepared more. She said she got 21/30, 23/30 and then 27/30 from supervisors. They wanted her to change her teaching methods and have small groups. The last supervisor especially liked when she asked the class to come up with questions from the short story on their own to ask and answer in class. Miss Baa said the last supervisor had said she “was good at warm up,” asking them lots of questions about the topic. Miss Baa said she “likes asking questions to find out about their knowledge of things ‘not in the curriculum’ like capitals, culture...” but in tawjihi she doesn’t because she “just tells them things.” In tawjihi, she must “give, give, give, not take.” Miss Baa said it depends on the class*
because if it is good and quiet and smart, they can come up with their own questions but not every class.

Miss Baa must keep practicality and various meanings of “the right thing to do” in mind when she focuses on correct answers according to the textbook and personal opinion, is broadly inclusive but also specific to students’ varied personal backgrounds, solves problems as they come up (temperature, noise, students without textbook materials, classroom interruptions), mediates students’ interests, personal interests, and the centralized education system’s (textbook) expectations, keeps student engagement high but manage noise level (through techniques like hand raising), has different kinds of relationships with different students since it takes two (teacher and student) to have a good relationship, and that sometimes there is too much to be done and some things stay undone.

Reminiscent of teachers in the US and elsewhere who lament “teaching to the test,” Miss Baa and all other teachers at Ammani Girls’ School - all other teachers with whom I spoke in Jordan for that matter - emphasized the importance of tawjihi testing. With high stakes high school exit exams looming, teachers of eleventh and twelfth grade admit avoiding discussion for its own sake and, in Miss Baa’s words, “just tell them things.” Teachers have different expectations for different classes depending on where those classes fit in the larger institutional system of education with respect to graduation requirements, weighted grades, optional electives, career outlook of students, previous grades, and personal history with the teacher. Miss Baa, and many other teachers, explained the practicality of small group and how different small group dynamics could be. As Miss Baa says, “It depends on the class because if it is good and quiet and smart, they can come up with their own questions but not every class.” Sometimes students use
small groups as an excuse to talk with friends off topic.

Miss Baa highlighted the relevance of “wanting to prove yourself” as a new teacher or perhaps in her case also in her current review by the district supervisor. First year teacher Miss Raa echoed Miss Baa’s affirmation that new teachers over-prepare, citing the stacks of lesson plans that she made for each class. Teacher authority is precarious because of the unknown and possibly challenging student audience and practicalities of the classroom interaction. This social context makes teaching about much more than inputting and assessing data from textbooks into minds, but rather about the mediation of moral and practical categories on which a student audience may or may not find the teacher authoritative. Anyone with experience of teaching knows that a fundamental aspect of the teaching practice is the need for emotional stability and patience for interaction with students (including buzz words such as “classroom management” and “relationship-building”). A judgmental student audience has little patience for a novice teacher, but the adult peer audience of other teachers, and administrators also affects teacher authority.

**Queen Rania’s Visit**

With only five minutes warning one day in mid-September, Her Royal Majesty Queen Rania and her security entourage visited the school. She stayed for a few hours mainly on the school first floor and met with the principal and administration staff, the first grade class, a physics class, and Miss Baa’s twelfth grade scientific stream English class. In the teachers’ lounge, Queen Rania sat in the physics teacher’s seat and spoke with all the teachers. The vice principal told me that when they heard the queen was coming she told all the students to hurry and clean their rooms.
When Miss Baa found out the queen would visit her class, she told her students that she would repeat the lesson they had just finished on “Festivals” because the queen wanted to see her teach. Students are generally very sympathetic to their teachers during external observation. The queen asked what was the most famous festival in Jordan and a student answered “Eid al Adha” because the textbook and classroom discussion had been about religious festivals. Another student answered “the Jerash festival.” Miss Baa said that while the queen sat in her class, she asked if Miss Baa “used computerized lessons.” When Queen Rania asked Miss Baa if she “used computerized lessons,” Miss Baa had answered “Yes,” but told me that “No, not really.” She said only ninth grade had computer class and she thought they didn’t have computer class in tawjihi scientific stream. Laughing and pointing at her cheek, Miss Baa said the queen had kissed her check so when she went home she told her husband not to kiss it.

The visit was accompanied by print and TV news reporters. The queen sat with them in the teacher’s lounge in Miss Hah’s seat and Miss Hah appeared on the 6 o’clock news on Jordan TV. Another teacher said the queen was “totally skinny” with “nothing here or here or here” pointing to her breasts, waist, hips, and butt, had her hair uncovered, and “wore jeans!” Female Muslim teachers in public school would not have been allowed to wear jeans and their hair uncovered like the queen. Miss Baa said she tried to watch Ru’iya TV and saw the physics teacher on the 6 o’clock news but missed herself on the 8 o’clock show. One of her female relatives called her a short time after and said they had seen her on TV. Miss Baa said she had been busy in the evening, but furrowed her brow and told me that she also wasn’t sure her husband would have been happy to see her on public television like that.
CHAPTER 4: WHO TEACHES BEST?

Not unique to Jordan, teachers everywhere negotiate uncertainty around the right thing to do and the right way to enact their authority. The culture of teaching often includes reference to the care of children, enculturation of patriotic citizens, “love of learning,” “political emancipation based on education,” but also “obedience to authority and hegemony” (bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress intro). Enculturation, the social process by which culture is learned and transmitted within and across generations, relies on direct and indirect transmission, gentle and forceful corrective actions, observation of peers and authority figures, pushing boundaries, and experimental practice. Teachers, who are responsible for defining and transmitting culture, morals, and knowledge, often feel like they don’t know what is “socially acceptable.” Culture influences, but does not determine, the behaviors of individuals, especially when the gendered scripts are ambiguous or undergoing explicitly transformational reform by the very institutions charged with their enculturation. Cultural rules are subject to interpretation, manipulation, contestation, and articulation by individual human agents, alone and in groups.

This chapter follows teachers in the school as authority figures who are nonetheless vulnerable to each other and their various audiences. In an evaluative institution like a public school, teachers are responsible for felicitous performance of ethics, knowledge, womanhood, and monarchical citizen-subject with the highest stakes. Poor performance would result not only in social ostracism and loss of moral reputation, but loss of employment, categorization of ignorance or dishonesty, and possible arrest. My approach as an educational anthropologist studying religious and political belonging and identity education is not at this point focused on the learning processes of students, but rather on the discourses of teaching, education planning
and reform, and teacher training.

The essential questions of the dissertation are how and why do teachers teach the way they do? My interest is not judging who is or is not a “bad teacher” but rather illustrating precarity and performance inherent in the culture of teaching. Social performance of definition, negotiation, mediation, and reproduction is how teaching and learning works, and how agency within institutions works. The multitude of audience members (those who eat Chinese food, those who eat fast food, those who love mansaf, those who go to Petra, those who eat sea food), and the corresponding practical schemas on deeper issues of morality and ontology (who you are and how to do it right) make teaching as complicated as there are actors involved. Mass, compulsory, public schooling is this diverse space even in a socialized-centralized, Arab, Sunni, female context that would seem to hold many categories of diversity constant.

The overarching answers of the dissertation’s essential questions start from the interest in agency within institutions (that relies on processes of practice, performance, and evaluation) with the ambiguity and precariousness of the educational institutional context. Teacher agency is the construction and mediation of practical schemas, negotiating expectations of rightness (morality), political ontology (being), and practicality. Teacher authority is ambiguous when performed to audiences. This social process can be understood through and has implications for the learning theory of constructivism.

In order to answer Dr. Alif’s question, “What is right? What is the right thing to do?” we must take into account the ways rightness (morality) is connected to gendered political ontologies and social performance for varied audiences. The relevant gendered political ontologies in this monograph are the Arab family, Jordanian monarchical citizen-subject, Islamic umma, and public educator. I do not assume the ontological selves and meanings listed here to be
discrete and real things; I assume that these are layered and intersecting categories of meaningful social discourse that generate and are regenerated by everyday interaction. These ontological categories have no individual meaning outside of performance to an audience or at least to an “Other” imaginary audience. Miss Dal, Miss Baa, and the other married teachers navigate the role expectations of wife and mother to the family, a veiled (muhajiba) Muslim, and a well-educated public servant within view of and dynamic interaction with other authority figures.

**English Teacher Evaluation**

Teachers in the school are embedded in hierarchies of power and agency. They have significantly more freedom of movement than students, are responsible for classroom activities, and have a variety of disciplinary options available to enforce behavioral norms and school rules. However, they are also subordinate to administrators and supervisors from the school, district, and state. Although the most basic distinction between roles in the school is that between students and teachers, the roles are often at risk of ambiguous performance and normative evaluation. Teachers strove to be “good teachers” and perform their role properly but this was difficult for them to know how to do given their multiple, overlapping and sometimes contradictory responsibilities and expectations.

**First Grade English with Miss Taa**

*Miss Taa has her first class period free. In the lounge, she tells me she has to re-write the “content analysis” because even though she had used all the headings from the guide, it wasn’t in the format the administration wanted. She says that the vice-principal Miss Fah told her she could get a student to rewrite it in the form, and Miss Taa asks me, “Is that fair? It’s the same*
material. Why should I rewrite it?” Miss Taa says the administration had “written that Miss Taa had no content analysis.” Miss Taa repeats that it is “unfair” and says, “A student should do it? Why? When I went to a workshop at the British Council, they said the teacher should be the author of the content analysis. Who knows better than the author?”

Miss Taa shakes her head and says ruefully, “There is a bit of a contradiction between classes. They have me teaching some lower levels and maybe I will teach them or maybe not. So I will teach them until I know.” She used to teach tawjihi but this year is tasked to 1st grade. She is quite unhappy about this. She says, “This is the first time I taught this class,” meaning this grade level. There are 31 students when I arrive and one or two come in later, sitting in groups of 3 to 5 at small, round tables. Miss Taa asks the class, “Do you know me? What is my name? Miss... Taa.” She writes her name on the board: <<Taa>>.

She goes to one student and says, “Stand up.” All stand, but she says “Not all of you” and the others sit back down. Miss Taa says, “Listen. I’m going to teach you English” and repeats in Arabic. “My name is...” and student repeats “My name is...” If the student doesn’t understand, Miss Taa repeats it in English. Miss Taa brings a girl to the front of the class and repeats a script: “My name is Miss Taa. What is your name?” She does this with all of the students in their seats, then brings up four students asking for their names, then brings up two at a time, having them repeat the script. She has one student say to the other “Yalla, my name is... What’s your name?” When the student says it correctly, Miss Taa claps and says to the class “Clap to them! Excellent.” She brings up another pair of students and tells one to “Ask her.” When one of the students is confused, she repeats, “Ask her.” When they are done with the script, she says “Thank you a lot.” Miss Taa holds their shoulders and squats down so her face is closer.
One girl in the back right is eating a sandwich. Miss Taa walks to her and says, “Why are you eating? Inti jaw‘ana? (Are you hungry?)” One girl calls to her as Miss Taa walks by, “Miss! Uhhibik kteer (col. I love you very much)!“ Miss Taa says, “Tuhibini kteer? You love me? I love you.” One girl is not in uniform and Miss Taa asks in Arabic why she is not.

Miss Taa continues, “Who knows the ABCs?” and calls on a girl out of uniform to sing up front. Miss Taa shows me a piece of paper and says “I want to see where is the difference in pronunciation. I will mark with an x. You see she said ‘abcd ah’.” She asks the girls. “Can you say them? Listen to her” and calls up another student. Miss Taa has the students say their names and then try to sing or say the ABCs. ‘Lmno’ was a definite problem section, along with ‘ef’. Miss Taa frequently interrupts the girls reciting their ABCs. She asks in Arabic, “Who isn’t listening?” Miss Taa pounds her pen on the table and says to the class “Listen to her!” and to the student says, “Raise your voice.” Miss Taa walks into the tables and says to one table, “Please habibti (my dear) listen.”

A girl comes up to her asking to go to the bathroom. Miss Taa asks her, “Why are you standing? ‘udi makanik (sit in your place)! sit down! What? Okay, go (to the bathroom).” She turns to the two students reciting A-G together as they get stalled on H-K and says, “Enough, okay, sit down.” Another student comes up asking for the bathroom and Miss Taa says to wait until the other girl comes back. Another student asks for the bathroom and Miss Taa says in Arabic, “Later.”

Miss Taa models how to sit by standing with her arms crossed tightly across her chest. She does this and asks the class in Arabic, “Who can sit like this?” Some students follow. She repeats this drill three or four times during class, and each time more students catch on and follow. Miss Taa says, “Excellent, mneeh (excellent)” and touches the student’s right shoulder.
with her left hand.

Two girls are playing together at the second table on the left, and when Miss Taa walks over a girl with bright pink glasses hits another girl on the arm while staring up at Miss Taa. Another girl at that table is eating a sandwich. Miss Taa tries to get them to pay attention, but they go back to playing when she moves on to the next table. Miss Taa calls out in Arabic, “Sit in your seat!” Two girls on the right are tickling each other, and Miss Taa grabs one by the arm and makes her sit at another desk. One girl comes up to Miss Taa and complains that she’s hungry. Three girls in the front right have balloons from their backpacks and Miss Taa tells them to put them away. One does but the other two bring them back out again. Through all this, Miss Taa has students come to the front to recite the ABCs, only paying attention to them when they make a mistake. Sometimes the student finishes and Miss Taa has them do it again because she wasn’t listening. Miss Taa corrects a student “Mish (not) zee, zed!” After students’ recitations occur a few times, the students now begin to clap without prompting.

Miss Taa says, “OK get a paper” and write your name in English on the cards. She waves her hand at the board to show students how she wrote her name on the board. The students don’t have flashcards or notebooks, so Miss Taa writes a note to parents to bring supplies in one of the students’ notebooks and tears out the paper to make copies to distribute the next day. Miss Taa says, “It would be too much to cut the paper from their copybooks.”

After class, Miss Taa says, “We are very interested in your feedback.” She asks me how I found her teaching. I tell her I was studying the relationship between teachers and students, as role models for adult morals and life in society, not evaluating who is good or not. Miss Taa says it was her first time in 1st grade and she thinks this young grade “needed a teacher with a special charisma.”
Miss Taa went directly to the district English evaluator, around the organizational hierarchy and her own school’s principal, concerned that Miss Baa was perhaps unqualified to teach tawjihi. At stake was Miss Taa’s prestige as a tawjihi teacher, her perceived career growth, and her relative power with peers and the administration at AGS. Miss Taa told Dr. Seen that she was concerned not just about Miss Baa’s lack of experience teaching tawjihi but also that Miss Baa didn’t expand herself with workshops and didn’t seem to care or seriously commit to teaching as a profession. Miss Taa used as evidence Miss Baa’s comportment, jocular speech, and chatting during planning periods.

**Ethnographic Vignette: Tawjihi English with Miss Baa**

The following story follows Miss Baa for an hour of English class for twelfth grade (also called *tawjihi* in reference to the name of the state standardized high school graduation exam) while observed by a district evaluator. Unique to Miss Baa are her personal relationships at home and at work, her responsibilities to twelfth grade students, and the potential consequences of the supervisor’s observation. However, she is also experiencing tensions that resonate beyond her classroom.

*November 2012 in Amman, Jordan*

_The bell rings. Miss Baa has just finished teaching class to the twelfth grade scientific stream under observation by the district English subject supervisor. Although the bell has rung, the students crowd around the supervisor, Dr. Seen, to ask about the upcoming high school graduation exams. The students ask Dr. Seen questions from their last graded exam, pointing to a particular question. Dr. Seen scans the question and says “Here you must quote exactly—write_
each comma, exactly, because it means quote—full stop. Tawjihi!’ he says calling the students to him, ‘Look to lines 43-46. Pay attention.’

The next teacher enters the classroom briefly but sees Dr. Seen and backs out.

A student asks Miss Baa if they have enough time to ask another question. Miss Baa looks from Dr. Seen to the door and nods, even though it will take time away from the next class.

Miss Baa tries to show Dr. Seen that the answer he gave was the answer she had in her teacher notes. He is focused on students and doesn’t see, so she turns to the front corner of the room and shows me. A student asks Dr. Seen, ‘Justify your answer, here. Is justify explain?’

Miss Baa speaks loudly in Arabic, facing Dr. Seen’s back, ‘When it says defend your answer or justify your answer it means find the sentence from the text. Also when it says find or quote the sentence.’

Dr. Seen turns to her and she shows her teacher notes to him. He tells me in English, ‘All the answers are here even though it’s Miss Baa’s first time teaching tawjihi.’

Miss Baa corrects him quietly, saying ‘Second time.’

The next teacher opens the door again and Dr. Seen says in Arabic, ‘One more minute.’

One student brings her exam to Dr. Seen and asks him to check whether her answer was correct. Miss Baa grins nervously. Dr. Seen says it was correct and Miss Baa quickly says, ‘No, this sentence was more correct.’ He says they’re both correct and Miss Baa grins nervously again. ‘Anjad? (Really?)’

Dr. Seen says in Arabic, ‘It’s a simple thing. Don’t you have an answer key?’ His tone sounds more helpful than judgmental, but it has opened the floodgates and five or more students start asking questions and pushing Dr. Seen to change their grade. The next teacher enters again and asks a student to erase the board, trying politely to force Miss Baa to exit. The student
presses Miss Baa about the exam as they exit, “Are you going to change it?”

As Miss Baa tells me later, she has to change the grade because the supervisor said it was correct in front of all the students, although not according to the answer key that she had. She said all the students now want her to change their grades.

Miss Baa thanks Dr. Seen and he says he’ll talk to her soon and check how she’s preparing the students for the tawjihi exam. She turns to me with deflated shoulders and says, “I have fifteen days left of term. What can I do?”

Miss Baa is now quite late to her next class, the twelfth grade literary stream. When she enters the classroom, students get back in their seats and one student erases the free-style drawings on the board. Miss Baa takes her position at the front of the class with the chalkboard behind her and the teacher’s desk in front of her. I sit at a student’s desk to her right and the hallway door is to her left. She takes a deep breath and skips the normal “Good morning” dialogue. “Yalla ya tawjihi! (Come on, twelfth graders!) Open your student book to page 32. Kesra!” she calls to a student talking loudly. Miss Baa shakes Kesra’s chair while the student protests. Miss Baa shakes Kesra’s neighbor’s chair to another protest. “T’ali! (Come on!) ya Damma! Write the words.”

“Ok tawjihi. Look at these words. We should know these words, at least in Arabic. What is the difference between climate and weather? What is this lesson about?” A student answers “climmate” and Miss Baa corrects her pronunciation “Climate, not climmate.” Other students laugh. “These words—Quiet!” and she knocks on her desk three times. Without being called on, a student stands up, goes to the chalkboard, and writes the vocabulary words from her book to the board.

Miss Baa goes to the back right corner where a group of six students are talking. Two of
the loudest are two students who do not wear the hijab, Kesra and Damma, with their desks facing each other away from the front of class. Miss Baa moves Damma’s desk up to the front, goes back for Damma’s books and bag, and then physically pulls Kesra’s desk up to the front with Kesra in it. Kesra scoots it back little by little as Miss Baa turns her back and speaks to the rest of the class. “How many seasons do we have?”

A student answers “Five.”

“We have four. They are winter...” She trails off to let students fill in the rest and they call out “Spring, summer, fall.”

Kesra gets up and sits in a chair closer to her original spot. Miss Baa calls to her in Arabic, “Kesra! Move back.” Kesra responds in Arabic, “No Miss, this is ok. Leave me here. I’ve already done this at home.”

“No,” says Miss Baa as she pulls her by the arm to the front seat. When Miss Baa points to the book, Kesra asks, “What page?” Miss Baa and I can both see that Kesra’s student book for this unit is already completed. As Miss Baa tells me later, Kesra’s parents have paid for private tutoring so she can get a high score on the tawjihi but it means that she is often bored and disengaged in class.

The student at the board has written <<Gangnam style>>.

A fly is stuck in the classroom and the students turn in their seats, looking for the source of the buzzing. Miss Baa knocks on her desk and moves on to the next question. She asks the students to spell and define vocabulary words including calm, lightning, and weather. Miss Baa asks the student at the board to sit down and for Kesra to go to the board. Her friend Damma goes back to her original seat without her books and bag, leaning on a girl next to her. Miss Baa asks “Are you sick? Tired? Do you want to leave or not?” Another student pulls her chair up to
Miss Baa sighs, exasperated as she tells me later because she’s not sure if the student is really sick, bored, or just trying to get out of class.

Damma and two of her friends go to the door but Miss Baa says, “It doesn’t take three to go.” Damma’s friends sit down but Damma lingers in the doorway, opening and closing the door repeatedly.

Miss Baa tells Kesra to write <<prefixes>> on the board. The teacher brings her book over to the board and takes the chalk from Kesra. While Kesra sits back down in her back row seat, Miss Baa writes <<1. overcultivate - much, 2) un - opposite - not, 3) re - again - rewrite, 4) mis - wrongly/badly - misheard>> The students laugh. Miss Baa says over their laughter, “If I say reread the text, then read it again.”

A student calls out through her giggles, “Like Miss that we call teachers?”

As the students laugh, Miss Baa says without humor, “No, it’s spelled M-i-s-s and is a word. These are not words, they are added to words. Open your workbooks.”

Students ask, “Which page?”

“24. I have two questions here. One is related to climate and one is related to prefixes. Who would like to read the question?” One student raises her hand, but Miss Baa chooses Kesra, whose hand is not raised, facing her friends with her back to the teacher.

Kesra turns forward, laughs, and asks in Arabic, “Ok sure, but which page?”

Miss Baa says “Workbook page 24, question 1” and then turns to a loud student in the middle of the class asking in Arabic if she wants to be moved. Kesra reads the question and Miss Baa looks for someone to answer it.

A student calls out “Teacher! Not Miss!” She laughs while she answers, “I misheard you.”
Miss Baa looks back at the book to repeat the question but realizes that was the answer to the question, which asked for a sample sentence using the prefix -mis. “The second one,” Miss Baa says as she moves on.

The student makes a sample answer using the prefix -re, “I did my homework too quickly so the teacher asked me to redo it,” but Miss Baa doesn’t hear because she is shushing other students who are talking. Kesra’s three friends from the back right of class are giggling and smacking each other. They do not wear the hijab but that is not too unusual, in this class or in the school. Roughly two-thirds of the secondary students wear hijab but almost no students in basic grades 1-10. In this class, ten of the thirty students do not wear a headscarf. Miss Baa tells me later that these particular students are bad influences on the other students and prevent her from being able to teach in this class.

Miss Baa calls on another student to read, but interrupts her and pulls Kesra’s arm to seat her in a front row seat. The school vice-principal, Miss Meem, opens the door. Some students from the left and middle of the class who have been quietly participating today call “Miss! Miss!” to notify Miss Baa of the important guest. Miss Baa tells Kesra to go to the board and write the answers. Kesra writes, <<1. Climate, 2. Cold, 3. Calm, 4. Weather.>> The teacher talks quietly to Miss Meem who quickly exits.

One of the disruptive students from the right side of class comes up to me and says in quick succession, “Hi Miss. I miss you! Do you drink alcohol?” I greet her and tell her that we cannot talk during class.

Miss Baa returns and knocks on the table to quiet students and says “Enough! Stop! Ok, I will give you two minutes. Think.”

One of Damma’s friends asks, “Where is Damma?”
Miss Baa asks after a pause, “Are you finished?”

“Thinking!” students answer.

Miss Baa walks through the aisles, checking students’ workbooks. The group on the right doesn’t have their books open. At the board, Kesra writes the answers from her book. Two students open the door and come talk to Miss Baa. They say she was so late they thought she was absent and Miss Baa said she had marked them absent. They asked if she did anything important.

Miss Baa sighs and says they did vocabulary and questions in unit 4.

Miss Baa checks her watch and the bell rings.

Miss Baa is under a lot of performance pressure in this vignette. Another English teacher in the school, Miss Taa, requested a review from the district supervisor of Miss Baa’s ability to teach twelfth grade English. Secondary education in Jordan comprises grades 11 and 12, commonly known as tawjihi. Tawjihi is extremely important to the future academic and economic lives of students, and is thus the most important and prestigious year of high school for a teacher to teach. Miss Baa filled in for an absent tawjihi English teacher for a semester and then was asked to teach tawjihi classes this school year instead of Miss Taa who, feeling slighted, requested the review. Miss Taa had taught tawjihi for years and found herself unexpectedly and upsettingly assigned to elementary grades. Internal politics aside, the supervisor Dr. Seen is also in charge of both of their annual performance reviews, professional career prospects in general, and reputation in and beyond the school.

When Miss Baa finishes teaching her first lesson observed by Dr. Seen, she is quite anxious that he should “like her teaching” and not “take tawjihi away from her.” The high stakes mean that she privileges Dr. Seen’s time with the students for questions even beyond normal
deference to his supervisory position of authority, and even to the extent that she takes almost ten minutes away from the next teacher’s class time. She goes out of her way to show Dr. Seen that her prepared notes dealt with each issue he brings up, and tries to correct his statement that it is her first time teaching tawjihi to make herself seem more experienced.

Miss Baa is frustrated that Dr. Seen would review students’ answers on a previous test and question her ability to grade the exam in front of the students. However, as she’s in such a vulnerable position due to his review of her ability to teach tawjihi, basically facing a demotion if he rules against her, she is willing to give back points to the enterprising students. The abrogation of her authority as a grader is not as important as getting a good review from the supervisor.

Dr. Seen is the English content supervisor for the secondary school level across the whole district, and as such he coordinates the tawjihi English examination timetable, exam creation, and grading. To the students, he is a much more reliable authority on the exam that will determine their fates, and thus it is worth risking the ire of their teacher to find out what he thinks about questions and answers on their previous exams.

All student questions to Dr. Seen are about technicalities of the tawjihi English exam and what kind of answers the questions are looking for. The public school system does not have any official “test prep” materials, but private schools and tutors regularly sell documents consisting of previous exams and sample answers. Students expect only half of those who take the tawjihi exams to pass, and expect the minimum tawjihi scores for admission to the most prestigious university fields to be 97 percent and above. With such a difficult test, students need to know what Dr. Seen expects them to answer. Students determined to pass the test will often wait a semester or year to retake their lowest scoring portions and even transfer schools in order to
They asked Dr. Seen how to get at least passing marks and what precisely different terms like “justify” wanted them to do. And as Dr. Seen clarifies, “Justify your answer means find the sentence from the text. Also when it says find or quote the sentence.”

Dr. Seen is fully aware that tawjihi students are panicked about their chances on the exam and thus takes the time to answer their questions as best he can. It is likely that Dr. Seen wishes he could do more to ensure all students would be successful on the tests, but one fundamental responsibility of education is social stratification and recognizing the advanced capabilities of some students over others. Dr. Seen expressed his wish to me that he could provide the students with more materials and guidelines, but that tawjihi policy decision-making was at the state Ministry, over his head. He returned several times during the fall term to observe and evaluate Miss Baa but also, as he told me, to help students know how and what to study for the tawjihi exam. When the tawjihi exams were unexpectedly moved up four days due to anticipated bad weather, he came by the school to tell students and teachers personally. Most students stopped coming to Miss Baa’s class entirely to study with private tutors full-time.

Miss Baa and other tawjihi teachers are under significant pressure from students, parents, other teachers, the administration, and supervisors like Dr. Seen to teach to the test. The test is entirely written and thus students are increasingly unmotivated to practice pronunciation and speaking with their English tawjihi teacher.

The scientific and literary streams of tawjihi students can be very different in terms of expectations. Miss Baa’s two classes in the above vignette had distinctly different atmospheres. Students in the literary stream have not had high enough scores in ninth and tenth grade to make it in the scientific stream or, more rarely, chose the literary stream because they like literary subjects more than the science and math subjects. In explicit contrast to scientific stream
students, students and teachers in both streams, parents, and administrators regularly dismiss the students in the literary stream as less likely to get into college or achieve anything beyond marriage.

The scientific track includes more hours of science and math courses, weighted heavily (subjects like chemistry, physics, calculus, geology) as well as languages and social science courses weighted less. The literary stream includes more language and social science courses, weighted more, and fewer science and math courses. The information technology (IT) stream includes language, social science, economics, and computer courses.

According to Miss Baa, her students in the literary stream are not tense since they know either they are good enough to pass the tawjihi exam easily or they have no hope of passing the exam. There is no incentive for them to study in class, she explains, since they either know the material already or are too far behind to understand the lesson. In this context, some students in Miss Baa’s literary steam class know enough English to write “Gangnam Style” on the board but others have trouble with the number and identity of the seasons. She complained to me about the “nightmare class” of problem girls who do not care about classroom lessons. Students may have noticed that Dr. Seen made no observations in their literary stream than absolutely necessary, that Miss Baa stayed in the scientific stream ten minutes into their lesson, and the vice-principal Miss Meem interrupted their class just to check with Miss Baa about the observation of the scientific stream. It is hard to make a case for student interest in a class that teachers and administrators dismiss.

Absent academic interests, many students still come to school in order to socialize with their friends. Miss Baa is actually quite sympathetic to this desire, since she acknowledges that she became a teacher primarily because she was “bored at home.” Mainstream culture in Jordan
is still quite conservative when it comes to gender segregation, gender roles, and women’s role in the home. Girls and women generally stay in the private space of the home, though they have full legal rights to drive, work, and dress as they choose. Girls and women in Jordan tend not to leave the home except to go with some of their family members to shop or visit friends and relatives.

In addition to the superior authority of the district supervisor, Dr. Seen also carried the traditional authority of males over females in a patriarchal society. Mostly an unspoken cultural norm, Dr. Seen’s maleness had some explicit effects. One teacher ran into the teacher’s lounge when she heard of his approach, and added a face veil to her usual abaya (solid color dress and headscarf). Miss Baa is married with three young children, but her marital social relationships and connection to her husband who is a private school English teacher cannot help her here, when she is being supervised by Dr. Seen.

Dr. Seen is a generally pleasant, encouraging man and former English teacher with a PhD in educational supervision who is very serious about his responsibilities to ensure quality English instruction in the district. Miss Taa’s requested review added quite a lot to his busy schedule, but he did not seem in a hurry to reach a verdict. In fact, he expanded his review to include Miss Taa herself and a first-year English teacher, Miss Raa. He visited each of their classes a number of times during the first several months of the fall term. The review added an extra level of uncertainty and tension to English classes by these three teachers.

Near the end of the term, he concluded his review in a compromise that moved several classes and teachers around, vindicated Miss Baa, stymied Miss Taa, exasperated Miss Raa, and mollified principal Miss Noon. The scientific stream English tawjih class was deemed too important for a teacher change so far into the semester, but several other courses swapped instructors. Miss Raa was moved to tears, and expressed to me hope that Miss Taa would request
a transfer to another school.

**Ethnographic Vignette: Student Teacher Miss Jeem**

One phase in which professional roles are defined, learned, and enforced is the visiting student teacher. For several weeks in the fall, Ammani Girls’ School hosted a student teacher studying English education at an exclusive private university. Student teacher Miss Jeem’s presence, though authorized by the administration, added a significant burden to the English teacher assigned to mentor her. This ethnographic interlude follows Miss Jeem as she tries to practice her student teaching and Miss Baa as she tries to balance her teaching responsibilities as well as her social and professional obligations to her principal’s friend’s student.

Bringing Miss Jeem to AGS was her departmental supervisor from Applied Sciences Private University, a specialist in American and English Literatures who served on campus quality assurance and subject equalization committees. A large, energetic woman, with colorful pink and purple dress clothes and headscarf, she was greeted by her friend the principal. Miss Noon served them both tea in her office and walked them up to the teacher lounge where she introduced the two of them to the English faculty. Miss Jeem expressed a desire to teach older grades like 11th and 12th, but Miss Baa said she was too busy. She explained that grade 12 must follow the curriculum for end of term exams and could not be distracted by a student teacher. Miss Jeem followed another teacher for a week to grade 3. Unhappy with such young grades, Miss Jeem asked her advisor to intercede. Miss Jeem’s advising university professor came back to visit the school and announced that it would be beneficial for Miss Jeem to see upper grades as well. The principal supported both her friend and Miss Baa and offered as a compromise where Miss Jeem could practice on Miss Baa’s grade 9.
Miss Jeem is a young student from a private university, thin, with long brown hair worn without a headscarf, and one of the very few women in the school to wear high heels. From gossip in the bright yellow curtained-lounge, I hear that vocational studies teacher Miss Daad had once taught the student teacher several years ago, and Miss Jeem used to weigh 100 kilos (220 pounds). Miss Daad says, “she got a private trainer who trained every part of her body: her hands, her wrists.” Miss Baa interrupts her, exclaiming, “Her wrists?” They all wonder aloud how skinny she is now, quieting awkwardly when young Miss Jeem enters. Miss Baa says, “Good morning! We were talking about you,” and leaves it at that.

Miss Jeem brought a laptop to school to record herself teaching in grade 9 today. It is a big hit in the left teacher’s lounge, as Miss Jeem keeps a ring of teachers entertained by playing videos. Right before class, Miss Jeem brings Miss Baa a lesson she prepared at home to teach today on “Keeping up with the News.” Jeem has several pages of meticulously hand-written notes and diagrams including time estimates for each activity. Miss Baa brusquely states, “No, they needed to cover ‘would’ and ‘used to.’” Miss Baa tells Miss Jeem to head over to the classroom and we would be along after her.

Miss Jeem greets the class and sets up the laptop on a desk along the wall, angled to record the teacher’s desk in front of the chalkboard. Miss Baa comes in several minutes late, interrupting Miss Jeem’s lesson. Miss Baa pulls a chair to the side and says to the class, “You have three teachers! (referring to Miss Jeem, Miss Baa, and myself).” Miss Jeem appears to be braving a difficult situation for her. She addresses the class: “Do you remember what we talked about in the last section?” Students answer, “In the past.” Miss Jeem continues, “We talked about ‘used to’ and ‘would’. We use these to make a comparison between the past and the present. Who can use
‘used to’ and ‘would’ to make a comparison between the pictures?’”

Two students answer. One uses ‘used to’ for past and future both, mistakenly. Miss Jeem does not correct her. “Look, do you think they had restaurants in the past? [Students chime, “No.”] coffee? [No.]” Miss Jeem turns to Miss Baa and asks, “Is that enough? Comparison?” Miss Baa answers her, “Write on the board and have them write.” Miss Baa says to students, “Yalla (Go on), Miss, write! Yalla tasi’! (Go on, ninth graders!”

A student comes to the door and talks to Miss Baa. Miss Jeem goes to get chalk and looks to Miss Baa who tells her, “I give them 5 minutes in groups like this. Look at your watch. If you want to give them more, give them an exercise.” Miss Jeem asks her in Arabic, “Where do I get the examples?” Miss Baa responds, “See, in the story, look for sentences that use ‘used to’ and ‘would’.” She stands at her chair and turns to the class, saying, “Yalla, that’s enough. I want three girls to write their sentences on the board. And read your sentences.” Miss Baa walks to the center of class and Miss Jeem hesitantly backs toward the empty chair, still holding on to the chalk. Miss Baa calls on a student who reads, “In the past there used to be home eat but now there are restaurants.” Miss Baa questions, “Home mate?” Miss Jeem volunteers triumphantly, “Made? Homemade.” The student repeats, “Home eat, eat.”

Miss Baa explains, “In the past they used to eat at home but now they go to restaurants. Eat is a verb not a noun.” Miss Baa waves another student to answer, “In the past they used to pick fruit with their hands and nowadays they used to pick them with a machine.” Miss Baa asks her to repeat the sentence and to write it on the board because she can’t quite hear the girl’s second use of ‘used’. Miss Baa turns to Miss Jeem and tells her, “Try to repeat her sentence.” Miss Baa asks for “One more.” A student calls, “Miss! Fountain.” Miss Baa asks, “Fountain? This is a fountain. Look at the picture in the book.” Miss Jeem is confused and looks around for a book.
asking, “What?”

Miss Baa is now standing in front of the class behind the teacher’s desk, speaking to the class: “Bravo but I want you to use ‘used to’ and ‘would’. You didn’t use these.” Miss Jeem walks to the board and underlines ‘used to’ in the sentences. Miss Baa continues teaching for the rest of class time: “After ‘used to’ we use action and state verbs. After ‘would’ we use only state verbs.” She takes the chalk from Miss Jeem and talks while writing, “Verbs of the mind: remember, understand…” A student calls out, “Explain.” Miss Baa continues, “Explain, consider. Verbs of the senses “What are they?” smell, taste, [Students call, “feel”] feel, touch. Verbs of the feelings: love, hate, [feel!] Yes, feel can be a sense and a feeling. Feel, like...[scared] “Scared? No, it’s an adjective. Verbs of possession: have [own] own, belong.” Miss Jeem walks to the wall and watches. A student calls, “Teacher! I win this, win.” Miss Baa misheard, “Want! good [win] Miss Baa says, “No, we are talking about possession. If there are more missing, I will bring a list next time because I don’t have my papers with me.”

Four hands are raised and Miss Baa asks the class, “What do we call it? [base form!] Infinitive, we call it, or ...[base form!] After ‘would’ we only use action verbs. If you see state verbs, it is ‘used to.’ The negative of ‘used to’? [didn’t used to] The negative of would? [wouldn’t] And that’s it. Open your books to the exercise.” Miss Baa walks to the chair and says to Miss Jeem, “Do you want to do the exercise with them?”

Two students come with a trash bag and stand asking for trash. Nothing happens for awhile while they look between Miss Jeem, Miss Baa, and me. Miss Baa freezes for a beat, and then directs a student to empty the trash. Miss Baa asks the class, “Are you working or talking, ya tasi?” While they work, Miss Baa quietly acknowledges to me, “I didn’t prepare this lesson.” Baa says firmly to Jeem, “We should prepare a lesson together and write every step. Right? They
can do it.” Miss Baa lets the students work for a few minutes and says, “Ok. Have you finished, tasi’ (ninth graders)? I think that’s enough. 1, 2, 3, Ok, go Jeem.” Seven hands are raised.

Miss Jeem reads directions to the students verbatim from the teacher book, “Teacher, take a look...” instead of just following the directions. Jeem reads the text and when she gets to a blank, she chooses a hand and the student answers. Miss Baa interrupts Jeem and chooses a girl to erase the board and write the answers. Miss Baa looks pointedly and calls, “Jeem...?” Jeem wavers, “...Repeat the answers?” Miss Baa says, “No, let them read.”

In response to a loud banging, Miss Baa asks me, “What is that sound?” When we left after class, we saw workmen putting up a new door and doorframe of unpainted wood for vice-principal Miss Thaa’s office across from the library. We went to the library and I greets Miss Thaa and the librarian. Baa remarks to Thaa that she must be homeless today while they worked on her door. Miss Thaa asks how Jeem’s class had gone. Miss Baa answers, “She was ok, but timid and needed to prepare every thing.”

Student teaching is not generally required for a university degree in education. To become a teacher in Jordan, all one needs is a degree. With international pressure to raise professional “quality,” the third phase of ERFKE will be dedicated to reforming the education degree programs at public universities. University departments are starting to build student teaching experiences, but it is unlikely that any teacher at AGS had any student teaching experience. Miss Baa said she never did any student teaching and neither had first-year teacher Miss Raa. The only models for guest teaching would be Dr. Seen’s supervisor visits where he establishes his expert authority by taking control of the class. AGS teachers would have had no model for what useful student teaching or mentoring would look like. However, Miss Jeem’s advising professor at her private
university decided to build in student teaching experiences for her students and used her personal connections to school principals to find placements. The emotional investment that the principal and advising professor had with each other lessened when extended to Miss Jeem and Miss Baa, who had no expectation of a long-term personal or professional relationship. Jeem’s visits were over a few weeks and often fairly unstructured or on an unknown timetable, so the host teacher wouldn’t know for sure when Jeem would be in her class.

Young, skinny, light-spoken, with high heels and uncovered long brown hair, Miss Jeem’s style of dress was very different from the modest headscarves, practical coats that could hide chalk, and flat walking shoes of most AGS teachers. Her fashion might have symbolized for the other teachers a very different lifestyle and career expectations from themselves. Jeem sat in the teachers’ lounge with a couple of the youngest AGS teachers, unmarried or newly married with no children, watching videos on her laptop. She did not sit and chat with her possible future colleagues, the English teachers she was to shadow. AGS teachers have established relationships, roles, reputations, and personalities, having bonded over shared jokes, tea, and similar burdens well enough to hug, kiss cheeks in greeting, or slap each other’s behinds. Even though one of Jeem’s former teachers was at the school, vocational studies teacher Miss Daad did not express her respect for Jeem or extend a warm welcome but rather started the gossip about how Jeem used to be fat. Jeem was so young she was closer in age to the students AGS teachers taught than their ages. Given the low rate of female employment nation-wide, it was also unclear whether or not Jeem would seriously become a teacher or whether she might get married and stay at home. Jeem’s distinct appearance, role as an outsider, and subordinate identity as a student produced a context where AGS teachers could feel comfortable gossiping about and teasing her. The professor received no such gossip or teasing that I heard or heard of.
Speaking to me alone as I walked her out of the school for the day, Miss Jeem said that this school was actually more welcoming and flexible with student teachers than other schools where her classmates were student teaching. Miss Jeem had prepared some lessons as classwork for her professor, not knowing which grade or curriculum she would be teaching. Knowing Miss Baa’s class plan would likely not have helped Jeem much, since Miss Baa often teaches extemporaneously. Miss Baa might have wanted to see how Jeem coped with spontaneous change, to model the curriculum changes and schedule flexibility teachers need to have. When I asked Miss Jeem what she planned next, she acknowledged that she would prefer to teach in an elite private high school like she had attended. How could Miss Jeem have had a better experience? Have her professor come with her? find a school herself? change her personality? Follow Miss Taa? Miss Raa? Everything mattered. The whole combination of things mattered.

**Theory of Teaching Practice**

One’s audience has to be socialized to see certain acts as “right” or sympathetically understood. I argue that in contexts of ambiguous and conflicting role expectations about what the good thing to do given your role, people appeal to sympathy (sympathetic understanding of the role). Normative models - what we should do based on who we are - are constructed through social mechanisms (Al-Atoom, 2012). The daily lives of Miss Dal, Miss Baa, and the other AGS teachers illustrate some of the tensions in the lives of female public school teachers in the Jordanian capital, of women in Jordan generally, and perhaps beyond.

I extend the previous analysis of gender performance to show how the evaluation of performance is also enforcement of certain kind of subjectivities. In this context, the teachers’ authority is precarious and “at risk” since it relies on a sympathetic audience. Though the way
political subjectivities are formed through the workings of emotional life is resonant in the anthropology of politics more broadly (see Stoler, Cowan, and Wedeen later in this chapter), the process is of unique importance within state education – the prototypical institution of defining, transmitting, and enforcing culture. Cultural enforcement happens at a metaphorical level as well as a literal level in a building with gated doors and disciplinary policies. The task of this chapter is to explore why female teachers don’t know the right thing to do in Jordanian public school and how they do the work of deciding while constantly available for judgment.

It is not enough just to outline the formal rules and hierarchies of the educational institution in Jordan, since people have agency within (literal and symbolic) structure. The authority of the teacher is presumed, even definitive, since the job of the teacher is to define and assess what is right, what is true, what we know, what we do, and who we are. This putative authority is precarious in social performance, depending on the audience and their sympathies and expectations. In this chapter, I present situations where teacher authority is precariously enacted, analyze how and why it is precarious, and suggest what it might mean in terms of broader cultural change. Providing my framework for analysis, I consider how teachers “submit cultural categories to empirical risks, in action” (Sahlins 1987: viii) and how teachers use “practical schemas” (Bowen et al 2014) to define and operationalize normative cultural categories.

Situations and events are informed by “structures” (systems of categories that mutually inform each other) thus every event has a “cultural significance” imposed upon a particular event, at empirical “risk” to the structural system for it might not work well and can therefore force revisions in structures. Sahlins’ theory risk is to answer the "enigmas of historic response” and explain, through interest in micro-interactions, how cultural traditions are made and changed
through human action. As Sahlins writes, "The cultural order reproduces itself in and as change" (1987: xii). Even in a classroom full of the codified cultural narratives of textbooks does a teacher charged with sociocultural reproduction attempt, react, and adapt.

Teaching is not merely the input of data but of engagement with students. People become “masters of concepts,” depending on “received possibilities of significance” (Sahlins 1987: x). Teachers work in an educational institution that consists of and is contained in fields of power. The social performance and embodied practice of teaching with judgmental audiences (students, fellow teachers, supervisors and administrators, external observers). As Bowen, Bertossi, Duyvendak, and Krook write about the impact of institutions on perceptions and boundaries, “A public school, for example, can be located in a broad field of power and accountability, and which ministries, syndicates, and local funding authorities play the role” (Bowen et al, 2014: 5). Different audiences and power dynamics produce overlapping, ambiguous, and ambivalent expectations and justifications. Informed by Bowen et al, I also use the term “practical schemas” to communicate how “actors often employ schemas to construct moral and practical boundaries between themselves and others, distinguished by religion, race, ethnicity or origin” (2014:15).

So, what are the ethically normative schemas that teachers use? Hierarchical authority exists but can be negotiated; peer pressure enforces conformity of comportment and behavior within their view; celebrated female public figures both validate and distract from teachers’ work; and there is too much to be done.

I suggest that interpreting how teachers try to “do the right thing” productively brings together the social interactionist theory of morality (Foucault and Durkheim), the social performance theory of ontology (Mead and Goffman), and learning theories of constructivism and scaffolding (Bruner and Vygotsky). When discussing morality, I repeat for emphasis, at no
point am I interested here in whether teachers are “really” doing the right thing since I am interested in the social processes that make the question interesting to me as a political anthropologist of education. I will stay at the level of Wendy James’ definition of morality as a “set of publicly sanctioned principles governing personal and general social behaviour” and investigate “how are are institutions verbalizing, debating, codifying, reforming the definition of morality” (James 1988: 146) through the perspective of female public school teachers in Amman, Jordan, in a time of explicit, state-engineered socio-cultural change. I aim to keep James’ distinction “between sanctioned rules and the morally intelligible behaviour of persons” clear and not to imply the immorality of teachers who navigate ambiguous sanctioned rules.

“Virtuous Self A Group Project”

As Susan MacDougall (2014) and Fida Adely (2012) have found in their anthropological studies with women in Jordan, “work on the virtuous self is a group project” (paraphrased from the title of MacDougall 2014) dependent on interactions with friends and family. In Anthropology News, Susan MacDougall (2014:64-65) writes about her dissertation fieldwork:

I arrived in Amman with a theoretical interest in the anthropology of ethics. In my grant applications, I asked how women negotiate the multiple, sometimes-conflicting moral standards that prevail in a rapidly modernising society heavily influenced by both so-called traditional values and by the region-wide “Islamic trend” (Starrett 1998). I imagined each woman in her own dizzying introspective universe of mutually contradictory thoughts. What in fact has emerged is that my research participants do confront the ostensibly unsolvable problem of contradiction, and do so through navigating their relationships with others.

Spending time with women and their friends, MacDougall discovers the importance of honesty, judgment, credibility, friendship, and “the relationship of the self to the self” at the center of “everyday ethical guidance.” MacDougall notes the multiple influences and rubrics of ethical
judgment available to women in groups and asks, “Is work on the virtuous self a group project?” This is an applicable question for teachers charged with the work of cultural definition and transmission as they constantly evaluate one another.

The conflict at the center of this chapter is that the authority of the teacher role is necessarily precarious in social enactment/performance/life because of the ambiguous relationships that are negotiated with various audiences in different settings. Intersecting an understanding of teaching as social performance is a spectrum of affective relationships between teachers, students, and other adults including Miss Baa’s private school head teacher husband, Miriam Louzi, Queen Rania, and the district supervisor. Social negotiation of rightness then relies on the sympathetic understanding of friends, students, and colleagues. The “virtuous self” as a “group project” is indeed fundamental to teachers of public education as they try to manage students’ social and intellectual interactions and index them as legitimate, “good, quiet, and smart” or illegitimate, “naughty” or “vulgar” through official and unofficial reward (care, praise) and punishment. Teachers’ own virtue is likewise a social project of performance, evaluation, and negotiation based on care and affective relationships.

Like morality (as social), ontology relies on the symbolic agreements among members. In the words of Lukens-Bull, “Anytime people discuss how to be moral they are engaged in moral discourse, which is not merely about right and wrong; it is about identity. What we define as moral, defines us as a people” (2005: 23). Meaning is intrinsically entwined with being, identity, and belonging. Teachers are by definition in the midst of creating, defining, and assessing morality, truth, and identity. However, because the nature of teaching, of being and becoming virtuous, of performing gender, etc is socially and empirically risky, teachers are doing much more than teaching the textbook even when they are literally reading the textbook verbatim. As
we have seen, context, audience, tone, the relationships involved, previous action, and
expectation all give shape to the lived experience of teaching, meaning, and identity. Being a
monarchical subject, public servant, and employed educator does not determine or force
“obedience to authority and hegemony” (bell hooks 1994:12).

Educational psychologist Jerome Bruner connects cognitive development theory to Russian
theorist Vygostky with the term “cultural scaffolding” to metaphorically describe how teachers
build connections between what students think and what they could think. Vygotsky’s cognitive
psychological theories posit that the best way to understand the mind is to look at how it changes
and that higher mental functions have their origins in social activity and are mediated by tools
and signs. All higher mental functions, according to Vygotsky, are embedded in “actual relations
between humans” (1978: 57). In this vein, my field work consists of recorded micro-interactions
all day and the process of these social relationships. If we extend Vygostky and Bruner on
sociocultural teaching to Bourdieu, Ortner, Goffman, and Foucault on the practice of actors
within institutions, we have the theoretical framework for understanding teachers’ precarious
authority. Psychologically, people develop the “dialogical self” by “scaffolding” the current,
internal self to the past, present, and external environment through signs (Valsiner 2005).

Teachers work in this zone of proximal development and intersubjectivity and the learning
theories of constructivism and scaffolding apply to how they teach but also to how they learn. As
we have seen, teachers like Miss Baa must connect with students’ backgrounds and help students
learn new meanings based on what students already know (whether that’s the Arabic meaning for
a new English vocabulary word or about festivals, culture, dress, food, etc).
Culture is used and transformed in subtle, yet cumulatively important ways, through “professionalization” teacher training seminars and workshops where teachers become students themselves. Teacher training workshops transform sympathies, “professionalizing,” and making new kinds of people putatively more functional in the present or desired future society. As part of the second phase of ERFKE, state education specialists try to “professionalize” teachers and train them into different beliefs, expectations, decisions, and sympathies, and about different content, discourses, and techniques. Through the state’s ERFKE programming, state actors aim to change how teachers and school administrators answer questions about the “right thing to do” and get them to answer in ways that sympathize with and prioritize state goals.

In order to teach students to become new sorts of people, teachers must be made into those new sorts of people themselves since students who feel controlled or manipulated by the classroom environment tend to perform minimal behavioral compliance rather than truly engage with new material or ideas (Ambrose et al. 2010; Zull 2002). Scholars who have studied the importance of emotion and gender (including Sara Ahmed 2004, Judith Butler, Berlant 2011) argue that both are often embodied in the structures of social, political and ideological power. The enculturation in emerging/developing culture of educator professionalism is an uncertain epistemic space with the co-constitution of institutions and actors/roles.

Teacher training and education reform are processes of intentional but ambiguous changing role expectations. Evaluations of in-service teacher professional development over the last two decades in Jordan found that the aims of the training programs were not obvious, training methods were generally theoretical and the trainers need more practical training, there was a
weak relationship between the training materials and the trainees’ needs, the program’s content was inappropriate to school curricula, training centers lacked the necessary facilities and equipment needed for training, and the timing of training was not appropriate for the trainees because the training sessions were held in the end-of-week vacation (al-Weher and Abu-Jaber 2007:246).

Very little was required of public school teachers in terms of continuing education, graduate degrees, or professional development unless the teacher wanted to become an administrator. At the time, such professional development was largely voluntary but incentivized by the education ministry through financial bonuses. Teachers who attend state sanctioned teacher training workshops earn certificates and diplomas that they can report to their school principal and district supervisor to earn substantial financial bonuses. Teachers and administrators also said that steady attendance at teacher training workshops improved a teacher’s application for career advancement to management and administration.

Every single teacher training that I went to was gender mixed and a lot of teachers, although especially female teachers, went into teaching because it was not gender-mixed. Teachers would say, “I liked English (or Math, French, etc) and I thought about journalism or working in a bank, but it’s gender mixed.” Secondary schools and K-12 comprehensive schools are gender-segregated so for women working in a girls’ school or primary school with young children allowed them to work in a culturally appropriate and comfortable gender-segregated environment. None of the female public school teachers I spoke with reported “wanting to train the next generation of Jordanian entrepreneurs” or “attending gender mixed training on educational technology” as a reason they had for becoming a teacher.

The goal at teacher professional development was explicitly to “professionalize” teachers
out of their personal and cultural understandings of the meaning of being a teacher and into the state’s understanding of the meaning of teaching for a knowledge economy.

**Ethnographic Vignette: Training Teachers with Mr. Yah**

The Education Reform Support Program (ERSP) is one of the largest professional development projects ever undertaken in Jordan and by 2012 involved 126 public schools. ERSP is specifically geared toward the second phase of ERFKE and has four components: to improve K-12 school culture, planning, communication and project management. A 2012 analysis of ERSP effectiveness found that the program increased school performance significantly and was especially impactful in female schools, but found no differences in school performance according to location (urban, rural), geographic location (North, Middle, South), type of school (comprehensive, secondary, elementary), or attendance of the school principal (Touq 2012). As part of ERFKE and ERSP, a new educational data management program called Eduwave is provided to all public schools.

In this vignette, thirty teachers, administrators, and trainers from five public schools gathered at AGS for a three-day data management workshop given in Arabic run by Creative Associates’ Jordanian branch as part of USAID-funded ERFKE Support. The central purpose of the following training is to teach how and why to use the new Eduwave software. The Jordanian branch of Creative was incorporated under the name ASK for Human Capacity Building. The training run by ASK/Creative was organized by the Amman secondary directorate for research, Dr Seef. The AGS principal called Dr Seef, introduced me, and gave her permission for my attendance at the training. I visited Dr Seef who gave me a short interview, reviewed my Ministry of Education paperwork, and gave me official permission in the form of a signed document to observe the training. My affiliation with Fulbright as a US Department of State program may have mattered to the USAID-funded ASK staff.
funded Jordanian education development in previous phases as well, including the Jordan Education Initiative in the 1990s and early 2000s. The USAID ERFKE Education Reform Support Program (ERSP) contract was awarded to Creative Associates (based in DC) and their Jordanian branch of teacher trainers though they are not directly state officials.

The young trainer with blue glasses, Mr. Yah, comes out to Ammani Girls’ School from 1-3pm for three days during the school week in late September 2012. Mr. Yah had been a computer teacher for a short time before working in electronics and then education development. He tells me that he joined ASK and volunteered to do teacher training because of his personal commitment to the importance of teaching and desire to improve the capacities of Jordanian education.

Attending the training are groups from four schools in addition to Ammani Girls’ School faculty and staff. From Ammani are the computer teacher, principal, three vice principals, and two teachers (Islamic Studies teacher Miss Waw and a young, high-heeled vocational studies teacher). Two groups consist of males from boys’ schools. Although class ended at 1:30 at Ammani Girls’ School, some students had class until 2 or 2:30 and training would have to pause over the noise of class release at those times.

The first day, a lot of teachers arrive late and one male teacher in particular spends a lot of time talking about the timing as a major problem. He emphasizes with hand motions, eye contact, and firm tone of voice that since school is not out yet, his children are not out of school yet and he could not get them home. He says he needs to wait until school is out to take his children home and then come here. The trainer asked if he has a wife or family member or neighbor who could pick up his children and take them home, but the teacher counters that as
the father it is his responsibility.

Everyone enters and sits in one of the two computer labs at Ammani Girls’ School and the trainer asks everyone to introduce himself or herself. In some groups, teachers introduce themselves and in other groups, the senior administrator introduces everyone in their group. Each school group has at least one or two teachers but some schools like Ammani Girls’ School are represented mostly by administrators.

As hostess, the principal of AGS has the custodial staff bring tea for all participants. The participants take seriously the socialization around entering the room, getting tea, and chatting with other teachers although Mr. Yah beseeches them to be more prompt and more professional. He repeatedly asks them to respect their short time together, respect him as a trainer, and respect their job, but each day socialization remains a meticulously maintained priority for the participants. Tension arises as the trainer tries to get participants to act “professional” since the participants must try to fit this brief training into their larger life. They have to see the other teachers much more often than this trainer. Teachers are sitting next to the vice principal or other administrator from their school and all were on display to their colleagues, bosses, and/or subordinates. Socializing and being pleasant to them is obviously much more important to their daily life than this trainer.

The trainer, Mr. Yah, was also trying to fit this training into his normal life as he is expecting another staff member from ASK to observe and video record his training at some point. This observation and video record of his training adds the stress of potential internal or external evaluation. He expresses to me his concern that he look effective and professional himself. Every fifteen minutes or so, he comes over to me and explains what he is talking about and why it was important for the participants to understand and change their behaviors. The
principal and I had introduced myself, and Amman Secondary District director of research Dr. Seef had called Mr. Yah to ask his permission for my observation, so Mr. Yah was fully aware of being observed by an American researcher studying teaching and teacher training. Mr. Yah speaks hurriedly, emphatically, and intensely to me during breaks about his presentation and the importance of the topics he was addressing, telling me that he wants to be effective, that he wants the teachers to get some benefit out of this training, and that they should feel they are learning helpful things.

Mr. Yah gives a projected slideshow presentation on the first day of training about “the contemplative school” and the “Observe-Orient-Decide-Act” process, with a printed activity packet for each participant. The projector picture is faded and hard to read and Mr. Yah apologized for the image quality and is occasionally asked to read the illegibly projected text. Mr. Yah has some trouble keeping all two dozen participants focused throughout the session. When one female teacher enters in late, she greets all other groups and the other teachers from her school in the customary extended Jordanian greeting style. The trainer stops his presentation and asks if she could please sit down and be quiet but she rebuts, saying she is just trying to be polite. She sits down and continues to greet the teachers around her from her school. She repeats her entrance each day of the training.

Mr. Yah often has to talk about topics that are very sensitive to his audience. When Mr. Yah asks the participants what their school was contemplating, the Ammani Girls’ School principal breaks the ensuing extended silence by expressing concern over the rise of Syrian refugee students in the school. Many participants chime in and speak over each other and Mr. Yah has to quiet the din and explain that he cannot respond to that topic. He says he could only stay on the topic of his presentation, which is data management. One teacher sarcastically and
quietly to a neighbor asks whom they should speak to then.

The second day of the training, Mr. Yah asks them to open Eduwave, but doing so turns out to be difficult. Few computers can access the web program or have necessary components installed and the computer teacher repeatedly exclaims that she did not know that they would be using the program. She tries four computers in a row before she finds one of the twenty-six computers in the lab that can open Eduwave. The computer teacher is trying desperately to help, but is not the district networking administrator and can’t troubleshoot the malfunctioning internet connection. The program requires internet connectivity, and many computers cannot get on the internet successfully, or the website to open the program will not load. The five groups and Mr. Yah eventually get Eduwave working on six computers. Some school logins don’t work, and some schools don’t know their logins.

Mr. Yah explains that they can input student and teacher attendance into Eduwave and see the correlation in their school between teacher absences and lower student scores. He passes out white poster paper to each group and says that they should enact the “decision making circles” modeled in their activity packet “to make informed decisions.” Mr. Yah says they should record student and teacher absenteeism in Eduwave where it can be readily accessible by district and state administrators, but the participants respond loudly, talking over him and one another. He walks over to the AGS principal and she quietly tells him that there are many reasons why teachers might be absent that shouldn’t be penalized, including going to professional development like this since school isn’t technically over and a lot of teachers are required to be here. There is no way in the software to mark excused absences or include professional reasons. Mr. Yah answers that professional development is part of their job so teachers should not be marked absent at all. He repeats this loudly to the room, but the principal replies that they
needed to mark which teachers are not present in the school so they can task other teachers to substitute in their classrooms.

Another teacher says, “if my child is sick and I have to go get them, are you going to take away my money because my child is sick?” Mr. Yah said it is national policy. She responds, “Are you telling me it is national policy to take money away from me when my child is sick?” Mr. Yah replies to the room at large, saying he has nothing to do with the development of the software or with ministry policies on teacher absence. He states he is there training them on how to use the software and that they should really use the software. He repeats that using this software would be professional and a good thing for Jordan’s development. Since he is not equipped to justify why there was no box for reasons for absences, he says he is sure the ministry is taking this into account and that there might be a box in the future. He tries to mollify or dismiss these practical issues and keep to his point that “the professionalization and bureaucratization of educational administration is a good thing for Jordan’s educational development.”

Mr. Yah then gets a phone call and motions the participants to work on their posters. Two groups fold their poster paper so it will fit on the small desks. Four groups come up with a list of ways the school can increase teacher attendance and the group from Ammani Girls’ School draws what Miss Waw calls a “bubble brain map” decorated with flags, suns, flowers, a butterfly, and stick figures. Mr. Yah takes a photo with his phone of them working, and then takes another call. When finished, the trainer gets some tape and gives a strip to each group to put their ideas on the walls. When one group presents their ideas to keep teachers working instead of dealing with personal family issues, a male teacher in a gray suit argues that they must [deal with personal issues] and Mr. Yah quiets him, saying “It’s not about right and wrong.”
The man in the gray suit continues to speak about the incompetence and in comprehension of the ministry. Mr. Yah holds up his palm for him to stop, pulls his fingers in to touch his thumb and pumps with his hands, telling the teacher to let the group finish and that he doesn’t work with the ministry and can’t make changes to the policy or to Eduwave. Several teachers sit back in their chairs and shake their heads. Mr. Yah, seeming exasperated, raises his palms thumbs down to the back of his neck and holds his head in his hands.

A frequent concern for teachers is whether they were doing the right thing by missing their own classes to go to teacher training. Mr. Yah’s presentation on “statistical explanations and educational implications” and “Pearson correlates” of teacher absenteeism and student failure seems to say they should stay in their classrooms in order to ensure student success, but Mr. Yah also says that teacher training and professionalization is good for education and good for Jordan.

The third day of training, the trainer and participants have a similar conversation about student absences. Mr. Yah speaks very quickly and tells the participants he has to hurry since they come in late and often leave early to pick up children. Mr. Yah says that since teachers already kept handwritten attendance, all they need to do is input the data into Eduwave. Teachers reply that the ministry policy on student absence is too harsh and would force a student who is absent too many days to fail the class, and force a student failing too many classes to fail the year. Failing school restricts a young person’s life choices so greatly that parents, friends, and other teachers might all appeal to a teacher to let the absent student pass. There could be many reasons a student can’t come to class (they get a job, get engaged, or are taking care of family members) with which a teacher would sympathize. While Mr. Yah says that the ministry needs accurate information in order to shape or change their policies, what he’s asking is for
teachers to sacrifice real students in the present in order to efficiently operate a system that might benefit Jordan as a whole in the future.

A male teacher makes a loud side comment about how that might work, “if the information was accurate” and explains that teachers often mark an absent student present if they have been absent too often, or are failing too many classes, so that the student would be able to pass. The teacher repeats, “The data is not accurate.” I had observed these inaccuracies in terms of recording teacher absence as well, for teachers and administrators could sign in for each other or cover for each other in family need or politically sensitive situations like a teacher union strike. The teacher says that when teachers ask things like father’s income, they can ask the students or ask the fathers but teachers have no way of knowing if it is accurate. While Mr. Yah pauses to think of a response, a female teacher opens the windows since the fan is doing little against the heat. The wind blows a plastic teacup to the floor and blows the long, heavy curtains onto the computers of a group of male teachers. They protest and the female teacher shuts the windows.

Mr. Yah does not engage in a debate about the practical reasons why a student or teacher might be absent, as that is clearly out of his purview. Instead, he appeals repeatedly to the discourse of development, professionalism, and the macro-level efficiency of bureaucracy and modernization. Mr. Yah appeals to the teachers and administrators according to their professional roles in a system of data collection, management, and usage. Perhaps, he suggests, the policy about passing and failing could be changed, but the ministry needs attendance information in order to make that decision. He says that the ministry can’t do its job, can’t help Jordan progress, unless all teachers and administrators do their jobs. He uses large-scale economic and bureaucratic language, and uses the only thing he has connection to – the data
management system Eduwave. He is trying to do his job: trying to get the teachers to use it.

The last day of the training, the workshop has two special guests from ASK and Mr. Yah is frantic to have better attendance. An hour into the workshop, he asks everyone attending where their group members are and tells them to call and get them on campus. The female teacher who disrupted the session on the first day greeting everyone when she came in late notices Mr. Yah’s phone use. “Why do you protest our phone use when you use the phone?” she asks. He replies that he’s trying to find the fourth group, which is his responsibility as trainer. He manages to have twenty out of thirty participants in the computer lab by the time the ASK officials arrive.

A representative from ASK comes to video record the presentation and interview the Ammani Girls’ School principal. The video recorder is a young woman with a background in management and degree from Holland University in the Netherlands, here to make a field assessment video about impact to show potential donors. She tells me that ASK stands for Attitude, Skills, Knowledge and is “to meet the difference between education of students and demands of the market, to empower Arab youth to meet the demands of the market in the 21st century.” They do not offer programming to youth however, but “expect there is a ripple effect from teachers down to students.”

Mr. Yah chimes in and defines success as change. “We love hearing success stories,” he says. “The impact on the communities, beneficiaries.” In front of his colleague, trainer Mr. Yah comes to me and says, “This school here is a success story of the workshop. The teachers didn’t put the names of those absent in class because they didn’t know why it was important but now the Information Technology teacher will put them down and make a plan. There has been four weeks of school and have already been absences.” I ask Mr. Yah if there will be any repercussions for the five or so teachers who were consistently absent from his training. He says
it depends on the internal system of the directorate and that “our role ends when we send in our report.”

From the very first day of training, there is a reframing, when the trainer asks the late teacher to think about how his family could help him do his job. The teacher appeals to personal family responsibility as foremost and that his job as a teacher is in order to support his family. However, the trainer responds to the teacher’s use of family as a reason not to come to this professionalization workshop by reorienting the framework of support. The trainer affirms that family should be in support of the teacher’s job. This example sets the tone for what Mr. Yah and other trainers mean by “professionalization.” Instead of the job at the service of family, a “professionalized” teacher would see the family at the service of the job.

The conversation around the topic of teacher absenteeism illustrates the negotiation over the meaning of the job of a teacher. It is difficult for teachers to figure out if they should miss school for training or home life and to figure out if that would be sympathetically understood by administrators and other teachers. Teachers struggle with these fundamental questions: Is teaching my job or is going to professional development my job? Is being a parent my primary job or is teaching the next generation of Jordanians for a knowledge economy my primary job?

No teachers from 11th and 12 grades were at this training, and later Miss Baa told me that it would be particularly bad for teachers to leave their students in the hands of tasked substitutes unprepared to teach them for the high stakes tawjihi exams. Miss Baa said that she attends training that is in November, December, or May when tawjihi students stay home to prepare for their exams.

These were the two ways participants were professionally engaging with the training: as a
teacher gaining personal training and as obediently representing a school as assigned by an administrator. One main reason there were so many administrators at this training was the importance of teachers staying in their classes. The training on Eduwave was also particularly applicable to administrators since vice principals would usually be the ones responsible for inputting such data. Teachers in their schools would be responsible for keeping track of class attendance, but like the teachers in Mr. Yah’s training explained, they would often have reasons to provide inaccurate data to the administrators. At Ammani Girls’ School, a head student goes from class to class to pick up attendance sheets and take them to administration. The student coming in to get the attendance sheet was one of many interruptions that made it more difficult for teachers to teach. The bureaucratization and professionalization of teaching often came at the cost of classroom teaching in this way, taking time, energy, and teacher presence from classroom teaching for purposes such as data management. A teacher who sees her job as teaching might see these bureaucratic invasions and increased paperwork as disruptions that are not clearly connected to teaching.

There is a parallel between this bureaucratic operation and his understanding of teacher and student absence reporting in the schools. For teachers and administrators regarding class absence, they had never told me that their role ended when they sent in the report but rather expressed concerns over what reported data might mean for the person. Although the participants in the training privately expressed to me their belief in Mr. Yah’s good intentions, I doubt any participant would record an absence that would fail a student because of this training regardless of what Mr. Yah concluded. Teachers often heard this line of reasoning – as teachers you have professional responsibilities to do what the ministry asks of you so the ministry can help Jordan progress and develop economically – but seemed unconvinced by the trainers insistence they
ASK Data Use Manager, Dr. Ghassan, also visits on the final day of training to give a speech to the participants. He is interrupted by a teacher in the gray suit, who starts his list of issues he’s raised in previous trainings: it is more beneficial to have 13 instead of 30 students per teacher, it is better to have the same students from day one until the end of the year instead of transferring students in and out at any point, there are additional burdens like rotation and homeroom. Mr. Yah tries to respond firmly, crossing his hands and pointing one flat palm against another. The hosting principal supports Mr. Yah in front of his boss, saying, “This workshop is excellent, responsibilities of homeroom aside.” The man in the gray suit tells me he is tired of being summoned to training given by people who do not have the ability to solve any problems in teachers lives. An administrator from the teacher’s school says, “The information from Mr. Yah is beneficial.” The gray-suited teacher continues, “This information is very beneficial but it is hard for a teacher to attend such training now at the start of school -“ but he is cut off by his administrator with a warning look.

Dr Ghassan’s speech seems prescient or tailored to the teacher’s comments, as he says, “Each should do their appropriate work. That’s what the kingdom wants. Next month, next year, listen to me, we can resolve all these problems together.” He points his finger at the teachers and at himself. A male teacher’s phone goes off but instead of answering it, he shuts it off.

It is customary in Jordanian schools for people to answer their phones immediately, even if they are at work or in meetings, as teachers and Mr. Yah had done over previous days of training, but the bureaucratic authority of the director is an exception. Mr. Yah and two other teachers also turn off their phones when they ring while Dr. Ghassan speaks. Not answering a
ringing phone or preemptively turning off a cellphone are tremendously significant actions. I observed teachers, students, trainers, parents, and professors answer their phones immediately at all times and even had the AGS principal admonish me for turning off my phone during school. For three teachers and the trainer to turn off their phones signified to me a major shift from normal expectations. As Mr. Yah had been telling the teachers, they should prioritize their professional identity and not answer personal calls during work. As far as I knew, no one had changed their behavior for him during the workshops.

Confronted with Dr. Ghassan, the behavior suddenly changed. The moment mattered: a phone rang and a teacher shut it off instead of answering it. That spurred the trainer and others to turn off their phones, although most of the teachers and even Dr. Gassan himself likely left their phones on. Here, two normative messages clashed: the right thing to do is to be available to answer your phone at all times versus prioritize your professional work to the exclusion of personal responsibilities or even other employment. The teachers and the trainer Mr. Yah mediate between these messages and some enact the professional behavior in that particular moment. In the teacher training, the trainer introduced, modeled, and attempted to persuade teachers that different things should be appropriate. Perhaps the function of this moment was succumbing to peer pressure or showing a supervisor that they had understood and could produce the taught behavior. There’s no absolutely clear reason why; no one told them to engage in that behavior right then or threatened consequences if they didn’t. There’s no promise any of the teachers will turn their phones off during work time in the future. When I asked one of the teachers later why he turned his phone off, he said that was the appropriate thing to do. When the behavioral change (turning the phone off) resonated with other feelings and role expectations (state authority of ERSP director, cultural authority of male elder, hosting a visitor, being judged
by a supervisor), it suddenly became the right thing to do.

Dr Ghassan ends with: “I used to be a teacher, but I want to tell you it is worth it. The point is to show the benefits are worth overcoming any resistance.” He yields the floor to Mr. Yah for parting words. Mr. Yah reminds participants of the teaching model they had learned: to present the main idea or new process, to detail the logic behind the process, and to brainstorm how to apply the process in the school. He tells me later, as his colleague records an interview with the principal, that ASK will not do any more data management workshops with these schools because they have many other schools to train. Dr. Ghassan’s lesson is about subsuming conflict in unity in a way that mirrors the state discourse.

“Teach Like A Champion”

Teacher professional development, as part of the rollout of Phase 2 of ERFKE, is intended to “professionalize” teachers, or to get teachers to prioritize state goals over other concerns or sympathies and see themselves as the education system sees them – in terms of their role enacting state purposes. Teacher trainers and professional development planners are engaged in a process of changing teachers’ sympathies and behaviors, and changing teachers into professionals who see themselves as extensions of the state and who act in the interests of the state. In addition to this data management three-day workshop run by Creative Associates’ Jordanian branch as part of USAID-funded ERFKE Support, I observed the American Language Center (ALC) training given in English open to all subject teachers on project-based learning (PBL), and several programs operated by Queen Rania Teacher Academy. At QRTA, I attended three State of the Art lectures, three-day “Teach Like a Champion” training in Karak, an environmental sustainability training at QRTA campus, and gave a teach for a knowledge
economy 2-day short course at QRTA campus.

In 2009, Queen Rania Teacher Academy was cofounded by Teachers College Columbia University (USA) and the Jordanian royal government as the premier teacher training institute for public school teachers as part of ERFKE Phase 2. QRTA’s role in the top-down education policy rollout plan is to comprehensively retrain public school teachers in Jordan. QRTA functions are usually open in a limited capacity to private school teachers for a small fee. Public school teachers can usually attend for free, sometimes with transportation provided for free. QRTA has three main programming lines: 1) the State of the Art lectures offered in the main lecture hall of the next building over, the Columbia University Middle East Resource Center (CUMERC); 2) short-term (1-7 day) thematic workshops held in QRTA classrooms or public schools around Jordan; and 3) long-term (up to 3-year) training cohorts organized by subject (Math, English, Arabic) or municipality (Amman, Karak, etc).

The “Teach Like A Champion” training was originally authored by American teacher Doug Lemov and licensed through his organization Uncommon Schools to QRTA to translate into Arabic. The training was held in one particular school and attended by small groups representing many neighborhood boys’, girls’, and coed public schools. Attendance to workshops like these would be through top-down invitation as QRTA staff informed (municipal administrators or) school principals. School principals could then select the faculty or staff to attend, either by open volunteering or obligatory appointment. The schools would be required to send representatives, but each school negotiated membership in the attending group. Sometimes a principal would assign training to particular teachers and/or staff, and sometimes they would carpool or ride together. Other times teachers would seek out training and even ask the principal to be allowed to miss school to go for training. Sometimes there are teachers at these trainers
who have been assigned and do not want to be there. Sometimes administrators assign themselves - because it is kind of like a free vacation from their job, everyone always gets free meals, they can list the certifications to get bonuses and advance their career - even though they are not always the target audience. At the TLC training, many attendees were administrators who did no teaching at their schools and would not be directly applying knowledge of teaching like a champion.

However, administrators could be attending training with the purpose of giving the training to a large group of teachers at their home institutions. This ‘train the trainer’ process is mostly informal, fortunate happenstance at the themed workshops. Some of the higher managers at QRTA are talking about doing this more intentionally and inviting administrators in a purposeful, explicit parallel cohort to do the activities and learn the training alongside the teachers so the trained staff know how to support the teachers and can go back to provide the training for all faculty and staff in their schools. For example, a small group of three teachers and three administrators from a sample school might be absent during the school week for training and then report about what they learned in an assembly for all 35 teachers and 9 staff in their school. Most of the administrators I spoke with at these workshops listed as reasons why they came 1) getting out of work, 2) free food, 3) seeing their friends from around town, and 4) getting certifications for pay bonuses; and they didn’t list that they planned to give the training to other teachers back at their school. Although that’s not what they told me they were going to do, I know from the senior managers at QRTA that they would like to ‘train the trainer’ more intentionally as a way of rippling this out because they’ve found that it is really hard to effectively retrain teachers all the teachers in Jordan - it takes a lot of time and small groups of trainees. Although Phase 3 is reforming the schools of education, in Phase 2 teacher trainers are
confronting incoming teachers each year who need immediate retraining. Trainers say that the new training is student-centered, skill-based, geared to critical thinking and the ERFKE goals.

The logistics of trying to retrain all public school teachers in Jordan is difficult enough, assuming that you have a set curriculum of how to teach for those six goals. Perhaps the reason the teacher retraining phase comes before the teacher education reform phase is that no one has such a curriculum and ERFKE managers are coming up with a list of “how to teach for a knowledge economy” by experimenting with teachers on the ground. Also logistically difficult is assessing the impact of teacher training since it is logistically impossible for trainers to follow up and observe every teacher’s teaching in the weeks and months before and after training. Following a teacher long term, recording and evaluating, takes up most of the time of district content supervisors.

“If we could change teachers’ behaviors – if we could professionalize them – we have done our job.” Mr. Zay, former computer teacher and current school headmaster in Irbid, Jordan, has been a teacher trainer for three years with the premier Jordanian teacher training institute Queen Rania Teacher Academy (or QRTA). He often leads training workshops for public school teachers like the two-day workshop series “Teach Like a Champion” that I observed in the spring of 2013. We met outside the QRTA campus in the capital Amman at six o’clock in the morning to pick up the other trainer, Miss Thal, before driving two hours on the Desert Highway to the southern city of Karak. In the back seat with Miss Thal, course materials in bags at our feet and balancing three plates of cookies on her lap, they spoke at length about the need for new kinds of teachers and teacher behavior to save Jordan’s future. Mr Zay twisted in the front seat to turn toward us, impassioned, “We are moving backwards because the teachers are left behind. They cannot meet the labor market needs at all, even the basics of life skills. They are unable to crystalize or make
them mature for every student in the education system. Backwards in everything!”

In response to rising youth unemployment and pressures for democratization, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan’s explicitly transformational “Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy” (ERFKE) aims to overhaul the centralized public education system. The rollout of the ERFKE involves re-training teachers to teach for the state’s new goals: critical thinking, cooperation and teamwork, multilingualism, technological fluency, democratic participation, and entrepreneurship. Assumedly, in order to teach every public school student these skills, teachers would have to learn these skills themselves and pedagogical methods for how to teach them. As one trainer said, “faqid a-sha’i’ la yu’ti-hu” (You can’t give what you don’t have”). QRTA was founded to support ERFKE and but struggles to meet these goals.

This process is problematic, as the transformational goals not only involve doing different things but really being different kinds of people. The monarchical state is not unambiguously behind students and teachers critically thinking, working in teams, using technology, participating democratically, and engaging in technologically sophisticated entrepreneurship. The state’s ambivalence problematizes the “effectiveness” of education reform for students, parents, and teachers themselves.

Teacher training programming can be seen through the lens of political affect, which is the role of state education in “educating consent […] by shaping appropriate and reasoned affect, by directing affective judgments, by severing some affective bonds and establishing others, by adjudicating what constitutes moral sentiments - in short, by educating the proper distribution of sentiments and desires” (Stoler 2007:9). The role of education in authoritarian regimes is

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25 يُعطَى الشيء لا يعطنيه Literally translated from the Jordanian colloquial, “the one who has lost a thing can’t give it. Often the listener immediately disagrees in order to be polite.
contradictory to the emancipatory perspective on education, inherent in the purpose and social reality of authoritarian education is inculcating loyal compliance and “educating consent” and “educating the proper distribution of sentiments.” After state training, “trained” teachers are supposed to have been ontologically transformed into more “professional” people with state-sanctioned, professional ‘distribution of sentiments and desires’.

In my fieldwork, I found that teacher trainers worried about the “effectiveness” of teacher training and how ineffective their efforts ‘educating the proper distribution of sentiments’ might be. State actors try to transform teacher sympathies in a way that makes state goals and visions of the future more emotionally salient and persuasive reasons for action, but I argue that their attempts confront ambivalences inherent in state goals and structures.

**Professional ‘Distribution of Sentiments’**

To illustrate how state social policy works in lived experience, I focus on some of the things trainers expect a “professionalized” teacher to do: put their family at the service of their job, put to use the techniques taught in the training, and commit to the ERFKE goals. Teacher trainers model the differences in behavior and role expectations both implicitly and explicitly through didactic content. In this section, I’ll present an “effective” case of behavioral change but also problematize the process with complicating cases.

In one clear case of effective “professionalization,” I saw a teacher at QRTA training that I had not expected. In the fall of 2012, she told me that she never attended extra-curricular teacher training because it contradicted the very reason she had become a teacher. “I am a teacher because I only work when my kids are in school, so I am always home when my kids are home,” she said. She would never work when her kids were home because it would defeat the
entire purpose. “I cannot go to training when my kids are at home. Who would take care of them? What would they eat? No one else can do this work, only their mother.” Given those statements, I was surprised to see her at an all-day weekend training in the spring. When I questioned her, she answered, “Well, my principal asked me to attend, and I talked to my husband about it. And he said it [development, or tatweer] is very important to Jordan, and for all the children of Jordan. And I will get paid extra for my certificate. And I can take lunch boxes home to my family. So here I am! My husband will watch the kids today.”

In this case, a teacher changed her behavior by reprioritizing her role expectations. She had prioritized her role as mother above her role as teacher and seen her job in the service of her family, but her principal was able to change her behavior by altering her ‘distribution of sentiments’. By connecting the extracurricular training to things already valued (extra money, welfare of kids, providing food to the family), the teacher (and her husband) adapted the role expectations of teacher and mother to include attendance at weekend training workshops. Mr. Zay and other teachers often came up with moral sentiments that referenced their present relationships (with bosses, students, social connections, peers, spouses and family) in ways that challenged, ignored, or adapted culturally appropriate forms of Western or Jordanian sentiments.

This process of professionalization and transformation of sympathies is complicated by ambiguities and contradictions. In the following case, the teacher does not change behavior to become more professional, but the trainer does not find fault. As I was observing the Teach Like a Champion workshop, I noticed and recorded four male teachers leaving for a “smoke break” and returning hours later only for lunch. After lunch, these men left again and returned at the end of the day. The four male teachers were present a total of fifty minutes of the five-hour day. I asked Mr Zay if he had noticed and what he thought. Mr Zay did notice, but explained,
“Teaching does not pay very well, and so many men have second jobs. They probably left to work at their second jobs as shopkeepers or taxi drivers. They must work to provide for their families.” Mr Zay confirmed that he would grant them certificates anyway because they could use all the money they could get (he repeated the phrase) “to provide for their families.” He lamented that they didn’t participate in the training, but hoped they would be able to review the materials at home and “find some benefit” from the training. Although trainers were only effective if they changed teachers’ behaviors - particularly having teachers put their families at the service of their jobs - Mr Zay did not mind being ineffective with the four absent men because of his sympathy with their practical concerns.

A second complicating case is that of the “career woman,” unmarried with no kids but active professionally. One might imagine that female teachers with no other distracting roles competing for their professional attention would be unproblematic. However, women in general, even teacher trainers, did not consider the “career woman” to be an unambiguously positive category. Some educational career women that I met were training addicts, going to as many workshops as possible with QRTA, the American Language Center, British Council, or other foreign agencies or private foundations once or twice a week.

Miss ‘Ayn, one such teacher, was very proud of her C.V. and list of certificates. She explained that this job is her family, her life, and she invests in it to fill it up. “I always thought that I would marry and have children,” she said. “But every year it seems less likely.” All the “career women” with whom I spoke shared this lament with me.

Many trainers and teachers did not value her for this but were rather put off by her seemingly excessive dedication to the job many people saw as the “best job for a woman” because it was so complementary to marriage and childrearing. Although Miss ‘Ayn was the
teacher with the most certificates by far in her school, other teachers lobbied the principal to transfer her to a different school. She was seen as “angry, lonely, and obsessed – maybe selfish in some way” for spending so much time and care on her professional career. A colleague of Miss ‘Ayn wondered if “being unmarried made her hard and cold.” Everyone did not share these sentiments, but they were common enough among trainers as well as teachers to note that the state “professionalization” process may be problematic for women. Miss ‘Ayn told me that she felt hassled and judged by the married teachers with whom she worked. “Honestly,” she said. “I hate working with women – not you – but they give you the wrong direction, a contrary direction.” Given the widespread social anxiety in Jordan over women who work (Adely 2004, 2007a, 2009; Sonbol 2003), teacher training is often unclear about how much female teachers should/are expected to/would be sympathetically understood for “professionalizing” their behaviors. Women who have changed their behaviors to prioritize their career are not necessarily respected or praised. It is a problem for the state, which says that changing teachers’ behaviors is “effective” and a good thing, but the above examples illustrate that role expectations for men and women haven’t really changed.

By juxtaposing policy statements and daily practices, Shirazi illustrates the “dissonance between intended outcomes and the actualities of education reform in Jordan” (2010:56). He writes that “top-down” implementation of ERFKE policies that posit “education as a socioeconomic panacea” often ignore or work counter to the real social, political, economic, and cultural structures in which people live (Shirazi 2010). Jordan presents a confounding case to the international development community that generally often assumes educational achievement will lead to employment, democracy, and secularization.
Sympathy for the State

How do you teach critical thinking when public servants and in fact all citizens are banned from criticizing those in power? In the Teach Like A Champion workshop, one teacher expressed frustration over the state’s contradictory structures incentivizing obedience, memorization, and standardization for students and teachers alike: “You cannot teach skills in a deskilled system,” he said. “Some training tries to take away teacher agency. The problem is the tawjihi (high school exit exam).” For most teachers with whom I spoke, professional training seemed to require ambiguous behavioral changes from them without offering them “follow-through,” support with administrators, enough recognition of the choices they have to make in the real world beyond the class curriculum, or adequate strategies for dealing with the fall-out of trying to change cultural role expectations.

The Teach Like a Champion training lasted from 9:00am to 2:00pm hosted at Zain a-Sharaf girls secondary school and included over thirty teachers from five public schools in Karak. The Teach Like a Champion curriculum is based on a book and curriculum series by American educator Doug Lemov and his work, training teachers with KIPP charter schools. QRTA purchased the rights to the book, had it translated into Arabic, and developed the associated training workshops. The previous October, QRTA hosted a three-day workshop by author Doug Lemov that was attended by Her Royal Highness Queen Rania and over one hundred teachers, Ministry officials, supervisors, and administrators. The book and curricular materials cover forty-nine concrete and actionable teaching techniques that are accompanied by short video clips of these techniques used in KIPP classrooms. As aware as I am of the uniqueness of the KIPP military discipline, teacher recruitment, and charter school status, I wondered how these video clips and techniques would be relevant to public school teachers in
Jordan. The state is actually ambivalent about what they want teachers to do or be, and one important source of ambivalence and contradictory pressures is the international education development industry.

One male teacher complained, “Everything comes down to politics, corruption. You can’t teach criticism of those in power.” Another female trainer responded, “wasta killed us. Crazy talks and the state listens. majnun yiḥki wa ‘aql yistim’a. [Crazy talks and knowledge listens]” Speaking out against those in power would be a “wrong” thing to do – culturally, legally, and politically – so many teachers restrict themselves to the prescribed conversation topics and stances in the standardized and approved curricula.

From a male principal in the Teach Like a Champion training came fundamental criticism of the “critical thinking” goal:

“Constructivism, student-centered learning, ‘no correct answer’ does not produce stable society. It breaks down society actually, because it is incompatible with absolute truth. The research papers say this is what constructivism brings about – the deconstruction of society. I am for the apprenticeship model, but also I focus on the quickest way to transfer knowledge, it’s instructionalism at the beginning. Even the UK’s moving away from constructivism now and bringing in more exams. The best way to get to be the best of the best is TIMSS. This type of methodology – developing a certain type of personality – is distracting from basic math and science skills.”

Every principal I interviewed brought up the need for stability and peace in the country and that stability is based on loyalty and obedience. School administrators in particular and many teachers expressed concern over the goal of critical thinking and said such a focus would cause
many problems, disruptions, chaos, result in ignorance instead of knowledge, and may even be against the understanding of truth in religion. Mr. Zay, from the “Teach Like A Champion” book, explains to teachers that “Right is Right” and that they should not accept partial or incorrect answers but push students to correct answers.\textsuperscript{26} He reminds teachers that on the state high school graduation exams, no partial credit is given for partial or misunderstood answers, so they should make sure their students give the correct response. Foundational in the structure of formal education is that teachers assess the accuracy of student knowledge; and this necessity is at odds with state idealization of critical thinking.\textsuperscript{27}

When Stanford professor Paul Kim presented a State of the Art lecture on using mobile devices, Miss Waw shrugs and says “phones are banned in school and anyway the tech teacher wouldn’t like it and it cost too much and teachers don’t like technology.” There is evidence that she does “get” the ideals of education reform and it’s not just logistical (if schools were equipped with the devices and teachers trained on them, they still may not use them), but Kim’s presentation may not be effective at changing behavior because there’s no affective/sympathetic, trust-based relationships built between the trainer and Miss Waw and her school community.

If education reform ideals are too ambiguous or contradictory to teach or train, how might trainers rethink measuring the “effectiveness” of the education reform workshops? Was the training “effective”? If one means, “Did it effect behavioral change?” or “Do teachers share reform ideals?” I suggest they’re not really the right questions because of the ambiguities and ambivalences of teacher authority, gender expectations, politics, and economic realities of the present.

\textsuperscript{26} Lemov: 2011, technique two of forty-nine.
\textsuperscript{27} For the application of this argument to standardized testing in the USA, see Kennedy 2005 and Ravitch.
Effectiveness as Educating Consent

For trainers, they try to connect material to their participants’ needs but generally also have a moral commitment to the transformational process. Trainers often report a sense of existential threat that comes from rising unemployment, lack of water and natural resources, and reliance on the service or new “knowledge” economy. This sense of threat or danger motivates them to travel long distances and speak for many hours to occasionally hostile or absentee audiences of teachers. Although the Government of Jordan spends a relatively high proportion of its budget on education, billions of dollars come from foreign aid agencies.

As one American education consultant affiliated with the US Foreign Service said, “There is no way traditional public or private sectors can produce enough jobs. Our goal must be to mobilize significant numbers of youth in a socially productive way. Youth-driven innovation on a massive scale is the only way to productively address social pressures of the youth bulge and unemployment. In societies that traditionally venerated elders, they must shift to venerating youth – the idea that youth are the most important part of society.” Much of the external pressure from international education development officials, and the teacher trainers they fund, is to change not just behavior but the ‘proper distribution of sentiments,’ sympathies, and what teachers (and the society at large) should care about (Shirazi: 2010a and 2010b; Kubow: 2011; Adely: 2010, 2009, 2007a, and 2007b).

This narrative of normative imperative, a succession of things “they” “must” do, comes from outside Jordan and outside the cultural systems and practical schemas between which teachers negotiate on a daily basis (Kupo: 2010). There is a tension that comes from the disparate international education development agents between borrowed, objective, specified “teacher proof” curricula with associated quantitative “accountability metrics” and subjective, flexible,
skill-based approaches and that needs qualitative assessment like peer assessment. There are also
tensions between the contextual needs of race, discipline, and college-readiness in the KIPP charter school movement and the very different ethnic, political, gender, and educational context of Jordanian public school.

*Effectiveness as Affective Communities of Practice*

The logistics of trying to retrain all public school teachers in Jordan is difficult enough, assuming that you have a set curriculum of how to teach for those six goals. Also logistically difficult is assessing the impact of teacher training since it is impossible for trainers to follow up and observe every teacher’s teaching in the weeks and months before and after training. Evaluation already takes up most of the time of district content supervisors even though teachers usually get evaluated only once a year based on one day’s observation. If trainers don’t know what “critical thinking” and the other ERFKE goals look like in practice, they cannot clarify, record, assess, or model them for teachers. QRTA staff are taking into account the ambiguities and impossibilities of education reform ideals and restructuring their training in order to be “effective” in slightly different, nontraditional ways. Instead of measuring effectiveness in one-off, check-box evaluations of discrete behaviors or even surveys of teacher belief in idealized concepts like critical thinking, QRTA is building a programming design called “communities of practice” in order to develop long-term relationships, dialogue, and experimentation.

This training strategy to structure effective, long-term changes in teaching practice called “communities of practice” was the topic of QRTA’s 2012 annual conference. They’re trying to conceptualize, structure, and teach for communities of practice by bringing teachers and administrators together intentionally so they build emotional ties and support networks.
Previously, teachers might get trained but administrators wouldn’t understand or support it back in their schools or administrators who can’t apply the content of the training would sign themselves up for the workshops. As part of the approach building “communities of practice,” QRTA staff members are more proactively training teacher and administration leaders who are officially responsible for offering the training to more teachers in their schools.

Scholars in the US have recently suggested that education reform is ineffective not because teachers lack sufficient knowledge or don’t care about the ideals in the same way as reformers, but that the education reform ideals themselves are contradictory and impossible to achieve. Mary Kennedy (2005) argues that it is impossible to teach content at the highest levels to students of varied life experiences and expect to engage all students deeply; it is impossible to organize, entertain, and control large groups of young people well all the time; it is impossible to teach “for critical thinking” and “to the test” at the same time as well as other contradictory goals.

QRTA has established multi-year “cohort” training to build “communities of practice.” QRTA cohort training explicitly privileges a qualitative approach to building trust-based relationships. By the spring of 2013, QRTA was operating five math, science, and English writing cohorts and began Arabic writing and science sustainability cohorts. These cohorts are long-term and include multiple workshops a year for three years. Subject area cohorts bring together teachers and administrators from all over the municipality to have this training and provide mutual support and accountability. Follow-up observations are not just evaluative but would be supportive coaching with a long-term cohort mentor. Mentorship is another component of successful communities of practice. QRTA staff members said the three-year commitment provides better community building than short term interventions and through these structured
meetings with other teachers in their subject the teachers can come up with their own best practices. QRTA is trying to effectively accomplish the education reform goals while navigating what that really means in schools across Jordan.

The process of restructuring what it makes sense to care about and reprioritizing values is a relational, social process embedded in larger social, political, and family networks. I suggest that QRTA is responding to ambivalences in Jordanian education reform by restructuring teacher training away from behavioral change and toward relationship building (in order to achieve long-term ‘distribution of sentiments’ and thus behavioral change). QRTA’s terminology of “communities of practice” is also borrowed from US education studies, probably through QRTA’s partnership with Teachers College, Columbia University. Many staff members have graduate training in American institutions and actively look for ways to apply American educational practices in Jordan. My interpretation of QRTA’s “communities of practice” approach is that QRTA staff members and teacher trainers have understood the ambivalences of state reform ideals and structures and are redefining “effectiveness” as long-term relational engagement instead of immediate absolute behavioral change. Thus, I did not attempt to follow teachers from training into their classrooms to see if the training was “effective” at changing their behaviors, since I find that a shortsighted question. Instead, I observe the affective relationships that are shape sentimentality and sympathy and ultimately determine behavior in daily school life. My effective = affective analytic focuses on teachers and teacher trainers as they discuss the ‘proper distribution of sentiments’ in Jordan and the role of education in transforming people’s sentiments for possible desired futures.

Is there a connection between teachers drawing on white boards with markers and their students leading Jordan to a more prosperous and democratic future? Perhaps, but it depends on
other (long term, relational) social contingencies. Better questions would include “What are reform ideals really and can they all actually be achieved?” and “How are we facilitating the development of trust-based relationships?” Multiplicity, flexibility, relationships, precarious authority, skills, friendship, caring, socializing with other teachers is what teaching is often about. QRTA teacher training aimed at building “communities of practice” can be interpreted as an attempt to integrate trainers (as representatives of “the state” and state education reform ideals) into teachers long-term relational lives. From this perspective, “effective” teacher training is about thinking, inspiring, gender-mixed socializing and talking, drawing and visually organizing, learning "professional" sharing of space and respecting vocal and body and gaze boundaries, and thinking about the present and possible futures.

In my interpretation, the operationalization of education policy reforms relies on state actors to transform teacher sympathies in a way that makes state goals and visions of the future more emotionally salient and persuasive reasons for action and that achieving the ‘proper distribution of sentiments’ is how trainers hope to be effective. Education policy reforms in Jordan often put teachers in the position of justifying behavior according to state goals in contradiction to traditional role expectations of religion, gender, family, and culture. Stoler and others (like Rutherford 2009) have shown the role of emotion and political affect in nation-building, and in particular colonial and imperial rule. The colonial connection of this theoretical frame is not accidental, but rather resonates with the contemporary case of external international development pressure and structural influence on Jordanian education reform rollouts. From the perspective of teachers and teacher trainers mediating multiple, ambiguous, and conflicting role expectations, ERFKE teacher training is about the struggle to define the ‘proper distribution of sentiments’ in ways that will be broadly sympathetic with people who have to live within long-
standing social structures.

I observed over one hundred hours of the attempt to retrain all current teachers for the knowledge economy goals: critical thinking, cooperation and teamwork, multilingualism, technological fluency, democratic participation, and entrepreneurship. These new goals were shocking and confusing to many teachers, especially the female teachers at public schools like Ammani Girls’ School, who had become teachers because of the cultural appropriateness of the work for women. What does “knowledge economy” and the six goals of ERFKE mean to teachers? At the winter 2013 QRTA short course “Teaching for the Knowledge Economy,” I asked teachers to answer those questions, and write their ideas of the six ERFKE goals and their own “best practices” (Appendix 2).

I ask what technology is available in the classrooms or teachers’ lounges, beyond the computer labs. “We have a smart board in the computer lab, but no one knows how to use it,” she says, laughing. “This is development.”

Miss Waw walks me through three other workshops she’s been to recently, including the “six hat strategy,” “mind map for interactive lessons,” and “e-quizzes.” The Six Hat Theory was originally developed by Edward De Bono in 1985 and Miss Waw learned about it in a 2008 certification course. The six colored hats stand for aspects of each lesson (blue for summary, red for feelings, white for data, green for action, yellow for positives, and black for negatives). She explains how she separates each class into groups for each hat color and gives each class a “starter” problem. Each group has 1-3 tasks for using the internet to search, discuss, and prepare a presentation. According to Miss Waw, the six hats integrate the lesson at many different levels for students so they learn it better. She says the white hat is about technical information but that students need more than that in order to learn. The red hat is about
emotional reactions that don’t need justification. When Miss Waw teaches about a lunar eclipse, for example, she asks, “How does it make you feel? Afraid? Go pray.” The black hat is about discernment and reasons to be cautious or conservative; whereas the yellow hat is about optimism and ways to benefit from the topic.

We sit in the computer lab with the computer teacher, Miss Khaa, who cannot get any of Miss Waw’s programs to work on the school’s computers. When Miss Waw brings out a flash drive, Miss Khaa says that personal flash drives are against school policy because they “can spread viruses.” Another teacher passing in the hall jokes that if Miss Waw uses her flash drive in the school computer, the flash drive will get infected with a virus. Miss Khaa shows her the virus scan and says, “No, it’s clean. Miss Waw comes another day with a compact disc she’s created, but the program is not on the school computer and it cannot open. Miss Khaa suggests that she “Save As” a PowerPoint or document, but it cannot. Miss Waw tries to print out some of her programs from home, but tells me that her printer stopped working when she replaced the ink so she needs a new printer.

Miss Waw finally brings her personal laptop to school in order to show me the Flash Player quiz creator. She explains how you could include different kinds of questions: fill in the blank, multiple choice, multiple answer, short essay, true or false, sequence, and matching options. She asks me about the difference between multiple choice (radio buttons) and multiple answer (check boxes). I explain how some students could spell a word with or without the hamza letter in Arabic, or could write the number itself (1) or word (one). She explains how you could score by question (points per correct question) or by answer (different answers worth different amounts of points). Miss Waw says that they’re also good for geography and shows me a clickable map. She also opens a PowerPoint “Hot Potato” for teaching English.
Miss Baa stops by the computer lab and says to me, “I don’t like computers. I took classes in computing but I don’t practice or use it a lot.” Miss Waw tries to convince Miss Baa to use it but she repeats that she doesn’t want to. Miss Baa, who teaches upper grades including tawjihi, says that these “apps may be better for younger ages.” Miss Waw says she’s trained the volunteer teachers in the technology team, but other teachers do not seem interested.
CONCLUSION: REFORMING RELATIONSHIPS

In the context of uncertainty over role expectations and conflicting pressures, I worked with my informants to understand the culture of teaching and how to render cohesive their experiences negotiating these tensions: How to be a good woman, a good Muslim, a good Jordanian public teacher, and most complicedly, how to be a good female Muslim Jordanian teacher all at once? What you get when applying the study of everyday teachers political affect is mediation of role expectations and concordant sympathies, I argue, according to their relationships.

I hope to contribute to the study of ways institutional power constructs and reconstructs the culture of teaching by bringing to bear contributions of educational anthropology to theories of authority and the state. I also hope to add to conversations about education reform, development, and women’s empowerment in general, and specifically, Muslim women’s agency and work in Jordan. More broadly, I explore how individuals raised within a culture engage in cultural transformation and the ways in which this transformation can be authoritatively engineered by looking at the formulation and change of sympathetic reasons for behavior.

Susan MacDougall (2014), writing of her fieldwork among women in Jordan, asks “how women negotiate the multiple, sometimes–conflicting moral standards that prevail in a rapidly modernizing society heavily influenced by both so-called traditional values and by the region-wide ‘Islamic trend’ (Starrett 1998)” and finds that “what in fact has emerged is that my research participants do confront the ostensibly unsolvable problem of contradiction, and do so through navigating their relationships with others.” The cultural mediation undertaken by Jordanian
female public school teachers is not particular to Arab women or Jordanian women, but resonant within national and regional conversations and part of the social process of education as well as human socio-psychology in general.

Affect(ion) determines behavior, seen when a teacher marks a student present when she is absent, ridicules a student’s dress code violation in front of the school, lauds nonexistent computer classes to the Queen, turns away from the camera during training photos, shows up for extracurricular training, donates begrudgingly to charity in front of colleagues, babysits versus teaches while covering a class, collects certificates for professional advancement, or takes three hour smoke breaks during training, etc.

Education should mean empowerment. Behavioral change without relational change matters not at all or is counter-effective. For example, although the data usage workshop goal was to make teachers record accurate data in order to provide the ministry with data in order to see improvement since research shows student and teacher attendance is positively correlated to grades, if all teachers suddenly complied with recording accurate attendance, the outcome would not be better attendance but rather massive student failure or teachers quitting because they don’t want to be so punitive to students. The recording of attendance is not just a bureaucratic process but a social one and thus a relational approach would have found out the social reasons not only for inaccurate recording but also why students and teachers are absent in the first place. Perhaps the time and energy put toward data usage workshops could be put toward providing child care at schools and teacher training (to increase teacher attendance) and provide mentors and alternative schools to at-risk students. Compliance is not empowering.

My work builds on research in anthropology, sociology, and education on social and cultural reproduction and transformation through schooling, and on recent anthropological work
on Islam, gender, and citizenship. I connect literature on agential social learning to institutional pressure to support my analytical framework, suggesting culture is reproduced and changed in school through mediation, sympathy, and relationships. This dissertation is a preliminary excursion into the anthropology of policy and systems that connects education research on how people teach and learn to the anthropology of ethics and normative reasoning in a context of education reform and institutionalized cultural change.

**Implications for the Study of ‘Moral and Islamic Life’**

The study of Islam and its integration into formal, civic institutions has found a “high degree of diversity in the localized understandings of a moral and Islamic life” (White 2003; El Gamal 2006; Hassan 2008; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; Starrett 1998). To define whether Islamic banking is “Islamic” in Jordan, most people agree on basic requirements like charging no interest, but “some people say the bank doesn’t feel Islamic. Yet there is the sense that all these Muslims *should* have the same idea… But really, no one can agree on an answer” (Tobin 2014). Rendered particularly evocative in formal schooling practices are ways adults try to define, transmit, enforce, adapt, reproduce, and transform answers to basic moral and ontological questions. My interest is in the mediation of modern Muslim womanhood in Jordan through schools as way to see cultural transformation and transmission in practice, and through the teaching of gendered political and economic identities during state-run education reform.

**Implications for the Study of Education**

The formal education system is a productive context in which to analyze state power, particularly in respect to national narratives put at risk, experimented, and put into practice. Such
national narratives are about Jordanian identity vis a vis Palestinian or about official Islam and the role of pluralism in society. Schooling is a unique socio-cultural space with the explicit purpose of defining and transmitting certain national narratives of religious and political identity from the generations in power to successive generations. Schooling is a deliberative, dynamic, ambiguous, and experimental process involving children and adults at many different political, economic, religious, legal, and linguistic levels from the teachers, parents, students, administrators, school policy makers and politicians, to textbook authors and publishers, exam writers and assessors, and teacher trainers and professors.

The school is a space for official and conscious identity construction, and this space of teaching and learning culture is a prime location for anthropological inquiry.\textsuperscript{28} Geertz (1973) argued for understanding culture as the “webs of meaning” within which people live, encoded and constructed by symbols. The creation and teaching of these symbols is one of the main purposes and functions of formal schooling. Schooling, as an institutionalized process, is charged with identifying important and useful knowledge and states of belonging and teaching them to children. Formal public schooling developed alongside European nationalism and constitutionalism and became a definitive part of belonging to the global system of independent nation-states.

Eric Hobsbawm is one of the most prominent historians of the ‘modern age’ and its corresponding social politics and ideologies: nationalism, imperialism, communism, liberalism, capitalism, globalization, and democracy. In his (1983) work with Terence Ranger, \textit{Invention of Tradition}, he wrote about “traditions” and how they can be “invented” or created concurrently

\textsuperscript{28} The school is obviously a space for unofficial and unconscious identity construction as well, but for the purposes of studying the precariousness and sympathy of professional educators, I focus on the official and structural levels.
with a created origin and past that makes them appear to have the gravity and emotional depth of history behind them. He calls on scholars to study the process of inventing and formalizing the rituals and symbols of new “traditions” and describes “three overlapping types: a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour” (pg. 9, sic).

Formal, compulsory education is a social institution that is pervasive in the modern world and one that defines a modern nation-state. The role of education in shaping modern citizens has been well studied; “As articulated early on by Durkheim (1956) and others, these schools have served to inculcate the skills, subjectivities, and disciplines that undergird the modern nation-state. [...] Schools interject an educational mission of extra-local proportions. [...] Schools and education often become sites of intense cultural politics.” (Foley, ed. 1996:1). The “invention of tradition” and “cultural politics” can be clearly and productively studied in formal education systems, with their officially sanctioned textbooks, examinations, teacher training, and school holidays and commemorations that have as their explicit purpose the definition of the nation and its history and traditions.

Benedict Anderson’s definition of nationalism in his eponymous book, *Imagined Communities*, focuses on the nation as an “imagined political community… inherently limited and sovereign.” He uses the words “imagined,” “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them,” and “community,” because the strength of their emotional ties means they would be willing to die or kill for their fellow-members of the nation (1983:6). Anderson’s history of nationalism stresses
its origin both from the nineteenth-century colonial state ideologies and policies, and from the New World non-dynastic nation-states that became models for every successive successful revolution. His historical development of nationalism highlights the rise of liberal democracy, codification and spread of print languages, and the Protestant Reformation. He emphasizes the decline of three ideas: “that a particular script language offered privileged access to ontological truth […] that society was naturally organized around and under high centers […] and] a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of men and the world essentially identical” (36). Anderson analyzes nation-ness, nationality, and nationalism as “cultural artefacts of a particular kind,” and investigates “how they have come into historical meaning, ways in which their meanings have changed over time, and why they command such profound emotional legitimacy” (3, sic). Anderson is part of a conversation with other historians of nationalism who stress other historical foundations of nationalism, such as industrialism or the Enlightenment.

Many scholars of nationalism argue that nationalism is a new form of humanistic religion (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Van der Veer and Lehmann 1999) that shapes religion to itself (Kapferer 1988). The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been alternatively praised and criticized for scripting a Jordanian version of “modern, peaceful Islam.”

Anderson traces the development of nationalism through the administrative territories of colonial empires and corresponding expansion of state and non-state modern-style education. He argues that the transformation of colonial states into national-states was “made possible not only by a solid continuity of personnel, but by the established skein of journeys through which each state was experienced by its functionaries” (1983:115). Educational institutions are doubly important because throughout the political transformation of independence, they consist of both
school teachers and administrators. They are functionaries themselves and teach students who go on to be functionaries at every other level of the state. Many scholars note the influence of the axiomatic ideas and ideologies of colonial education on alumni who went on to lead independence movements against colonial states. Less studied are the transformations in educational ideology and practice in postcolonial states after independence.  

There have been many contributions to the epistemological tradition that people see and know things based on what categories they bring to their worlds (from Kant through Boas, Durkheim, Bourdieu, Geertz, Foucault, Goffman, etc). This paradigm recognizes that people have different sense perceptions based on their unique socio-cultural backgrounds. Durkheim posits that the phenomenal world is experienced by human beings in a particular social context that so shapes the categories and classifications of experience that perception “in no way resembles what it would have been if it has been dictated to us by sensuous experience alone” (quoted in Bellah 1973, pg 217). In fact, Durkheim gives the ultimate place to society as a whole, as it is in the totality of a society that the universe of conceptual thought exists. Human nature is a unity of the duality of the individual human mind and ‘other minds’ and it is this combination of personal and impersonal that is the basis for human society and conceptual thought, including concepts of the divine. For Durkheim, society is epistemology.

Early educational anthropology incorporated many concepts and terms from classic theorists in sociology and anthropology. Classic sociology and anthropology theory presents lived experience as a balance between individual agency and societal structure. I suggest the process of education as (teaching) individuals attempting to teach knowledge to (learning) individuals is also mediated in social, cultural, economic, legal, and political contexts. From Bourdieu, we use vocabulary to describe human behavior and meaning-making through such
terms as “praxis” (or “practice”), “field,” “capital,” and “habitus.” For the field of education specifically, Bourdieu focuses on social reproduction and the symbolic violence inherent in a pedagogue’s arbitrary power (1990: 5) and the ways symbolic power is embedded and ritualized in language (1991). Bourdieu connects cultural phenomenon firmly to the structural characteristics of a society and illustrates how the culture produced by a structure in turn helps to maintain it. He makes explicit that education “carries an essentially arbitrary cultural scheme which is actually, though not in appearance, based on power” (1990: xv). Thus, educational anthropologists look at meaning-making as both explicit and implicit processes, constructed and debated through symbols with symbolic power, through everything from policy reform to classroom pedagogy.

Perhaps a product of his own culture, Bourdieu saw class as the most important social structure being reproduced. One of the best-known educational anthropologists is Paul Willis, whose (1977) Learning to Labor provides an ethnographic account of class reproduction in British schools. Willis writes that the explicit ideology of modern compulsory, universal, tuition-free education through John Dewey and Thomas Jefferson has been to inculcate the values of democracy and equality and to provide opportunities for social mobility and political participation to the lower classes. In contrast to this explicit ideological purpose, the educational experience that Willis records effectively reproduced social classes and “working class kids get working class jobs” (Willis 1977).

Anthropology of education goes beyond rhetoric and explicit ideology to deconstruct cultural production, reproduction, argumentation, and transformation in lived experience. Schooling consists of daily enacting political deliberations. Throughout the educational institutional structure are individual agents answering questions of how they should behave and
how schooling should be done. Recurring in each question is the word “should,” because schooling is an essentially normative institution: teaching them who they should be, what they should know, and how they should behave.29 Schooling teaches children who to be and how to enact those identities; and those in charge of organizing schooling must figure out what the identities are, how to teach them to children, and why.

All of the above questions and social processes of answering them are of interest to cultural anthropologists. Educational anthropology as a sub-field was launched in the US in the 1950s. The originating conference was at Carmel Valley Ranch, California in 1954, with twenty-two participating anthropologists and educationists discussing how anthropology and education studies could productively engage each other (“Reflections” 2005). The organizers of the conference, George and Louise Spindler, are considered founders and early leaders of the sub-discipline in the US over the next five decades, but some of the most important contributions to the field have come from European scholars such as Durkheim, Bourdieu, Willis, Foucault, Anderson, Habermas, and their work on culture and modern education. In the US, the institutionalization of the sub-field took shape along the lines of the Council on Anthropology and Education incorporated in 1968 under the American Anthropology Association umbrella, issuing a journal called Anthropology and Education Quarterly beginning in 1970.

29 Some of these normative questions include: To what extent should public education accommodate individual differences with respect to academic ability, cultural background, worldviews, or various disabilities? What should be the appropriate balance between subjects? What place should religion and spirituality have in the curriculum and daily practice? Should there be a separate middle school or alternative schooling for this age group? How much should it cost and who should pay the tuition? How should meals be provided? Should there be required uniforms? Should it be co-ed or separate? What should be the role of private schooling and parental choice? What should be the role and influence of athletic programs? — all grounded in more philosophical questions: What is the purpose of education? What is the nature of learning — and teaching? How do you prepare students for the real world but also equip them with tools to change it for the better? What constitutes good education? To what extent should students be allowed or forced to identify their religions or worldviews in class? Should any be given favored status? Who should decide these questions and how?
Recent issues in educational anthropology have been methods of international comparisons, methods of democratic schooling and power relations in schools, the balance between equality and recognizing and encouraging merit, and the balance between individual autonomy and community (particularly religious) belonging. A former AEQ editor asked in 1996, “What is mass schooling really about, worldwide, at this point in human history?” (Anderson-Levitt 1996). Eighteen years later, the question is still a fruitful source of educational anthropology work. Many of the questions about globalization, post-coloniality, ideology, language, history, power, socialization, identity, teaching, and learning that have been raised in the anthropology of education have made an impact in many other subfields like linguistic and psychological anthropology. Many linguistic anthropologists have studied educational practices and institutions (Wortham & Rymes 2003: 3-4). In psychological anthropology, Vygotsky’s work on the social, institutional nature of education, learning, and literacy has become a classic touch point for contemporary scholars (Wertsch 1985). Scholars in political anthropology and anthropology of religion are consistently referring to political and religious identity formation in schools and the politics of education. I answer the question by concluding that the meaning of mass schooling at this point in human history is dynamic cultural experimentation with identity construction and meaning-making.

Richard Fox (1989) writes that these “experiments with truth” are “struggles to master surrounding circumstances” (26) that are “not anonymous, [but] authored by individual dreams, authorized by group struggle, deauthorized by opposition” (34). The transition from utopian dreams to political activism that motivated Gandhi applies to the study of education because it is motivated by a comparable normative, progressive, and even utopian project. Fox emphasizes that “individuals are unique cultural-historical constructions and produce unique interpretations
(15) and that “existing material conditions and cultural meanings define, limit, [enable,] but do not completely compel the outcome” (16). I share Fox’s conviction that culture is “historically contingent, always ‘in the making,’ through ‘active husbandry’” (27) and argue that the educational process is a moment that is singularly capable of providing the data on this meaning-making and active identity construction by particular authors, groups, and opposition.

The term “experiment” has been used explicitly in educational studies, but usually in reference to practical “experiments in improving education” (Bruner 1996:xiv) to reform educational practices to more fully achieve the assumed markers of “better” education. My analytical framework of mediation and sympathy connects approaches in both political and educational anthropology that focus on the iterative and performative nature of identity and institutions. That is, a “professional” identity and institutionalized education reform are performed, practiced, and “experimented” in context. I argue that teachers mediating education reform need to be understood as dynamic interplay between internal and external messages. To unpack the meaning of teachers’ lives in the context of Jordanian education reform, I shall explicitly interpret teacher mediation of external normative dimensions (state, family, religion, economy, culture, gender) and internal sensibilities (self, role, being).

Critical scholars who have attempted to deconstruct normative assumptions in education studies have come from many, usually interdisciplinary fields. One such critical scholar is cognitive and educational psychologist Jerome Bruner. In Bruner’s (1996) words, “culture shapes mind, in that it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of our selves and our powers” (p. x). In this determination, he approaches social theory through “cultural psychology” instead of educational anthropology, with his overly homogenized view of – presumably ethnic or national – “cultures.” Bruner’s work is part of the
Neo-Vygotsky paradigm of education and developmental psychology that seeks to understand the social, cultural, and historical roots of human cognition. This tradition refers to the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky in the early twentieth century, brought to English-language work on educational psychology by James Wertsch (1979, 1985, 1994) and recognized recently by many others (Kozulin 2003, Daniels 1996, Wortham 2006). This work posits that intellectual processes and knowledge are not detached from social identification and that human minds are essentially social and thus “higher mental functions are social before they are internalized by the individuals and that they become internalized by means of social interactions” (Pelissier 1991: 81).

Bruner exhibits greater analytical sophistication when talking about the “culture of education” and the psychosocial activity of the educational context, as he founded the psychocultural approach to educational studies. His approach is based on the following tenets: awareness of alternative meanings unique to individuals’ perspectives (1996:14); constraint in terms of human mental functioning and language capacity; construction of reality that is “made, not found” (19); interaction and intersubjectivity (20); the externalization and production of educational artifacts; instrumentalization of talents and skills traded for “distinctions” valuable to institutionalized “markets” (25); institutional roles that people play and what his interests, status, and respect should be based on each role (29); agency is tied to self-esteem, and self-conceptualization; and narrative as the form of understanding culture that goes through various stages of development and imagination (41). He argues for the primacy of “narrative as both a mode of thought and an expression of a culture’s world view” (1996: xiv) and claims both that “narrative capacity goes through stages of development” and that it “is ultimately an act of imagination” (41).
Bruner explains that narratives do not only go through stages of development and are imagined, but that they are also “risky” (42). He writes, “Education is risky, for it fuels the sense of possibility… It risks creating alienation, defiance, and practical incompetence” (42-43, *sic*). My understanding of risk comes from Marshall Sahlins who writes that we “submit cultural categories to empirical risks, in action” (1987:viii). Part of the source of this risk, for Bruner, is the dynamic engagement of teachers and pupils “to effect that crucial but mysterious interchange that we so glibly call ‘education’” (44); at its foundation, “the classic problem of Other Minds” (45) in education is “based on notions about the nature of the learner’s mind…about teaching…and assumptions the teacher holds about the learner” (46-47). According to Bruner, this practice is unique to the human species, to have a “theory of the mind, to recognize ignorance or false beliefs in another and try to correct them” (48).

One of the most relevant lessons I take from Bruner is the reminder that education as an institutional system consists entirely of changeable, relational, and creative humans. He spends a great deal of time on the various intersubjective dimensions of schooling. “A choice of pedagogy inevitably communicates a conception of the learning process and the learner,” he writes. “Pedagogy is never innocent. It is a medium that carries its own message” (1996: 63). Bruner argues that educators are political agents, who “search for authoritative voice: ‘who owns the right version of history’” (pg. 68-69) and who “actively and honestly [participate in educational reform,] willing and prepared to give and share aid, to comfort and to scaffold […] for they are the ultimate change agents” (pg. 84).

Bruner strongly criticizes educational studies as a field. He writes, “It is surprising and somewhat discouraging how little attention has been paid to the intimate nature of teaching and school learning in the debates on education that have raged over the past decade. These debates
have been so focused on performance and standards that they have mostly overlooked the means by which teachers and pupils alike go about their business in real-life classrooms – how teachers teach and how pupils learn” (1996: 86). Finally, Bruner laments “how little systematic study is devoted to the institutional ‘anthropology’ of schooling, given the complexity of its situatedness and its exposure to the changing social and economic climate… What I envision is something that might be called an ‘anthropology’ of education, a term that for me goes far beyond the collection of ‘classroom ethnographies,’ however helpful such exercises might have been. This kind of ‘anthropology’ should be dedicated to work on the situatedness of education in the society at large…” (pg. 33). This is precisely my approach, though I focus on “how teachers teach” rather than “how students learn” at this point.

For those interested in studying “how teachers teach” through a study of education, I argue for the recognition of many associated important points. Firstly, education is more than textbooks. In some cases, academic research purporting to be about “education” is absolutely restricted to quotes from textbooks.³⁰ The study of textbooks obviously provides the clearest text of an official national narrative and ideologies but does not illuminate the practical schemas of institutional actors (teachers) responsible for working with these tools in contexts of classrooms full of students.

This reminder would seem to be obvious to anyone who remembers going through school themselves, for surely a negligible amount of our own school memories are about the textbooks. Instead of discovering what students are “learning” by collating curricula and lesson plans, those researchers are actually collating something very different, though invaluable for

³⁰ In Jordan, note the focus on textbooks of Betty Anderson 2001; Buckner and Russell 2013; and regionally, see Doumato and Starrett 2007. In Syrian education for example, see the critique by Cardinal 2009 of Landis 2007 – a critique that could also be made of Wurmser 2000.
social theory: public discourse on proper and useful knowledge. “Forcing change in curricula,” Starrett writes, “is merely a way to force elites to publically articulate different ways of talking about conflict” (2006: 129). Secondly, education is more than the students. Many other studies claiming to be of “education” draw solely from lessons in the official school curriculum conclusions on what students learn. Willis’ educational ethnographic work over three decades ago clearly shows how school teaching can be contested, adapted, or rejected by learners (Also see Rahman 2004 and Borneman 2007: 221). As Starrett pointed out, “The evidence we have suggests that students are rarely motivated by schoolbook lessons – whether of tolerance and mercy or exclusion and violence” (2006:125). Mediating between the official curriculum and the restless students are the teachers. Thirdly, education includes the static texts and student experiences, but also the engagement between students and teachers recorded in classroom observation as teachers try to make sense of curricular messages for their students. Education as a socio-cultural institution is all of those aspects and more.

Educational studies literature has long established the sociocultural context of schooling, relying on classic analysis by Vygotsky, Bruner, and Berger and Luckmann. Vygotsky (1978) theorized that cognitive skills first develop socially in what Bruner (1969) called “scaffolding”, where students increase knowledge by operating in a space of proximal development between what they can do with guidance and what they can do on their own. Berger and Luckmann (1966) made this space more explicit through “constructivist” theory by arguing that meaning is the outcome of interactions of members in a structured social group. Constructivist theory can be extended to teachers, as teachers are also active participants in the negotiation of meaning making, not passive transmitters of uncontested content (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996). Classic approaches to the study of education have focused on cultural and class reproduction in
schools (Bourdieu & Passeron; Willis 1977), critical studies of the production and reproduction of inequalities based on race, gender, class, language, and sexuality in schools (Dimitriadis & Dolby, 2004), and how the educational system constructs actors who can realize and transform inequalities (Stevick & Levinson 2007; Rubin 2007; Gutman 2004; Giddens 1984; Collier 1989; Ortner 1984). Sociology of education studies have experimented with an analytical language that can cope with reproduction and transformation in education (Morrow & Torres 1995 and 2002, Mayo 2004 and 2008). This literature relies on “critical pedagogy” or “critical education theory” in which the learner is an active participant in the appropriation of knowledge in relation to lived experience and the theorist pays close attention to the relations of power, race, class, gender, ethnicity, and so forth on learning and consciousness formation (McLaren 1996 & 1997).

Teachers are also active participants in the process of semiotic mediation in education (Levinson 2000; Lave & Wenger 1991; Erickson 2011).

Educational anthropologists have added ethnographic detail to these theories by studying how teachers learn “communicative competence” and how to use language in socially appropriate manners (Hymes 1986), the impact teachers’ expectations and focus on particular differences make on student learning in the classroom (Erickson 1984, 1987), and the “structuring of structure” and constitution of relationships between structure and agency (Mehan 1979). For decades, educational anthropologists have operated with these understandings to study cultural transmission through educational structures, with particular interest in identity formation and politics, language socialization, power and patriarchy, and the effects of modernization (Spindler 1974; Pelissier 1991; Levinson 1996). My study of teachers builds on previous studies of how students’ identities and relationships to parents, larger community, and development of the region are impacted by competing modern and traditional ideas about gender.
roles, self-making, and community involvement (Stambach 2000). Ethnography gives names and faces to abstract notions of culture and identity by producing a complex, interpretative map of the range of ways people interact, converse, challenge and, as always, mediate the potentialities in their lives (Wolcott 2008; Zou & Trueba 2002).

Implications for Development

Taken as an analytic for teacher education, education reform, and development policy, political affect requires a new education narrative. Quantitative processes are currently used as the methods to putatively accomplish qualitative goals. That is, behavior changes and compliance (do this) are meant to produce good/developed/modern/trained/quality/professional educators. However, education ideals are impossible anyway; economic citizenship rationales actually justify authoritarian intervention; and in previous analytics “culture” is deemed the problem that prevents development.

The processes of normative mediation and the importance of relationships do not rest easily with most international education development. In many development processes, agencies still rely on outdated, Eurocentric, orientalist understandings of culture and false binaries of individualistic versus collectivist cultures (Hofstede 1984). Development processes generally rely on quantifiable problems, concrete actions, and quantitative accountability where an expert knows which behaviors produce which results. The narrative is that successful development occurs when the correct, imminently tangible, resources or behaviors are organized into the right policies and systems according to “best practices.” Putatively, these problems and solutions are scientific and teachable. When agents are evaluated as improperly enacting the prescribed

behaviors, it is deemed an issue of improper distribution of sentiments – that they do not ‘get it,’ they do not have the right culture, or they haven’t bought in to the goals or ideals. The complicated relational realities, many complicated normative messages, contradicting sympathies, and massive scale of uncertainty in a time of sociocultural change are rarely given space in development reports or reform plans. However, there’s a growing appreciation of the fundamental role of relationships in human nature and particularly in teaching and learning. In practical terms, training courses should be held accountable and reduce staff turnover and reduce referral problem. Training is social capital for career progress and some are not actually staying and using the training but only using the certificates to get promoted away from the classroom and school.

To explain people's behaviors you can't just follow the money or say the authoritarian state or religion or tribe told them to because people mediate these things. Miss Dal wasn't self-appointed disciplinarian because she was enacting state priorities all the time but rather when they resonated with family/religion role expectations for her. The importance of relationships and affect is not news to anthropology, but rather a fashionable new wave in medical, economic, agricultural, and anthropology of development in general all similarly find political meaning in social relationships. The understanding that what is effective is affective could change how education reform and development proceeds. Although quantitative metrics are more easily comparable across cases and legible to donors than qualitative measures, a qualitative approach that focuses on relationship building would more effectively “transform society” (to refer back to Dr. Alif) and change not just what people do but why they do them and who they are.
APPENDIX I

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Education, Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Educational System

Vision: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has the quality competitive human resource system to provide all people with life-long learning experiences relevant to their current and future needs in order to respond to and stimulate sustained economic development through an educated population and a skilled workforce.

Mission: To create and administer an education system based on “excellence,” energized by its human resources, dedicated to high standards, social values, and a healthy spirit of competition, which contributes to the nation’s wealth in a global “Knowledge Economy.”

Core Values: Providing educational opportunities for all, loyal and good citizenship, quality, justice, equality, effectiveness, efficiency, harmony, and building effective partnerships.

Education System:
The philosophy of education in the kingdom stems out of the Jordanian constitution, the Islamic Arab civilization, the principles of the great Arab Revolt and the Jordanian national experience. This philosophy is manifested in the following basics:

(a) The intellectual bases:
   1- Faith in Almighty God.
   2- Faith in the higher ideals of the Arab Nation.
   3- Islam is a system of intellectual behavioral ideology that respects man, exalts the mind and urges for knowledge, work and morality.
   4- Islam is a system of wholeness that provides virtuous values and principles that from the consciousness of both the individual and the group.

(b) The national, bases of pan-Arab and human:
   1- The Hashemite kingdom of Jordan is parliamentary, hereditary and monarchic state where loyalty is for God, the homeland and the king.
   2- Jordan is a part of the Arab Nation and the Jordanian people are indivisible from the Islamic and the Arab Nations.

3- The Arabic language is an essential pillar in the existence of the Arab Nation; its unity and renaissance.
4- The Palestine cause is crucial to the Jordanian people.

(c) The social bases:
1- Jordanians are equal in political, social and economic rights and responsibilities and are distinguished only by what they contribute to their society and their belonging to it.
2- Respect for the individual’s freedom and dignity.
3- Education is a social necessity and a right for all, each according to his intrinsic abilities and potentials.

(d) General Objectives
The general objectives of education in the Kingdom emanate from the philosophy of education, and are exemplified in shaping a citizen; believer in God, adherent to homeland and nation, endowed by virtues and human aspects, and mature physically, mentally, spiritually and socially so that each student, by the end of the educational cycles, shall be able to:
1- Use Arabic language in expressing himself and in communicating easily with others.
2- Vigilantly comprehend facts, concepts and relations connected with the natural environment both locally and globally and effectively use them in life.
3- Comprehend Islam as an ideology and sharia’ and vigilantly exemplify its values and trends.
4- Vigilantly comprehend technology and acquire skills of using, producing and developing it, and subjugate this technology to serve the society.
5- Think objectively and critically and adopt scientific methods in observation, research and problem-solving.
6- Adhere to citizenship rights and shoulder the related consequential responsibilities.
7- Invest personal potentials and free time in developing knowledge, innovation, invention, and the spirit of initiative, towards work and its completion and in innocent entertainment.

(e) The educational policy principle are manifested in the following:
1- Orienting the educational system to have better suitability to both individual and societal needs, and establishing a balance between them.
2- Emphasizing the importance of political education in the educational system, and enhancing the principles of participation, justice and democracy and their practices.
3- Enhancing scientific methodology in planning, conducting and evaluation of the educational system and developing research, assessment and follow-up system.
4- Expanding educational type in the educational institutions to have them involve programs for special education and others for gifted learners and for those with special needs.
5- Emphasizing the fact that teaching is a message and a career that has its own ethical and occupational basics.
6- Enhancing pride in the scientific and social status of the teacher for his distinguished role in building-up the individual and society.

*The educational cycles and their objectives:
(a) The educational institutions are classified in terms of their cycles in the following types:

1. The pre-school (kindergarten) cycle of maximum 2-year duration.
2. The basic education cycle of 10-year duration.
3. The secondary education cycle of 2-year duration.

(b) Upon instructions issued by the Minister, it is allowed to:

1. Accelerating gifted students by reducing the academic scholastic years needed to accomplish the primary stage for the period that does not exceed 2 years.
2. Reducing the number scholastic years needed to finish secondary education in accordance with the semester’s system or according to foreign programs and does not exceed 3 semesters excluding summer semester.

*The basic education cycle:

(a) Basic education is compulsory and free in the government school.
(b) A child is accepted in the first year of the basic education at completing six-year of age by the end of December of the school year he is enrolls in.
(c) A student is not to be expelled from school before completing 16 years of age, except for those with health problems stated in a report and signed by a specialized health committee.
(d) Basic education is the base for education and the cornerstone for building-up national and pan-Arab unity, developing intrinsic potentials and attitudes and orienting students accordingly.
(e) This cycle aims at realizing the general objectives of education and preparing the citizen in all aspects of his personality; physical, mental, social and spiritual so that he shall be able to:
   1. Vigilantly acknowledge Islam’s history, principles, provisions and values and exemplify them ethically and behaviorally.
   2. Acquire the basic skills of the Arabic language so that he becomes able to use it easily.
   3. Realize essential facts relevant to the natural and geographical environment on the Jordanian, Arab and world levels.
   4. Exemplify the social behavioral basics and respect the traditions, habits and sound values of his society.
   5. Love his homeland, feel proud of it and hold the consequent responsibilities.
   6. Acquire the basic skills of at least one foreign language.
   7. Comprehend scientific basics of all exposed types of technology and exploit them in daily life.

*The secondary education cycle:

(a) Students enroll in the secondary education cycle according to their abilities and interests. Secondary education provides specialized cultural, scientific, and vocational experiences which shall meet the existing and anticipated needs of the Jordanian society and of such standard which helps the student continue higher education or join fields of work.
(b) This cycle aims at building up a citizen who shall be able to:
   1. Use his Arabic language to enhance his scientific and literary knowledge, to consider the constituents of correct linguistic structure, and to relish the arts of the language.
   2. Have cultural identity derived from his nations past and present civilization, and be aware of the necessity for
   3. Conscious openness to world civilization, and contribute to its development.
   4. Interact with the culture environment of his society and work towards its development.
5- Endeavor for the prosperity, eminence and pride of his country, and for participation in resolving its problems and bringing about its security and safety.
6- Perform his duties and adhere to his rights.
7- Work with a team spirit, be aware of the bases and forms of consultation and democracy and apply them in his dealings with others, and believe in the principles of social justice.
8- be aware of international issues and problems and perceive the importance of international understanding and peace built on right and justice.
9- Master at least one foreign language.
10- Relish artistic work and express his artistic tendencies in producing positive artistic works up to the standard of his abilities and potentials.
11- Develop himself through self- learning and continues learning throughout his life.
12- Exemplify Arab and Islamic values and human perfection in his behavior.
13- Investigate information source and master the processes related to collecting, storing, and processing data, at well as ways of benefiting from them.

*Secondary education consists of two major streams:
(a) Comprehensive secondary education stream with a common general educational basis, and specialized academic or vocational education; and.
(b) Applied secondary education stream which is based on vocational preparation and training. The conditions for acceptance in secondary education are determined in accordance with regulations issued by the minister according to bases decided upon by the council.

Collecting school donations in governmental educational institutions is permitted for the purpose of promoting the educational process, in accordance with regulations issued for this purpose.
APPENDIX II

QRTA workshop, “Teaching for the Knowledge Economy”

Notes collected by teachers

My own best practices
- Teaching “students taking care of environment through acting a play and debating
- Consuming water in a proper way showing them a film
- The ability to make the teaching interesting by learning by doing
- Involve students in class management
- Question competition team
- Acting in the classroom
- Draw the word
- Student’s day
- Busy bee
- Hangman play
- Story time
- Crossword
- Scientific experiment
- Boys and girls sing while they play Hijla (jumping)
- Role playing

Team work
- Making models/ multi activities
- Writing
- Discussion
- Competitions
- Open questions / as a teacher a part of the activity
- Presentation
- Mind maps
- Brain storm
- Drama
- Debates
- Field trips
- Case studies
- Projects
- ice breakers
- Mind map: using mind maps is a good way for teaching soft skills in which we can summarize and analyze abstract information
- Design virtual trips for caves and different places in Jordan geological structures [plagued by technological problems]
- Projects - five teams gather to produce one major goal
- Team work: cooperation work between students on one task [Difficult to assess individual work]
- Portfolio - it’s a case carrying student works during the term or year [Student does not get to keep, teacher keeps for assessment purposes]
- Team player’s giving tasks for groups or individually but forces cooperation
- Communication skills: open minded for other opponents opinion such as oral discussions which lead to growth of their personalities
- Time planning - as roles played to act for some companies to give a plan for a project in a crucial time manner
- Fast learning: using shapes that are similar to the curriculum shapes as a real way of illustration
- Old skills: in a direct sequence or line; new skills: diagonal and mutually enforcing among wide range of options

**Technology fluency:**
- Teacher / teacher and students / students
- Using animation programs / Facebook groups / self learning
- Virtual labs / debates, online curriculum / tests, presentation
- Documentation / assessment / chatting
- Tests / monitoring and evaluation / online courses
- Courses, presentation
- interactive boards (smart boards) [How often did I see animation or SMART boards used? 0 times by 0 teachers, only in training; training added on top of training/ expectations on top of expectations means no time to do any of them or just once]
- iPAD
- Facebook groups
- virtual labs, using animation programs
- Ease in using soft skills
- Action Plan: good labs and equipment, teaching pupils technology principles
- What technology do your students use? Powerpoint, Word, Excel, Google, Games, Multimedia, Facebook
- What do they want to use? They want to use what they do best or practice more like Facebook or YouTube
- How do you use technology? How do we learn new technology? Simulation program like Crocodile, Drylab, we can watch video on YouTube
- Utilizing technological applications to facilitate communication
- Teaching listening skills through listening to British students on Skype
- Using short movies to explain the natural disasters (volcano, earthquake)
- Use smart board
- Use simulation for scientific experiments using certain programs like molecular weight calculator
- Using DryLabs for learning and teaching physics
- Photoshop to create a story
- Make a presentation using Powerpoint
- Use mobile phone to teach new vocabulary
- Use email to send homework (effective if they have email)
- Blackboard for evaluating interaction with students [only effective if wholeheartedly assimilated into school]
- Design webpage for lesson using HTML and Dreamweaver (effective)
- Make a quiz using Quizmaker
- Design modules by Authorware
- Use moviemaker to tell a story, discuss a project (effective)
[Relies on technology access/purchase, updates, internet connection, teacher access to updated/working computers]
- Microsoft office
- Mobile applications
- Internet
- DVD, playstation games
- Facebook Twitter
- Data traveler, USB [beware of viruses]
- Facebook, chatting, reading, practicing English
- Mobile phones: download an app, create his own [students can’t use phones in school]
- Email, sending tasks, asking question
- Study through satellite to interact with other cultures
- Distance and e-learning to give chance for absent students to join class [doesn’t happen because teacher doesn’t have time]
- We learn technology by exploring web pages, google for new helpful programs and so on
[Issue: Facebook and YouTube often banned or blocked by government or school, no place for popular movies or games in school curriculum; can’t keep students “on task” if chatting on Facebook or doing inappropriate things like playing Facebook poker]
- Smart phones
- Laptops
- Social websites (way to keep up with their friends)
- All kinds of wireless devices, hands-free

**Democratic Participation**
- Activating the student’s council
- Question/suggestion box
- Group leader
- Competitions
- Making question
- Working together to write tests, classroom management rules and learning process goals
- Give students chance to write teacher’s responsibility to the class as well as teacher gives rules to students [PeaceCorps training in writing class contracts]
- Democratic participation might mean students choose a topic to write about and let them read their topic to all students.
- Make students choose a topic of this lesson and explain it to students, let him take the teacher’s place.
- Opinion survey
- Debates
- Definition: Students share in an educational process positively
- Action plan
- Classroom rules
- Dividing pupils into roles
- Limit the time
- Using soft skills
- Training by practicing
- Motivation
- Democratic participation is giving students the freedom of participation without being forced to do so, but the teacher can encourage them to participate by using indirect means such as putting the name of any student distinguished in participation on the board that has been designed specifically for that
- Empower students’ self-respect, self-confidence, and thoughts, and rewarding the distinct ones
- Accepting students’ opinions, answers, even false ones, listening to all of their viewpoints.
- Think individually what democratic participation means
- To express your notions and feelings freely without having any restrictions or pressure
- Encourage students to express their ideas
- Encourage students to hold responsibilities
- Encourage students to solve their problems in a democratic way
- Encourage students to organize student parliament
- Encourage students to come up with their own rules (punishments, consequences), their own test
- Teachers guard citizenship, you have to update yourself
- Practice democracy beyond a lesson
- Democratic participation that gives the students their own community in the class doing our role as you must be as a citizen
- Negotiate classroom rules, respect others, sharing in assessment of others’ papers

Entrepreneurship
- Is to undertake the act and art of being an entrepreneur, or one who undertakes innovations or introduces new things, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovations into economic goals.
- Action plan:
  1. Being involved in my company
  2. Career day (invitation to some new career presenters to the school)
  3. From school to career
  4. Training in project & money management for students directly
- Definition: is creating a chance to market your ideas
- How to teach:
  - Small project like start a small business (sandwich, snakes, ships, accessories, hot drinks)
  - Handmade craft (game, make characters)
  - Ask to solve problems (how to use the rubbish, save environment by reusing materials or recycling)
  - Growing and investment the school gardens
- Practicing management
- Break fear walls
- Having initiative
- Being motivated
- Practicing judgments
- Developing critical thinking
- Practicing patience
- Planning skills
- Facing risks effectively
- Being creative
- Teaching the students to believe in themselves and self-esteem
- Stand by giving the students enhancement to think about their abilities to create a good school environment of their future which leads to help their society
- Create his own job
- Fundraising by selling school’s products made in vocational room
- Making an open day so students can sell home’s products. Such a day may help poor students and make the relation between friends. Also, strengthen the relationship between community and school
- Entrepreneurship is to help students making their future, decide and plan what they want to be and do
- Steps: Teachers should enlighten the class at the beginning of the semester to let each student think about his future. Then, encourage them through the semester to achieve what they want to be.
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