Changing Childhood in Saudi Arabia:
A Historical Comparative Study of Three Female Generations

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By

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To My Mother and My Grand Daughter Nora
May the Past light the Candles for Tomorrow
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Preface

In this preface I demonstrate how my original ideas progressed, shaping this thesis into a study which takes a historical and comparative approach to children's culture in Saudi Arabia. This study initially aimed to look at children's literature, an idea inspired by three factors:

1) Debates about the need to introduce Arabic heritage to children in contemporary Arab societies, including literature.
2) Discussions regarding the need to improve the quality of contemporary Arabic children's literature.
3) My interest in children's literature and my previous experience in writing for children.

The debates related to the role of children's literature in contemporary Arab Gulf societies are generated by the socio-economic changes these societies are experiencing. Rising income has helped in providing global contact with other countries, and therefore has led to the emergence of new and foreign cultural patterns. This situation, at the same time, has encouraged an interest in the preservation of local culture and generated various arguments regarding the transition and change in Arab identity across different generations (Alwani, 1995; Muhmmod 1995).

Literature, by virtue of being one of the most important elements reflecting social norms and values, can be used as an instrument for measuring
social changes and socio-economic development (Eagleton, 1996: 8-14). Children’s literature also could be considered as an element, which affects and at the same time reflects upon children’s culture (Hunt, 1994:5). Therefore, I suggested that the changes which occurred in children’s literature at different historical periods, might provide indications for changes in the conceptualization of childhood in Arab culture. I wanted to explore the possibility of employing traditional folk tales in contemporary children’s literature as part of examining the concurrence between social change and children’s literature.

Considering the complications of studying children’s literature, particularly when dealing with folk tales, I started with a pilot study in order to examine the possibilities for carrying out a Ph.D. research into this subject. Children’s literature overlaps with the process of socializing children and, in the Arab World, can be seen in the attempt to amalgamate conceptions of local identity with new images developed to encourage children to participate in creating the future of their society. In their development plans, Arab countries aim to improve children’s literature, to the extent that it will become comparable with children’s literature in the developed world. Meanwhile, children’s literature is considered as a tool to bridge the gap between heritage and modernity. Children’s literature is also regarded as an educational tool, used to pass on moralities and personal qualities encouraged by society. Therefore, the adult-child relationship is another important element, which affect the quality as well as the quantity of children’s literature (Hunt, 1991:58; Jafar, 1992: 31)
Taking into account these factors, I realized that it would be useful to start my study with a pilot questionnaire, in order to help illuminate the important and possible variables that might be researched and to stimulate new ideas and questions. The pilot study aimed to compare adults’ experience of listening to tales during their childhood, with the experience of children in contemporary society. This was used to provide evidence for social change, and the changes in approaching traditional literature that have followed. This study also sought to examine the changes that have occurred in children’s interest in literature, through looking at children’s reading habits. It also aimed to look at the correspondence between adult’s desire of introducing folk tales to their children with their actual action.

Examining the relevance of these issues requires an understanding of the diversity between adults’ and children’s experiences and in their interpretation of the meanings in traditional tales. Therefore, I designed a pilot questionnaire, which included questions investigating adults’ experience of listening to folk tales during childhood. It also questioned their judgment regarding the importance of introducing traditional tales to children in contemporary society, and the motivation behind their intention. It also questioned whether they were in practice telling folk tales to their children, and their opinions about doing this. The questionnaire also looked at contemporary children’s literature, examining adults’ judgment regarding contemporary children’s literature, and comparing it with children’s choices. This was to provide evidence regarding any similarities or differences between
the generations. This pilot questionnaire also asked informants to voluntarily write down the traditional tales that they still remembered, and to explain their evaluations and comments.

The pilot study revealed that folk tales were an important part of children's childhood in traditional society, which reflected family structure and functions, as well as the socialization process and children's role in the family and the local community. The results of the pilot study also indicated some of the obstacles involved in the employment of traditional folk tales in contemporary children's literature. It emphasized the argument which suggest that folk tales are a mode of oral literature where it is the storytellers who give the tales their special unique features; once they are written down into paper, the drama stops and the tales lose some of their power and effect (Ibraheem, 1988; Zipes, 1992). Furthermore, it revealed that story telling in traditional society was a social event and family gathering, which was woven smoothly into the traditional social structure and helped shape traditional understanding and concepts of childhood.

Considering these conclusions, instead of starting my study with a strong feeling about the importance of employing Arabic folk tales in contemporary children's literature, I began to question this assumption and, therefore, my research presupposition. It became clear to me that in order to study the possibility of employing folk tales in contemporary children's literature, it would be important to start by examining the changes which have occurred in perceptions towards the child's place in the family, as well as
childhood itself. My questions, in this case, should aim to explore: how different children and childhood are today than in previous generations, and how children’s daily life is and was constructed and enacted. And, therefore, how possible would it be for the transmission of traditional folk tales to the new generation.

I decided therefore to focus my project on studying changes in conceptualizations of childhood, and to see the role of children’s literature as an indication for such change. Thus, my project became an historical and comparative study of changing childhood: for three female generations in Saudi Arabia.
Introduction

Saudi Arabia and Social Change

This study is about changing childhood in Saudi Arabia. It is an historical comparative study, looking at childhood in three female generations. The analysis of the changes that have developed in perceptions of childhood are examined in relation to the historical circumstances that have influenced social and economic changes in Saudi society in general, in the latter part of the twentieth Century.

The socio-economic and political changes that occurred in the Arab world affected children’s culture to a great extent (Al-Drage, 1990: 23; Alwani, 1995:15; Abulnaser, 1985: 10). This is more obvious in the Arab Gulf societies because oil revenue has contributed to increasing their national income. Therefore, since 1970 these countries have been witnessing rapid social and economic change (Abdul-Fadiel, 1979; Abdul-Moatee, 1996).

In studying the Arab World it is important to understand its culture in the light of its geographic location and its historical role. The Arab World is located at the center of the Old World: Asia, Africa, and Europe. This location gave it strategical importance as a connection point and allowed interaction with other parts of the world. Amin describes:

To understand the Arab world, one must see it in its own context, as a stop-over area, as a turntable between the main areas of
civilization of the Old World. This semi-arid zone separates three areas whose civilisations were essentially agrarian: Europe, Black Africa, Tropical Asia. The Arab zone fulfilled commercial functions, bringing together agrarian worlds which otherwise had little contact with one another (1978:12).

The long distance trading played a significant role in creating Arab civilization. The surplus which allowed the formation of its great cities and guaranteed its function as an intermediary came from this type of trading (Amin: 1978).

Studies concerned with socio-historical analyses of Arab culture explain that forces of change in the Arab world have created a tension between traditional heritage and modernity in contemporary Arab societies (Al-Jabry, 1988: 34; Ammara, 1984:13). The roots of this situation are embedded in the historical circumstances that Arab nations have passed through (See Chapter One for details on these historical periods). Several studies have attempted to provide explanation for the factors involved in generating this problematic relation, which is often identified as the conflict between heritage (origins of culture) and contemporary life (modernization) (e.g. Al-Jabry, 1988 and 1991; Ammara, 1984; Ghalyon, 1990).

These studies argue that the Arabs, in their renaissance project, have to deal with two poles apart: the West as a core for development, and Islamic heritage as the origins of Arab culture (Al-Jabry, 1988:18; Mansfield, 1992:134-235). After the end of the era of prosperity and enlightenment that
marked the rise of Islam and the Islamic Arab culture in the period 612-1258 AD, the Arab nation has experienced internal determination of its political structure, combined with external domination by other civilizations, such as Turks, Portugal, British, French and Italy (Al-Dory, 1984:278). Some argue that this problematic situation when dealing with heritage and modernity in contemporary Arab culture is due to the long period of determination that the Arab world experienced, starting in the 11th Century during the second Abbasid state and continued throughout the 19th Century. During those years Arabs were isolated to great extent from their local culture and heritage due to the domination by colonial forces. Therefore, they further suggest, that these conditions have contributed to the separation of the past from present ways of living, and therefore this becomes problematic when dealing with heritage and setting out future plans (Ghalyon, 1990; Al-Jabry, 1991).

The twentieth century witnessed the First and Second World Wars, where the struggle over the Arab World was part of the conflict. However, in 1945, by the end of the Second World War, most of the occupied Arab countries had obtained their autonomy, the last being Algeria in 1961 (Al-Dory, 1984:279-284). Nevertheless, the rise of Arab Nationalism had already started in the 19th Century, emphasizing the unity between Arab countries and calling for the preservation of Arab local identity and culture. At the same time, Arab countries were determined to set out plans for development and change. One important way had been importing knowledge and technology from the Western world, as the Arabs were left behind during the determination and years of colonization (Al-Dory, 1984; Abrash, 1987).
However, looking back to a certain moment in history, during the enlightenment period of the Islamic world (612-1258 AD), the Arabs were considered as leaders of the world. The history and traditions of Arab culture would therefore often be considered as symbolic of the golden age in the past. Thus, change and development could be regarded as the loss of identity through dealings with the West. Indeed, for some, this has meant dependency on an old enemy and on a Westernizing local culture (Al-Jabry, 1988:17-33; Ghalyon, 1990:295).

These different debates around social development and issues related to identity always emerge when dealing with change and continuity in Arab culture and can be classified into three groups: The first supports tradition and local culture, whilst rejecting any outside force of change, especially Western. The second group supports change, and considers traditions as obstacles in the face of development and change. Therefore, this group accepts the need to throw over the old ways of life and seeks to develop new means. The third group represents an attempt to forge a compromise between tradition and modernity. It considers change as a necessity, which can be achieved while continuing to hold on to traditions and heritage (Ammara, 1984:13; Hanni, 1998:50).

Although the composition of these groups can differ from one Arab country to the other, similarities can be observed in the concerns related to the above debates, and therefore to the development process in almost all the Arab countries. Regardless of the differences, one of the main obstacles which
continues to face development in Arab countries is, for example, finding channels to combine tradition and modernity, since these issues are considered to be part of the distinctive Arab goal, that is to maintain their historical and cultural identity (Ghalyon, 1990:21). However, the dominant role of Islam in the formulation of Arab culture in most Arab countries, and more specifically in Arab Gulf region, has meant that the religious values of Islam have been passed on throughout history despite socio-economic change (Al-Dory, 1984; Bshara, 1985). This is more obvious and most important in Saudi society due to several reasons:

- Historically, the Arabian Peninsula, where Saudi Arabia is located, is considered the heart of the Arab origin. Therefore, keeping identity and culture was important not just for the countries of this region, but to the entire Arab world (Al-Dory, 1984:277).

- The Arabian Peninsula is the main center for Muslims. Islam began in Mecca, which is now part of the western province of Saudi Arabia, and where the two main holy mosques are located. Therefore, Saudi Arabia is the centre of the Islamic world (AlMunajjed, 1997:1; Al-Farsy, 1990:21).

- Islam was a main force in the unification of the Arabian peninsula in the early years of the twentieth century and in the establishment of Saudi Arabia, and therefore still carried on in the political structure of Saudi Arabia today (AlMunajjed, 1997:1; Al-Farsy, 1990:21).
Arab Gulf societies experienced a large increase in the national income in 1970s due to the rise in global oil prices. Therefore, these countries have witnessed rapid change in a relatively short period of time. Compromising tradition and modernity has therefore become a dominant issue, especially when discussing change in the position of women and children (Abdul-Rahman, 1982; Al-Rumaihi, 1977).

It is important at the outset to clarify some of the meanings associated with tradition and heritage. Al-Jabry, for example, in explaining the meaning of heritage, defines it as follows:

Every thing we have with and within us in the present time, which was passed to us from the near or the old past, and this past could be ours or belongs to others (1991:45) (Translated from Arabic).

Al-Drage further suggests:

Any definition for heritage should relate to "the self" and to the process of "creating identity". These two elements contain in their structure "time" as a factor involved in creating the "past" for individuals as well as the social past. The definition is also pointing to our relation with the past, and how it is interacting with our present and future (1990:23) (Translated from Arabic).
Although these two definitions could be criticized for their generality, they do indicate that studying the role of heritage and tradition in contemporary Arab culture requires an analytical methodology in order to explore the interrelated dynamic of this role. Questions of subjectivity are also important when dealing with heritage and tradition, since these are a part of the social memory. Memories could therefore be nostalgic rather than a factual or accurate record of the past (Al-Jabry, 1991: 21). This highlights the need to research the actual interaction between traditions and heritage in different generations during different historical periods. This study aims to contribute to this discussion through studying the childhood experience of three generations of informants in Saudi Arabia.

Focus and Aims

This thesis aims to study, from a three generational perspective, change and continuity in childhood in Saudi society. It is, in a sense, looking at the evidence for the creation of a Western type childhood within the Saudi Arabian context, considering that social change has brought new understanding of childhood and children. In order to understand these changes, this study adopts a very broad definition for childhood, the UN definition, which considers childhood to be from birth to eighteen years of age. In light of such a broad definition, the study will examine the first years of life at different historical periods and trace the gradual emergence of a new understanding of that period during the course of that generational shift.
Therefore, it will examine whether we can say the concept of childhood existed earlier in traditional Saudi society; and will also investigate the emergence of a generational stratification, which has sharpened divisions between adults and children, and created distinct categories tied to perceptions of 'age' itself.

The sample of informants for this study was therefore chosen from age groups, which could provide data about the historical period 1925-1990. This period covers the traditional phase as well as the era that witnessed emerging change during the 1950s, and the 1970s-1990s which was characterized by rapid social change.

Change in childhood in Saudi society is thus examined by looking at the memories and experiences of three female age groups who were born across this period. The experience of each generation in this study is analyzed within the type of family system that existed during each historical period. Change and continuity within the family values and its moral system are explored, mainly in relation to the socialization of female children in traditional and contemporary society. This decision to limit the sample for this study to female informants only was made because of the cultural conditions which preserve the separation between male/female relationships in Saudi society. However, this concentration on women's experiences, although in some ways a limit to the scope of the study in term of researching gender relations, did enable a detailed examination of cultural and social transition and changes in the female line from one generation to the other. This is
important here since this study focuses on family practices as a way of understanding how the politics of every day family life are enacted, through looking at the experience of three female generations (see Chapter Three).

First and Second generation informants in this study look back to their experiences of childhood. This is to provide data regarding to the process of female socialization in traditional Saudi society, and to study the experience of being a female child in traditional society. Therefore, other issues are involved when studying the childhood of girls, such as: family relations, gender divisions in relation to the development of social roles and obligations, children’s literature and culture as a means of socialization. The study, therefore, inevitably throws light upon the role of women in the family and society. The experience of contemporary childhood is examined through studying contemporary Saudi children’s views about their daily activities, as well as their evaluation of some aspects of traditional life and traditions.

**Structure and Areas of Inquiry**

Studying the experiences of these three generations permits an investigation of the changes that have occurred in the following areas of children’s daily activities: play and leisure time, learning and education, family relations, relations with community and the function of folk tales. Meanwhile, the analysis of such activities gives rise to other broader issues, such as the tension between traditions and change referred to earlier. The questions this study is aiming to explore are therefore related to those often raised when
negotiating debates surrounding change and continuity, and issues of globalization and locality in a changing society. Such broader matters will therefore also be looked at while dealing with the main questions of this study, which can be summarized as follows:

1. What have been the main factors involved in shaping children's culture in Saudi Arabia during the latter part of the twentieth century?

2. What changes have occurred in the socialization of female children in Saudi Arabia during the latter part of the twentieth century?

3. To what extent has there been continuity or change in socializing female children in current Saudi society?

4. In what ways do historical circumstances create a unique standpoint for each generation?

The chapters of this thesis can be divided into two parts. The first three chapters are introductory, in the sense of introducing the historical and cultural aspects surrounding the arguments, which are central to this study. It also introduces the methods and research design used in researching the questions for the study. The last three chapters deal with analysis of the data gathered during the fieldwork. The final chapter is a conclusion, illustrating the means used by each generation to manage change. These chapters can be summarized as follows:
This chapter aims to formulate a basic theoretical framework for perceiving childhood. In order to provide a proper understanding for childhood as a structural phenomenon, early parts of this chapter consider the importance of the interrelated relations between global and local factors involved in creating contemporary children’s culture. It therefore looks at the local factors involved in creating children’s culture in the Arab region, as well as wider global perspectives on childhood. Thus, one of the main concerns of this chapter is to review some of the leading theoretical debates in the study of childhood. Furthermore, in order to construct an understanding of childhood in Saudi Arabia, this chapter presents an historical review of the changes which have occurred in conceptualizing childhood in Arab culture. These changes are demonstrated in relation to the main historical periods in Arab Islamic world, and are also presented in relation to the changes that have occurred in definitions of childhood in Saudi society. Thus, this chapter accentuates the importance of the specificity of the Saudi Arabian culture, when aiming to form a proper understanding of childhood in Saudi Arabia.

This chapter also deals with childhood in the light of the theoretical stance that views childhood as changing phenomenon linked to the development process. Therefore, this chapter goes on to present a brief review for the main theoretical approaches to the study of development, concentrating on arguments related to family and development, as well as changes in the roles of women and children.
It aims to show how misleading national development plans for childhood can be, when it disregards diversities within various cultural contexts. Furthermore, it presents arguments related to the globalization of childhood and the difficulties that this brings in terms of whether first, childhood is a unitary or diverse structural phenomenon, and second, the problems faced by policy makers when confronting childhood in the local context.

**Chapter Two Family, Kinship and Childhood**

This chapter deals with three main topics: family, socialization, and socializing girls in Arab culture. The early part aims to provide a framework for understanding the changing roles and functions of the family. It also looks at changes that have occurred in family's linkage to kinship and community. It therefore carries the discussion forward to investigate the validity of setting universal features for the family and for considering a single direction for change when studying the 'family' in different cultures.

This chapter also aims to formulate a theoretical framework for studying the family in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the discussion relates the changes in Saudi family to the general theoretical debates in the study of change in the family as a social unit. It also looks at the local and global forces of change in Arab world, and in Arab Gulf societies, and more precisely in Saudi Arabia.
Another important aspect of this chapter is the re-examination of the socialization process. This is to provide an understanding of this process as a changing phenomenon that is culturally relative. This approach in understanding the socialization process parallels the theoretical arguments in the new paradigm in the study of childhood, which the first chapter illustrates. The importance of these arguments is to clarify the particularity of the family, childhood, and socialization in Arab culture.

Since the core interest in this study is to examine the changes that have occurred in socializing girls, the final part of this chapter reviews the main elements involved in constructing female socialization. The discussion illustrates issues related to gender and role divisions in Arab culture.

**Chapter Three Methodology**

This chapter ventures to introduce the areas of study, as well as to describe the methods used in the gathering of the data, with each generation. A section of this chapter also describes the difficulties and ethics encountered by the researcher, while dealing with different groups of people. The final part of this chapter illustrates issues and obstacles encountered by the researcher, as female, in the course of fieldwork.
Chapter Four Traditional Childhood 1925-1940

This chapter is mainly concerned with structuring an understanding for childhood in traditional Saudi society, which is considered as the period before the discovery of oil and the dependency on traditional economic systems. It is mainly concerned with the process of socializing girls within the structure of the family pre 1950 and therefore looks at female roles in the family during childhood and during their shift to adulthood. The data provided by elderly women who were born between 1925-1940 is analyzed in relation to the socio-economic context of traditional Saudi society, looking at girls’ daily life through examining their participation in play and work, their family relations and obligations, and their relations with the local community.

It also looks at the different means of socializing girls during that phase, such as the methods used in their learning, the function of folk tales in the socialization process, and training girls for female roles before and after marriage. The conclusions from this chapter are important for structuring an understanding of traditional ‘childhood’, and therefore to compare it later with other generations, as well as with the Western understanding of childhood. This background is necessary to situate the emergence of new understandings for childhood in Saudi society, and to highlight both continuities and change.
Chapter Five The Childhood of the Second Generation 1955-1970

This chapter deals with the childhood of the second generation, examining continuities as well as changes in the process of socializing girls during this phase. Most of the informants of this generation have lived their childhood in the traditional society, and started their families after the rapid socio-economic changes. The majority of them are daughters of the informants of the first generation, and also mothers of the girls who are included in the children’s sample.

This chapter is concerned with similar elements to those examined for the daily life of girls during the traditional phase. However, it concentrates on the socio-economic and political factors involved in creating standing point for this generation. For example, it looks at political concerns about Arab unity and the preservation of identity, the establishment of formal education, the advent of literacy and mass media and the gradual global contact. Therefore, this chapter reveals the emergence of new understandings of childhood, reflected in providing children with new cultural patterns such as schooling, reading materials and toys. Meanwhile, the analysis in this chapter also traces continuities in core values, as well as the impact of the different debates regarding dealing with tradition and modernity on children’s culture during that period.
**Chapter Six** Contemporary Childhood 1985-1990

This chapter deals with the third generations, which are those girls who were born after the rapid socio-economic changes in Saudi society. The analysis of the data provided by girls investigates continuity as well as change in girls’ perspectives towards ideas about the family, moral values and kinship. It therefore looks at girl's contemporary childhood in the light of current cultural patterns, socio-economic conditions, the impact of globalization and the wider contact with other cultures through mass media, travel and commerce. Meanwhile, it considers too the continuity in moral values and the debates related to arguments about dealing with tradition and modernity. The impact of such conditions on contemporary socialization will be investigated through looking at girls’ daily life and the role of the family in structuring children's culture. Here, the function of folk tales as a method of socialization or as an aspect of children’s leisure.

**Chapter Seven** Conclusion: Managing Change

This chapter presents an overview of the different topics in the thesis and is mainly concerned with identifying the socio-economic and historical conditions that have contributed to forming certain understandings for childhood, in each historical era. It also draws together the previous analyses and identifies the main factors involved in structuring children's daily culture, demonstrated across the three generations.
Thus, the discussion in this chapter raises again the main debates and arguments about dealing with social change, and expresses the diverse views related to continuity and change. Finally it suggests a generational perspective for managing change through one final look at the methods used by each generation for dealing with contemporary conditions in the light of the forces of social change.

The dilemma of introducing heritage to children's culture is highlighted again through looking at the differences between adults and children over issues, such as the use of folk tales as a mean of socialization or entertainment. Broader social factors involved in children's literature, or other creative work such as the project of the Arab Cartoon Character, are is also discussed in this chapter. This discussion thus brings us back to the main theoretical arguments introduced at the start, concerning childhood and development, and the development of the family. Finally, the analysis concludes with an attempt to predict the future construction and reconstruction of childhood in Saudi Arabia.
Chapter One

Childhood and Development

Introduction

Childhood and development are the two main topics discussed in this chapter. Childhood is perceived as a changing phenomenon linked to the development process. Therefore, the discussion in the early parts of this chapter aims to formulate a theoretical framework, which considers the diversity of childhood across cultures and time, and in relation to the local and the global factors effecting children’s culture. It also looks at the main debates in the study of childhood and the changes that have developed in this field. The later part reviews some of the main approaches to the study of development, mainly the debates related to family and change in women and children’s roles in general, and in Saudi society in particular.

This theoretical framework is important in providing an analytical tool for understanding change in childhood in Arab culture, and therefore in Saudi society. According to this approach, childhood in Saudi Arabia is looked at in its wider context; within the Arab culture and in the light of the global factors involved in creating and approaching contemporary childhood.

Children’s culture in the Arab world has been centrally involved in debates around tradition and modernity (see the Introduction for details of
these debates). The tension between tradition and modernity has had various impacts upon local ideas about children and childhood. Such issues are most obvious in the case of Arab Gulf societies due to the rapid social change which these societies have experienced since 1970. This has played a crucial part in creating this conflict, particularly where children and children's culture are concerned (Al Drage, 1990: 23). Rising income helped in the emergence of new cultural patterns, and the exposure to other cultures through different means such as education, the growth of mass media and travel, that has led to the emergence of new cultural norms. At the same time, this situation has fostered a concern to develop the locality and to maintain cultural identity especially for children.

For example, children's literature has been one area that is intensively involved in this dilemma. The attempt to introduce new 'modern' themes into children's literature has often been understood to create patterns that are not necessarily congruent with the concerns of traditional Arab culture (Alwani, 1995:15). For example, Western cultural patterns may appear in the text in the shape of the houses, the clothing worn by characters, and the images of what children do. On the other hand, employing heritage (traditional thought and ways of life) in contemporary children's books may mean dealing with subject matter that is far removed from children's daily life (Muhmmod, 1995:139).

The attempt to introduce heritage to children is noticeable. For example, the Folklore Centre in Arab Gulf Countries is one of the organizations that is concerned about this issue. Therefore, in 1988 it organised seminars
concerning the employment of folk tales in current Arab children's literature, and argued for the need to control the effect of Western culture in children's literature. Other examples are the studies which were presented in a seminar held in 1994: Toward National Plan for Arab Child's Culture. The Arabian Organisation for Education, Culture, and Science organised this seminar in order to discuss issues related to children's literature and Arab nationalism. Other seminars have also dealt with the same subject, such as: Children's books in Arab Gulf Countries: 1985; The Child and the Heritage: 1992; The Culture of the Arabian Child: 1992; Child's Culture: Reality and Horizon: 1995. The issue has also been addressed in several studies, for example: Hoor, 1993; Hoyhy, 1996.

Therefore, the changes that occurred in Arab World have been reflected in children's culture. In order to capture the changes that developed in conceptualising children and childhood in Saudi Arabia, the next section presents an historical review of changes in the conceptualisation of childhood in Arab Culture. The presentation of the historical periods of the Arab Islamic world is important here in order to provide a background to the circumstances involved in creating a general culture within the Arab world. Furthermore, these historical factors are involved in shaping the stand point for each generation in this study, as will be illustrated later in the ethnographic analysis.
The Definition of Childhood in Arab World

The definitions of childhood in Arab societies have changed throughout time and in relation to the socio-economic and political development which took place in that part of the world. In order to understand the roots and the different elements involved in creating local, contemporary understandings, and the issues surrounding current childhood in Arab societies, it is important to review the historical process of defining childhood. Some of the main eras in Arab world can be distinguished historically as follows:

Pre-Islam (Al-jahiliyya) before the 7th Century

The Arabian Peninsula is the home of all Semitic people. The Arabs who lived in the Arabian Peninsula in the first centuries after Christ were a nomad inhabitant, while others adopted a sedentary way of life (Al-Dory, 1984:17; Mansfield, 1990: 13). Several factors have influenced the social and historical structure of this area, some of the important ones are its geography and the climate. The areas in the north and at the edges of the Arabian Peninsula had better natural resources for living, and therefore, people were able to settle in those areas, working mainly in agriculture or fishing. The centre of the Peninsula, by contrast, is identified by its infertile nature; thus, many of its people migrated to more fertile areas in ancient times (Al-Dory, 1984:20). The Bedouin culture and a simple life characterised this period, with a religion based on deifying stones and trees, and a belief in demons and spirits. Great importance was given to literature, especially poetry and composition.
(AlMonjed: 1986, 207). However, poetry in this era was regarded much more highly than prose, and held an honoured place in nomadic society (Mansfield, 1990: 18).

The tribe was the social structure, which helped in maintaining a living in such conditions. Its political system was appropriate for the nomadic way of life, as people had to travel in small groups across the deserts, looking for water and food in order to maintain their lives and the life of their animals. The tribe was also an appropriate system to maintain social relationships within members of the tribe itself and with other tribes. At the same time, to ensure people’s safety, the tribe was usually divided into branches, led by one Sheikh. This structure of small groups permitted mobility and the possibility to find additional resources in scattered areas. This was efficient because people were moving continuously from one place to the other, and equally they were expected to defend themselves, since conflict and war often started in relation to disputes over the control of resources. Therefore the allegiance to one Sheikh was important (Ali, 1980: 280).

The political and socio-economic circumstances, which marked this phase of Arab history, had an impact on the social conceptualisation of childhood. Children in the tribe were not given special categorisation; they were considered as little adults. This went so far as to mean that a child, in some situations, could be elected to become a Sheikh of the tribe (Al-Hadeedy, 1986: 217). Children were trained to join in adults’ activities, such as fighting other groups and killing wild animals. Children in urban areas were trained to
work in primary manufacturing industries, and simple handicrafts. The family was responsible for rearing children and training them, although there was no special way of doing this. Children would consider adults’ behaviour as a model to copy, or they would follow what they were asked to do, or they would be given directions about moral values and behaviour through poetry. Some studies (Al-Suwailem, 1992:13; Al-Hadeedy, 1986:219) point out that at this historical period (before Islam) children suffered from tough treatment, such as burying girls alive. It was also common to send boys to the desert at an early age to be trained for hunting and defence. However, other studies disagree and have argued that children were often treated as a special group in all historical periods of Arab history. Thus, only under certain conditions would they be asked to perform adults’ roles. Al-Shanty (1996:166), for example, explains that children were trained to join in fighting the tribe's enemies, only when this was needed. Burying girls alive only existed in certain situations under specific conditions, such as severe poverty due to the lack of adequate resources.

**The Islamic Enlightenment 612-661 AD**

In the early seventh century the Muslim religion (Islam) was founded in Arabia by the Prophet Mohammed's call for Islam in 612 AD. The Islamic Enlightenment stage continued till the end of the period of the Caliphs (successors of the prophet) in 661AD. Medina and Mecca, both in what is now part of Hijaz in Saudi Arabia, were the first cities to be converted to the new faith. By 633 AD, when the Muslims began the call for Islam outside Arabia
most of the peninsula had accepted Islam. Under the Caliphs who ruled from Medina until 661 AD, Arabia became politically unified. The peninsula rapidly lost importance with the shift of the caliphate to Damascus in 661 AD (Ahmed, 1992:166; New Standard Encyclopaedia, Vol.1).

**Umayyad State** 661-750 AD

This state gained the authority to rule the Islamic world after conflicts over the selection of caliphs. The Umayyad State was named after Omia ben Abud Shames, the great father of this family, which ruled the Islamic State during the period 661-750 AD. There were about 14 leaders of this state who ruled for 91 years. The capital city was Damascus (Shalaby, 1978:30-34; Al-Monjed, 1986:69). In the eighth century the Abbasids, descendants of Abbas, Prophet Mohammed’s uncle, led a secret revolutionary movement against the Umayyad dynasty. The movement began in Mesopotamia and spread east through Persia, when in 750 AD the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown and the Abbasids took up power (New Standard Encyclopaedia, Vol. 1).

**Abbasid State** 750-1258 AD

This state was named after the great father of this family. Islamic law stated at the time of Islamic Enlightenment gave the public equal right to rule the Islamic state. However, the Abbasids withdrew this law by asserting their right to rule as an authority derived from their blood relation with Prophet Mohammed. One of the most significant aspects of the Abbasid caliphate was
the Persian influence. The new capital, Baghdad, developed into a major cultural as well as political centre. The sciences and philosophy of the Greeks and Persians were translated into Arabic and spread throughout the Muslim world, giving rise to much intellectual activity such as had not been seen since the days of ancient Greece (Mansfield, 1992:43; New Standard Encyclopaedia, Vol. 1). The Abbasid state experienced two main historical stages: The golden period 750-809 AD, when the Islamic state reached its greatest development, and the second stage 809-1258 AD, at which time the rulers and the state started to lose power and influence (Shalaby, 1966:15-22; AlMonjed, 1986:447).

The Long Decline 1258-1798 AD

During this period the Islamic world experienced internal weakness and determination by outside political power structures. Since the loss of political unity during the second stage of the rule of Abbasids, the Muslim empire was broken up into different states. In the 11th Century, the Turks seized control of the Baghdad caliphate, and in time the entire peninsula became part of the Ottoman Empire. During the 16th Century Portugal established supply and trading posts on the south-eastern and eastern coasts of Arabia, and in the 18th Century Britain began establishing control over the East Coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Through 1820-1839 the British seized other strategic locations and additional protectorates were established. In an agreement with the Ottoman Empire in 1905, Britain gained control of the Arabian coast from the entrance of the Red Sea to the Arabian Gulf. Other forces colonized wide parts of the
Islamic world (See Mansfield, 1992, chapters 3,4,5; and New Standard Encyclopedia, Vol. 1)

The Enlightenment Period (The Nahda) 19\textsuperscript{th}. Century-mid 20\textsuperscript{th}. Century

This period started in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century and continued till mid of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century. Arab Muslims were awakened to intellectual and political activities, as the Arab world tried to regain some of its power, and to banish colonization. This movement is called Nahda (Arab literary renaissance), as the Arab world aimed to re-build nationalism through establishing political, economic and cultural unity between the Arab countries. A major goal for the Arab world was also to develop their countries through using the benefits of modern technology, which had already been developed in the First World. Meanwhile, contact with other, mainly Western cultures in the process of development was combined with a goal to protect local Arab Islamic culture and identity (Laroui, 1976; Amin, 1978).

Defining Childhood: Socio-historical Analysis:

Childhood was of great concern in Arab Islamic culture during the first enlightenment period that marked the rise of Islam, during the years 612-809. Children in Islam are highly valued and the main function of marriage is to have children. The Qur'an says:
Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world.

Moreover, the prophet said:

Get married and multiply, as I shall take pride of my followers in comparison with those of other nations

Killing children in Islam is prohibited. The Qur’an says:

kill not your children for fear of want: we shall provide, sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.

The Prophet Mohammed illustrated in his traditions (Hadith) the Islamic perspective of adult-child relationship. He pointed out children’s rights for care and education. He also explained that children should be listened to and their questions should be answered. Furthermore, they should be treated according to their age level (Farukh, 1983:174; Shanty, 1996:171). The companions of the Prophet Mohammed followed these concerns about children, and thus for example, the Caliph Omar says:

Teach your children swimming and horse riding and tell them about the good sayings and poetry (Shanty, 1996:171).
Different debates emerge in discussions of the historical progress in conceptualizing childhood in Arab societies. While there is general agreement regarding the distinctive concern Islam gave to children and childhood in comparison to other cultures during the 7th Century, there are different arguments regarding the progress beyond this point.

Some of the comparative studies point out that children in Arabia were given great attention during the 7th Century, when children in other parts of the world were neglected and mistreated, such as was the case for European children. They were classified in a lower position regarding their intellectual abilities, yet they were considered capable regarding their biological abilities, and therefore they were forced to work. This perception of childhood existed during the Middle Ages and continued until the Enlightenment stage in Europe, through the years 1100-1500 (Batweel, 1995:29). Torki (1980:99) in his study carries this comparison further, aiming to provide evidence that the children's rights which were announced in 1995 by the United Nations, were already in place and included in the Islamic educational philosophy, written in the Qur'an and cited in prophet Mohammed's traditions (Hadith), in the 7th Century.

Several other comparative studies emphasise the idea that childhood was always distinguished as a special stage, and that children were treated differently from adults throughout history in Islamic countries. It is argued therefore that Islamic history sets a good example in relation to treating children with love and care (See Al-Hadeedy, 1986; Al-Shanty, 1996; Al-Suwailem, 1992; Dyab, 1985).
Nevertheless, other studies point out that the concept of childhood has also changed through time in Arab culture. For example, Shabshob (1993) argues that, although children were given great attention during the Islamic enlightenment stage, the progress in understanding childhood in later periods was limited. Therefore, the early conceptualisation of childhood, as it was understood during the period following the Islamic Enlightenment, is not appropriate for defining childhood in contemporary societies. Referring to the social and economic conditions in Arab societies after the Islamic enlightenment stage he argues that these were unable to foster the necessary conditions to develop what he terms a ‘positive concept’ of childhood. According to Shabshob these conditions are the following:

- A belief in childhood as a distinct stage in human life, and in the differences between adults and children.
- Considering childhood as a positive period in human life, which does not tally with adults’ evaluations, with regard to the fact that children are different in the way that they think and feel.
- A belief in children’s rights, such as education and health care (1993:14).

He further explains that social and economic change usually allows these conditions to develop in a society by, for example, reaching a socio-economic level where children’s work is no longer needed, and where the needs and characteristics of individuals are respected, and where there is equality between members of the society. But, these conditions did not exist in Arab societies during the period following Islamic Enlightenment. Therefore,
children and childhood were, he argues, to remain peripheral concepts. In contrast, he argues that these conditions were available in Western societies by the 18th Century, as the rise of capitalism after the Industrial Revolution led the creation of special education and training for children. Children's work was no longer needed; instead children were moved to schools to start their long training (Shabshob, 1993: 16). A discussion around the development in conceptualizing childhood in Western societies will be presented later in this chapter. The next part deals with contemporary factors involved in creating the culture of Arab children.

**Children in Contemporary Arab Society:**

In some definitions childhood starts before the child's birth, and continues till the age of 18 years old. This definition has been influenced by several social and legal conditions, and has been used in some studies researching childhood in Arab countries. However, when dealing with such a definition it is important to consider the diversity among children related to socio-economic and cultural conditions, such as class, gender, ethnicity and urban/rural or Bedouin social structure. These diversities help construct differences in the ways in which childhood is enacted and experienced in a society, as for example the issues related to children's work and age of marriage (Abdul-Moatee, 1996:15).

The percentage of children as part of the population in Arab countries is, in general, high. It is estimated that around 40% of the population are under
the age of 18, and that therefore children number about 100 million in the Arab world (Abdul-Motee, 1996:29). In Saudi Arabia more than half of the population are under twenty years of age (Al-Farsy, 1990: 203).

As the 20th Century reached towards its end, concerns regarding setting out international rights for children became more distinctive. The role of the United Nations in this sphere crystallised in the setting out of specific child-centred agendas and planning legislation. In the 1990’s these issues became the core of arguments about the rapid change the world has expected to experience in the next century (Boyden, 1991). Thus, local concern in the Arab world about children and their rights has been part of a more universal move toward considering children’s issues and the way in which childhood is shaped.

Most Arab countries have, for example, signed the Declaration on Children’s rights, with some exceptions made, which are regarded to contradict Islamic law. Arab countries have also designed the Declaration for the Rights of Arab Children, which all Arab countries have agreed upon, and is a declaration that is intended to highlight the importance of setting legislation for children’s rights, as well as to deal with local cultural diversities (Belarbi, 1996:27).

Children in Arab Gulf societies have been given great concern in development plans. Their rights to health and education are some of the main issues which these plans deal with (Abdul-Moatee, 1996:29). However, when setting agendas for children in the development process, cultural concerns are
also involved, such as the debates related to tradition and modernity, the Arab identity and the global role of Arab nations, as well as their relation with the west (see for example the five-year development plans for Saudi Arabia: 1970-1995).

Children are considered the future of the society, and hence there are a number of different debates regarding the negotiation of the socialisation process, and the means of preparing children for their future role. Meanwhile, children have also been regarded as an important force in the transition of cultural identity and traditions. Western influences on Arab children’s culture has been seen as one of the greatest challenges for a society that is rapidly changing and is widely open to global contact (see Cairo report about the culture of the Arab child, 1992). One example of an attempt to control the effect of Western media on Arab children can be seen in a cartoon character project, which was held in 1997 by Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD). This project aimed to produce local cartoons for Arab children, a process which was seen to combine elements of tradition with those of modernity (Khalifa, 1998). Thus, when negotiating Arab children’s culture, a number of different challenges have to be dealt with, and two of the most important are: globalisation versus locality, and East versus West. These concerns have been the core of discussions around childhood in Arab Gulf societies (Kathem, 1996:125-135). The ethnographic chapters in this study provide illustration of some of the ways in which three female generations have attempted to manage such change during childhood.
Gender is also an important factor which contributes to conceptualisation of childhood in Arab culture (Al-Khayyat, 1990:21-54; Ammar, 1954:125-143; Sharaby, 1975:34-47). Islam provides equal rights for male and female children, and regulates their relations. Nevertheless, other social and cultural elements are also important factors in the socialisation process, and here gender is regarded as a key issue. The socialisation process aims to teach boys and girls to learn their different roles at a very early age (AlSuwaigh, 1984:236). Family, school, media and other socialising agents all play a part in this process, as will be seen in further discussion of socialisation in Arab culture carried out in Chapter Two. However, in order to highlight the changes in conceptualising childhood in Arab societies, which later chapters of this thesis present, it is important here to give a brief discussion and overview of the legalisation of girls' rights in the Arab world.

Girls share the general rights of other groups in the society, such as rights related to care and protection during early childhood. Other rights are also approved; for example, health and education should be provided for girls by the state and the family, and at later stages, girls have the right to choose freely their education. The contemporary age for marriage has been decided to be at least 15 or 16 years (Belarbi, 1996:28-31). A set of rights are also designed to protect girls at work. For example, girls are not allowed to work before the age of 12 or 13, and not for more than 7 hours a day. They also should not work at night, or in dangerous jobs. Moreover, boys and girls should receive equal financial allowance from their parents. However, other
issues related to inheritance are defined according to Islamic law (Belarbi, 1996:28-31).

These rights aim to provide general protection for girls but also aim to change the status of female children, and to raise girls’ awareness of their rights within the family, as well as in society as a whole. However, these rights and regulations are not always practised on the ground. Several obstacles still face those who are attempting to provide for the actual needs of girls which would often ignore the wider goals. Thus, for example, although children’s rights have changed in law and policy, social attitudes toward girls are almost static. For example, families often believe it is their right to decide whether their daughters should go to school or not. Other issues are also regarded as family matters, such as the age of marriage or whether a girl should go out to work, as well as their right to choose their education (Belarbi, 1996:32).

Although education has been one of the most important forces for changing girls’ status in Saudi Arabia, social conditions continue to limit it. Family decisions are considered to be one of the most important factors (Al-Munajjed, 1997:74). Girls’ roles and behaviour within the family and in the society are controlled by several elements related to the value of women’s modesty, whereby the honour of the family is correlated with the behaviour of its female members. Therefore, women’s role in development plans needs always to be considered in the light of these social and cultural factors, as for example in the United Nation’s report Impact of Social and Economic changes on The Arab Family: An Exploratory Study, 1992. Here it is clear that in the
case of Saudi Arabia, the state has been carrying out five-year plans since 1970 and the development of women's role in these plans has been conditioned to religious and cultural factors. Further discussion of these issues will be presented later in this chapter and in Chapter Two.

Thus, local conditions as well as global change have also influenced children's culture in contemporary Saudi society and, therefore, the study of Saudi Arabian childhood has to acknowledge the complexity of this situation in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding. In addition, since this study is concerned with changing childhood, it is essential also to look at the general theoretical debates in the study of childhood in order to contextualize the approach this study has adopted to explore childhood and change in Saudi society. The following part of this chapter illustrates some of the important debates around contemporary childhood.

**Childhood, Social Construction, and Globalization:**

Although the 20th Century is described as the 'century of the child', the concept of childhood has been seen as problematic during the last decade with the study of childhood experiencing a great change and shift in perspective (James and Prout, 1990:1). This was stimulated in the 1970s by the work of Philipe Aries who argued that childhood has not always been with us and pointed to the importance of childhood as a social construction (Aries, 1962:125).

Aries proposed a radical critique for the concept of childhood. Aries challenged the notion of childhood as a human universal, and suggested that
the concept of childhood emerged in Europe only between the 15th and 18th Centuries. He explained that beyond the dependent stage of infancy, children emerged only as miniature adults. However, the growth of new attitudes of coddling towards children stressed their special nature and needs and was reflected in their gradual removal from the every day life of the adult society. The gradual emergence of a long period of schooling stressed the difference between children and adults. School was an important institution to train children to adapt to adult responsibilities, and through this, paved the way for the increasing institutionalisation of childhood (James and Prout, 1990:17).

Aries’s thesis submitted a series of historical studies around children and family and although his idea of ‘the discovery of childhood’ sometimes found support, at other times it was rejected by claims that Western societies, both past and present, have always made a distinction between children and adults, and treated them differently (James and Prout, 1997:17).

However, the early work of social anthropologists involved in culture and personality studies gave support to Aries’ claims concerning the socially constructed character of childhood by illustrating the diversities in child-rearing practices across-cultures (e.g. Mead, 1928; Benedict, 1935). These studies were mainly concerned with viewing socialisation as a moulding process carried out by adults. Thus, although children were considered passive in their own rearing process and little attention was paid to children’s own views and experiences, such studies provided evidence that childhood is not a fixed fact
and that it is a social phenomenon which is culturally and socially relative (James and Prout, 1997:18).

Up to the 1970s, the study of childhood was primarily located within the field of development psychology and education, rather than in sociology or anthropology. This springs out of the assumption lying behind the conception of childhood, that the immaturity of children is based on their physical and their psychological character. These dominant similarities were used to define the criteria shared by all children, and thus led to generalisations about all children and the concept of childhood, and also therefore to the actual practices which took place when dealing with issues related to children. Within this framework, the study of children was dominated by three themes: 'rationality, naturalness, and universality (James and Prout, 1990:10).

Early 20th Century socialization models were influenced by the growth of developmental psychology in Western societies (Mayall, 1994: 1-3). Developmental psychology, as an evolutionary model, considers the child to be developing into an adult, a change which represents a progression from simplicity to complexity of thought, from irrational to rational behaviour. This accentuated the idea that children are only capable of doing certain things at certain ages, an idea that promoted particular ways for approaching children's education and schooling. This vision of the child had an impact on the relations between parent and child, teacher and pupil, politician and populace. The biological facts of life were constantly used to explain the social facts of childhood with little account taken of any cultural component (James and
Prout, 1990:10-11). This framework can be clearly traced in Jean Piaget's work on child development. James and Prout add:

The singularity of 'the child' who constantly appears in both the title and the text of Piaget's writings is constructed around the twin assumptions of the naturalness and universality of childhood. Children do not have to appear: 'the child', as the bodily manifestation of cognitive development from infancy to adulthood can represent all children (1990:11).

In such accounts, children are regarded as 'passive', 'incompetent', 'immature', and therefore 'socialisation' is the magic process, which transforms children into adults. (Further discussion of change in socialisation will be carried out in Chapter Two).

Previous perspectives in studying childhood were therefore dominated by the biological difference between adults and children (Mayall, 1994:118), and until the new approach to studying childhood of the 1970s, these biological facts were still seen as important. However, what is more important than the 'facts' themselves is how societies deal with them. This was central to the new perspective encouraged by the findings of cross-cultural studies, which showed that children's experiences of childhood are different in different cultural contexts. The biological/development stages which children pass through are not wholly determinant of the path which children follow into adulthood.
Children's competence and rationality can therefore be seen as culturally relative, rather than necessarily biologically determined.

Current debates in the study of childhood are therefore often concerned with the question: what is a child? The concept "child" occurred in the past differently, and studies reveal changes in this concept. Hendrick, in a survey about the changes occurring in British childhood from 1800 to the present concludes:

It would be wrong to say that the past societies had little or no concept of childhood. This survey has shown that since the end of the 18th Century, there have been several authoritative constructions (1990:55).

He points toward a change in the use and understanding of the concept 'childhood':

From the beginning of the period each construction sought to speak of childhood as a singular noun; the plural posed too many conceptual and political problems. In the 18th and for most of the 19th Centuries, the plurality of childhoods made it difficult to clearly identify the desired condition...For most of this century the widely accepted concept has been refined and elaborated in accordance with the principles of paediatrics, medical hygiene and child psychology, and notably
in relation to politically inspired (but culturally recognized) commitment to the family (1990:55).

Such studies, i.e. Aries (1962) and Hendrick (1990), indicate therefore that conceptualisations of childhood in Western societies have been subject to a continual and changing process, since the 15th Century, which has involved various attempts to identify and fix children's social position.

The 1990's new paradigm for childhood studies which, following Aries, portrays childhood as a socially constructed phenomenon, has also highlighted the importance of children's own role in constructing childhood and of children as social actors and have been influenced by the growth of the interpretative perspectives in the social sciences, especially symbolic interactionism and social phenomenology. James and Prout point to their importance:

In particular, they fostered an interest in children as social actors and childhood as a particular kind of social reality...Rather, social life is seen as being constantly created through the activities of social actors. It is an accomplishment of human beings and carried out on the basis of beliefs, perspectives and typification which give rise to meaningful and intentional action (1990:15).

James and Prout (1990) present a historical review of the emergence of different approaches in the study of childhood in social sciences, and provide
evidence of a long standing marginal concern for the actual role children play in creating their culture in different societies. At the same time, they stress the diversity in the social roles played by children in different societies, which accentuates the further importance of the notion that childhood is not a fixed fact, but that it is changing across time and culture.

In their volume, James and Prout present a collection of essays, which stimulate debates and make a contribution to some of the more problematic issues. They clarify, for example, that while the study of childhood was traditionally taken for granted as being part of studying the family or socialisation, it is time now to break off, and unlock these relations. They also explain that, although an interest in studying childhood was not entirely absent from earlier studies, children themselves however were silenced, since little attention was paid to research their views (1990: 33).

Comparing the study of childhood in Western societies to work that has been done in this field in Arab countries, we can observe resemblances in the approach towards seeing childhood as an irrational stage of human life. It is one which manipulates the adult-child relationship and has a direct input into educational plans as well as to the more general socialisation process. Although, issues around changing childhood and socialising Arab children in a global world have been the subject of several studies and are some of the main topics in the media, there has been, however, little change in approach to child study in Arab culture. Nevertheless, several studies have accentuated the need for new perspectives and methods in the study of childhood. (see for example,
Abu-Heyf, Alwani, and Duckak (1995). These authors propose that a new analytical perspective is needed when studying childhood in order to provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of childhood as a social phenomenon. This thesis aims to contribute to the development of such an approach to the study of childhood in Saudi Arabia.

In sum therefore, comparative analyses provide evidence for the argument that childhood is socially constructed and must always be seen as culturally relative. This has also enabled the shift from seeing children as marginal or passive members of society to seeing them as actively involved in constructing and reconstructing their social life. In this sense childhood is now seen as the outcome of both biological and social factors, but what weight should be given to each factor? And is there one childhood or many?

Recent studies concerned with diversities and similarities in childhood here focused the discussion on these dilemmas. Qvortrup, for example, illustrates these debates as follows:

In a sense this is true. Who can possibly claim there to be only one childhood when it is so obvious that children lead their life under a variety of conditions, depending not least on the socio-economic back-ground of their parental home? On the other hand this view would, if followed to the end, constitute an insurmountable obstacle to any generalised insight, because it
indicates the preponderance of what is unique over what is common (1994:5).

However, contemporary sociological thinking about childhood provides evidence that physical and psychological similarities among children are overlaid and intermingled with differences shaped by the social context. It is argued therefore that the concept 'the child' is not an appropriate concept whereby to represent all children, because it is not capable of addressing the diversities which exist between them, and which are revealed when comparing children in different cultural contexts. However, when using the concept 'children' we should also take into account similarities between them as Jens Qvortrup insists in his exploration of childhood as an undifferentiated phenomenon. Focusing on the "childhood" of a society, he argues, allows consideration of what it is that all the children in a given society have in common in their relationship with the rest of the society. It facilitates comparison through envisaging childhood as part of the social structure, as a category like old age or youth. Other critics, by contrast, insist that it is always necessary to speak of plural 'childhoods'. This draws attention to the ways in which childhood is cross-cut by other social divisions such as North-South inequalities, social class, gender and ethnicity (cited in James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998:126).

The complexity of the study of childhood in a social structure suggests that childhood can be seen as either a unitary or a diverse structural phenomenon. It is important therefore to take this into account when studying
childhood in Saudi Arabia. Recognition of the similarities and diversities between children on the national level, as well as the regional, is essential in this study since socio-economic changes have contributed in providing both global contact with other cultures, and also in creating local fragmentation and sub-cultures within the society. The analysis of the experience of each generation in this study embodies therefore a central question: are we dealing with one childhood or many? On the one hand, we are dealing with shared factors within specific social structures. On the other, we are also dealing with diverse experiences, which are generated by the particularity of each generation. Therefore, a dynamic cross-cutting between national/regional, social structure/sub-cultures helps frame a perspective for analysing changing childhood in this thesis.

Such a perspective raises other issues. James, Jenks and Prout argue that:

..it can readily be objected that dealing with childhood as a whole and across many different local (including national and regional) circumstances, produces a rather abstract and schematic account. On the other hand, though the details of diversity may be less clear, a focus on one childhood rather than many childhoods does offer a broad perspective from which to address the process of comparative childhood structural change (1998:134).
The problem of childhood diversity thus creates a challenge for policy makers. Agencies such as the international Union for Child Welfare have been created specially to monitor children’s rights. However, children’s needs and rights can and do differ in their localities, with regard to a more universal standard. It is argued that the Declaration of Children’s Rights has been exported from the industrial world to the developing countries, and as Boyden describes it, contains highly selective, stereotyped perceptions of childhood, of the innocent child victim on the one hand and the young deviant on the other, which have been exported from the industrial world to the south (1991:191). Therefore, although these rights have been approved they may not always have a global utility. Boyden illustrates this further:

It has been the explicit goal of children’s rights specialists to crystalize in international law a universal system of rights for the child based on these norms of childhood. The present United Nations convention on the rights of the child comes closer to this goal than any previous international instrument. At the national level, child welfare has been a major pretext for state manipulation of the affairs of family and community (1991:191).

The issue of global/local becomes problematic in a discussion about the international rights legislation and the development of a global standard of childhood. Firstly, these rights are introducing norms of childhood built on adult-centred studies, where children’s voices are not counted. Secondly, the
methods usually used in such studies seldom research children’s views, and
development plans provide only little benefit for children on the ground. This,
therefore, has widened the gap between theoretical approaches and empirical
research. Questioning the ways in which children’s perspectives as social actors
are being translated into new policy directions, James, Jenks and Prout explain:

Given the strategic advantages that adults have in exercising power over children in an adult-centred world, it is always possible, indeed likely, that the process by which children’s preferences enter decision-making will themselves shape the effect they have....In these circumstances, then theoretical and methodological decisions or preferences deserve consideration in terms which recognize that what might appear as technical choices are always imbued with social implications (1998:144,145).

Another obstacle to developing a global perspective of children is the idea of an ideal childhood (Jenks, 1996:13). This ideal of a safe, happy and protected childhood is culturally and historically bound to the social preoccupations and priorities of the capitalist countries of Europe and North America (Boyden, 1991:186). This lies behind the building of a unitary vision, and a disregard for cultural diversity, images which are explicit in international children’s rights legislation. All these emphasise the view that childhood is a fixed notion, determined by biological and psychological facts rather than being culturally relative and socially constructed.
Another problematic issue in the Declaration of Children's Rights is temporality, the focus is often on childhood in the past, or with children as future citizens (Jenks, 1996:14). This method marginalizes the need to research the current complexity in children's everyday life. James, Jenks and Prout point out:

Children are seen as future resource, with concern centring on the quantity and quality of children as a form of human capital. Consequently amelioration of children’s social conditions or interventions are promoted and evaluated purely in terms of some future, usually economic, pay-off (1998:133).

Considering the above issues and related debates, we may question the assumption that it is possible to talk of a global culture for children. Are we dealing with the same phenomenon when we research cross-culturally?

Although there is a tendency to view current childhood as having global characteristics, this understanding could be misleading for it has arisen as part of the understanding of the concept of 'a world culture', which is the result of the international interactions taking place in current society. However, the concept of globalisation does not necessarily indicate the existence of an identical culture in all societies, as Hannerz explains:
It is marked by an organization of diversity rather than by a replication of uniformity. No total homogenisation of systems of meaning and expression has occurred, nor does it appear likely that there will be one any time soon. But the world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as of people and goods (1990:237).

The idea of a world culture has been created through the increasing interconnectedness of varied cultures. However, even in one society, people can relate in different ways to ideas and the global, as well as to local change. Therefore, fragmentation and sub-cultures are also becoming part of the structure of current society, alongside increasing similarity. It remains true, therefore, that cultures are better understood in the context of their cultural surroundings, than in isolation (Hannerz, 1990:237).

This is particularly applicable when linking the global with the local in children’s culture. Making policies and designing rights for children, even basic ones such as education, require in-depth research within their local reality. Frones (1995) in his work on schooling in Norway, points out that social structure and large-scale social change are not separated from the activities of the boys and girls and of men and women in their localities at the so-called ‘micro’ level. Each is the outcome of the other, each implicates the other (cited in: James, Jenks and Prout, 1998:139).
Finally, in this study it is important to also place these arguments within wider perspectives on the forces of development and change. Understanding of change and development in childhood can only be obtained through analysing the wider context for change and development in Saudi society, which the following part of this chapter deals with.

**Social Change and Development: Theoretical Background**

Since, as explained earlier, this study is concerned with social change in Saudi society and its impact on childhood, it is important here to provide a brief overview of the major theoretical issues surrounding social change in developing countries.

The concept of development is essentially concerned with social change and human progress in a group of countries usually called the ‘underdeveloped’ or the ‘developing’ countries (Hulme and Turner, 1990:33). However, there is disagreement about the methods used in identifying and grouping them, the recognition of their needs and decisions regarding their fulfilment, as well as the responsibility for the actual process of providing for those needs (Hulme and Turner, 1990:5).

It is also clear that most researchers have looked mainly at macro structural economic issues, which has led to the predominance of economics both in the theory and practice of development. Little attention has been given
to the study of cultural values, such as family practices, the position of women as well as that of children (Hulme and Turner, 1990:5).

In order to frame a background for analysing change in Saudi society, which will be carried out later in this chapter, it is useful here to present a short historical review of the theoretical study of development and social change, beginning with a discussion of the definition of development.

**Defining Development**

The concept of development has changed over time. In the post-war era, it has been viewed in terms of economic, social and political change in the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Early definitions of development were concerned with economic growth and the establishment of economic, social and political orders similar to those of western industrial countries. It became apparent, however, that the expected changes in developing countries were not occurring, forcing revision of the concept. Social scientists started to view development in terms of progress towards a set of welfare goal, specifically, provision of the basic requirements of physical well-being (food, shelter, clothing) and basic services (health, education, clean water). The definition was later expanded to encompass access to employment opportunities, personal security and civil rights (Hulme and Turner, 1990:5).
Despite the diversity in defining development, a general description is
given by the ‘Brandt commission’:

Development is perceived as being broadly concerned
with the improvement of the condition of existence of the
majority of the population and particularly of the poorest. It is
supposed to be a beneficial process which carries with it not
only the idea of economic betterment, but also of greater human

Altorki & Cole (1989) in their study of Unayza; an Arabian oasis city,
define development as follows:

By “development” we refer to a process of change
which is both incremental and purposive. In the present-day
context, development involves an increase in the capabilities of
a country to provide a sustainable improvement in the standard
of living of its citizens or subjects in areas such as nutrition,
health care, shelter, and education. As currently practised in
most countries, development also has a goal of enhancing the
power of the country vis-à-vis other countries to achieve and
guarantee a significant degree of economic and political
independence (1989:1).
Another term often used in discussions of development is that of the 'Third World'. Although this expression is now widely used as a synonym for developing countries, there is some confusion about its meaning. When the term was first used in France in the 1950s, the focus was political, based on the need for a third force of uncommitted, non-nuclear and non-aligned nations, between the capitalist and socialist blocs in the Cold War. Subsequently, the term became associated with 'neglect, exploitation and revolutionary potential' (Wolf-Philips, 1987:1313). The nations of the world were classified into three groups: the First World referred to advanced market economies such as the United States and France, the Second World contained centrally-planned economies such as the Soviet Union and Hungary. All other nations formed the Third World. Hulme and Turner further explain:

Although some common features among third world countries can be discerned, such as relatively high rates of population growth and the predominantly low incomes, it must be recognized that there are also significant economic, social and political differences among them, and even within a single country. Therefore, the idea of a homogenous Third World is misleading (1990:7).

In the light of this, although Saudi Arabia is often considered as a developing country, it is unusual because it is one with high oil income. Therefore, caution should be taken when studying the process of development and social change in Saudi Arabia, and some studies have suggested a new
category for defining Arab Gulf societies. For example, Al-Rumaihi (1977) suggests using the concept ‘Fourth World’ to describe Arab Gulf societies, due to the fact that they combine some characteristics of the developed world, such as high income, while also having characteristics of the Third World, such as high rates of illiteracy. A more specific discussion of the socio-economic change in Saudi Arabia will be carried out later in this chapter.

**Approaches to Development:**

The study of social change before the Second World War was focused on understanding the dynamic West, as is clear in the work of the founding fathers of the social sciences like Durkheim, Marx and Weber. The study of the Third World was regarded as the academic territory of social anthropologists. (Hulme and Turner, 1990:33). After the Second World War, however, the colonies began to achieve independence while the capitalist West and the communist East were engaged in a cold war. Part of this war was to acquire allies from the developing countries. Meanwhile the United Nations had been established and was concerned about the disparity in socio-economic conditions between the developed and the underdeveloped countries. Social scientists became involved, therefore, in generating explanations for the causes of underdevelopment and finding ways of curing it. However, the broad theoretical consensus established in the 1950s gradually fell apart as Third World realities failed to match First World expectations. Radical new theories emerged, with Social scientists participating in searching for a key to understanding development and underdevelopment (Hulme and Turner,
The following section will review briefly some of the main approaches to understanding development.

**Modernisation**

In the 1950s and 1960s, the ideas of development centred on the 'modernisation' approach which viewed modernity as manifested by Western society and as a social, political and economic ideal to be aspired to. The focus of research was to understand the situation in the Third World and to suggest how these countries could be helped to become more like those of the First World (Hulme and Turner, 1990:34). Willbert Moore defines modernisation as: 'a “total” transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into the types of technology and associated social organization that characterize the “advanced”, economically prosperous, and relatively politically stable nations of the Western World' (1963:93). Cyril Black (1967:7) provides a slightly different definition: 'The process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man’s knowledge, permitting control over his environment, that accompanied the scientific revolution.'

Analysing the above definitions, Hulme and Turner make several generalisations regarding this approach: First, the world is assumed to be made up of two distinct components, the traditional and the modern, each of which is distinguished by certain distinct qualities, in terms of economic structure, values and family organisation. Second, modernisation is viewed as a process
that facilitates the transition from one historical period to the other. Third, this process is directed by national elites through policy initiatives. They drive the changes that must occur for modernity to be attained. Finally, the modernisation paradigm is an ethnocentric view that upholds a proclamation of the western society as the apotheosis of civilization (Hulme and Turner, 1990:35). In this sense, modernisation is identified with Westernisation, and the west is seen as superior to the Third World. However, there were different strands to the modernisation approach, designed as attempts to explain and predict how Third World countries were going to ‘replicate the transition’ already experienced in the west (Roxborough, 1979:13).

One of the famous studies in this approach is Walt Rostow’s five-stage growth model. He suggested a sequence of modernising stages, which societies had to pass through in order to achieve modernisation. However, subsequently, modernisation theorists had to cast off parts of this uni-lined model by admitting that there were many diverse paths to development.

Many sociologists of the modernising school laid emphasis on the study of changing values. They argued that the change from traditional to modern society required a corresponding transformation of values, following Talcott Parsons (1951) who led the way with his notion of pattern variables. These were alternative or conflicting value orientations found in the role expectations of people: self-orientation/collective orientation, particularism/universalism, ascription/achievement, and functional diffuseness/functional specificity. Different combinations of pattern variables led to different role relationships
and therefore resulted in different social structures. Several other writers presented similar analyses. One such was Lerner’s famous study of the Middle East, in which he saw modernity as requiring a ‘characterological transformation’ through ‘psychic mobility’, in other words, a change in personality and values from the traditional to the modern. A similar view was expressed in Moore’s (1963:98) statement that ‘extensive values changes are most fundamental condition for economic transformation’.

By the 1960’s, however, it was evident that the modernisation paradigm, with its notion of smooth and steady transition, did not match the reality of rebellions, social protest, poverty, growing indebtedness, political repression and economic stagnation. The modernisation school faced widespread criticism and the challenge of new, more radical theories (Hulme and Turner, 1990: 40-43).

**Neo-Marxism: Dependency**

By the 1960’s the sociology of development was in a state of crisis. The grand theories were not able to provide adequate explanations of what was happening in the Third World and a new paradigm was urgently required. This was the neo-Marxist dependency approach. The main thinking in this school originated in Latin America in the 1930s, although it was not until a decade later that a coherent ideology in support of inward looking development was formulated. With the economic depression of the 1930s which resulted in a dramatic decline in Western demands for Latin American products, these
countries recognized that external trade could not be relied on to drive economic growth. They began, as an alternative, to formulate and design inward-looking development strategies which would leave them less vulnerable to the fluctuations of world trade (Hulme and Turner, 1990:46).

Two important observations were made: firstly, that the world could be perceived in terms of a core of developed industrial nations and a periphery of underdeveloped nations. Second, that the core and the periphery were closely linked economically, especially in terms of trade and investment. These links, however, prevented true development from taking place in the periphery as they were designed to serve the interests of the core. The periphery countries had been made dependent on the economics of the centre. Thus, it was important to develop inward-looking industrialising strategies of development in order to break dependency. Only then could real development take place (Hulme and Turner, 1990:47).

The dependency theorists believed that the relations binding the centre to the periphery worked against the creation of a flourishing industrial capitalism and among the most influential theorists of the dependency was Andre Gunder Frank, who argued that capitalism, at both global and national levels, continues to generate underdevelopment. He portrayed capitalism in terms of a global system of exchange which is both monopolistic and exploitative (Hulme and Turner, 1990:48). Frank depicted the structure of the world capitalist system as one of metropolis and satellites, wherein the metropolis exploits the satellite and appropriates some or its entire economic
surplus. The satellite is impoverished by this exploitative relationship and is reduced to a state of dependency on the metropolis (Hulme and Turner, 1990:48-50).

The dependency paradigm hastened the demise of modernisation theory and the major achievement of the dependency school was to identify the world economy, rather than events within developing countries, as the appropriate focus for study and analysis. The relations between nations determined developmental status. No longer could the blame for underdevelopment be placed exclusively on those who were underdeveloped (Hulme and Turner, 1990:52-53).

By the early 1980s however, there was a widely shared consensus that social research and theorizing about development had reached some kind of impasse. Although work was still done, little cumulative advance had been made along the lines mapped out during the 1970s. Booth illustrates this dilemma:

Crucial real-world questions were not being addressed and the gap between academic inquiry and the various spheres of development policy and practice had widened to the point where practitioners were raising fundamental doubts about the relevance of academic development studies (1994:3).
Although there are obvious differences in the ideology of the different development models, they are in general tainted by determinist, linear and externalised views of social change. Long and Ploeg illustrate what is missing in the study of social development:

A more dynamic approach to the understanding of social change is therefore needed which stresses the interplay and mutual determination of internal and external factors and relationships, and which recognises the central role played by human action and consciousness (1994:64).

However, despite these problems of subordination, abstraction and grandness, the attempt to develop a sociological theory of development has not been a waste of time and its future is potentially bright. Sociologists have learned from theoretical debates of the 1970s. The way forward since the 1980s has been through more theoretically informed empirical work and by the mid-1990s a new research agenda was emerging (Hulme and Turner, 1990:66; Booth, 1994:3).

This study can be situated within such an approach; it considers members of the society to be social actors involved in creating their culture, and therefore in responding to the forces of change, which development plans may encourage. People cannot be viewed simply as passive, nor in the face of change can their interpretation be isolated from the process of change and development.
The following part of this chapter deals with issues around development theories and social change in Saudi society, focusing on the family and childhood, for it is the impact of social change and development on the actual practices of these institutions in Saudi society which is the subject matter of this thesis.

**Saudi Arabia and Development:**

This section discusses development in Saudi Arabia. It is mainly concerned with issues related to children, women, and the family and can be seen in the light of the previous general review of the theoretical debates regarding development. However, it is useful here to start with a brief summary of the historical development of Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formally proclaimed in 1932. This came as a result of a process which started earlier. At the beginning of the eighteenth century under Ottoman rule, Arabia was shut off from the outside world and had degenerated into a state of ignorance and violence, which was similar to Pre-Islam (Jahiliyya). The Wahabi movement was a revivatlistic movement organized by Muhammad ben Abdel Wahab and Muhammed bin Saud to revive what they perceived to be social virtues and to bring about a return to a former era of happiness: the 'Golden Age of Islam'. This movement started in 1703 and went through conflicts and wars with the different parties which seized power in the region, mainly the Ottoman Empire. It was only in
1902 that Abdul Aziz bin Saud returned from exile in Kuwait and captured Riyadh, thereby reestablishing the Al Saud dynasty. By 1926 he had captured the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina and the province of Hijaz. In 1932, after unifying the whole peninsula, Abdul Aziz declared himself King of Saudi Arabia (AlMunajjed, 1997: 3).

Although the new kingdom was militarily and politically dominant in the peninsula, it was economically weak. The country’s income came in the main from the exportation of goods such as dates, wool, horses and camels, but the most important source of income was the annual tax paid by pilgrims to Mecca (AlMunajjed, 1997:5). Oil was discovered in commercial quantities in mid 1930s, but the second World War interrupted the development of the petroleum industry. In the period immediately following the end of the war, production increased rapidly, and since then oil has been the source of revenues for both private and public sectors (Johany, 1982). The dramatic increase in the price of oil in the 1970s, led to extremely rapid economic and material evolution with the construction of the main public services, such as hospitals, schools, universities, houses, roads and communication systems, which was completed throughout the 1980s. The government started five-year development plans in 1970, which resulted in an enormous expansion in the economy and affected all aspects of life (Al-Farsy, 1978; El Mallakh, 1982). Although oil prices went down by mid 1980s, it never, however, come back to the original prices before the 1970s. Social and economic change continued, and Saudi Arabia carried on its position holding about 25% of the world’s proven oil reserves (Al-Farsy, 1990:2).
Therefore, the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia is considered a turning point in its modern history. However, additional debates tend to argue that the changes which occurred in this period are related to the strategy in the employment of oil income and to the way the society related to this process (Abdul-Motee, 1983). The social impact of this rapid economic change in Arab Gulf societies, as well as in Saudi Arabia, has been at the core of these different arguments. It is usually maintained that the rapid economic growth marked a watershed in social change in Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is argued that prior to the oil boom, social process and structures had remained relatively unchanged over generations, whereas after the mid 1970s dramatic transformations occurred throughout the social and economic systems (Altorki, 1992). It is assumed, therefore, that social analysis can distinguish two historical stages in Saudi social development: before the discovery of oil, and after the discovery of oil, i.e. traditional and current social structures (Fergani: 1983, 34-37).

Nevertheless, the analysis of social change recognizes that while material changes developed rapidly, changes in the social system and moralities as well as behaviour were slower. This is considered to create a cultural gap, which could generate obstacles in the development process. On the other hand, it could also contribute to the preservation of traditional local identity. This condition can be observed most clearly when examining changes in women’s status. Development has brought material changes for women, such as education and employment. Meanwhile, the preservation of the traditional
moralities in viewing women’s role in the family and the society continues to be carried out in the society (further discussion will be in Chapter Two).

With regard to women and development in Saudi Arabia, it is often suggested that economic change has resulted in women taking a more visible part in the Saudi economy. However, others accentuate the fact that female participation in the economy is not as new as some studies have suggested. Altorki further explains:

The transformations have occurred in their lives may not be doubted, but whether such transformation have indeed been as salutary as the theory of development suggest is open to doubt (1992:97).

Thus, although study of development, as briefly reviewed earlier in this chapter, has progressed in its recent attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice, since development is essentially concerned with people’s lives, and aims to provide better conditions for living, the study of development and social change will always be incomplete if it does not research the actual changes which development brings to the lives of the people who are involved in the development process. Developmental programmes, for example, have often been designed by Western experts who are not interacting closely with what is actually happening in the life of the people of these countries. This is explained by Long and Ploeg:
Social actors are not simply seen as disembodied social categories 'based on class or some other classificatory criteria' or passive recipients of intervention, but active participants who process information and strategize in their dealing with various local actors as well as with outside institutions and personal (1994:64).

Therefore, the analysis for the impact of development, should involve what is actually happening on the ground, and should aim for empirical research in the field, as this thesis does through exploring changes in the lives of female children in Saudi Arabia. General estimations in expert reports, will not provide a clear picture of what the real world looks like.

It is also important here, therefore, to recognise that the early development theories of the 1980s were mostly dealing with low-income countries, and thus aimed to deal with problems such as poverty and health care, issues which might not necessarily be applicable to the case of development in Saudi Arabia, for this country is considered to have one of the highest incomes in the world due to its vast petroleum deposits. This economic condition has given Saudi Arabia a political position on the global stage. Petroleum production creates a condition of development in the context of wealth rather than poverty (Al-Farsy,1990:xxi). At the same time, however, Saudi Arabia continues to be considered as one of the developing countries, since its economy shares elements with other developing countries.
Studies concerned with development in Arab Gulf societies (e.g. Abdul-Moateec, 1982; Abdul-fadiel, 1979; Ferjani, 1983; Ibraheem, 1982) point to some of the main features of the economy for these countries reiterating their dependency on the developed world, the most important factors being their dependency on exporting crude oil as a main source for national income. They argue that this creates instability in the economy, as change in income is tied to international oil prices. Another factor is the dependency on a foreign labour force. Although Arab Gulf societies have planned to replace this labour by their own citizens, they still have long way to go before achieving their final goals. The third factor is their dependency on importing technology from developed societies. All these factors need to be considered when planning for development or researching the impact of socio-economic change. (The effect of such changes on family structure, roles and relations will be discussed in Chapter Two).

Other important aspects to be considered in the analysis of development in Saudi society is the cultural context of this society. As its economic position has created wide contact with the developed world, a relationship with Western societies has been part of the process of development. This has been through importing technology as well as experts, goods and other daily needs. The development of mass media and transportation has also provided wide access to the West. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia stills hold its key position in the Islamic world, as it has the custody of the two holy cities where Islam was born, and many pilgrims visit each year. Its relations with Arab neighbours are constructed on the unity of language, history, politics, as well as religion. Thus,
the particular position and problems of Saudi society make it different from other developing countries.

As stated earlier, the rapid change influenced by forces brought to the local society from the outside world, and mostly by Western culture, has cultivated the need to develop the locality (see the Introduction), and this is an important factor to be considered in studying social change and development in Saudi Arabia. For example, if we try to assess the stage of development of Arab Gulf societies according to the old Modernisation model, these societies could be categorised as being in the transition stage, from tradition to modernity, or transforming from traditional production to capitalist. However, considering the previous different debates about change and ‘tradition and modernity’ in the Arab world, it is not possible to provide clear indications of an absolute direction for change, as different parts of the society are interpreting, and dealing with, elements for change in various ways. In addition, some studies point out that using the concept ‘transforming societies, or transition stage’ to describe contemporary Arab Gulf societies, is also not appropriate, because this concept embodies the assumption that these societies are moving toward modernisation or capitalism, which may not in fact be the end result of change in these societies (Al-Najar, 1994:22 and 1999:57).

**Family and Development:**

When studying changes and development in the Saudi family, the actual dynamics of relations have therefore to be interpreted within the specifics of the
cultural context. The socio-economic and political changes that occurred in Arab world have affected the family and children’s culture to great extent, and as this thesis will explore represent a continual contradiction between tradition and modernity. This has had various impacts upon local ideas about roles and role obligations, especially in the case of women and children. Further discussion about family and change will be carried out in Chapter Two.

Changes in values, in order to achieve development, also have to be examined carefully when studying change in the developing countries. Considering the cultural specificity of Saudi society, change in values may not be following the same direction outlined by grand theories and therefore accurate judgement regarding these issues can only be obtained through empirical studies and in depth research which engages with actual behaviour and with the actions people take toward change. It is this which this study is aiming to do by examining the evaluation of three generations toward family, as well as cultural values.

The grand theories of development have also given minimal attention to the actual needs of women in the process of development. Several researchers have shown that development planners have worked on the assumption that any development which would benefit one section of the society (men) would also be useful to the other (women) (Boserup, 1970; Rogers, 1980; Mazza, 1987: cited in Bert 1991:3). However, the roles that women play are different in any given society, and their situation is determined by the legislation, religious norms, economic status or class, cultural values, ethnicity, the type of
productive activity of their country, community and the household (Bert, 1991:4). Historically, development workers have largely viewed women and the family from Western-derived perspectives, based for example on the assumption of the universality of the nuclear household, composed of a non-productive wife dependent upon a male head. However, anthropological evidence suggests that in many cultures, this assumption is not valid (Bert, 1991:5).

Other assumptions regarding family structure, roles, and relation with kinship, also impede development theories, in suggesting that development produces patterns of family and kinship like those in the West. However, empirical studies in the Third World have accentuated the need to observe extreme caution in making generalisations regarding these issues. Development plans often fail to accomplish change within families in the Third World, due to their failure to encounter the particular conditions of family life in each country (Hulme and Turner, 1990: 83-93). A detailed discussion about family and change will be carried out in Chapter Two.

The general issues concerning women and their role in the development process, with reference to noted above women in Saudi Arabia, have been recently addressed by feminists, seeking to understand women's position in development, and examining the actual dynamics of gender relations and women needs (e.g. see Momsen, 1991; Wallace and March, 1991). Macro-development theories, on the contrary, often deal with these issues as being of marginal importance for the development process. They neglect the fact that
women are usually responsible for domestic work, the care of children, family health, cooking and providing food and other household services, that women are usually paid less when compared to men doing the same work, and that they are seldom given the role of decision making. These issues are now considered as being of central importance in feminist studies, and in the neo-populist approach to development, as they emphasise the need to research what is actually happening on the ground, regarding the development of the family, women and children (Momsen, 1991: Chapter Three).

It is important here to point briefly to women's participation in the development process in Saudi Arabia. This is to highlight how the cultural conditions contribute in structuring women's roles within a particular society. It is also to frame understanding for the dynamics of roles and relationships between members of the Saudi family and how family life is enacted, which will be explored in the ethnographic chapters.

The development process in Saudi Arabia, as mentioned earlier, was motivated by the increase in the national income in the 1970's. The development plans aimed to provide better standards of living for the people of Saudi Arabia. In this process, the main cities have become the first target for the process of change. This is true in the case of Riyadh, being the capital city of Saudi Arabia. However, other urban and rural areas have also been affected by the process of socio-economic development. Altorki and Cole further point out:
But as will become obvious, many of the changes which the people of 'Unayzah have experienced are the result of decisions taken elsewhere—in the national capital and, indeed, in other countries far removed from this desert oasis. That changes are largely the result of decisions outside the community is related to the nature of Saudi Arabia's national economy (1989:5).

Therefore, change has emerged in the whole country, though the main cities have become points of attraction for employment and services. For example, the population of Riyadh is mixture of local people, Saudis who moved from other parts of the country, Arab labor, and foreign labor of various nationalities. Alongside such transformation are the changes in the social order. Class division are emergent for the first time in Saudi Arabia. However, this continues to be crosscut by loyalties to family and kinship (Vasiliv, 1986 cited in Altorki and Cole, 1989: 243). It is also worth noting that the expatriates from different nationalities largely occupy the position of working class. These are temporarily resident as individuals and divided among themselves according to their national origin, which all add a special and complicating dimension to the social order (Altorki and Cole, 1989:243). These aspects of change in the local society of Riyadh are important when studying change in the family as well as in women and children’s positions (see Chapter Three for further details on the city of Riyadh).
The development plans have brought progress in the public services such as education and health and other social services, which all citizens have benefited from, including women (Nahedh, 1999). As pointed out earlier women’s education was the main force that brought changes into women’s roles in the Saudi society. In the late 1950s the government started to provide educational opportunities for girls, and the first public school was opened in 1960. Nevertheless, this education was planned and designed to be in accordance with the principles of Islam and to continue carrying on the traditional values with regard to women’s roles within the family. The function of the education system is to establish a religious, moral and traditional entity in the Saudi society. It was important to introduce girls’ education within this Islamic framework in order for it to be accepted in traditional Saudi society. This was also maintained by the supervision of The General Presidency of Girl’s Education, which is always headed by religious men. Therefore, women’s education is segregated and supported by the state and the religious ideology is integrated in all education programmers (AlMunajjed, 1997: 60).

The development process influenced women’s roles within the society. For example, in the first and second development planes (1970-1980) the main concern was providing women with education. However, in later stages the need for higher education was dominant, and since the third development plan concerns women’s employment and participation in the labor force. Women were also addressed in this plan both with regard to the importance of advising them about jobs opportunities, as well as raising public awareness of women’s employment roles in the public and the private sectors, and also the importance
of this kind of participation. This could be understood as part of the general
concern in the Saudi society about citizens’ role in the labor force, which has
been a dominant goal for the development plans since 1980. In the seventh plan
(2000-2005) the concern about women’s participation in the NGO’s is clear,
and the emphasis on the importance of the private sector in providing work for
women continued to be carried out, since the number of qualified women is
higher than the jobs available in the market (Nahedh, 1999).

The percentage of Saudi female citizens is considered to be about 49%
of the whole population. Women’s participation in the labor force is considered
to be about 5% (The General Organization for Statistics, 1999). Although this
could indicate a low participation, working women are usually more qualified
than men in regard to their level of education, for example 50% of working
women have completed a university degree, while 50% of the men without
higher education. The number of working women is 275,700, of whom the
largest number (211,375) work in Education, and 17,726 are employed in
administrative positions. The percentages of those working in the social
services and as nurses are considered to be the second (Nahedh, 1999). Women
also work as typists, cashiers, bank tellers, farrashat (Messenger; coffee and tea
maker and server), and journalists. A number of women have also started
private business such as women’s tailors or commerce. Women’s employment
in the modern economy has been legally sanctioned by maintaining segregation
between men and women (Altorki and Cole, 1989).
The employment of women could be in many cases beyond the requirements of economic need. It is a combination of women's desire and agreement by her close male relatives, as well as general acceptance by the society in large (Altorki and Cole, 1989). Central to women's participation in the development process has been the strategies of planning women's education. Education has qualified many women for paid employment, for example, in 1996 the number of female students in higher education was 169,600 and in colleges 101,000. In 1997, 57,841 graduated from high schools while male students were 41,944. The state in its development plans is now aiming to provide sufficient work for the increasing numbers of female students and to limit the problem of unemployment.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered an analytical perspective for the study of childhood in Saudi society. It is one that aims to approach childhood through its wider interrelated context and therefore, to achieve this understanding, this chapter has reviewed the historical changes which have occurred in conceptualising childhood in the Arab world in relation to socio-economic and political change. This chapter has also provided a historical review of some of the main debates, which have contributed to the emergence of a new theoretical paradigm in the study of childhood. In addition, this chapter has reviewed relevant theories of development, and indicated some of the obstacles facing development plans in the Third World, as well as in making policies for children's rights.
It has been concluded that in order to frame an understanding of childhood in Saudi Arabia, childhood has to be seen as a changing phenomenon that is culturally relative and socially constructed. Therefore, the changes that occurred in conceptualising childhood in Arab societies are linked to the specifics of its social and economic circumstances. Children differ according to the culture they interact with, and biological similarities between children are overlaid by cultural diversities. Therefore, considering similarities and diversities between children on the national level, as well as the regional, becomes essential when setting development plans for children.

The discussion of development in this chapter accentuates the importance of seeing development plans in the light of the cultural context of each society and it also therefore emphasises the need to look at children's rights and setting plans for their development through their actual needs, which could differ from one society to the other. The discussion also points to the importance of these issues for the family and women in the context of development. The next chapter will carry forward a deeper analysis of the theoretical issues around family and socialisation.
Chapter Two

Family, Kinship and Childhood

Introduction

The family has always been considered the backbone of society and although the family is changing, it continues to be viewed as the main social institution for socializing children. For example, concerns about the changing family forms with respect to high rates of divorce in the UK and other Western contexts are issues often raised when dealing with the change in children’s behaviour, and with the socializing and upbringing of children (Allan, 1995:1). Therefore, any study of the changes in the concept and experience of childhood must in part overlap with researching the changing role of the family.

The importance of studying the family in this thesis is linked to the family’s role in socialisation. A child’s childhood is usually spent living in a family, therefore, living in a family at particular historical period shapes childhood. This study aims to provide evidence of that, through looking at the experience of three generations of informants during their childhood. The view of each generation is expected to reflect changes that have developed in childhood, as well as adaptations to the changes.

The first part of this chapter explores different theoretical approaches to defining the family and its functions as a changing social institution. The
importance of addressing these arguments here is to examine the validity of the debates around these issues cross-culturally, and their pertinence to the case of studying the family in Saudi Arabia. This chapter is also concerned with the process of globalisation and its effect on the local culture of Saudi society. Therefore, it suggests a framework for studying the Saudi family, while also allowing interpretation of the different dimensions which are believed to take part in creating family culture and practices. These dimensions are necessary for understanding the impact of change in wider society, its consequences for individual families, and for the social organisation and the structuring of family life, relations and practices through which the idea of the family is enacted.

The final part of this chapter discusses the socialisation process, focusing on the different debates which consider this process a changing phenomenon and which is culturally relative. Attention on female socialisation mainly in Arab culture is carried out here.

**Studying the Family: Problems of Definition**

The process of attempting to define the family, to describe its structure, its function and its roles, has been through a number of different stages. One of the earliest attempts was carried out by Malinowski (1913). Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako cite his work in defining the family as giving social scientists:

...a concept of the family that consisted of a universal
function, the nurturance of young children, mapped into (1) a bounded set of people who recognised one another and who were distinguishable from other like groups; (2) a definite physical space, a hearth and home; and (3) a particular set of emotions, family love (1997:72).

Family, for Malinowski, was concerned with both kinship as a structure of social relations and types of affects as universal features. Later, sociologists and anthropologists challenged some of Malinowski's ideas about the family, and new perspectives developed in studying the family. Although the study of the family continued to try to identify its features as a distinctive institution in society, several different approaches emerged, which accentuated diversity in ideas about the family.

Klein and White (1996) point to some of the features which are generally agreed on, and which are relevant to this study. They consider families to be intergenerational, because, the family is, virtually, the only group which is associated with the act of giving birth. Therefore, the family usually contains different generations: parents, children, and often grandparents. The family is also responsible for providing care for its members, one of the most important roles being the nurture of children during early childhood. The second feature is the relationship between its members, which can be identified as biological and affective. The biological relationship is generated by the act of birth, which is socially considered to be the family's job. It is also the family's responsibility to rear children and socialise them, in
order for them to adapt to the culture and develop social personhood. Marriage
is the legal process through which families are created, and through which
children can identify their membership, legally, in the society. It is also the
way to identify their linkage to wider kinship groups, and this is the third
feature of the family. Klein and White emphasise the importance of this
feature of the family:

The ties of kinship create the potential for lineages and
collateral (i.e., within generation) family relationships that can
become quite extensive. Through kinship families are tied to
history, tradition and multiple generation of group members. In
some societies, these kinship groups are major features of the
social, cultural, political, and economic landscape. Work and
friendship groups tend to be much more temporally and
spatially encapsulated (21-23).

The family has also been a subject for study on several levels.
Macroscopic theories and microscopic theories deal with different aspects of
the family, which can be summarised as follows:

Macroscopic theories deal with (a) linkages between
families and other groups or institutions. (b) comparisons
between families in different cultures or societies, (c) fairly
broad periods of history, or (d) some combination of these.
Microscopic theories, on the other hand, deal with (a) an
individual family member, (b) personal relationships within families, (c) a single culture or society, (d) episodes of short duration, or (e) some combination of these (Klein & White, 1996: 27).

**Family and Change:**

However, regardless of these seeming universal features and regardless of the importance of the family to human life, the history of family studies reflects problems involved in approaching and understanding the family as a social institution rather than a biological or natural institution. Allan (1995) for example, argues that this social institution can be counted as one where the most contradictory images abound:

On the one hand, home and family are often seen as havens from the harsh realities of the outside world. They are taken to be the natural location of our most meaningful, intense and rewarding attachment and experiences... Yet at the same time as all this, the modern family is regularly portrayed as being in quite a serious state of decline. Unlike times past when family members could rely on each other to meet the contingencies of every day life, we are told that contemporary families are incapable of providing the collective support and sustenance that used to be their hallmark (1995:1).
The contradictions involved in defining the family and its functions are clear when the history of family study is examined. The main thrust in early arguments tended to relate changes in the Western family to industrialisation, often describing this change as a decline in the importance of family life, and relating it to the shift from extended to nuclear family structures (Hareven, 1994:14; Allan, 1995:5; Morgan, 1996:5).

During the 1960s, for example, the study of family relationships in Britain was woven into the study of whole communities, a perspective which stressed continuity and homogeneity and led to a relatively limited separation of the family as an institution. Using anthropological techniques in studying a community, the family became seen and studied as an isolated phenomena as, in analysis, the community would be broken down into different units in order to study the relationships between them. Therefore, the focus was on studying family structure and functions in relation to the community. Family relationships were defined as part of a larger network, and less effort was put in to studying the dynamics of relationships and actual practices of family members (Morgan, 1996:5). The family was viewed in terms of its traditional role, rather than looking at what the individual members of the family were actually doing, and how their activities formed part of larger network of institutions with which family members interact on a daily basis, such as work, schools and the media. These studies perpetuated myths about family life in the past, as well as making generalisations about the impact of social change on the family and society (Hareven, 1994:13). Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako illustrate the impact of such studies:
The real importance of The Family in contemporary social life and belief has blinded us to its dynamics. Confusing ideal with reality, we fail to appreciate the deep significance of what are, cross-culturally, various ideologies of intimate relationships, and at the same time we fail to reckon with the complex human bonds and experiences all too comfortably sheltered by a faith in the 'natural' source of a 'nurture' we think is found at home (1997: 71).

However, new approaches to studying the family have illuminated the importance of studying the dynamics of relations both within the family and with the wider society (Morgan, 1996:11; Hareven, 1994:31). The term 'family practices' used by Morgan is useful to introduce here. It represents the family in a processual light. For Morgan, family practices convey:

..a sense of doing and action rather than static structure. This term is also designed to carry with it some sense of the every day. These practices are at the same time getting their significant meaning from their location within the wider system of meanings (Morgan: 1996,188).

However, Morgan goes on to argue that family practices also have a degree of regularity, as well as fluidity due to the fact that the pattern and character of family life is often repeated on a daily basis. Through this, he
concludes, family practices have a degree of fixity and solidity. Meanwhile, Morgan relates the fluidity in family practices to what he describes as the ‘open-ended character’ of family life, to the fact that any set of practices can be viewed in two or more ways:

Practices constitute major links between history and biography. Practices are historically constituted and the linkages and tensions or contradictions between practices are historically shaped. At the same time practices are woven into and constituted from elements of individual biographies. Therefore, family practices provide links between self and society (1996:193).

One such family practice is, as suggested, the socialising of children and therefore debates around the new sociology of childhood as discussed in the previous chapter provide the theoretical background for the analysis of changing childhood in Saudi Arabia.

**Family, Kinship and Obligations**

Assumptions about the roles and functions of families in pre-industrial societies (the extended family) have always suggested that extended families contained several generations living together, who would provide care and services for each other. Allan explains how the modern family is typically viewed:
Unlike times past when family members could rely on each other to meet the contingencies of every day life, we are told that contemporary families are incapable of providing the collective support and sustenance that used to be their hallmark. Not only family life became privatized and isolating, with each household living out its existence trapped in its own little box, but, perhaps more importantly, family relationships are less stable and apparently less caring (1995:1).

This approach accentuated the significance of the total network in which extended families had an active relationship. The 'home' was portrayed as an open place for kinship, where neighbours and friends would gather and support each other. Extended families were assumed to provide family members with health care, welfare, and education, in addition to several other services. These services are now assumed to have been taken over by new social and civil institutions, following the decline of the extended family (Hareven, 1994:14).

Recent historical research in studying the family has, however, challenged those assumptions (Allan, 1995:6). It is now disputed whether three generations would ever had lived and cared for each other in extended families in pre-industrial societies. Since poor health and services affected the average age of individuals in pre-industrial societies, many people would not have lived long enough to become grandparents. Families' abilities to provide
health services were also limited by the lack of these services in the society as a whole. The same would be true for other services such as education. Thus, in contrast to previous studies, recent studies argue that nuclear families in contemporary societies are more involved in the socialisation process than ever before. Nuclear families, particularly daughters in the family, play significant a role in providing health care and education, as well as caring for the elderly (Hareven, 1994; Morgan, 1996).

However one major change in the family as a social institution is usually considered to be the shift from public integration to private life (Allan, 1995:1). It is argued that social and economic changes have gradually limited the role of the family and restricted its relations with the community (Morgan, 1996:7). The nuclear family is considered to be isolated from the community and from an extensive kinship system, and therefore is seen as having to depend on various organisations to fulfil the services which the extended family used to take care of. Economic change has created different elements, which affect the relationships between kin, such as the fragmentation in the labour market, and the need for a variety of qualifications which requires training in other institutions, rather than within the extended family. These new economic conditions, therefore, often required the need to travel away for work or education. All these have pulled the family away from kinship and its embeddedness in the local community. This has also created privacy in the way the family deals with everyday matters, and helped create boundaries between public and private life (Hareven, 1994:23; Morgan, 1996:7).
Although these early family studies consider the change in family structure and relations to represent a decline in its roles and functions, new perspectives offer an alternative approach to analysing these changes. It is argued that to ask whether families in the past supported each other more or less than contemporary families, we have to have sufficient data about changes in family obligations before we are able to come to conclusions. Such data is however limited (Finch, 1989:57). Moreover, the interpretation of historical information about the notion of family life in the past and the role of family members differs according to the questions we raise (Morgan, 1985:169-170). Finch, for example, explains:

...because the idea persists that in the past there was a time when ‘the family’ had a stronger sense of responsibility towards looking after its young, old and sick members. ..By contrast, the present day is seen as a time when people’s sense of duty and responsibility is much weaker, so that they are less prepared to acknowledge obligation or take responsibility for kin...it was industrialisation and urbanisation which triggered those processes and which led ultimately to a weakening of family ties, and especially ties with kin outside the so called ‘conjugal family’ composed of a couple and their immature children (1989:58).

Contemporary comparative studies of western families, as well as
cross-cultural studies, show that nuclear families are in fact not so isolated from wider kinship as was previously thought, and that families maintain relationships with their extended family depending on certain circumstances (Finch, 1989; Hareven, 1994; Allan, 1995; and Morgan 1996).

The debates around family and change, and the development of new perspectives in studying the family are summarised by Hareven:

Over the two decades and half of its existence, family history has moved from a limited view of the family as a static unit at one point at time to an examination of the family as a process over the entire life of its members; from a study of discrete domestic structures to the investigation of the nuclear family’s relations with wider kinship group; and from a study of the family as a separate domestic unit to an examination of the family’s interaction with worlds of religion, work, education, correctional and welfare institutions, and with processes such as migration, industrialisation, and urbanisation (1994:14).

Finch illustrates, further, that support between kin remains important for many people, even in cultures such as contemporary Britain. However, in practice this support is promoted by various elements, such as closeness to kin and the type of relationship, as well as the nature of the need, and whether support can be repaid or not. She adds:
The main point which emerges from considering the historical evidence is that there certainly has been change in the amount and type of support offered, but that this cannot be seen simply as decline from a high point to a low point (1986:81).

Finch later argues:

But in reality the amount and type of support which kin give each other varies with the particular historical circumstances within which family relationships are played out, so that looking at patterns of support at different points in time means that one is not comparing like with like in quite significant ways: there is variation both in people’s need for support and in the capacity of relatives to provide it (1989:240).

A discussion about family obligations in Saudi family will be carried out later when dealing with changes, and the view of past and present family life in Saudi Arabia will be looked at throughout the analysis of the experience and evaluation of three generations of informant in this study (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). But the conclusion to be drawn from the studies mentioned above is important in showing that there is not necessarily a simple correlation between social change and family types, once the actual practices
of family members are looked at in detail. For example, we cannot assume a simple trajectory from pre-industrial to industrial society, and from extended to nuclear family. Furthermore, the change in the family is culturally relative, and it is important to consider this when making any analysis of the family in particular cultural settings.

**The Extended Modified Family: Roles and Obligations**

In criticising previous assumptions about the family, a new concept has emerged to overcome these problems: the modified extended family as defined by Litwak in 1965. This concept suggests that the form of family found in contemporary societies is neither an isolated nuclear conjugal one nor an extended one, but rather that it lies somewhere in between (Allan, 1995:9).

Therefore, this concept tried to explain the functions which this type of family has in industrial societies, and pointed to the social impact of the nuclear family which offers help and assistance to its members. It further suggests that family's function as primary group helps many of the formal organisations and institutions to fulfill their goals, and that new roles for the family arise from fragmentation among its members. Allan summarises Litwak's argument in three points:

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, it recognizes that the family is not becoming functionless in the sense of having its social importance limited to one or two residual activities.... Rather the family and the help and assistance
its members offer one another is central to society...
Secondly,... the family operates as a network in which a
range of services are exchanged between the individual
members. The family in this view is not best seen as a fixed
group... but as a collection of individuals who can draw on
one another and use each other as resources in co-ordinated
fashion as and when the occasion demands (Allan, 1995:
12).

He goes on to explain how the roles of the nuclear family, as well as
the kin group, in current society have been stimulated by socio-economic
changes:

The third advantage of Litwak’s model is ...(the)
recognition that bureaucratic organizations cannot satisfy all
the contingencies people face. His emphasis on the need for
primary groups/networks in an industrial society... Such
primary relationships are not some kind of unnecessary luxury
in modern society, but rather are crucial in one form or another
to its functioning. In emphasizing the significance of informal
relationships, Litwak’s has provided a much needed corrective
(Allan, 1995: 12)

Litwak’s model provides, I suggest, a useful framework for studying
the family, and the process of family life. However, this model has been criticised in different respects. For example, it has been argued that, with Litwak’s definition, all kinship can be called upon to provide support for the conjugal family. However, contemporary kinship studies in western societies have shown that it is primary kin to whom the individual is likely to turn at times of need and who will routinely be involved in the round of daily events (Allan, 1995:12-15).

Allan further criticises Litwak’s use of the terms ‘modified extended family’ and ‘modified elementary family’:

Clearly Litwak used the former term because it symbolised his rejection of claims that kinship is of little significance in contemporary society, but in many ways the latter term gives a clearer indication of the extent of kinship involvement for the majority of people (1995:16).

The change in family relations, and therefore in the domestic division of labour, are issues often raised when rethinking family and soci-economic change. For example, as Morgan points out:

The importance of family and domestic relationships is not simply that it is within such contexts that much gender work gets done. It is also that domestic life provides the site for the interweaving of the public and the private, the structural
and the interpersonal. Family life may become back stage where the participants are aware of both the public and the private faces of gender. Yet family life may also be another stage where gender performances take place (1996:94).

Considering this domestic division of labour, it is imperative to understand the dynamics of relations within the contemporary family. Gender is an important factor in shaping the roles of family members in order to serve the wider society. Allan brings forward the argument that the division of labour within the family continues to play an important role in industrial society. For example, consider women's role in meeting the demands made on the family by external organizations in their specialized capacity of housewives and mothers. It is assumed that they can do this, because their time as housewives and mothers is apparently free both in terms of availability and cost.

A study of such changes that occurred in family and community relationships, as well as the changes in public and private boundaries in relation to issues of gender, will be carried out later in this chapter to demonstrate on some important changes in Saudi family life.

In looking at the family and changes in family life in Saudi Arabia through the experiences of three generation of females, the family is viewed in this thesis as both a process and practice, in relation to the wider historical circumstances that have been involved in the development of Saudi society.
Thus, the roles and the functions of the family are analysed with due consideration given to the dynamic interaction between its members and other wider kin, as well as its links to other social institutions and the social structure (i.e. to both macro and micro levels). In the analysis of the changes which have occurred within the Saudi family, consideration will be given to the actual practice of its members, considering that what the family is, is what the family does. The experiences of the different age groups of family members, including, importantly, children's activities and their views of the family, will be counted to contribute to family life. Therefore, this study considers children as social actors involved in creating their culture as well as that of their family. Hareven outlines such an approach to studying the family:

The formidable goal is to understand the family in various contexts of change, while allowing the levels of complexity to play themselves out at different points in historical time. In short, it represents an effort to understand the interrelationship between individual time, family time, and historical time (1994:13).

**Studying the Saudi Family**

As I have shown, studies concerned with family and change in Western societies, contemplate industrialisation as the main factor in the
transformation of the extended family to the nuclear family, and associated with this has been the myth that industrialisation destroys familial harmony and community. Literature about the family in Arab Gulf societies makes similar assumptions relating to change in family structure as well as to the network of relationships with kinship and community. However, the main force of change, in this case, is the discovery of oil and its impact on national and individual income, and therefore on the life style of families, rather than the industrialisation process itself (Abdul-Moatee, 1982; Al-Najar, 1999).

The tension in dealing with issues of continuity and change in Arab society is most clearly highlighted when dealing with change in the family. The Arab family is considered the most important social unit in maintaining the continuity of moralities in the society, and this is sustained by the fact that most values are supported by wider religious rules and obligations (Goode, 1963:88). For example, relations with parents and kin, most of all the mother, are subject to Islamic religious laws and rules. Therefore, social change and development has to be seen as conditional and as conditioned by the desire to maintain the moral values of the traditional Arab culture and heritage, as this can be clearly seen in the socialisation role of the changing Saudi family.

Historical changes in the Arab world, and in the Arab Gulf societies in particular, have brought changes to the family, as well as to the socialisation process. The family in Arab societies is still considered to have the first responsibility for child rearing (Sharaby, 1975:34; U.N, 1992:8). However, social norms and value systems have been affected in some important ways,
and therefore, there have been changes in family functions and roles in socialising children. Thus, the adult-child relationship has a number of different features today from those it had thirty or forty years ago, as will be seen in the following ethnographic chapters. Several factors can be identified as influencing change in the family system, and it is therefore important to study the family within a framework that offers the chance to look at the interaction between the family as a system and the social structure. Following Morgan (1996), this study considers the Arab family as a social system, which interacts with the changes that are generally taking place in the society.

It is, however, also important to look at Saudi society as part of the Arab world. Although there are diversities in political, economic, and social conditions within Arab countries, there is a common and dominant Arab culture. This culture affects the structure of each society, its systems and institutions. As mentioned in Chapter One, the dominant Arab culture has arisen from a similarity in ethnicity, a unity of language, religion and a similarity of historical experience (U.N., 1992:2-3).

To claim this common, dominant Arab culture is not, however, to deny the specificity of Saudi society, or that there is a specific Gulf Arabic culture for the societies in this region. Arab Gulf societies share some similarities related to their geographical location on the Arabian Gulf, parallels in historical experience and in tribal ethnicity, geographical environment, and traditional and contemporary economic sources of production (Bshara, 1985:35). It is also important to note, however, that Saudi Arabia differs from
other Arab Gulf states in its version of modernisation, both in type and degree. Unlike the other Gulf states, Saudi Arabia was not a British protectorate in the past. It never experienced colonialism, and its contact with the world was limited, and occurred mostly through the pilgrims who came from all over the world to visit the two holy places in its Western region. The contact in the eastern region was mostly by exchanging trading products with India and Iran, while the middle region remained isolated from the outside world. Further discussion regarding geographical importance will be carried out in Chapters Three and Four. These circumstances have led to the development of sub-cultures within the dominant culture, and therefore Saudi Arabia is divided today into five provinces: middle, west, east, north, and south. Each province has its own sub-culture, which developed throughout history, and was related to its geographic position. Therefore, any analysis of social change in Saudi Arabia has to consider the above factors, which were involved in the development of different orientations toward tradition and modernity.

Considering the previous theoretical debates in the study of the family and the local and global forces of change in the Arab world, then, the family can not be seen as a static unit. It is changing, and the changes that develop in the family are due to its interaction with other social institutions, and have to be considered in relation to the different networks, which shape "family practices".

Defining the Arab Family

The family in Arab society is the basic social unit around which the
individual's life is centred (Sharaby, 1975:37). As Ammar (1954) explains, in Arabic, the word family (aila) literally means the social unit that supports its members. Sometimes the words for family and household (bait) are used interchangeably. This accentuates the strong connection between the household as structure and the family as a social unit (Ammar, 1954:42). Yamani illustrate further family function in Saudi Society:

In Saudi Arabia, the family (‘ai’la) is held to be the basic unit of friendship, obligation, loyalty, moral support, socialization and economic help. Kinship remains the prime means of social organization and associations. The identity based on patronymic group is used to define a person’s worth, as well as to define legal and social status. This identity for men and women is not altered by marriage: women do not change their family name by adopting their husband’s name. As the motto goes, “Whom you are born to is for life while whom you marry can be changed by separation or divorce” (1996:274).

Studies concerned with defining the family in Arab society usually delineate its structure as the main factor in their definition and therefore focus on the household (Altorki and Zraig, 1995:12), regarding ‘the family’ as members who are living in one household and who constitute the basic unit of daily interaction. However, the study of the family has proved that such a definition cannot provide enough flexibility to deal with the different factors involved in creating family practices, in general, as well as in current Arab
families.

Therefore, different approaches to understanding the contemporary Arab family have occurred. These approaches can be classified into three themes: the first one considers the extended family as the dominant form in Arab societies. However, disagreement has emerged regarding the spread of this type; while some consider the extended family is the form to be found in all social classes, except the urban modern educated class, others limit its existence to rural and tribal societies, and to some extent in small cities (Al-Zagel, 1989:7).

The second theme suggests that the nuclear family (parents with unmarried children) is the main form, in urban communities as well as rural, and in all Arab countries, except for Palestine, where the extended family continues to be the main form (Al-Zagel, 1989:9-13; Al-Safty, 1990:5-6). Still others explain that although the nuclear family is the dominant form in contemporary Arab societies, the decline in the number of extended families living in one household does not mean that the extended family has disappeared altogether (Al-Zagel, 1989:7).

An alternative approach towards understanding and defining the Arab family suggests the constructed family, or as it is some times identified ‘the transforming family’, to be the dominant form (Al-Safty, 19:6). This family usually contains other kin members additional to the nuclear, and therefore, it is similar to the modified extended family, which was pointed to earlier in this
chapter. Different versions of this family type can be observed in contemporary Arab societies, which cannot be defined as either wholly nuclear or as extended families. For example, the family can be a married couple with some relatives living in one household; sometimes it is parents with their unmarried children along with one of their married adult children and the grandchildren, while the other adult children have moved to live in separate households. Other situations would be where one or both parents are living with one of their married adult children, or some of the siblings (Zraig and Shorter, 1990:61).

Another option in defining the Arab family suggests three forms: the nuclear family, the modified family, and a third form, the family without married couples, which could be one person or more. This later form is considered to be more common in Western societies, and seldom exists in Arab societies (Altorki and Zraig, 1995:12).

Studies of the Arab family are generally criticised regarding the limitation in the sample and the methods used in collecting the data, and therefore it is difficult to come to any accurate definition and final division regarding the most common type. However, the results of these studies can provide indications of the main aspects of change in the Arab family (Al-Zagel, 1989:13-14). They indicate that the shift from an extended towards a nuclear family type is usually bound up with the increase of an urban population and with internal, as well as external, migration to the main cities. It is also linked to the increase of education levels especially for women, the
delay of marriage, and the influence of Western values. However, we cannot assume that the family in all Arab societies is changing in one direction. The extended family still exists strongly in some agricultural communities, and in other low income communities it provides shelter and help with living expenses. It also plays a significant role in caring for elderly parents and in socialisation, especially in the case of families with working mothers (Abdul-Hameed, 1991:28-32).

Although some recent official reports offer statistical information which indicates that the nuclear family is the main form, especially in urban Arab societies, what is more important perhaps than the household structure, is that the extended family continues to have a dominant effect in contemporary Arab societies (Altorki and Zraig, 1995:15). The study of the Arab family shows, as will this thesis, that the extended family remains an active experience for individuals throughout the different stages of their life course: during childhood, the teen years, the first years of marriage and elderhood (Altorki and Zraig, 1995:12-15; Al-Njar, 1999:181). The extended family continues to impose its ideological and cultural role on the pattern of nuclear family life, as well as sustaining the network of relations through kinship with the second generation. Therefore, even if nuclear families are living in separate households, they continue to have strong relationships with the extended family. Under these circumstances, the domination of nuclear family culture should be questioned before reaching any conclusion regarding overall change in family values.
It is also important in the study of the family in Arab societies to acknowledge diversities between Arab societies, as well as sub-cultures within each society. For example, the United Nations's report (1992) on the impact of social and economic changes in the Arab family explains:

...it cannot be said that there is a single concept of the Arab family or a single pattern or uniform characteristics for it. A generalization of this nature is erroneous, because although there are features common to Arab societies in general, there are differences in family characteristics in each society...Family characteristics may be different even within the same society, depending on the class status, which in turn, will affect family characteristics within each social class. There is also the conventional classification of families as rural and urban, each with its own characteristics. We thus find that each family pattern has its own characteristics which are the outcome of economic, social and cultural interactions (1992: 2).

It is also suggested in this report that the Arab family, at the present moment, is set on a course of transformation, and that this is related to the changes that are taking place in the Arab world. The report goes on to describe Arab societies as in the process of transforming from tradition to modernity, and therefore they are in continual motion, neither traditional nor modern, but combining the characteristics of both a situation which affects the family's
structure and functions, as well as the roles of its members. The report states:

The features that are most prominent in such a society are those which demonstrate the contradictions, such as duality of standards which regulate relations among individuals and determine their behaviour and attitudes. It is also demonstrated in the conflict of roles from which those who fall between the two grinding wheels, the old and the new, suffer (1992:2).

Although there is some disagreement about this characterization of Arab countries, since this definition embodies the assumption that all developing countries have to pass in their development process from traditional to modern society (see Chapter One), the above discussion highlights, however, the importance of considering diversities and similarities between Arab countries in the study of the Arab family. It also underlines the importance of constructing a framework which allows for an understanding of the dynamics of the local and global elements in shaping ‘family practices’ in the Arab world. Therefore, the next part of this chapter deals with constructing a framework which can be referred to in the study of the Saudi family.

**The Important Features of Change Which Affected the Family in Saudi Society**

The changes that occurred in the family in Arab Gulf societies are usually considered to have been influenced by a number of different factors.
One major element has been the raising of the national income standard, which has resulted in the implementation of large development projects, mostly centered in the towns (Ferjany, 1983:24-167; Abud Al-Rahman, 1982:270). This led to large-scale migration from rural and Bedouin areas to urban ones as people went in search of employment in the modern sector, or in search of the benefits to be gained from the services available in towns. Al-Dossary explains:

Bedouin are attracted for migration to the main cities, where the opportunities for jobs in the new work sectors are available. These opportunities include work at government offices, police departments and in the military. Also this migration is caused by their desire to benefit from the social services available at the main cities (1983:356).

It is worth noting, for example, that the nuclear family in Arab societies differs from the one in Western society, regarding the large number of family members and the continuity of relations with other groups of relatives (U.N., 1992:4-9). The size of the Saudi urban family in 1985 was between 6-8 children (Kattan, 1991:55). In some social classes, the family's social status and position are still seen to be reflected in the number of children it has, for increased family income makes available the necessary funds for caring for many children (U.N., 1992:72). Therefore, the number of children in these nuclear families or modified extended families is high compared with Western families, although there are differences between urban
and rural areas (Arab Council for Childhood and Development, 1995: 84). A survey, which was completed in 1990, showed that the average total fertility rate was 7.26 live births per woman, being higher in rural areas (7.47) than in urban areas (7.12) (Al-Marzou, 1990). The large size of the family in Arab societies is also related to the fact that adult children always continue to live with their parents until they get married. In some Arab countries the average age of marriage is getting higher, and therefore the period spent within the natal family is longer. This also affects the roles and stratification within the family, which will be discussed later.

The rise of individual/family income standards has affected the lifestyle of the family, particularly amongst the middle and upper classes, and in this the state has played a major role. It directed development plans by providing mortgage loans and new patterns of work, some of which are based on commerce, investments and real estate agencies. Explicit examples of this change in the standard of family living can be seen in the great housing expansion, and in the large scale use of modern appliances and consumer items within the home. This can also be seen in the practice of high income behaviours, such as travelling, having large social gatherings, having more than one car for one family, and the employment of private drivers and maids (Abud-Alrhman, 1982: 208; Ibrahim, 1982:151-170; Hassan, 1983: 122-123).

Great concern about changes in the family function and roles has been related to the extensive employment of foreign labour within the family. It is said that the permanent presence of such labour and the increased reliance on
it has changed family members' obligations towards each other. The roles played by the family members have become unclear, in relation to decisions about work and family responsibilities. This is said to have happened particularly in relation to children who were born into or who have grown up in these types of families. Some studies (e.g. Ferjani, 1983; Abdul-Moatee, 1982) even indicate that the importance of the family as social institution in the Gulf societies has begun to decline, and that the family is losing its socialising function. One such change in familial roles viewed as problematic is related to the value of work within the family. This again is often particularly relevant to children in the sense that, it is argued, children in contemporary Saudi Arabia are growing up to be served and are seen to be living in wealthy surroundings where they can mostly get everything they wish for (Khalifa, 1987:74-79). This compares with previous generations, where children were brought up in impoverished, destitute environments, and were expected to participate in work and to watch their families working hard. Therefore, the high value of hard work was part of their life experience. Since children are often viewed as the future of their families as well as their countries, the decline of such values is considered to have broader social consequences for the wider society.

The decrease of traditional work patterns is another factor, which has cultivated some changes within the family. For example, the emergence of new work opportunities, where people having higher financial incomes and requiring to put in less effort, has led to competition between overseas imported commodities and local traditional production, and an increased focus
on the development of modern production sectors (Ammar, 1983:390). This has led to increased migration from urban and Bedouin areas to towns, which consequently has affected family form, size and relations (Al-Dossary, 1983:356). The contemporary family, therefore, tends to be financially independent from the extended family, as the latter, with the change in production process, no longer represents the main production unit in Saudi society. Family size is also growing smaller, because parents are tending to control birth, as children no longer represent an economic force, though as noted it still remains larger than the average western family. Therefore, some studies consider the family has become more of a consuming than a productive unit (U.N., 1992:71).

The Arab family remains patriarchal, with male members usually considered to be superior to females. The roots of this gendered stratification are to be found in traditional culture and continue to be carried forward, to some extent, by the socialisation processes, as Altorki suggests:

According to older ideology, men are not only physically but mentally superior to women, despite the Quranic view that women are equal to men in religious duty and reward. In fact, women are considered lacking in reason ('aql) and religious observance. This view is based on the physical nature of women, whereby the biological condition of menstruation puts them in a state of ritual pollution which suspends religious duties of prayer and fasting. This brings a
temporary lapse in religious obligations not experienced by men. Such conditions endure for women until they reach menopause (1986: 51).

Altorki explains that aql refers to the faculty of understanding, rationality, judiciousness, prudence, and wisdom. Women are viewed to lack aql, especially the ability of judgement. Therefore, men are often the ones to hold the right of divorce, despite the equal right in religious roles. It is, however, expected that women can and do exercise aql in controlling their own behaviour, for example, running the affairs of their household, their relations with others (especially within the extended family), keeping the love and attention of their husbands, tolerating their husband's shortcomings and forgiving them when conflicts arise (Altorki, 1986:52).

Gender and age are the main elements in the division of roles for the Arab family. Both females and members of the younger generations are obliged to obey and respect males and the older members of their family. Altorki explains:

At the same time, Aql is seen by women to begin for girls at the early age of seven and for boys around the age of twenty. Theoretically, for men Aql grows with responsibility that marriage brings, but in effect it has no starting point. However, most men reach their quota of aql no earlier than forty, or mature adulthood. Therefore, socialising girls in Arab
families would always encounter these moral values and stratifications (Altorki, 1986:52) (see also Soffan, 1980:18).

However, historical and comparative studies of different generations within the family have provided evidence for changes also occurring in relation to these areas within the family, with education being considered as the main force for change (Altorki, 1986:55; Soffan, 1980: 46-60).

There has been an obvious growth in the educational sector. This has affected family size, conditions regulating the selection of partners between couples and kinship relations. For example, the contemporary Saudi family now tends to adopt birth control, often as a result of one or both parent’s engagement in improving their educational or income standard. As regards selection of partners for marriage, there is nowadays a relatively free choice, even though traditional rules/norms still draw the broad lines and the general principles that govern the question of selection. Moreover, parents’ approval of marriages is still a basic condition for marriage, especially in the case of young couple (Altorki, 1986:123-147; U.N., 1992: 22,57).

One important change is in couple relations, regarding child rearing and participation in family decision-making. This is now more of a joint process, although the husband still occupies the more dominant decision-making, due to his important role in financing the family (Kattan, 1991:70).

The nuclear family in general preserves community values, and
continues to be patriarchal, and despite some of the changes which have occurred in spousal relations, and within the extended family, the main moralities remain. For example, even though relatives no longer constitute a pressing force on the contemporary Saudi family, particularly in the field of decision-making pertinent to daily practices, the family may still seek opinions of some relatives within their kinship group, such as grandparents or uncles, regarding important issues like marriage. All these issues differ, however, between social classes, and from one family to the other (U.N., 1992:4-8).

The increase in women's educational standard and employment represent a rather important change in the Saudi family. However, women's education and participation in the economic sector is also shaped by traditional values. Therefore, women are allowed education and the opportunity to work as these organisations support the traditional system, such as retaining the family’s moralities and improving women’s role within the family. Moreover, women's traditional position in the family continues to be represented in education, mass media and literature, as well as in the family (Atorki and Zraig, 1995:30). Al-Suwaigh explains:

Women's education, in particular, has gone through tremendous changes. The government encountered many traditional obstacles in establishing public education for women in 1960. The main problem was in reconciling the rights of women to education with the traditional norms of
honour, norms that required women to protect their virtue by staying at home. The government solved the problem by vesting the responsibility for girls' education in Islamic leaders who formed what is now known as the Administration of Girls' Education (1984:11).

For women this change has contributed to the emergence of a tension between women's traditional roles (as mothers, wives and housewives), and their new roles (as working women, or students). It is, therefore, in an attempt to solve some of these problems that the family has often come to use the services of foreign labour to carry out the obligations of woman's traditional role, at times when women are out at work or doing other activities. As women start to hold important positions in their jobs, this is increasingly likely to be seen as a necessity.

This situation has, therefore, led to the continuity of the traditional social assessment of women's work. Meanwhile, it has delayed the emergence of new values such as developing a new perspective in evaluating women's work and in sharing the domestic work between members of the family, as has occurred elsewhere (see Creighton, 1999). Housework, therefore, continues to be seen as a woman's job and her employment in the labour force continues to be marginal, often linked to their ability to employ domestic labour. It only assumes importance in situations when housemaids are available, or when the family is desperately in need of income. However, we have to note again that these situations differ between classes. The other negative results, as noted
earlier, are the growing reliance on maids to do domestic work and to take care of children (Khalifa, 1987: 109-125).

Contact with other cultures through mass media, and overseas travel, through foreign labour working within Saudi society and through the wide expansion of world markets and consumable commodities, has led to the exploration of cultural models from different societies. These factors have had some influence on the conceptualisation of social roles, including family roles, and encouraged a new orientation in some family concerns and activities. The increase in the standard of living and the improvement in educational and health standards, as well as the provision of different services and facilities for the family, in turn, have played a role in determining the manner and force of the effects which foreign culture has had on contemporary family life in Saudi society.

Rising income has helped in the emergence of new cultural patterns, for example, the growth in use of mass media—but at the same time, as noted, this exposure to more global worldviews has cultivated the need to develop and protect the culture of the locality. Here, children have become seen as the focus for ensuring the continuity of morals and cultural attitudes.

The next part of this chapter deals with socialisation as a changing process and is therefore concerned with constructing an understanding of the interrelation between childhood as a social phenomenon and social change.
Children and Change: The Socialisation Process

The family is considered one of the main agents in socialising children in contemporary societies, the other major agents being the school, peer groups, and the mass media. Danziger notes the importance of considering these different elements:

Nothing could be more misleading than to treat the socialization of the child as though it were simply a family process. It surely needs no stressing that the child is socialized by all the social structures in which he participates, by his school and peer groups as well as by the mass media and by the position which his parents occupy in the social structure. He is socialized also by virtue of belonging to a particular culture at a certain stage in its history (1970:18).

The importance of the socialisation process can be seen both in relation to its function in society as well as to the individual, in the sense of maintaining social life as well as shaping any individual's adaptation to the social world. Illustrating the importance given to the socialisation process in the study of society, Mackay points out that:

For the sociologist, to be human is to be socialised (1973:28).

As the discussion in the first part of this chapter revealed, when
changes occur in the society and the family, the socialisation process also changes. A discussion about the role of the family in socialisation, and in particular the Arab family is, therefore, important here in order to provide the theoretical background for the processes involved in the socialisation of girls in Arab culture, which is the empirical focus for this research. However, it is necessary to begin by defining socialization.

**Defining Socialisation**

Socialisation has been defined in various ways. For example, Mayer suggests a very broad definition:

The inoculation of the skills and attitudes necessary for playing given social roles (1970:xiii).

He explains further, that socialisation is a long-term process, which continues at different periods of the individual’s life, and points out that the re-socialisation of people of all ages takes place when major changes appear, such as social mobility, urbanisation, and industrialisation. He indicates that:

Under such conditions individuals usually have to confront actual or potential new roles in adult life, which would require from them the acquisition of new role play skills and attitudes (1970:Xiii).
He also suggests that socialisation differs from one culture to the other, in the sense that different roles are expected from members in each society. However, he suggests as well that certain roles, such as being a parent and being responsible for a job, are normally found from among people who are already grown up.

Another definition for socialisation is given by Gosline as follows:

The processes by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable them to participate as more or less effective members of groups and societies (1969:3).

According to the above definitions, socialisation is a process that trains members of a society with the special skills needed to play certain social roles. This process can continue throughout an individual’s life cycle. However, certain roles are usually expected at each age level. These roles, as well as the socialisation process, are culturally relative, and can change as the socio-economic processes develop in a society. Furthermore, as Gosline (1969) points out, members of society could be socialised to play different roles within the sub-cultures of the various groups with whom they are interacting.

In defining socialisation, Musgrave (1988) problematises the concept of 'society' in order to underline the diversity and the fragmentation within current societies, and therefore to point to the existence of several subcultures
within one society. Thus, he suggests the socialisation process in such societies indicates that members may be differently integrated within different settings, e.g. a person could be a father at home and a teacher at work...etc. In addition, referring to Dahrendof's arguments, he points to the importance of power in relation to the different roles which are taken on in the socialisation process:

Any human society must be regulated by established expectations about how members should behave. These expectations are often called norms and many of them are moral in nature, as they constrain how members treat each other. In order to ensure the group's survival, someone must be given the power to ensure that norms are preserved (1988:1).

Examining the above definitions of socialisation, we can highlight some key points: first, socialisation is a continuous process of learning to adapt to existing norms in a society, and therefore, it is a crucial link between the existing culture of any group and its members. Second, socialisation is culturally relative. Third, power is an important tool in the transition and the sustenance of social norms. However, norms can change, and thus need not be internalised.

Musgrave draws attention to the importance of the third implication in developing the notion that individuals have the chance to construct their own
norms which can differ greatly or only partly from those already existing. He explains that it is this notion which gives rise to the issue of deviance. However, deviance does not always refer to law breaking. It could only be the result of the failure to meet existing norms by a group of social actors (1988:2-3). Musgrave’s argument is important in any analysis of the change in behaviour or interests of different generations across time, as it accentuates the fact social norms are not only culturally relative but also subject to change historically. Such an approach, therefore, is helpful when attempting to reach an understanding of changes in behaviour, and changes in judgements about this behaviour. Since continuity and social change in family values and practices is part of what this study is aiming to research, through looking at the experience of three generations of informants, Musgrave’s argument will be highly important in carrying out analysis of these issues.

In contrast to Musgrave’s notion about creativity as a very important factor in understanding changing cultural norms and expectations, earlier research in socialisation had emphasised the notion of pre-determined or passively accepted roles. Thus, the next section explores the arguments about the socialisation process and the changing perspectives which have been developed.

**Change in Studying Socialisation**

The study of socialisation has developed over time, with different
aspects of socialisation being approached from different theoretical perspectives. According to Musgrave (1988), during the first two decades of this century the concept of socialisation was used to analyse the problem of how social order could be possible by examining the transmission of norms in societies at the collective level. While the concept may still be used in this way, the main focus contemporarily has switched to considering how individuals become members of groups. Analysis is now more at the interpersonal level, and there has been a gradual move from conceptualising the process as training to seeing it as a social learning. Musgrave points out:

In brief the focus has moved from macro, or societal, to the micro, or interpersonal, from one of consensus or agreed norms to one of learning and to the negotiation of norms between members of groups (1988:2).

He further explains the importance of different perspectives involved in studying socialisation in social sciences which include psychology as well as sociology. Comparing the psychologists’ interest to that of sociologists, he points out:

Sociologists, because they focus on groups, do not privilege individuals, but rather the relationships into which they are moving. The contrast is clearly demonstrated if we consider how the two disciplines have analysed moral learning. Psychologists have examined what moral concepts an
individual can learn, given the cognitive stage he has reached, while sociologists have tried to discover how moral codes developed in groups, how they are sanctioned and how they change. The individual, usually in a given situation, is the focus in the first case, the set of interrelationships, potentially changeable, in the second (1988:3).

The analysis in this study will be using tools belonging to the sociological tradition.

Musgrave clarifies the point that the sociological analysis of socialisation, or of any social process, can be undertaken at various levels. Four levels commonly found are those of the social system, of culture, of personality and behaviour. The social system level highlights the ways in which any social structure is integrated, so that any individual's integration into society involves making choices from those which are available within the social structure:

The pathways through social systems cross institutions, from family through education into the economic and political orders, in a complicated and contrapuntal manner (1988: 6).

The second level is the cultural. The analytical focus here is on the nature of the content of the social system, since the term culture here refers to all the characteristic activities and interests of people, considering aspects
such as social class; professional roles; an individual school or similar organisation. The third level is that of personality, by which is meant the patterned organisation of an individual’s dispositions, governing responses to the environment. The concept of personality logically entails a degree of stable patterning. However, personalities do change over time. The last level is the level of the behaviour. Here care must be taken to differentiate between behaviour, which is observed and reported, and what has been termed action, which refers both to what social actors do and to their intent (Musgrave, 1988: 6-7).

Musgrave sums up his discussion about the past approaches to socialisation by suggesting that each new approach attempts to overcome the difficulties the previous ones had encountered. He explains that the process of socialisation implies that various kinds of knowledge become acceptable in a particular culture and are made available to its members at an appropriate moment in their life cycle. Some cognitive knowledge is usually learnt in the early years of primary schooling, and some behavioural, or moral knowledge is learnt early in life, for example how to behave towards adults, and in later years how to treat and what to accept from one’s boss. All this knowledge, whether academic or moral, will have been socially constructed by previous generations, and in relation to particular cultures. As long as it is seen to still be appropriate by the actors involved, it will be reconstructed at each transmission. But when this happens, knowledge is also refined, changed or created, and there is a creative process at work. Musgrave explains that this approach emphasises the notion that the actor is a potentially creative subject
who, depending upon how power is structured within his career, constructs rather than reconstructs knowledge (sometimes cognitive, but particularly moral knowledge) as this is communicated to him through both language and other cues (1988: 23).

**Adult-Child relationship and Socialisation**

The adult-child relationship has always been seen as the core of the socialisation process. Early studies, e.g., by Mead (1928), and by Malinowski (1930), are considered important starting points in the history of studying child development and family patterns, regarding their dramatic implications for psychological and sociological theories (AlSuwaigh, 1984:24).

However, changes have occurred in approaching and understanding the dynamics involved within these relations. Exploring these, Macky points to the representation of the adult-child relationship in the socialisation process:

What is more important for the argument presented here, under the auspices of current formulations of socialisation, the conception of children as essentially deficient vis-à-vis adults has, in practice, led to no research into children qua children. Under the formulation of the world as a process of socialisation, children as a phenomenon disappear, and sociologists reveal themselves as parents writing about slightly abstract versions of their own or other children (1973: 28).
As noted (see Chapter One), contemporary debates around socialisation focus on the notion of childhood as not simply a biological stage in human life, but rather as a changing phenomenon dependent on the historical moment which the society is experiencing. It also considers the child as an active partner, and in such a view socialization is seen as an interactive process (Dreizel, 1973:5). The new paradigm in studying childhood represents a good example of the shift in studying childhood and of contemporary perspectives on the process of socialisation. James and Prout’s work illustrates the notion that childhood is a social phenomenon which is culturally relative:

The biological facts of life, birth and infancy, were constantly used to explain the social facts of childhood with little account taken of any cultural component. It was the gradual growth in awareness that the meaning attached to the category "child" and "childhood" might differ across time or in space which began to destabilize traditional models of child development and socialisation (1990:15).

Within this new approach the 1960's model for socialisation is considered as a passive one, since it neglects the fact that children are actively involved in creating their own response to the socialisation process, and therefore in shaping their childhood. Early understandings of the socialisation process saw it simply as a process of preparing individuals to play fixed roles.
in a static society (See: Dreitzel, Rafky, and Mackay: 1973).

James and Prout further explain:

In the 1950s and 60s, then, interpretative sociologies were a potent source for the critique of the then dominant paradigm of structural-functionalism, from which conceptions of child socialization derived. This general critique reversed the structural-functionalist relationship between structure and agency, with interpretivists stressing the role of creative individual activity in the constitution of human society. There is no doubt that the growth of interpretative perspectives in the social science, especially symbolic interaction and social phenomenology, gave an impetus to new directions in the study of childhood. In particular, they fostered an interest in children as social actors and childhood as a particular kind of social reality (1990:15).

Psychologists have also made a distinguished contribution to the field of studying socialisation and child rearing, in particular, to the study of parent-child interaction. Alsuwaigh (1984) demonstrates the range of perspectives in child psychology as being those of ‘social learning, psychoanalysis and cognitive development’ and highlights the importance of the latter in particular:
The third major view conceives of socialisation as children's acquisition of cultural and social beliefs and behaviours, but within the limits set by sequences of cognitive development common to all humans...the process of socialisation is conceived to be operating in two interrelated ways to influence the early experience of individuals: (1) the family structure which determines the nature of the child’s earliest interpersonal experience, and (2) the social system which influences parents to train their children deliberately to adapt to the social roles (1984:19).

Summarizing the different approaches in theorising the process of socialisation, by sociologists as well as psychologists, it is possible to identify the existence of a circle of relations which are involved in the process of socialization—individual, culture, and society—although as noted, cross-cultural studies reveal the importance of diversity in the process of socialisation and child rearing, and that the socialisation process is a changing phenomenon, which differs across time.

The next part of this chapter reviews changes in the study of the process of socialization with regard to children in Saudi Arabia, and in particular girls in Arab culture.
Children and Change in the Arab World

The socio-economic and political changes which occurred in the Arab world, have affected children’s culture to a large extent. For example, the changes described earlier that developed in Saudi society and therefore in the family, have led to the emergence of new images and understandings of socialisation (Al-Suwaigh, 1984:216-221). At the same time these changes have cultivated ideas about the importance of employing the socialisation process in order to sustain local identity and moral values, as well as traditions in the face of globalizing trends. The enrolment of other organisations in child rearing--such as schools, literature, and mass media--have been part of a broader concern about effects of social change.

The socialisation process, as it is taking place in contemporary Arab societies, has been affected by the tension between the traditional heritage and modernity. Children’s culture has been considered as a major focus for this conflict (Al Drage, 1990:23), and has led to contradictory understandings and dealings with change in contemporary childhood as noted in Chapter One.

Any discussion of issues related to contemporary Arab children's culture, entails therefore exploring the various topics that have preoccupied the Arab world’s thoughts and policies, such as alienation and identity, and the preservation of cultural locality against globalization. It also needs to address the contemporary concern to revive traditional culture and to create appropriate channels to ensure its continuity and effectiveness in the current
life of Arab people. This means, as well, tackling issues relating to educational policies and to the implications of the interaction between cultural heritage and contemporary values.

Looking at traditional, as well as current socialization, the next part of this chapter deals with changes that have occurred in socializing Arab children. Although this study is mainly concerned with socializing girls in Saudi culture, it is useful to set this within a broader frame for analysis, which encompasses the inter-relation between Arab culture and the local culture of the Saudi society, as well as global contact with the wider world. And by discussing childhood socialization in general, a theoretical framework will emerge that can be used to situate the ethnographic data presented in later chapters.

**Traditional Socialisation in the Arab World**

Socialisation in traditional societies is often seen as the procedures and methods that are adopted by the community to transform the child, who is relatively peripheral, into the adult who is the child's central link to community social life. Therefore, traditional socialisation focuses on the transition from child into adult. As Fortes puts this, in the transition:

...from an economically passive burden into a producer, from a biological unit into a social personality, irretrievably cast in the habits, disposition, and notions

Such traditional definitions of socialisation, as was illustrated earlier in this chapter, are static and can be seen to parallel traditional attempts to define the family, which consider the family a static unit. Both neglect the fact that they can change across time and between cultures.

The diversity in child rearing in Arab societies is related to different factors, such as the age of the child, the urban, rural location, education and class. However, several studies identify general characteristics of the socialisation process in traditional as well as contemporary Arab families (e.g., Alsuwaigh 1984; Ammar 1954; and Sharaby 1975). Therefore, the discussion in the following section is an attempt to clarify these dominant characteristics. Here I focus on one study in detail to pick out the key elements of traditional socialisation, which are the focus for current debates about continuity and locality, in relation to preservation of heritage and traditions. This study is ‘Growing up in an Egyptian Village’ (Ammar, 1954).

The differences between an adult and a child, in a traditional Arab culture, as Ammar describes, are quantitative rather than qualitative. The former knows and thus conforms to the cultural norms, while the latter does not. This is accurate in that the Arabic word commonly used to describe the child, is jahil. This word literally means ‘ignorant’, and therefore identifies ignorance with childhood. Ammar notes further that under such circumstances the process of socialisation includes technical training as well as cultural
training, since children are expected to learn roles and their moral obligations, in order to take over from their parents or elder siblings. The child must work for his family as a necessary requisite to enjoy their protection. (Ammar, 1954:125).

The family in traditional Arab societies is the main agent responsible for socialising children. The family, as Sharaby describes it, is the connection ring between the individual and the culture in his society. Therefore, one of the main characteristics of the Arab family is that it continues to carry the cultural norms and relations of the tribal society. Thus, the resemblance between the society as a culture and the family as a social unit is clear when inspecting relations and stratification within the family (1975: 35).

Examining the inner relations and family dynamics, the family gains strength and continuity through emphasising the child's dependency on it, and at the same time his/her responsibility toward it. Therefore, the child grows up to learn that he/she is primarily obligated toward the family and not the whole society (Sharaby, 1975: 35-38). In his study, Ammar points to the fact that in (Silwa) village, the child's recognition of the importance of his family and his identification are expressed in using the plural rather than the singular in talking, such as when referring to possessions. He describes:

The child usually talks in the first person plural, by saying 'our donkey, our camel'. In fact, it is preferable to use the plural pronoun rather than the singular, as it is considered
to be modest and less presumptuous.... In this way, the identification with, and submergence into, the family is impressed upon the child (1954:132).

This dominant position for the family in the individual's life is a fact in other Arab societies. Loyalty toward the family is traditionally considered part of family membership, and it is reflected in different manners, as this study will later provide evidence for in the ethnographic chapters.

In addition to an emphasis on the importance of the family, the process of growing up reflects the moral values, which overlay relations and social stratification. This can be distinguished in adult-child relationships within the family as well as in the society in general. In his study, Ammar explains the key features of the socialisation process in traditional Arab society:

The process of growing up is envisaged as a way of disciplining the child to conform to the adults' standards, and to comply with what their elders expect them to do, thus acquiring the qualities of being polite 'muadab'\(^1\). In adult eyes, the period of childhood is a nuisance, and childhood activities, especially play, are a waste of time. The 'giving of adab' to children is the guarantee of survival of the social structure, with its patrilineal bias and respect relationships, especially filial piety, which is sanctioned by the koranic injunctions (1954:126).

\(^1\) Muadab: being polite.
Adab: politeness/morality.
Therefore, the essence of the socialisation process is the longing of the adults, particularly parents, to create a docile attitude in their children, and thus to make them disciplined (Alsuwaigh, 1984: 34). Ammar explores this relationship:

"To become 'muadab' is the ideal set up by parents for their children, the adherence to which is constantly impressed upon them. The ideal, although emphasizing subservience and obedience of the children to their parents, is actually extended to include the whole range of children's activities for which elders are responsible (1954: 126)."

Alsuwaigh points out further:

"It is to be noted that in situations where adults are involved, children's behaviour patterns and motivations are based on subservience, respect, and fear of adult anger (1984:35)."

Therefore, one of the cardinal virtues of a disciplined child is his/her respect for his/her elders and the child, as well, is expected to respect all adults in his/her kinship circle although the expected degree of respect and the behaviour can vary according to the age and the closeness of the relative. Ammar discusses the means by which some social norms are impressed on the
Till the age of four or five, this respect expresses itself in the young boy, on being introduced to a gathering in the house, touching the older person's hands with his lips and forehead. When the child grows older, this is replaced by handshake followed immediately by his withdrawal from the adult gathering.... the respect later on is expected in terms of decrease in word intimacy and physical proximity. Moreover, certain manners must be observed, such as walking behind the father or an elder and not abreast of him, standing up or at least sitting properly on the ground at his approach (1954:129).

Therefore, children would learn the approved manners of behavior, which can be acted in the presence of an adult, and learn as well to signify these manners according to their blood connection. Introducing the child to social gatherings is an important way of teaching him/her to act according to adults’ expectations. In such gatherings, children's attention is usually drawn toward adults’ evaluation and not according to what or how the child would like to act. Therefore, children would gradually learn to act according to adults’ expectation, in their presence. Meanwhile, they also easily learn to act differently when on their own (Sharaby, 1975:50).

Children also learn the ability to distinguish between formal and informal behavior, and the circumstances which control these behaviors. For
example, while children could experience a certain degree of informality when alone with parents, they would be expected to act formally in the presence of other kinship members and strangers. Nevertheless, children would usually act with no formality when with their friends (Ammar, 1954:130). The hierarchy in children's relations with relatives and kin is also part of role division in the family and the authority between parents. Therefore, in paternalistic families, the mother's relatives are often less powerful and thus children would usually be closer to them, since there is less stratification in their relations (Ammar, 1954:134).

Religious values and obligations reinforce the adult-child relationship, especially towards parents and kin. Thus, children are expected to obey adults, otherwise they will be liable to punishment. Discipline is defined as the ability to acquire the qualities of being polite. Ammar illustrates how religious roles shape the adult-child relationship, and the process of socialisation:

The ideal norm of 'adab' is a value which also has its religious sanction, as a pious son 'ibn salih' is synonymous with 'muadab'. Such a value does not only include the child's economic services and his observance of the expected social behaviour, but also implies a pattern of reciprocity between child and family...The acquiring of the procedures of "adab", which incorporate the prescribed standards of behavior, has also a religious sanction behind it from the prophetic tradition. It is related that the prophet said, 'God has disciplined me, and
has perfected my discipline'. The adult sense of keenness to bring their children to realize this ideal can be traced in parents’ prayers that God might not make their children disobedient or cause them shame. One of the most effective insults to a boy or a girl is the provoking remark that he or she has no people to discipline him or her (1954: 127).

Therefore, children would be subject to punishment if they did not act according to social expectations, and the punishment would vary according to the child’s age and behavior. Punishment could sometimes be physical, for example if a child talked back at his parents while being scolded (Ammar, 1954:137). Kabbaj also noted that parents often used to make their children conform to their wishes by frightening them with imaginary creatures or harmful spirits (1979:423). Sharaby points to another way of submitting children to adult society and the customs of the community, which is by making children feel ashamed (1975:44). He explains further that in such traditional patterns of socialisation children would feel ashamed because of what other people thought about their behavior, and not due to what they felt toward themselves. In such conditions, children’s behavior would be motivated by outsiders and not by self-control. Therefore, this situation emphasises the hierarchy in adult-child relations and provides for adult authority over children, since it is adults who set the roles and make the judgements (1975: 43-47).

Expected behaviour and role obligations were usually learned from
parents as well as elders. Children would also learn through their association with slightly older boys and girls, who usually assumed the role of leaders or teachers in work or play. However, the behavior pattern and motivation in the learning situation where adults were involved would be different from those with the age-group learning situation. In the former, subservience, respect, and fear were expected; while in the latter, rivalry and reciprocity on equal terms were the norms (Ammar, 1954:128).

The main aspects of Arab traditional child socialization can therefore be summarized in the words of Alsuwaigh words as:

(1) Disciplining the child to conform to adult's standards and to comply with what the elders expect them to do, thus acquiring the qualities of being polite; and (2) socializing boys and girls to behave in a culturally approved, sex-typed manner (1984:29).

Those aspects of traditional socialization reviewed above, will be looked at in this study, mainly when dealing with the analysis of the traditional childhood of elderly informants. Continuity and change in the process of socialization will also be investigated when dealing with the childhood of the second generation informants and in contemporary society but as mentioned earlier, since this study is concerned basically with female informants, more attention will be focused on socialising girls in Arab culture.
The issue of gender is important when looking closely at the socialization process, and in particular the division of social and economic roles between men and women. To clarify ideas around gender and sex, Oakley (1972) suggested the need for this analytical tool to distinguish between these two concepts. According to this distinction, sex is connected with biology, whereas the gender identity of men and women in any given society is socially and psychologically, as well as historically and culturally, determined (Brett, 1991:2). Brett illustrates further the role of socialization in division of gender:

Gender is learnt through a process of socialization and the culture of the particular society concerned. In many cultures boys are encouraged in the acts considered to display male traits (and girls vice versa) through the toys given to children (guns for boys, dolls for girls), the kind of discipline meted out, the jobs or careers to which they might aspire and the portrayal of men and women in the media (1991:3).

Therefore, although biological sex can be considered as a starting point for describing gender, there is however considerable variation in gender roles between cultures (Brett, 1991:3). Some cross-cultural studies carried out by anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and George Murdock provide evidence for these variations, and thus emphasise the notion that gender is
culture specific (Brett, 1991:4; Sharpe, 1976:62). Other studies have tried to show how a particular economy affects gender roles and the socialisation of boys and girls, and therefore the formation of their personality. For instance, a study of the training of boys and girls in 110 cultures (Barry, Bacon and Child), provides evidence that training children for certain skills in different cultures varies according to the economic structure in each society, and is not due to children’s sex (Sharpe, 1976:63). Considering the contribution of cross-cultural studies, Sharpe points out the following:

The existence of so many differing types of masculinity and femininity contribute towards undermining the system of sex stereotype. However, it is important to remember that sex differentiation and its surrounding values and attitudes does not develop in an arbitrary way. It is vitally influenced by the nature of the economic structure of a society and the division of labour that has been developed around it (1976:62).

In researching the process of socializing girls in this study, it is important to consider the various aspects of gender cross-culturally and within cultures over time. Therefore, special attention will be given to the specificity of Islamic Arab culture. Meanwhile, taking into consideration that culture is not static but evolves, there is also the need to consider more global issues of gender and socialization when analyzing girls’ socialization in Saudi Arabia.
Socialising Girls in Arab Culture

Islam has always emphasised equality between males and females. This is clearly stated in the Qur’an:

O mankind, we created you all from a male and female, and made you into races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God fearing of you.

In another verse men and women are regarded as equal in spiritual worth:

O mankind, be careful of your duty to your lord, who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from these twin have spread abroad a multitude of men and women.

Other verses in Qur’an explain equality between men and women in their duties and in punishment if they fail to fill them. Furthermore, they have equal rights to work and education.

Although there is some disagreement regarding women's status in pre-Islamic Arabia, it is generally accepted that they held a subordinate position up to the time of the prophet Mohammed (Soffan, 1980:13). Islam shifted the status of females, as well as children, through Quranic legislation. ‘Suras’ (verses) referring to paternity, support, adoption and inheritance also
contributed to the rise of children's status. Furthermore, the ancient practice of female infanticide (al-waad) was forbidden, although the extent and the reasons for this practice, are not definitely known, and the explanations given by historians are quite varied and range from positive to negative. According to the Qur'an the reasons were poverty and the over-abundance of females since so many men were killed in war (Soffan, 1980:13-17; Belarbi, 1996:16).

Despite Islamic perception of equality toward males and females in traditional Arab culture, boys and girls were valued differently. Several studies argue that the persecution of girls persisted due to socio- economic conditions (Al-Khayyat, 1990: 26). For example, Ammar (1954) explained that the importance of boys stemmed from their major contribution to the family's means of subsistence. Boys were considered to be the best capital investment for security in old age, not only for their parents but also for any widowed sisters. The value of males supporting female relatives was not only socially expected, but also legally enforced by religion. Boys, as Ammar points out, were an added qualification for social prestige. He explained:

A man with more sons backing him up can always speak with more authority and ranks high in the community's esteem even if he owns less land (1954:95).

Al-Khayyat argues that since most Arab societies were, and remain, largely agricultural, they continue to value the birth of boys over girls. The need for field workers is part of the value given to boys, since men are
considered to be more physically able than women (1990:26). Studying a Bedouin Arab society, Abu-lughode discusses parents’ attitude toward their male and female children. She concludes:

Yet, on the whole, women share their husbands’ preference for sons because of the way social and economic life is organized. Sons are a woman’s social security. She is initially happy to give birth to sons because this secures her position in her marital community and with her husband (1986:122).

The greater status deriving from having boys continues to show itself in the prestigious practice whereby parents of male children will often adopt their eldest son’s name. Therefore, they will be known in public, and sometimes at home, as Abu (father of) Mohammed and Um (mother of) Mohammed, for example. A mother will not be called by her own name or her daughter’s (Al-Khayyat, 1990:30).

Differentiation between male and female starts even before birth, as the hope for newly married couples is to have a son. After birth, people greet the birth of a boy with more enthusiasm than that of a girl (Al-Khayyat, 1990:26-30). Ammar (1954) in his early study recognized that very few people had a naming ceremony for the girls, while in the case of a boy it was customary to introduce the child to his neighbours and relatives through celebrating his naming in a ceremony. On the other hand, the motive behind
the absence of a girl's ceremony could be regarded as a kind of religious Puritanism to counteract the pre-Islamic sin of burying girls alive (Ammar, 1954:95-97). However, Islam considers all children as gift from God, as the Qur’an states:

Money and children are the joy of this life.

Therefore Islam emphasises equality between boys and girls, regarding attitude toward their birth and the celebration that follows (Belarbi, 1996:19-20).

Studies concerned with the relation between gender and the process of breast-feeding have come to various conclusions. For example, in her study, Abu-lugode shows evidence that in a Bedouin Arab society in Egypt, people to some extent believe that boys should be breast-fed longer than girls. However, this was conditioned by other factors and varied from one family to the other, and even within a family, regardless of gender (Abu-lughode, 1986:122). Ammar, on the other hand, noticed that boys in Silwa village would often be nursed less than girls. The reason for this is a belief that girls should be infused with their mother's compassion, while boys should experience independence earlier.

In summary, however, it can be concluded that female children are generally held in a more subordinate position compared to male children. The position of girls in the society remains regulated by a range of factors. Al-
Khayyat states that:

There are many reasons for not welcoming the birth of a baby girl. Perhaps the most important is the fact that bringing up boys is much easier than bringing up girls, since whatever boys do, their conduct will affect only themselves, rather than the family as is the case with the girls (1990:30).

This situation is linked to the beliefs that the honour of the family depends on girls’ behaviour. Honour demands that girls should be watched and controlled. The society’s conceptualisation of honour (Irād) is characterised as preoccupation with the sexual purity and chastity of women (Dodd, 1973:45).

Therefore, in traditional Arab society, where the concept of honour is primarily associated with female modesty and sexual purity, the socialisation process emphasises these values almost from the first day of the girl's life. Ammar describes the traditional family’s position toward the gender of their child:

The fear of having a daughter is mainly connected with the sense of ‘shame’ which a girl might bring to her family, especially before her marriage. It is the responsibility of the male line of her family to arrange for her marriage, and clothe and feed her if she is not married. If any disgraceful rumour
about a girl or a woman spread in the village it is the father as well as the husband who has to discipline the girl or bear the social stigma (1954:95).

Sex-role learning remains a crucially important aspect in the socialisation process in Arab culture (Alsuwaigh, 1984:36), with the different treatment children will get according to gender preparing them for expected social roles (Al-Khayyat, 1990:32).

According to Al-Khayyat some of the important factors involved in girl's socialisation are: the family name, obedience, chastity and puberty (1990:31). She explains that a son holds the family's name and passes it on to his own children, while the children of a daughter take their father's name, the woman retains her own family name after marriage. Therefore, the desire for the family is to have male children, who will guarantee the family's continuity for generations. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, boys are considered an economic investment, as well as providing social prestige for the family (Belarbi, 1996:38). Therefore, traditionally girls grow up relatively neglected when compared to their brothers, especially during early childhood. A boy would be introduced to male gatherings, encouraged to be strong, brave, active and independent. In contrast, a girl would be encouraged not to leave home, and to be calm, quite shy and polite (Sharaby, 1975:39; Belarbi, 1996:38-42).
Al-Khayyat explains:

In order to fit ideas of manhood, boys are taught to treat younger children as inferior, though ill-treatment of young children is not acceptable from girls, who should always be kind and calm. Whereas boys are taught to be strong and not to be afraid, girls are constantly reminded of fear and of their physical weakness. They are expected to control themselves and their needs and not to be demanding...Boys on the other hand are taught to demand what they want and ask for it directly...While boys are encouraged to play rough games, climb trees, play out doors and learn how to defend themselves, girls are conditioned to act in a totally opposite manner (1990:32).

There is another term connected with honour (aib), which may be translated as immodesty. It is immodest for a female to laugh or even talk loudly, argue, and so on. Girls should learn about immodesty and their behaviour should traditionally be controlled at an early age, in order for them not to bring scandal to their families as they grow up (Al-Khayyat, 1990:22).

The ignorance that usually marks the early years of girl’s childhood would be reversed into attention and caution as she grows older and reaches puberty. This derives from her family’s need to control her behaviour and to ensure her chastity. Since honour is highly valued in the Arab traditional
family and is linked with women's sexual conduct, a girl's behaviour and appearance should be strict and to the prescribed standard. If a woman is immodest or brings shame and dishonour on her family by her sexual conduct, she brings shame and dishonour to all her kin. The phenomenon of honour and shame bears a direct relation to family ties, and to the complex interrelation of social organization and conduct in Arab society (Al-Khayyat, 1990:210).

The segregation between men's and women's worlds in Arab society, can be defined as a necessity under these circumstances. Dodd explains:

Some sectors of society, those involving public appearance, must be strictly male: most occupations, most economic transactions, all political activity, all military activities. Education must be segregated by sex. All activities in which women engage—household chores, agricultural work, visiting, childbearing—must be predominantly private or subject to careful supervision (1973: 46).

The images behind the roles of male and female in traditional Arab society are enhanced systematically by the parent's model in the family. The father represents the public sphere of the society while the mother takes the responsibility for the private sphere. The apparent inequality, therefore, is due to the differing nature of the two faces of the society: public and private (Alsuwaigh, 1984:39).
The socialisation process as it takes place in traditional Arab societies, strengthens the bond between the woman and her family. Women are brought up to be emotional and submissive, while men are supposed to be tough, rational and independent. Abu-lughod points out the different characteristics of men and women as they are considered in traditional Bedouin Arab society. In this culture, male and female are symbolically opposed. Females are defined by reproduction, in its natural aspects of menstruation, procreation, and sexuality. She adds:

Women’s association with nature is seen as a handicap to their ability to attain the same level of moral worth as men. Women’s lack of independence from nature compromises them vis-à-vis one of the crucial virtues of honour, the self-mastery associated with ‘aqel’ social sense or reason (1986:124).

With such characteristics, women depend on the family unit and remain their family’s responsibility. This is emphasised throughout the socialisation process. Al-Khayyat illustrates:

Because a girl is often rewarded for being submissive and obedient, she will tend to develop a passive personality. The family will make decisions about every area of her life: what she eats, the clothes she wears, how she spends her time, and also more important matters such as education and marriage (1990:43).
The mother is considered to take the first responsibility in bringing her daughters up according to the values and standards of society, to which she herself must conform. The dynamics of this relationship could vary according to personal qualities and between families. However, some studies show evidence that the mother would keep her distance from her daughters in order to maintain control over them (Al-Khayyat, 1990:41-43). Other studies point out that the mother is usually close to her children of both sexes, and she is the one to be approached to express children's wishes or to mediate between them and their father (Ammar, 1954). It is also argued that mothers are regarded as an indirect source of power in decision making in the traditional family, and that they are sometimes the guiding force in promoting their children's education (Altorki, 1986; Dwer, 1978).

Regardless of girls' position in the traditional Arab family, they are valued positively in terms of their relationship with their parents (Alsuwaigh, 1984:38; Abu-lughode, 1986:123). Girls are considered more compassionate than boys. Ammar pointed out that in the evaluation of the two sexes, a girl is always referred to as the one who will "usher her parents into the shade" (meaning, give them care and ensure their comfort). It is also argued that a girl provides a means of extending kinship relations through her marriage (1954:95).

**Conclusion**

As was seen in the early parts of this chapter, the discussion about
defining and studying the family can be concluded by accentuating the significance of "family practices" as the core element in understanding change in family structure and its socialising functions. This perspective also emphasises the importance of considering the family as a changing rather than a static unit. Therefore, when approaching an understanding of the changes that have occurred in family life in Saudi Arabia, we should investigate family life as it is enacted, within different generations.

Adopting this perspective also accentuates the need to distinguish, theoretically, the diversity of the forces and directions of change in the family in different societies. This notion was illustrated in the discussion related to defining the Arab family, which highlighted the importance of taking into consideration the cultural diversity between Arab and Western societies when studying the world-wide changes that are occurring in contemporary families. Thus, pre-assumptions and early myths about general features of change in the family's structure, and the decline in its functions, should be examined carefully before carrying any further generalisation regarding change in the Arab family.

This chapter also reviewed some of the important debates related to defining socialization, arguing that this is an important process for the individual as well as for the society. Meanwhile, it pointed to the changes that have occurred in approaching the study of socialization, towards seeing socialisation as a changing phenomenon, which is culturally relative. This was stressed in Musgrave's (1988) argument regarding the role of the individual's
creativity in constructing social norms, and therefore, the possibility of change in behavior and values across time and place; an argument supported by the new paradigm for studying childhood (see James and Prout, 1990). The debates within this paradigm consider childhood as a changing phenomenon, and consider children as actively involved in constructing their social life. Family and childhood are both social institutions, rather than biological or natural phenomena.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, socio-economic changes in Saudi Arabia have brought changes to the family structure and, in turn, to childhood itself. Comparing current children with previous generations, children today are living in a different society with regard to its material culture. However, there are continuities as well as changes in patterns of socialisation in contemporary childhood, which still need further research. While some studies stress the changes that have occurred in socialising children (e.g. Alsuwaigh, 1984), others explain that attitudes towards children have changed only a little (Al-Khayyat, 1990). It is the aim of this study in the course of the following chapters to investigate this further and to provide evidence regarding the continuities and changes in children’s socialisation, with a special focus on the process of socialising girls.
Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This study, as explained in the introductory chapters, aims to look at the social changes that have occurred in the Saudi family, and in particular at the changes that took place in children's culture. It proposes that one way of looking at the socio-economic changes which have occurred in Saudi society and their effect on people's daily life would be through utilizing a family generational study.

As explained earlier, social analysis can distinguish two historical periods in Saudi Arabia: before the discovery of oil (traditional), and after the discovery of oil (current) (Fergani, 1983:34-37). It is important for this study to look at different generations in order to examine the changes in family life, which occurred during the period of rapid social and economic changes. This is to allow a review of the different cultural perspectives that have shaped children's culture during this historical period. The notion of transition of cultural knowledge from one generation to the other is also demonstrated by tracing the different perspectives within three generations in one family. This study is aiming to examine different means of socialisation in traditional as well as contemporary society.
Children's literature and folk tales are some of the elements which this study will be looking at as mentioned earlier (see preface and the Introduction). This decision was made with regard to the researcher's interest in children's literature and in writing stories for children, and also due to the fact that children's literature was widely affected by the changes that developed in Arab world. The debates regarding the introduction of folk tales to contemporary children's literature is part of the attempt to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity.

Therefore, this study takes a historical and comparative approach to look at continuity and change among middle class groups in Riyadh City. In order to understand the change in conceptualizing childhood, this study compares the behaviour and ideology of three generations, which are defined in terms of the important historical events which Arab countries, as well as Saudi society, have experienced and contributed in structuring contemporary Arab culture (See the Introduction and Chapter One for further details).

The Region of Study

Riyadh City is the region where this study was carried out. The decision regarding choosing this location was made in relation to a number of different factors. An important one was that Riyadh City is the capital of Saudi Arabia, and therefore this region is one of the most important in the country. Most of the development projects are located in the main cities of Saudi Arabia, and this is obvious in Riyadh; by 1955 all ministries and government
offices had been moved to or established in Riyadh. It is also a commercial
centre and a centre of Arab and international diplomacy, with a growing
population (Al-Farsy, 1990: 8). Therefore, Riyadh City has been witnessing
rapid socio-economic changes for the last thirty years. The many different
Saudi groups who live in this city experience urban life in a changing
community, which has been exposed to various cultures, through contact with
foreign labour, mass media, imported commerce, travelling abroad, and
through the other means discussed in previous chapters. Considering these
factors, Riyadh City was a highly suitable location for studying social change
in Saudi Arabia. Another more pragmatic reason for choosing this city was the
fact that I was living in Riyadh, and this was of help in having access to my
sample.

Saudi Arabia lies at the furthermost part of the South-Western Asia
(see Map p.155). It is bordered to the west by the Red Sea, to the east by the
Arabian Gulf, United Arab Emirates and Qatar, to the north by Kuwait, Iraq
and Jordan, and to the south by Yemen and Oman. Saudi Arabia encompasses
around 80 per cent of the Arabian Peninsula. The country occupies
approximately 850,000 square miles. It is a land of highlands, plateaus and
deserts. Most of the surface is covered by sand, forming the deserts of Nafud,
Dahna and Rub al Khali (The Empty Quarter). Saudi Arabia is divided into
four major regions: Najd, Al-Hijaz, Asir and Al Ahsa. Administratively the
country is divided into five major provinces: Central Region (Najd): national
centre and capital city; Western Region (Al Hijaz): national centres, Jeddah
and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina; Eastern Region (Al Ahsa): national
centres Dammam and Al Khobar, and it contains the most important oil fields of the country; Northern Region (Ha'il and Tabuk); Southern/South-Western Region (Asir): national centres, Abha, Khamis Mushayt.

The population of Saudi Arabia in 1999 was 21.4 million, of whom 15.7 million were Saudi and 5.7 million non-Saudi. The population of Riyadh City in 1996 was more than 3,000,000, and it is expected to increase in 2005 to be 5,525,000 (The Seventh Development Plan, 2000:77).

Sampling

The sample for this study, according to the historical comparative approach described earlier, should contain three groups of people belonging to different historical periods, representing the traditional and contemporary Saudi society. Therefore, their dates of birth should approximately cover the period between 1925-1990. This period can be classified into 3 stages: the first stage is 1925-1935 the years before the discovery of oil, the second is 1935-1969 which are the first years followed the unification of Saudi Arabia and the time of oil discovery though the socio-economic impact of such change was limited. 1970-1990 the period which experienced high national income and rapid social and economic change.

In order to cover the above historical periods, each of the first and the second generation in this study represents fifteen years. At the same time there are fifteen years space between every generation and the next. Therefore, this sample was chosen as follows:

- The first generation: Elderly women/grandmothers who were born between 1925 and 1940, ranging in age between 58-73. This group represents the traditional phase, where the possibility of contradicting modernity might be expected. This group is therefore composed of women who are most likely to have had the experience of growing up in traditional society and who were socialized using traditional methods such as folk tales. They therefore should
be able to provide material about socializing children in traditional Saudi society.

- The second generation/mothers, who were born between 1955 and 1970. The age for this group ranges between 28 and 48. Most informants in this generation represents those who lived their childhood through the traditional period, but also grew up and started their nuclear families during the years that experienced rapid social and economic changes (see Chapter Five for further discussion of the reasons for this age sample). They would be most likely to have experienced growing up through traditional means of socialization, e.g. listening to folk tales. They are now most likely to be mothers of teen-agers or young children and dealing with children on a daily basis.

- The third generation is the granddaughters, who were born between 1985 and 1990. Therefore they range in age between 8-13. They were born after the rise of the national income, which was started by the oil production boom in 1970, as explained earlier. Therefore, it is expected that they will have different experiences from the previous two generations, regarding the socio-economic changes that have affected the socialization process. These children were to be introduced to some of the old folk tales in order to study their attitudes towards these tales and in addition, other contemporary children's stories would be discussed with them, to seek their opinions about them (see Table1, p.206).
The study initially attempted to research a random sample, which included informants from different social classes in Riyadh City. The study sample also required combining three generations in one family. However, due to a number of different obstacles, final decisions regarding the sample for this study had to be altered. Those limitations will be discussed more fully in the final section of this chapter, but I will point briefly to some of them here in order to describe the steps involved in choosing the sample for this study:

- Socio-economic changes have created a dynamic society in Riyadh City, as well as most Saudi cities. This has created difficulties in classifying social class, with regard to individual status and other elements, such as the city's quarters. Therefore, using these variables to provide variety in the sample was not possible.

- Statistical information was provided by The Highest Commission for the Development of Riyadh City, which shows that Riyadh's population in 1997 was 3,403,000. However, this information and the information available at the library of The Ministry of Planning did not provide details about class stratification among the different quarters, nor family distribution in Riyadh City. Therefore, to use this information for a random sample was not possible.

- The nature of the male-female relationship in Saudi society shaped the decision to limit my sample to include only female informants. This is appropriate in Saudi society due to the fact that social and religious rules continue to maintain gender segregation regardless of changes in women's
role. As discussed in the previous chapters, although the rise in the national income has contributed to the emergence of new roles for women and provided education as well, women's role continues to be considered mainly one of child care and to some extent of domestic work.

Therefore, I started looking for a random sample by visiting King Abdulaziz Public Library in Riyadh City, assuming that different social classes and groups who are interested in children's literature would visit this library. It is relevant here to mention that this library was the only public library, which had a separate children's section in Riyadh City during the period of the research. Using a snowball technique, I thought that the library could be a good place to start some interviews with children and the female adults who would be accompanying them. This could have provided a lead to locate other people to include in the study sample. However, this was not very successful, as the adults were not helpful in providing links to enable me to contact a sufficient sample.

Therefore, another plan had to be made. I would contact an equal number of families, from each social class, separately, at different locations. For example, members of the lower class might be met at social services offices and in low income quarters in Riyadh City; meeting middle and upper classes would be through contacting friends and visiting public places frequented by some women of different age groups and from those classes, such as Prince Salman Social Centre. Unfortunately, this was also not very successful, as people came to these places for other purposes and would
seldom cooperate. On the other hand, some of my friends were able to introduce me to the families included in this study, but the number was not enough, nor was there sufficient variation in categories. Although I was able at the social services offices to interview women from different age categories (first and second generations), it was impossible to meet three generations in one family, due to their family circumstances or problems in reaching their locations. Interviewing people in low income quarters was also impossible, as they were only concerned about their basic needs, and therefore the attempt to have conversation about any other subject always failed.

Trying to include different categories in my sample, I visited traditional markets in Riyadh City. Women sellers can be found there, and they are usually middle aged and occasionally elderly. I interviewed a number of them (Table1, p. 206) but I was not able to complete a generational study. Partly this was because of their personal judgement of the inherent power differences in the relationship between themselves and me, which was obvious to them, regardless of my attempts to resolve it. It was also difficult to get transportation to their houses, as they were living in areas hard to locate.

Considering those difficulties, the only other option to contact a sample of three generations was to look for informants at public schools. Choosing the schools from different areas in Riyadh (North, South, East and West) was one way to provide variety in the informants, regarding their background and social class. Moreover, the decision that the core sample to be researched would be those at public schools was based on the fact that the
majority of Riyadh population send their children to public schools. The number of Saudi girls students graduating from elementary public schools in 1997 was 11,309, while the number at private schools was 3,667, according to "Statistical Card Showing Girls’ Education For The School Year 1997". Therefore, this was one way to study a sample that represented a cross-section of Saudi citizens.

**The Study Methodology**

The first idea was to use the case study method for this research which, for a generational study, would allow in depth analysis by providing the ability to look closely at the historical background of the subjects. A wide range of information could be collected by the use of many different methods such as personal and group interviews, observation and referring to personal documents. However, after brief investigation, many obstacles emerged, such as families’ reluctance to allow a stranger to observe them for long period of time, or to look at personal documents. Moreover, often elderly members of the families would be living outside Riyadh City; and contacting them over the research period would be difficult.

Therefore, because of such difficulties, I chose simply to carry out semi-structured in-depth interviews, with general topics and open ended questions with families. Though not as comprehensive as the case study methods, this nevertheless allows deep insight into the respondent's experiences. This is useful to elicit more subtle information which increases
understanding, and illuminates factors found in real life settings (Saville, 1989:46). Semi-structured interviews also help in getting access to information through the informants' participation in the interpretation, adding details, and explaining their experiences. Hammersley and Atkinson emphasize this point:

Interviewing can be an extremely important source of data: it may allow one to generate information that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise—both about events described and about perspectives and discursive strategies. And, of course, some sorts of qualitative research rely very heavily if not entirely on interview data, notably life-history work (1995:131).

The diversity in this study sample required both formal and informal interviews. The formal interviews were usually arranged as meetings in a bounded setting, such as schools and the social services offices. Meanwhile, the informal interviews were held in places that were being used for other purposes, such as the public library, traditional markets and at homes. These different settings allowed access to particular kinds of information. In the later case, for example, the dividing line between participant observation and interviewing was hard to discern, while in the formal interviews it was more obvious.

In comparing interviews and participant observation, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest that the 'artificiality' of the interview when compared
to normal events in the setting may allow us to understand how a participant would behave in other circumstances, for example when they move out of a setting or when the setting changes. Furthermore, the variation achieved by interviewing in different situations can help in identifying which aspects of the setting produce particular responses. Through this, they add, the differences between participant observation and interviewing are not so great as is sometimes suggested. In both cases we must take account of context and of the effects of the researcher. Therefore, the personal characteristics of researcher, and how these relate to those of the interviewee, can be important, though their effects are never entirely determinate (1995:139-141).

This study endorsed using a variety of different methods in collecting the data due to the nature of the research questions. These required adopting a range of methods, and although these different methods may not be said to help increase the validity of the data collected, nor lead to a single truth, their use has maximized the information gathered during the research process (Maynard and Purvis, 1994:3).

The mixed methods also helped in providing a variety of information to answer the study's questions, and as a way to gain access to the knowledge of elderly people that may differ from that of middle-aged people and of children. It was also important to consider the fact that individuals are not necessarily able to provide sufficient knowledge about their lives, because their knowledge represents their standpoint, which could only ever be part of
the social reality (Glucksmann, 1994:157). Therefore, using a variety of methods provided a device for gaining access to diverse information.

The snowball technique was used for obtaining the sample and providing information. This technique was used at different places, such as the main library in Riyadh City, at social gatherings, and at traditional markets. This enabled me to locate other members to be included to the study sample.

An amalgamation of note taking and tape recording was used to record the conversation as it took place. Full consent was gained from adult respondents. The children's interviews were also recorded, and children were divided into small congenial groups. Their consent was also sought by explaining to them the purpose of the project and the importance of their participation.

The study was designed according to the following methodological steps:

- Personal and group interviews with elderly women who were able to provide information about the socialisation of children in traditional and current society, and about the use of folk tales in traditional society. This group, in the ideal situation, was composed of the grandmothers of the children included in this study. The data collected from this group was seen as providing information regarding traditional ideology and behaviour.

- Personal and group interviews with the second generation of females. It was thought that they were most likely to have had the experience of growing up in
families using traditional methods in socialisation, such as listening to folktales. They also were dealing with children on a daily basis as parents or teachers. Interviews held with this group provided information related to middle-aged people's perspectives regarding tradition and change, and the effect of this on the socialisation process in contemporary society.

- Group interviews with girls between (8-13) years old. The discussion in these interviews aimed to gain access to children's view of their daily activities and contemporary life. It also sought children's knowledge and opinions regarding family traditions and lifestyle among the older generations. Children's understanding of traditional tales was examined through introducing some of the tales to them in interviews. The study also sought, through this, to examine children's attitudes toward reading and other leisure time activities, in order to get an overall picture of the factors that contribute to the socialisation of children in contemporary society. This includes issues such as contact with other cultures, globalisation and the tension between tradition and modernity.

Methods

Different methods were used in collecting data for this study. The diversity in the sample required that a unique way had to be used with each group. Due to difficulties in finding the right sample, as explained earlier, the fieldwork period lasted longer than expected. The process of interviewing took place at different periods during the year 1998. In this part of the study I will explain the methods used, the difficulties and some ethical issues involved with each group.
Research and criticism in the field of childhood has played a major role in raising new issues and in the emergence of a new theoretical paradigm underpinning this field of study (see Chapter One). This new theoretical paradigm can provide a ground for analytical studies which consider childhood as an actively negotiated set of social relationships, which is both constructed and reconstructed both for children and by children (James and Prout, 1990:7-10).

The basic elements of the new theoretical paradigm for childhood study are as follows:

- Even though childhood is characterized with biological immaturity, we cannot regard children’s characteristics as simply natural, nor assume similarity of children's behaviours and characteristics or allege the generality and universality of children’s qualities. Childhood is socially constructed.

- Childhood is a variable of social analysis, which cannot be studied or interpreted apart from other social elements such as class, sex and ethnicity. Comparative and cross cultural studies indicate that childhood is culturally relative, rather than a “universal phenomenon”.

- Children’s culture and social relations are worthy of independent study, apart from adults’ perspective and their centres of concern.
• Children are an effective element in constructing their social lives, the lives of the individuals around them and societies encompassing them. It is important for any study concerned with childhood to recognize that children are not "passive" beings to be formed only in accordance with the social systems within which they exist.

• Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. In comparison with other methods, it opens wider ground for children to speak up and express their own views directly, and for their participation in the collection of social data about them.

• Posing a new theoretical paradigm for childhood study means, at the same time, commitment and response to the process of reconstruction of childhood in the society.

The new theoretical paradigm thus confirms children's competence in forming their own culture and in articulating their views as social actors. While society plays a role in the formation of children's culture, children, in turn, contribute effectively in the formation of their culture, as well as the culture of their societies and families. Therefore, interviewing children and researching their views in this study was considered as a basic element and starting point which oriented the research at all its stages.

Children at the public library were the first to be interviewed and, therefore, I will start with a discussion regarding the methods used in their interviews and, in particular, the ways in which the snowball technique was used in order to find further informants.
Children at the Public Library

This part of the research aimed to initiate the generational study within families. Children were interviewed first with the hope of contacting their families afterwards. Fifteen children were interviewed at the public library in Riyadh City. They were all girls aged between 8-15 (Table 12, Chapter Six). The library opens for children and mothers two days a week from 4-8 p.m., and therefore the interviews were held at those times.

Children were interviewed in groups, the number in each group ranging between 4-6. The interviews would start by explaining to children the aims of the study and the outcome that I was hoping to reach. This allowed children to get to know the researcher and to participate actively in the research itself. The next step involved asking children to introduce themselves and, after that, children were asked some questions, taking it in turns to answer them. The interviews were taped, and the reason for taping was explained to children and their consent was gained. Afterwards, children were given the chance to listen to parts of the taped conversation.

The interviews were completed in two sessions; each session lasted about two hours. The first session was used to establish some background information related to their daily life, reading, and hobbies. The second session included reading modern stories and telling folk tales, in order to hold a discussion of them. Many children had tales to tell which had been told to
them by members of their families, or which they had read in children’s or adults’ books. In the case of these children, it was obvious that their families had an interest in reading, or at least encouraged their children to read and to attend the library, and in most cases folk tales continued to be used in the family.

Children at the library showed considerable interest in participating in the interviews. They were able to talk openly about their daily life, school, books and folk tales. They also talked about their hobbies, and the different sorts of activities that they were doing in their leisure time, such as reading, writing, handicrafts, drawing and painting, acting, computing, cooking, and swimming. A number of different elements were involved in the success of the interviews with children. For example the interviews took place in the library where they had chosen to come to take part in voluntary activities, and therefore joining the interviews was part of their leisure time. Although the children were sitting at a table during the interviews, this did not constrain their abilities to explore their thoughts and feelings. On the contrary, sitting at a table, beside the researcher, gave the children a distinguished role and feeling of self-importance, such as children often feel in similar situations (See Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:147). This enabled them to talk to me, feeling happy and excited, since they had been chosen to participate. They also mentioned other children’s desire to join in. Moreover, sitting at a table during the interviews helped in organizing the conversation, with children taking turns to talk, and encouraging other children to join in the interviews.
Involving children in the decision-making process regarding their participation in the research had given them a sense of control over their own individuality, privacy and autonomy (Morrow and Richards, 1996:95). Although, consent had to be obtained from gatekeepers (mothers and library administration), this study approached children as different from adults but not lesser than them (Waksler, 1994:63). Children have the right and the ability to make decisions, especially when dealing with subjects they are involved in, and therefore gaining their consent was important, although this may go against adults’ views, which are built on different beliefs, such as envisaging children's minds as too unformed or too nebulous to be capable of making informed, unpressured decisions. According to such views, children are assumed to need protection from others and do not have the right to choose (Alderson, 1994:46-47). On the contrary, this study considered children as social actors involved in constructing their social life, and therefore to achieve a successful conversation with the children it was important to start the interviews taking this factor into consideration.

The children interviewed at the library were also familiar with the researcher's books written for children, and this was therefore an additional element to help encourage their active participation.

**Children at Public Schools**

These interviews were completed at girls' elementary public schools in Riyadh City. The number of informants was 40, and their age range was 8-13
years (Table 12 Chapter Six). They were mostly the daughters of the teachers who were working at the same schools, who were also interviewed. 4 of the mothers, however, worked in the administration, and 2 of them worked as cleaners at those schools.

The schools were picked from different areas in the city: north, south, east and west, three schools from each area. The arrangements for this process were completed through The General Presidency for Girls Education (GPGE). The interview questionnaires were sent to the schools, along with a letter explaining that the questionnaire would be filled in by the researcher herself.

As explained in Chapter One, the schooling system in Saudi Arabia provides separate schools for boys and for girls. The elementary schooling period is six years, followed by three years for intermediate and a final three years for secondary. Students’ progression from one stage to the next depends on the marks obtained in coursework and examinations. For each subject, a total of 100 marks are available, of which mid-semester tests account for 15 and the final exam for 35. Elementary schools enroll children at the age of six. The subjects they study at this stage emphasize religion, Arabic language and comprehension, and science. However, private schools would also add to that English language and comprehension, and some schools thought French language. Private schools would often also include computing and sports. However, those additional subjects do not count in the final evaluations for girl students, as the GPGE does not consider them to be part of the main curriculum designed for girls’ education. The actual use and benefits from
such activities would vary from one school to the other, though they often attract parents to enroll their children to a particular school.

Children were interviewed at girls' public schools after interviewing their mothers. The interviews were held in the teachers' common room, or the administrator's office, and at other times in any vacant room, such as the nurse's office; once an interview was held in the empty theater.

Children were divided into small groups, three in each session. The aims of the study were explained to them briefly and simply. It was important to place emphasis on the fact that the researcher was not a teacher, and on the possibilities for their participation in the project. It was also necessary to avoid adopting an authoritative role with them, to be sensitive towards their needs and to respect their privacy, allowing them to participate but not forcing them to give me more information than they wanted or needed to (Finch, 1984:79). As Glucksmann argues, we need to keep in mind that walking away from the interview and feeling good about it does not necessarily mean that the interviewee feels the same. This might happen if the researcher is insensitive towards the informant's own agendas (Glucksmann, 1994:155). Trying to deal with the hierarchical relationship between me, as an adult researcher, and children as informants, it was appropriate to show that I was different, and that although I will never look or act like a child, I could understand, appreciate and be familiar with their views. This was important as a starting point for the interviews, especially in the school setting, as this is a place where adult-child relationships are bound by social roles, in which adults usually dominate.
Encouraging children to talk was also attempted by my showing an interest in writing children's books and the significant role their contribution would bring to that.

The background information was completed at the beginning, then questions were circulated among children. The last part of the interviews involved reading modern stories and folk tales, and discussing them. The children compared the two kinds, looking at different themes. Children were also encouraged to tell tales or stories that they already knew and liked.

The schools would not allow the interviews to be recorded; therefore collecting the information depended on note taking. This policy was taken as a precaution to protect schools from the possibility of the misuse of the information that been provided to the researcher.

Children showed great diversity in their abilities to explore these issues themselves, however, and they were on the whole less capable compared to the children interviewed at the library. Various factors could account for this, such as the formal setting and atmosphere at the schools and the fact that in schools, the adult-child relationship is one where adults usually do most of the talking. This situation seems to be commonly encountered when researching children in different parts of the world. Morrow and Richards, referring to children's research in U.K. explain:
The consequence of this presents a dilemma for social researchers: in the UK, we simply are not used to talking to children to try to ascertain their views, opinions and so on. There are so few attempts to understand children's lives in their own terms, and talking children own words at face value, and as the primary source of knowledge about their experience, effectively goes against a tradition in sociology in which children voices have rarely been heard and their opinion rarely sought. The challenge for social research is to find ways of eliciting children's opinions and experiences, and to develop appropriate methods and corresponding strategies to deal with ethical dilemmas that may arise (1996:97).

This applied when researching children in this study, especially at public schools. Children are not used to talking openly to adults about their views and judgments. The expected roles, which are designed for them by adults, are the ones that could be accepted by adults. Therefore, they would usually talk in adults terms and not their own. Those children were not familiar with my books for children, and seldom showed an interest in reading as a daily habit. These could be additional reasons for their not being as enthusiastic as the children at the public library.
Children at Home

Interviewing children at home was mostly part of family study, where other female members were also interviewed. However, children were often interviewed separately. The number of those informants was 11 and their age ranged between 8-16. Although some of these children were older than the pattern it was important to interview them in order to complete a generational study. Different categories were included in this group, regarding economic class and the family’s background education. In general, children who were interviewed at home were able to express their thoughts and ideas more freely, as they were in a relaxed setting, especially when other adult members of their families (mothers and grandmothers) decided not to attend children’s interviews.

Group interviews often took place with children who were related to one another and at other times with their friends who lived in the same neighborhood. Personal one to one interviews were also held with few informants, however, girls were less willing to participate in these especially when an adult joined the interview.

Interviews with the Second Generation

The age for this group was required to be between 28-48 years. The interviews were completed with 76 informants, their education level ranging
between Elementary school and Bachelor degree. This sample contained different categories (Table 1, p.206), and can be defined as follows:

- Thirty-one teachers who are also the mothers of students studying in the same schools, and whose children were interviewed for this study. Three other informants working at schools were also interviewed.
- Twenty-eight members of families who were interviewed within a generational study.
- Five Mothers who benefited from social services.
- Five mothers of children who attended the public library.
- Four Sellers at traditional markets.

The interviews started by introducing the researcher and giving background information about the research. The next step would usually involve taking down background information of the informants. The interview questions would be circulated among informants during group interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, with general topics and open questions rather than strictly worded closed questions. This allowed greater depth of discussion and helped in getting more information, because the informants were also participating in the interpretation; adding details, and explaining their experience. Some of them even had comments on the interview and suggested questions to be added. Toward the end of the interviews, a discussion about the interviews with elderly people was held and the informants were asked for advice about how to contact them. The diversity in the informants’ categories.
required different methods to be used when interviewing each group. These methods can be illustrated as follows:

**Teachers at Schools**

The interviewees' questionnaires were collected from the school's administration on the first visit, as they had already been sent to schools by the GPGE. The next step was to introduce the study to teachers in their common room. Teachers who were interested, and who had three generations within their families, including daughters (8-13 years old) at the same school were interviewed. The time for the interviews was arranged according to teachers' schedules, and therefore, this meant that sometimes individual interviews and at other times group interviews were held. The original intention was to interview three second generation informants at each school. However, in practice this was adjusted a few times when more informants were interested to join, and at other times when the number of informants was less than three. The number of interviews completed at public schools was thirty four.

Teachers mostly expressed keen interest in taking part in the interviews. This could be related to the similarity between them and the researcher, regarding age, experience, and profession. Many of them became actively involved in the research process, giving details about their childhood, adding themes that they thought had been important in developing their own personal and social experience as children. The open questions helped in stimulating ideas. We were able to share memories regarding the books we read, games,
social events, and relations with family and with community. Present details about current life were also shared because of the similarity in age category and experience. At the end of the interview, they were willing to help me with finding informants to complete the elderly questionnaires, as by that time they had an understanding and enthusiasm for the project.

It was important to dress in an appropriate way, which would be accepted in schools, having regard to the conservative system that is sustained by the GPGE and also by some teachers. This also meant adapting to the existing contradiction in the society between tradition and modernity, and its effect in creating diversity in the way people deal with daily matters, such as clothing and, for women, make up and hair style. For example, all women entering schools buildings should be veiled, and they should wear long clothes that cover the entire body. Western short hair-cuts are also usually not in favour. However, these rules are stricter for students than for teachers. Mostly, notes were taken during interviews, because schools and sometimes informants would not allow taping.

Mothers at the Public Library

The interviews with this group were completed after interviewing their children. The number of informants was five, three of whom were interviewed in a group. Generational interviews were done with one informant and her mother in their home. One mother was interviewed at the library, after her children had taken part in interviews.
Although only a limited number of interviews were completed at the public library, the informants who did participate were keen and showed great interest in the study's aims. They appreciated my standpoint which was created by my academic background, as we shared an interest in the improvement of children's activities, mostly reading. This did not lead to a hierarchical relationship, precisely because they were given the chance to participate in exploring details about their own childhood and their own children's childhood. Showing appreciation of their role in encouraging their children to attend the library was also a way to have a balanced relationship with the informants.

Mothers within Families

Second generation informants were also sometimes interviewed in their homes, with other members of their families representing different age categories. At other times, they were interviewed while visiting friends who were also known to the researcher. The number of informants for this group was 28 (Table 8, Chapter Five).

Interviewing people at home has advantages such as: having longer periods of time, being in a relaxed atmosphere, and meeting several informants at one time. On the other hand, social life often interrupted the interviews, such as serving coffee and tea and snacks, since being generous to guests and visitors is an important feature of social customs in Arab society.
Many times, informants would get involved with other people in social conversations especially when other people were visiting. Therefore, the time was sometimes limited, and to try and keep the interviews focused, needed a lot of effort.

Mothers at the Social Services Office

Some informants were visiting the social services office to collect their benefits. Interviewing those people required permission from the office’s administration. The selection basis for this sample was therefore more haphazard. However, while introducing the research to the informants, the validity of including them in the study would be made clear.

Five interviews were completed. The interviews were mostly individual, in order to avoid any embarrassment that could occur, regarding their income problems. The interviews were held in a meeting room. This was for particular convenience, but the formal setting also helped in controlling the interviews. However, these informants had their own interests and problems, and therefore many times, issues were raised by people during the interviews which appeared marginal to the researcher and it was necessary to compromise often between their agendas and mine. This hierarchy in our relationship was created by the diversity in all backgrounds, experience, academic and social status.
However, informants were able to talk openly about their past and current life. They were not embarrassed by their income situation, or by the difference in our social position. This can be explained by the religious faith that indicates that wealth is divided among people according to God's wish, and people are rewarded by paradise after death for being good Muslims and not for their wealth. As pointed out in the introductory chapters, before the rise of the national income most people were almost equal, wealthwise, and therefore also in term of social status. This enabled the possibility of sharing childhood memories with the informants, as we are from the same age categories. An amalgamation of note taking and taping was used to collect information, according to the informant's wish.

**Sellers at Traditional Markets**

Visiting traditional markets was another way to meet different categories from this second generation. The interviews were completed either in groups or individually, according to the situation. Four informants were interviewed at these markets.

The starting point for the interview could affect the process of getting data from the informants on some occasions. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 142). This required planning, as the site was not very suitable for interviewing, nor was expected that the site would be used for this purpose. It was helpful to start by looking at commodities, asking about prices and admiring the traditional products as well as the old life. Showing the intention
to buy some of their commodities, which I did toward the end of the interview, was always helpful, as being in the market was the main purpose of those sellers. It was necessary to talk with them using the same dialect they use, to sit on the floor whenever they did, to dress conservatively and to wear the veil in a similar way to theirs.

It was appropriate to start the interviews by a conversation around childhood memories and to delay the background information, till the point when it felt convenient and fitting. Introducing myself as a person who is interested in finding ways to keep traditional manners alive in the current life of children was more relevant to them than my academic background. Folk tales were always an interesting issue to keep the conversation going. Mentioning some themes or names in folk tales would always work in bridging the gap between them and me. They would be astonished by my knowledge about this information, as the rapid socio-economic change has created a large gap among people. Therefore, they would not expect a person who lived in an urban area and who was highly educated to know about these parts of their life; social change has made me look too different and made the events look as if they had happened a long time ago.

After some hesitation, most likely caused by shyness, the informants talked proudly and joyfully about the past. Informants who were selling traditional commodities were particularly cooperative. This could relate to the place, as each one or two sellers had their own stall with tables and hangers. Other informants were showing their commodities, such as cloth and
accessories, in more simple settings on the floor. In these cases, it was less easy to interview, because of the conspicuous setting and frequent interruptions. Taping the interviews was a must in these cases, as writing notes would be more conspicuous, and this could be irritating to the informants.

**Interviews with The First Generation**

It was important for me to try to grasp every opportunity to meet elderly women, since they would not always be capable of being interviewed, nor would they agree to participate in interviews easily, because of their health or mental state. Moreover, they would not always have the desire to recall past events and talk them over with a stranger belonging to a different age and social category. Therefore a variety of methods were tried to contact the sample for this group of informants. It was efficient to use the snowball technique in order to complete a family generational study. This started by introducing the aims of this study to people at social gatherings and also by contacting the families of children at King Abdulaziz Public Library, and through meetings with women sellers at traditional markets.

However, difficulties occurred in meeting elderly women, and sometimes it was impossible to complete face to face interviews. In such cases the interview questionnaire was adjusted to be completed by the help of the second generation who have elderly women in their family. The number of elderly informants was 50. In the end, the total number of the informants in this age category was 50 (Table 1, p.205), 22 of them were interviewed face to
face, these informants are the core source of the data for this generation. This group could be defined as follows:

- Thirty-two grandmothers of children who were interviewed at schools.
- Thirteen grandmothers interviewed at home.
- Three elderly women depending on social services.
- Two elderly women working at traditional markets.

Despite the diversity in the informants’ social class, and sometimes their age range, it was important for this study to interview these informants regardless. Keeping in mind the similarity of social experience for the elder generation, due to the simplicity of economic resources during the traditional phase, the informants had mostly shared similar experiences in the past, and so they considered themselves as middle class, except the ones at the social services office.

The age range planned for this group was between 58-73. However, some informants were as old as 100 years (Table 2, Chapter Four). Since this study is looking at the transition in moral values shaping female role, from one generation to the other in the family, it was important to complete the interviews with all grand mothers despite their age. This was useful in order to be able to trace the continuity and change that was developed in the family’s values throughout out time. Therefore, some of the interviews were completed with grand mothers, their daughters who were mostly middle aged, and their
grand daughters, despite the fact that some of the grand mothers were younger, or other times older than the age category that had been decided upon.

All the informants in this generation were illiterate, except two. Thus, they all were taught to memorise or sometimes read the holy book (Qur'an) during their childhood. Some of them had lived in the desert and were members of a Bedouin nomadic society, herding animals and taking care of their families. Others lived in agrarian areas and worked as planters; their work was an important part of the agricultural society, and they helped sustain a living for their families. Details about women’s role in traditional society will be discussed in the analysis of the field work. Currently, however, these women were not working. Some of them were living with members of their families, most often the eldest son. In other cases they were living in separate houses, which often would be close to their families.

Meeting elderly women was often difficult, and therefore the interviews were sometimes with one informant and at other times with a group of them, around 2-3, according to the circumstances involved at that time. The informants were apprehensive about the purpose of the interviews. To reassure them, it was necessary to explain to them part of the study’s aims which they would be interested in, such as the contribution to preserving heritage and introducing it to younger generations, in order to control the attraction of Western culture.
It was important to encourage the informants to participate by also supporting their knowledge, by an emphasis on the need to learn about their experience. The interviews started by asking them about their childhood memories. This helped because they found themselves talking on subjects about which they already knew, while the researcher did not. Moreover, most of informants were recalling a joyful period of their lives.

It was important to show respect to elderly informants, by the way of greeting them, sitting close to them, talking and listening carefully, dressing in a manner that would be accepted by them, giving a running commentary showing respect and admiration for their ways, especially when religious values and beliefs were involved. Using the same dialect was also helpful to keep a mutual understanding throughout the interviews. Consent of the informants to tape recording was gained. However when informants rejected it as they found it strange or suspicious, this was replaced by note taking.

**Difficulties and Ethics**

Dealing with different groups of people requires sensitivity towards their feelings and judgments. Reflexivity is also important in negotiating the issues that could be raised by the diversity in knowledge and background as well as social position between the researcher and the informants. Those issues have been discussed from different social perspectives, such as the feminist (Fonow and Cook, 1991; Maynard and Purvis, 1995). This perspective
suggests that adopting reflexivity can be the key for good social research, since it allows the researcher to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process, and to criticize him/herself, not just as an object of inquiry but also in relation to the way he/she conducts the inquiries (Fonow and Cook, 1991:2).

Other issues should also be thought of, such as the relationship between me, as researcher, and the researched, and the differential power in this relationship and the diversity in knowledge; we both had a different relation to the research process, and we played different roles in it, which were related to our different aims. For example, in this study the hierarchy in the relations between me, as researcher, and elderly people and children as informant had to be taken into consideration. Although this diversity is created by the research setting, it is in fact part of a wider stratification within the society. It usually controls relationships among different parties in the society, such as adult-child relationships. Glucksmann gives further explanation of this:

The inequality of knowledge in the research situation derives from socially determined structural divisions in knowledge between people formed in society at large (1994:156).

This study also involved dealing with more practical issues like: finding the right people to interview, handling the interview so as not to go o
the subject or be interrupted, making decision about the way I should represent myself, and where I should draw the line between my interpretation of the data and the information provided by the informant. Therefore, striving for reflexivity is particularly important in this study in the sense of:

- Being aware that my choice of this subject to be studied is relevant to my desire to learn more about childhood, and my own interest in writing children's stories. Being a mother is also pertinent my interest in researching this subject.

- Being aware of my standpoint when dealing with members of my sample: elderly women, second generation, and children. My standpoint is created by my academic position as a lecturer and a researcher, my experience in writing children's stories, the culture I have lived in, my age and gender. Therefore, I cannot be totally objective while I am dealing with this research. I will always have my vision of how the world works. This embedded vision will be reflected in and shape the way I deal with the research process. Being aware of these facts from the start will help in examining my style of research, and also in deciding to what extent I should make my place explicit in writing the research report.

There are also a number of general ethical issues which had to be considered whilst doing this research, and I will briefly point to them here. Further discussion about ethical and methodical issues will be presented in details in a later part of this chapter.
• **Tradition Versus Modernity** This issue involves defining an individual's social position and identification in the society and, therefore, it could have caused sensitivity, for example, in asking questions, and in giving answers. Through my action and words the informant's beliefs should not appear to be questioned, nor should support or rejection be given. As a researcher I am on the same critical plane as those I am researching, and I should express no value judgments through the research process (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 200).

• **Language** There are a number of factors involved in using the Arabic language which needed to be considered, especially when dealing with folk tales and children's literature, for example, the Arabic written language is to some extent different from the spoken one. This is caused by the fact that the spoken language has experienced changes throughout time for several reasons, such as colonization and contact with other cultures. In Saudi Arabia the spoken language also to some extent differs from one province to the other, due to variation in geographic nature, economy and contact with outside world. These conditions have created sub-cultures as well as diversity within the spoken language. Therefore, such issues related to language could have affected understanding and transmission of literature from one generation to the other.

• **Oral testimonies** are also considered as part of the historical perspective that is used in this study. This could, however, be problematic because oral testimonies are mediated by memory, and the memory will be shaped by the circumstances in which it is elicited (see Gullestad, 1996). Therefore, not all
members of the society will accept these testimonies as being part of the popular memory. Another reason for considering oral testimonies to be problematic is the fact that the researcher will not always gain collective knowledge from this experience, due to the diversity of interest in the research between the researcher and the informant. This could be counted as one of the disadvantages of using oral interviews in the research. However, feminist approaches consider oral testimonies to be an important source of data, especially when combined with other methods (Glucksmann, 1994:154-159). Glucksmann illustrates:

The researcher defines the subjects to be covered and poses the questions in a particular way. She is not entering the lives of her interviewees in the long term and again there can be little question of developing collective knowledge. She initiates the interview and runs it on her terms and for her purposes.... They are not the questions of the interviewees, and the interviewees are not writing it up. They are likely to have quite other interest in their life stories than what the researcher treats as significant and they are not in a position to appreciate why certain points are more significant for the researcher than the others. Nor in most instances would they probably care. What is in it for them is never what is in it for you. Even if they were interested it is usually for the knowledge of it (1994:154).
Another problem in oral history interviews is the time and the effort that this kind of method needs. Some feminist researchers define these issues as research problems and note that these should be taken into consideration (Marshall, 1994:162).

• **Naming the Informants** Considering the privacy of the informants and their family's history, which they provided information about for this study, it was appropriate to change the real names of all informants and give them names that is commonly used at each generation.

**Difficulties and Ethical Issues Relevant to Each Group**

Several elements affected researching each group in this study, and limited access to certain information. Different ways needed to be considered to deal with it and several ethical issues arose to be concerned with. These can be summarized for each group included in the study sample as the following:

**Public Library:**

**Difficulties:**

**Timing:** Opening hours and days for the library were limited, therefore the interview time was restricted. Group interviews required a longer period of time, and this led to the adjustment of interview time to fit in to the library hours. Moreover, some children were joining in other kinds of activities at the library, such as acting in the theatre, and often had to cut the interviews short.
to join the recital. At other times, children would leave early as someone came to pick them up.

Children would visit the library more often during school breaks or vacations. During term time, they are usually busy with homework or studying for exams, and therefore only a few of them would visit the library during these times. During the month of Ramadan, the fasting month, the interviews also had to be stopped, as the attempt to meet children at that time did not succeed. Children would not visit the library because their families, and sometimes themselves, were fasting, and they were too tired to do so.

As mentioned earlier, the number of children interviewed at each session was around six. The questions would be circulated among them, when they would take turns to answer. However, on occasions, the children would talk out of turn whenever they were anxious to share the information they had. The interviewer did not deem it right to keep reminding them to wait for their turn, because this would interrupt the flow of the conversation, and disturb the relaxed and natural atmosphere where no one was playing the authoritative roles. Therefore the interviews would usually take a longer time than expected. However there were times when it was important to control the interviews so as not to veer away from the subject.

Other children who were at the library but not interviewed directly in the study, were attracted to the interviews. They would gather around the group, and would often interrupt with information or to ask to join the group.
This led to the extension of the interview time, since it was important at that stage of the research to hold on to every opportunity, even if it was not planned, and since the attempt to set an appointment with these children often failed, in view of their own schedules and those of their family.

**Collecting the Data:** As children many times did not take turns to answer the questions, it was difficult to know the precise source of information when listening to the interview tapes afterwards, during transcription, and trying to match this to the background information. This process took a long time, trying to identify the voices by listening to the tapes more than one time. However, being with the children at the actual interviews and remembering the conversation, made it easier. It was therefore important to transcribe the data on the same day as the interview or, at the most, within two days.

**Contacting the Families:** The children’s families responded in different ways to the request for their enrolment in the interviews. While some of them were pleased to collaborate, others refused. Children mostly came to the library alone, or their mothers would drop them in and come later to pick them up, and therefore access was only available to a small number of them. It took weeks for some of them to set up a time for an interview, others even took months. It was necessary, therefore, to follow up by telephone calls. In the end, interviews were completed only with five mothers at the library and one mother along with grandmother at their house.
There were also a number of ethical issues to be considered whilst doing the interviews with children at the public library:

- **Informed consent**: it was important to inform children and their mothers about the aims of the study. The interviewer emphasized the need to improve children's literature through examining the possibility of using folk tales. Presenting children's stories that the interviewer had published was one way of persuading the informants to participate. At other times, the books were given to children as gifts at the end of the interviews, as an expression of appreciation. It was also done to encourage them to continue reading and attend the library. Some of the children at the library had already played acting roles in one of the interviewer's children's plays, performed at the library, and therefore they were excited about the interviews.

- **Sensitivity to Children's Feelings**: One of this study's aims is to examine children's evaluation of folk tales. But since folk tales usually contain frightening themes it was important to explain to children that these were fables and that the events would not happen in reality. Children had various responses. While some were familiar with folk tales, others found them strange or frightening. The study was also looking at the literature that children prefer. Therefore, children who had written stories themselves were asked to bring them to the second session of the interview. Some of them asked for their stories to be published. In order to keep the relationship of trust between the researcher and the informants, it was not right to promise them
with any certainty that this would happen, in case it did not occur. Therefore, it was important to clarify this issue with them.

- **Sensitivity to acceptance by library staff and parents:** Permission from the library administration was required before starting the interviews. However, some of the library staff found that the interviews interrupted their program, and attracted children away from their own activities. Others, however, were very helpful and appreciated the aims of the study. Some mothers also quickly became tired of answering the interview questions, while others were happy to do so and provided additional information.

**Public Schools**

**Difficulties and Ethics:**

- The interviews were mostly held during the student’s lunchtime. This was inconvenient for some children, as they would be inside classrooms most of the day and would be looking forward to having a break. Therefore, it was most important to show understanding for children's feelings and to try to encourage them to participate in the interviews. Meanwhile, some children were excited about joining the interviews as they assumed this would give them an explicit role and importance. Furthermore, participating in the interviews was not a routine duty. Some schools, however, did allow children to leave classes for the interviews when they were not taking exams, and therefore, this problem did not occur in these cases.
• The time for the interviews was limited. It was necessary, therefore, to hurry through the interviews, and to try to complete each in one session, as cutting short the interview and then coming back to it would break the rhythm. Moreover, it was felt that children may lose interest and may feel they were again being kept away from what they would prefer to do at that time.

• During the interviews, children did not give much information, although they showed different abilities in expressing themselves, and in exploring ideas and judgements. But in many cases children also showed some limitation in this regard. This could be attributed to a number of different reasons, the first that being at school simply required conservative behaviour and self control, as set by the whole system. Second, children were not used to talking openly to adults, most of all to strangers. The effect of the atmosphere was demonstrated in a previous study, when I researched children’s judgement of cartoon characters. In this study I noticed that children who were put in a classroom with teachers, while completing the interviews, acted with a great deal of caution. In contrast, children who were interviewed in the school theatre were able to express their ideas clearly and joyfully (Khalifa, 1998).

• Children sometimes copied answers from each other. They also often changed their minds about some subjects. Many times, they were not able to give clear or definite answers. These conditions are relevant to the adult-child relationship, as such situations occur when researching children (Alderson, 1994; Morrow and Richards, 1996). Therefore it was important to help children to think about their answers, asking open questions rather than
"yes/no" questions, some times giving alternative answers, asking about reasons for certain behaviour, seeking details, and appreciating differences in their responses.

- Some mothers (teachers) were worried that their children would give more information than they should about their family life. Therefore they sat in the same room and interrupted the interviews occasionally by adding or deleting information. Others directed their children to what they thought was the right answer. It was helpful to show the mothers a copy of the 'children's questionnaire' in order to reassure them about the information required, and to give them the feeling they were also involved in the process. After interviewing the children, many mothers were anxious to learn about my judgement regarding their children's behaviour and abilities; therefore, a few words of praise were needed on those occasions.

- Some schools, as well as teachers, felt the interviews were interrupting their work. It was important to show some understanding and appreciation of their point of view and to promise to complete the interviews as quickly as possible. It was also important to reassure them that nothing would interfere with their authority, and to show sympathy toward their problems at school whenever they talked about them. Some teachers asked for a copy of the folk tales, and it was provided for them.

- Two of the schools filled in the questionnaire themselves, despite the instruction in the letter enclosed. It was necessary to go back to these schools
and to try to finish the questionnaire or correct the information filled in by teachers and children. However this was not successful, because the schools found this a waste of time, and moreover children had by this time lost interest in the interviews. These informants were not therefore included in the sample, and were replaced by others.

The Second Generation

Difficulties and Ethics:

The diversity of the sample for this age group led to various difficulties, and each required a particular way to deal with it. These can be summarized as follows:

- Persuading informants to participate in the interviews was problematic on various occasions. For example, some teachers found it an interruption to their daily schedule and resting hours. Some were not totally committed to participating in the research, and kept dealing with other matters during the interview, and the time was not ever enough to finish the questionnaire. At the library it also took a long time and great deal of effort to convince mothers to participate in the interviews.

- Finding the right sample was not always easy. The study needed informants whose age ranged between 28-48, and who had three generations in their families. One way to provide this sample was to interview teachers at schools along with their daughters. However contacting the grandmothers was not always easy, because they were sometimes living in different areas, and not
visited by their family on a regular basis. Interviewing those grandmothers, therefore, was difficult. Other times the informants showed resistance to the idea of the researcher meeting their mothers in person, and they did not explain their reasons. Under these circumstances, teachers and some of the mothers at the library completed the interview questionnaire with the grandmothers themselves. However, this was not possible with informants at the social services office, nor with the sellers.

• Timing the interviews was also sometimes difficult. At schools, planning for the interviews had to be arranged according to the school’s as well as teachers’ schedules. Therefore it was necessary to visit each school more than once. Moreover, some of the visits were to interview children and to collect the third grandmother’s questionnaires. Public school hours are 7 am -11: 30 am, and the interviews had to be done at the times when the school was not busy with monthly exams. The time for interviewing mothers at the library was also limited, especially during group interviews. One informant came late to the session, carrying her child, who was not feeling well and had caused her delay, so that the group interview had to be stopped, in order to interview her as quickly as possible. Informants explained that they were unable to set a time for the interviews, due to family obligations and caring for their children, such as helping them with home work, or taking them to the doctors, or to the shops.

• The twelve schools enrolled in this study were not chosen by the researcher but by the GPGE. Schools’ locations, as requested by the researcher, were in
the north, south, east, and west of Riyadh City. Locating these schools was difficult and needed time and effort, and it was often necessary to make more than one trip to each school; the first was to locate the school and to arrange for the interviews with the school administration, and the following visits to start and complete the process of interviews. The social services offices and traditional markets are in the old town of Riyadh, and it was therefore important to use the services of a driver who was to some extent familiar with these locations.

- Handling the questionnaire to be filled in by elderly women with the help of their daughters was not always successful, as some teachers did not bring them back. It was helpful to have personal interviews with other informants in this age group on different occasions, in order to get information about this category.

- Women at the social services office were used to being interviewed occasionally by the administration regarding their financial support. It could be possible that they expected to benefit from the research interviews. Therefore, the purpose of the research had to be clearly explained to them. At the end of the interviews it was appropriate also to help them with some money.

- All informants enjoyed talking about their childhood. However, it was painful for some informants at social services to compare their childhood with their
current life. They needed support and understanding, and it was suitable to include their interpretations in the interview’s agendas.

The First Generation

Difficulties and Ethics:

Dealing with elderly people was sometimes problematic for several reasons, such as:

• The interviews were mostly centered on memories, and therefore elderly people would go off the subject, talking about parts of their lives which they considered more important. Often it was necessary to draw their attention back. But to do so it was also important to choose the right moment, since they would usually be talking about emotional experiences. The interviews needed a long time because of these conditions, and the time varied from one informant to the other.

• Many times the conversation would be emotional to the point of crying for elderly women. Dealing with the informants at those moments required sensitivity and sympathy. As mentioned above, this occurred most often when interviewing elderly women at the social services office, as they compared their past life with their current situation. Many are now concerned with daily problems related to the difficulties of sustaining a living, sickness, and on one occasion the informant was concerned about her son being in jail. Talking about the subjects included in the interview questionnaire seemed inappropriate at such moments. It was important, therefore, to consider the
informants as participants in the research process with their own agendas, and to try to reach a compromise between their agenda and the one that was decided for this research.

- Elderly women would sometimes refuse to participate in the interviews. At other times they would get tired and would not continue. This occurred more often when their friends or relatives surrounded them, and they would rather spend time with them, than participate in one to one personal interviews. One way to deal with this situation was to interview more than one person at one time. Such group discussions were successful and inspired them to stimulate each other's memories and opinions.

- Socio-economic change has contributed to changing the family structure in Saudi Arabia. As explained in earlier discussion, the role of extended families has been reduced, and therefore it was occasionally difficult to locate elderly family members, as they were living in separate locations. To overcome this problem, sometimes grandmothers were replaced by other elderly informants, not necessarily related to the families included in this study. The second way of dealing with the problem of meeting elderly women in person, was to hand the interview questionnaire to their daughters (mostly the teachers who were interviewed at schools) to take home and fill in with their mothers. This would happen after interviewing the daughters themselves and explaining to them the whole process.
Conclusion: Women Studying Women:

Gender is considered one of the factors which affect the process of social research (Nahed, 1989:140). Yet, it is culturally relative, and its effect varies from one culture to the other. Female researchers are faced by different conditions; while gender can create obstacles in certain research settings, it can provide access to information in others (Al-Sulh, and Altorki, 1993). Therefore, for many Saudi female researchers the study of the family, and mainly women within families, is one accessible area. Altorki explains this:

My decision to study family life was not a matter of choice so much as a consequence of the field situation. The domestic culture of urban families was for me the most accessible sphere of social relations. It also happens to be the least accessible for foreign researchers, especially if they are men. (1986:2).

Several such conditions have affected this study, regarding the topic, the sample and therefore the results. First, as mentioned earlier, the cultural conditions for women in Saudi Arabia had contributed to my decision to limit my study to female informants. Second, although my decision to study family generations concentrating on females only has allowed me to follow the transition in values and norms from one female generation to the next, male members within families in this study were not included. A previously planned
idea of designing a questionnaire to be filled in by males themselves or with male helpers was not completed. This was because the data collected by such a questionnaire would not be as in-depth as when using semi-structured in-depth interviews, which was the main method used in collecting data from female informants. Therefore, I assumed it would not lead to the same quality of data gained from interviewing females. As illustrated earlier in this chapter, the researcher's interpretation of the data was often important. As a result, the study was limited to females, in order to guarantee similar discussions with all informants.

During the research process the cultural context also had to be considered, such as the religious and social norms and values which structure male-female relationships in Saudi Arabia. For example, it is not accepted for a female to interact with strange males without the presence of a male relative (husband or close blood relative). It is also prohibited for a woman to drive, and therefore her mobility is conditioned by the presence of a male relative who is able to take her where she needs to be. However, it is common for many families in urban areas to hire drivers to provide mobility for females in the family. Such situations affect the research process as well as the research results (see Nahedh, 1989)

It is a regulation that male and female researchers gain official permission from the administration department of government agencies where their studies will take place. It was essential to arrange with a male relative to complete the paper work, and that was not always easy. Similar conditions
also occurred when trying to contact public libraries to provide resources for this study. Most public libraries are open for one or two days a week for females. Therefore, help from a male was needed and the arrangement for this did not run smoothly at all times.

Other difficulties occurred when depending on a male driver. It was necessary to find a male driver who was familiar with school locations in Riyadh City. However, visiting schools more than once was often necessary, as the driver was not able to locate all the schools by himself. Coordination with the driver in order to keep to the time schedule was not always possible. The time needed to complete the interviews varied from one school to the other. Many times, when the interviews were cut short, for several reasons, the driver was not waiting.

However, as a Saudi woman, I am familiar with such a cultural context and was able to deal with it and the difficulties mentioned in this chapter, which are typical for Saudi women studying their own society. The cultural context, my gender, and my class location brought both strength and weaknesses to this project, as this chapter has shown.
Table 1

Division among Informants According to

the Age and the Place they were Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Generation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand mothers at schools</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews at homes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews at social</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services office</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews at markets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Generation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>28-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and others</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at schools</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers at homes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers at social</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers at the library</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews at markets</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Generation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>8-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews at public</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews at public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schools</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews at homes</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four

Traditional Childhood
(1925-1940)

Introduction

This chapter discusses girls’ childhood in traditional Saudi Arabia. It aims to look at the concept and understanding of childhood within the structure of the family. It is mainly concerned with the process of socialising female children in traditional society, and therefore, it aims to highlight how this structure has contributed to defining significant roles for female children, and therefore for women through their life course. Thus, the data provided by the informants is not only about their childhood but also about parenthood. It also researches their views and evaluation of contemporary childhood, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Therefore, the main areas, which will be discussed in this chapter, are centred on girls’ daily life during their childhood, then the shift to adulthood, looking at girls’ play and work, in domestic work as well as outside the house, family relations and obligations, relations with the local community, and the function of folk tales within the traditional structure of the family. The shift to assuming adults’ roles occurred at an early age, which, according to contemporary definitions, would be regarded as part of the period of childhood and thus raises interesting questions about the social construction of childhood (See Chapter One for further debates on the construction of childhood).
As it was explained in the introduction and the methodology chapter, this study has adopted a sociological analysis that divides the history of Saudi Arabia into two historical periods: the traditional phase and the contemporary phase. The years before the discovery of oil, and the unification of Saudi Arabia, (see Chapter One), during which the impact of change was manageable represent the traditional period. The years following the increase of oil wealth and contact with the West world are the contemporary period, taking into consideration that this period experienced the economic boom, which occurred by mid-1970s as a result of sharp increases in the world market price of crude oil. The impact of this economic change continued to affect the social structure and implies a fundamental change in the society’s economic basis and in the social stratification (See the Introduction and Chapter One for more details).

The sample for this study, as was explained in the methodology chapter, was chosen from those age groups which could provide data about these historical periods. Therefore, in this chapter we are looking at the experience of the first generation: elderly women who were born between 1925-1940.

**Background**

This generation symbolises the traditional phase in the history of Saudi Arabia. Elderly women, who were interviewed in this study, were born before the discovery of oil. They got married and started their families during the
traditional period. However, they have witnessed the great socio-economic changes that have developed in the society, and the emergence of new cultural patterns, which could have affected their current life. As explained in Chapter Three, 50 elderly informants were interviewed, aged between 55-100 (Table 2). Most of these informants were widows or still married (Table 3).

Table 2

Ages of the First Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-55 (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 – 65</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 – 75</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 – 85 (2)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 85</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50 (3)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Informants were younger than 58.
(2) Informants were older than 73.
(3) This total number of informants who were interviewed face to face, and those who filled in semi-structured questionnaires.

Table 3

The Marriage Conditions for the First Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arab women could be grandmothers at an early age, particularly in traditional society, as it was common for girls to get married at an early age, and therefore a grandmother and her daughter could give birth at the same time. This is relevant to the general belief, which considers a woman’s fertility as one of her important characteristics, which affect a male’s decision to marry her. This is emphasised in Prophet Mohammed’s tradition (Hadith), as he praised women who bore many children. A married woman would usually be called by the name of her first son, and this is considered to give her higher status. Therefore, calling her after her eldest son, for example Um-Mohammed, meaning Mohammed’s mother, was a way of expressing respect, which she had gained by giving birth to a male child. Therefore, women in traditional society would try to keep this characteristic for as long as they could (see Chapter Two). Birth control methods were also not common in traditional society due to the limitation in the health services, and that birth control was discouraged from a religious point of view.

Most informants were originally from Najd. This was expected since the interviews were completed in the capital city, Riyadh, which is located in Najd province, as explained in the methodology chapter. Many informants were from Qasim region in the heart of Najd. Others were originally from the north province, and a few of them were from the east and the south provinces (Table 4). Najd is located at the centre of the Arabian Peninsula, and surrounded by deserts. Means of transportation, as well as contact with other cultures, were limited during the traditional phase, especially for this part of
the peninsula, which stayed conservative in its traditions and subculture (Alsuwaida’a, 1983: 18).

Table 4

The Origin of First Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Najed</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
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<td><strong>50</strong></td>
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Most of the population of Saudi Arabia during the traditional phase were nomadic and scratched a living by cultivating patches of the barren land over a widely scattered area. The rest of the people lived in the small oases, market towns and the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina (Mansfield, 1992:362). Nomadism was the most efficient system for the use of the vast arid regions and nomads would travel with their flocks to almost any place, where they can find forage and water. All pastoralists are partners in the use of water, pasture and firewood, with collective ownership operating at the group level (Nahedh, 1989: 219).

However, it is important to understand that this region had experienced different modes of production during the traditional phase. Altorki and Cole (1989) challenge some of the stereotypical views of Westerners, as well as some local scholars of Arab society, which misrepresented the social realities of the Arabian Peninsula and romanticized the Bedouin and their way of life. They explain:
Although Bedouin nomads were a highly productive element in the regional economy and provided important inputs into the development of both regional and long-distance trade. However, they were only one element in the regional economy and society. Also existing were agriculture and craft production, sedentary villages and cities and highly developed trade and transport networks (1989: 5).

They further illustrate the effect of geographic location on traditional modes of production:

Najd consists of vast stretches of desert rangelands which are mainly conducive to the nomadic herding of camels, sheep, and goats. However, rich agriculture oases have long existed in Najd and, in the past, they produced enough to the needs of their own local inhabitants, most of the dates and grains consumed by the Bedouin, and a surplus for export to the holy cities in Hijaz (1989:7).

They further explain that, due to its location and because of the internal conditions, (which is beyond the scope of this study), Najd remained relatively isolated, not only from the wider Arab world but also from influences from other regions of the peninsula. Najd was involved in caravan trade with Yemen, Hijaz, Hadramawt, Oman, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. Nevertheless, this
trade was conducted by men who left the area and went to those places and did not result in outsiders moving into Najd. The area has never been directly ruled by outsiders. Thus, Najd maintained its distinctive character, despite its involvement in the long-distance trade. The nomadic group in Najd, as well as town people and villagers, differ significantly from those of mountainous and coastal regions of the peninsula. However, as discussed in Chapter One, during the first decades of the twentieth century, as the result of the religiopolitical movement led by the Al Saud and the Al Ash-Shaykh (Wahhabi movement), men from Najd conquered the other regions of the Hijaz, the Asir and the eastern coastal areas, leading to their inclusion in the contemporary Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1989:19).

Meanwhile, the limited contact with other cultures also played a part in developing new cultural norms (Alsuwaida’a, 1983: 18). Some families had to move out to other regions or near countries looking for better living conditions. Therefore, they could have another type of contact with other cultures, such as the case of those who lived part of their childhood in other countries. Other people might have been brought up in mixed families, as men would sometimes marry women while they were travelling to other Arab neighbour countries such as Syria and Iraq. This study will examine these emerging norms while comparing them to the other groups. Nevertheless, this geographic location and conditions, as explained, has contributed to some extent to the isolation of Najd province, and therefore, it was expected that informants would have had only limited access to other cultures and ways of
life in traditional society. Also this could provide explanation of their bind to traditions and origins.

Altorki and Cole studying ‘Unayzah a city in Najd, further discuss the contact of the people of this region with the outside world during the traditional phase:

Thus the economy of ‘Unayzah in the past produced almost all the items needed to meet its own needs along with surplus, which was used to meet many of the needs of the nomadic Bedouin in the region. In turn, the camels, horses, and ghee obtained from Bedouin provided items which led to the development of the long-distance trade to other urban centers in the Arabian peninsula and especially to Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and eventually even as far away as Bombay, India. In return for products produced by the Bedouin, ‘Unayzah merchants both imported and transported items from abroad to sell in their hometown (1989:25).

Considering the shared cultural conditions in Najed province we could, to some extent, in studying other parts of the same province draw on some of the results obtained by Altorki and Cole in their study of the transformation of ‘Unayzah’ oasis in the heart of Qasim. They describe the occupational categories which existed in the old city to be: ‘ulama’ “the learned” in religion; Umara, “rulers”; fallalih, “tillers of the soil” or “peasants”; tujjjar,
“merchants”; jammamil, “cameleers”/“caravanners”; and sunna, “artisans”/“craftspeople” (1989: 23). They add that occupational mobility was possible, but the system was not completely open, and some occupations were governed by consideration of descent and gender:

Within ‘Unayzah, the three descent categories were those of the gabili, “tribal”; the khadiri, “non tribal”; and the ‘abd, “slave”. Those of qabili status were recognized as being of unquestionable tribal descent … Those of khadiri status were freeborn but who, for a variety of reasons, could not claim recognized tribal origins. Those of ‘abd status were mainly people of African origin; either they, or more likely their ancestors, had been imported into Arabia as slaves. Only a qabili could be amir, and certain craft specializations such as leather working, silversmithing, goldsmithing, and butchering were confined to the khadiri, but other occupations were in practice open to all (1989:23).

They further explain that gender also played a role in determining access to certain occupations. Females were barred from occupations that would require them to travel long distances alone but they were permitted to engage in farming, small scale industries and some craft specializations. Therefore, one base for social stratification was descent which in the past it was translated into occupational differentiation and differential power, as explained above. Though the use of descent status (tribal versus non-tribal) by
both settled and nomadic communities is now limited to establishing marriage boundaries between groups (1989: 23-25).

Therefore, traditional society had a significant degree of stratification. Nevertheless, regardless of economic status, people felt a strong affiliation to the neighbourhood in which they lived, and within that close community. A high degree of socialising took place among men and women (1989:30).

Most informants pointed out that they lived during their childhood in adobe houses, and moved out to more modern houses at a later stage, long after marriage. The traditional adobe courtyard house, as explained by Bahmmam (1998:558), was built for hundreds of years all over the region, with a design concept and construction skill passed from one generation to the next. It was not until the mid 1950’s that the contemporary dwellings were introduced to Riyadh, when government’s agencies were moved from Mecca to Riyadh, and its employees were accommodated in villa-type dwellings:

Riyadh’s traditional dwelling is a lumpy thick walled adobe structure built around one or more rectangular courtyards. Its exterior walls have small openings, and its interior walls, which surround the courtyard, have large openings. It is inward-oriented, intended to provide the maximum privacy desired by the society. The dwelling consists of two main sections: the family and the guest sections. Only family members, female guests, and the “maharm”, male
relatives, who according to Islamic teachings, cannot marry females in the house, e.g. brothers and uncles use the family living section. To provide maximum privacy, this section is always located away from the entrance (Bahmman, 1989: 559).

He further explains that traditional dwellings were built according to the immediate needs of the family. Since youth were considered and treated by the society as adults, no private gathering places for them were provided in traditional dwellings. He describes:

Except for the parents’ bedroom, all living spaces within the family section are used interchangeably for sleeping, eating, family gathering, and household work. Room floors for this section are covered with oriental rugs or mats and tend to have little and simple furniture which is easy to move, rearrange, or store. This provides a high level of flexibility in using the rooms for various functions, depending on the circumstances and needs (1989: 560)

In describing the function of the traditional dwellings in family life Bahmman points out:

The inner courtyard is the focal point in the traditional house and an important element in the family section. It has served several various functions as a private open space with
direct visual contact with the sky, a place where adults may sit or gather, a place for social and religious celebrations, and as a safe playground for children (1989: 560).

Altoki and Cole, in describing the traditional dwellings in ‘Unayzah, add:

Each house has three entrances, one each for men, women, and animals. The men’s entrance led directly to the men’s majlis, ‘reception room’, which was a long rectangular room with cushions around the sides. At one end of the room was a fire, the smoke of which escaped through small windows at the top of the room. Houses with wells of their own had special places for washing and performing the ablutions, as well as an area for bathing. Each house had areas for storing firewood, dates, wheat, and other foods. The food storage areas were locked and strictly controlled by the senior woman in the house. Almost every house had a number of animals that were kept in the ground floor, and many had several palm trees that grew within an open court at the back of the house (1989:22).

The majority of the informants had never travelled abroad. Some had travelled locally and smaller number had travelled to other Arab countries. Only two of them had travelled to USA and Europe, and also two had lived for
part of their childhood in other near Arab countries as their families migrated during drought years, which the Arabian Peninsula experienced.

Being a girl

Socialising Females

As explained in Chapter Two, the socialisation process which female children received in traditional society aimed to confer the social values related to female roles in the society and to prepare girls for their future roles as mothers and housewives. Socio-economic factors were also part of defining social status according to gender, which emphasised the male’s role in the economic sector, while considering the female role to be in housework and in rearing children as the first priority. Therefore, a male child was considered as a source of labour, and that provided him with a dominant position, despite the fact that female members shared in different types of work during their childhood as well as adulthood. Further details will be given later in this chapter.

Comparing the birth of a female to a male child, the informants explained that the family would usually receive a boy's birth with more happiness and joy than a girl's. This was expressed in celebration and treatment. **Um-Ibraheem**¹, 75 years old, talked about this:

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¹ All informant’s names will be typed in bold.
Happiness was always linked to having a boy. The family would be very delighted at the birth of a boy and the opposite when they had a girl. Therefore, they would serve two whole lambs as a feast to celebrate a boy’s birth, while a girl’s birth would be celebrated by serving only one.

Although the process of nursing a baby could differ according to gender, as was shown in some studies in other Arab societies (see Chapter Two, and Rossie, 1993: 194), when this issue was raised with the informants, they explained that children were fed equally during early childhood. Nevertheless, they pointed out that when the family was having a meal, men used to eat first, boys second, and women along with girls would eat last, and often they would not have enough. Um-Munsor, sixty seven years old, said:

The men had all the respect, while the women had none.
Even when having a meal, the women would eat after boys:
men first, boys second, then girls along with their mothers last,
often they would find only skinny, thin slices of meat (jelydat,
lehaymat khafifat).

As children grew older, the diversity in the manners used in their socialisation is noticeable; boys were trained to attend public life by accompanying their fathers at social gatherings. Afterwards, they were encouraged to join discussions and participate. In contrast, girls were encouraged to stay at home, and they were not allowed to join their mothers
when visiting. Nor were they encouraged to speak or to participate and often they were put off by members of their family. **Um-Ibraheem** explained:

> Girls would often be treated with disapproval by not paying attention to their talk or objecting to their opinions more than boy's, even when they grew older. On the contrary, the family would listen to their son as he grew older and he would join the gatherings, while the daughter would not.

Girls also were raised to respect and obey male members of their family and this included their brothers. Some informants pointed out that boys in the family were responsible for controlling their female relatives, mainly their sisters. Other informants explained that this diversity in child rearing was expressed in the songs that mothers used for putting children to sleep or when playing with them. The words in the songs usually asserted parents' attitudes toward the participation of their male child in the society and encouraged him to claim and hold an important position in the society, while they expressed the opposite attitude towards girls. Also those songs expressed parents' joy at having a male child and the disappointment of having a female child. The boy was described in those songs as the support and the strength of his mother as well as his family, while the girl was described as an additional burden to her family.

Similar images were described in Albatny's (1986) study of children's dancing songs in Kuwait. She explained that in traditional society, the
response toward the birth of a boy was the opposite of that for a girl. The songs for boys stressed their physical strength and the importance of these qualities for work, as they grew older to be pearls divers or merchants. Therefore, boys’ songs would repeat words that expressed these images and qualities, while girl’s songs often used words related to housework marriage, death, birth, clothes and jewellery. She further explains that the images in those songs reflected traditional socialisation, which aimed to prepare children for their future roles according to gender. Therefore, boys were left to play and would not be asked to do domestic work, and this was part of preparing them for their future roles as leaders for their families. She further commented:

Boys’ songs would often contain words that expressed loving feelings, such as: Darling, and my love. These words cannot be replaced with other terms; otherwise the sentence will indicate different meanings. On the other hand, the words that express love in girls’ songs would usually point to the girl as being nice and kind rather than stressing feelings of love towards her (1986:172) (Translated from Arabic).

For example one of the songs (1986:161) reflecting the importance of marriage for girls says:

\[ A \text{ girl...the best girl} \]
\[ She \text{ is worth one thousand Robia (Pounds)} \]
\[ May a merchant take her (marry her) \]
And give her golden chain for her tresses

A song for boys (1986:175) says:

Oh... how it suited him

He carried his sword and rifle

Followed the deer to hunt it

Any one who wants him, should follow him (Translated from Arabic).

As pointed earlier, calling married woman by the name of her first son is a symptom for respect, this would happen even if she had given birth to daughters before this son was born. This also indicates that women lose their identity as women in their own right. This practice of teknonymy features in the kinship system of other cultures. People with children would be called ‘father’ (mother)-of, and attached to this is a general image of the nature of the social hierarchy: childless people remains dependent minors, while fathers and grandfathers are considered to have a more active role in the society, developed through their parenthood (Geertz, 1975: 377).

Children’s Play

The informants explained that during their childhood pre 1950 they played most of the time outside the house, with other children many of whom were related to them such as siblings, cousins and nieces. They also played with other children in their neighbourhood (see plate 1, p. 224 a). Children’s
relationships were part of a wider relationship net in the traditional community, which was emphasised by socio-economic conditions as well as religious values. Their toys were usually made out of materials provided in their local physical community, such as sand, mud, wood sticks and animals’ bones. Other materials that could be found around were also used, such as cloth, marbles dabag, empty cans and pieces of broken china. Sometimes toys were made for children; **Um-Abdulaziz**, seventy three years old, from Ha’il in the north region, pointed out that carpenters used cane wood to make tricycles which children of various ages used to play with; they called them **Gerger**.

Children also often played group games, such as playing with small stones **Masakeel** and marbles, **hygla** which was based on jumping inside squares drawn on sand, similar to hopscotch. They also played games similar to hide and seek which they called **ghumayma**, and chasing games, which they called **hubsha**. Some informants talked about the games they played during their childhood. For example **um-Mohammed**, 70 years old, with a lot of longing for her childhood, said:

*We used to play with **Dandana** which was basically a hoop pushed by a stick. Sometimes children would make wooden cars, and playing with sand was common among children.*

Imaginative play was also part of the games they played. Animal bones were used to create stories or telling folk tales. At other times, children would
(Plate 1)  

**Al-Lub (Marbles) 1985**  
By Binzagr, Safeya 1999  
A Three - Decade Journey  
with Saudi Heritage
play house, pretending to visit each other, and acting adults' roles such as
being parents and neighbours. Sometimes children would bring food or cook it
in their pretend houses. **Um-Khaled**, sixty one years old, described this play:

*We used to play house in the junk-yard. Each one of us
had part as a house. We would visit each other, exchange
adult's roles, and often bring food and kitchen supplies from
our homes.*

**Um-Salleh**, sixty years old, from wadi Dawasir, seller at the traditional
market (*Suq-Alhamam*) mentioned that children would build small barbecues
and cook food over them and eat it afterwards. She explained that when
children went out to play in the street, they would often bring with them food
they called *ghursha*, or would cook the food in their pretend houses. Other
informants mentioned that children would use empty cans, such as tomato
paste cans, to cook the food in. Children would sometimes cook locusts, and
this was one of the richest meals in a country that was known for its poor
resources.

Some studies argue that the continuation between children's world and
the adults' world was obvious in children's play in traditional society.
Children's play was influenced by daily culture; meanwhile children
themselves in their activities could contribute to their societies (see Rossie,
1993:197). Others point out that children in contemporary societies are losing
the opportunity of learning through free play in the countryside, since they are
mostly controlled inside school classrooms, and therefore they are losing the benefit of learning through participating in the real world (Hockey and James, 1993; Buckingham, 2000).

Um-Salleh described other group games, which would sometimes be combined with songs. She repeated part of a song saying:

_Hady Bady, Men Tha Betah._

She described another game she played as a child:

_We used to climb date palm trees, then we would jump off them and roll over the sand, covering our heads with the lower part of our dresses to keep the sand off our hair._

She added that they would sometimes weave the leaves of date palm trees to create rings and bangles, using date seeds as well. She explained that she could still do that now, if she was asked to. Pointing to a date palm talking to my daughter (9 years old) who was with me, she asked her:

_Get me a leaf and I will make one for you._

However, my daughter did not care much for that. She was more interested to go to the next shops and buy toys and stationary. Her attitude reflects the change in children’s interests, which this study is attempting to
investigate. Further comparative analysis regarding these issues will be carried out in chapters Six and Seven.

Playing with dolls was mentioned by almost all informants as part of girls’ play. Different materials were used to create them, such as bones and sticks, usually taken from date palm tree boughs. The dolls would be covered with cloth, and the face and hair would be drawn with a piece of coal, as the informants illustrated. Sometimes a doll’s face would be made out of a piece of china, and the hair would be made from dark cloth, usually the mother’s veil. Mothers and other women would usually make the dolls, sometimes girls themselves, as the informants explained (see also, Rossie, 2001:271). Um-Rashed, sixty eight years old, described how the dolls were made:

*We usually used a stick from palm trees, other times bones, which we would cover with spare materials to create the body. The face could be made out of materials or from a broken piece of china, which we would stick to the stick or the bone with a piece of chewing gum. Then we would cover the head. If it was a male doll, so we would cover it with guthra and ogal (the traditional male head cover). When it was a female doll we would cover her head with a piece of our mother’s veil (shila). The face would be drawn with a piece of coal or kohl.*
The discussions with informants who lived in different parts of the country provide indications of variations in types of play according to the physical environment. For example, in rural agricultural areas such as Qasim children played often with water and mud, and used it to create tales and their characters. It was also common to use animals’ bones and some times chicken bones to tell stories, as well as for imaginative games. **Um-Naser**, 68 years old, from Qasim talked about her experience:

> Wonderful memories; we used to have a farm, where we played most of the time. Every morning we woke up, washed and prayed, and ate (Al-lugma) which was a part of last night’s dinner, kept carefully for us. After that we would go to the farm (Al-hyat), and to the water wells. We would play with water and mud, using the mud to tell tales, or to draw over it and run competitions. We played with palm leaves and robes. As we grew older we started helping our mothers, sewing and cleaning the house, and afterwards helping in cooking.

Other informants, such as **Um-Ali**, 56 years old, who lived in Jazan at the south West Coast, referred to playing by the sea and watching fishermen as part of children’s daily activities. **Um-Munsor**, who lived in Riyadh with her uncle after her father died, (her uncle worked on palm farm for a wealthy man), remembered that girls often played in the field. The effect of other neighbourhood’s cultures can be noticed in the case of **Um-Ahmed**, 63 years old. Her father, who originally came from Qasim was the first Najdy man to
marry a woman from Syria, as she described him. Therefore, she as a child, had a different experience than other children, especially as her family lived in Al-Zubair in the north, by the coast of Iraq. She mentioned that during her childhood, she went to school up to the 4th grade, and she played with cards, which none of the other informants mentioned.

**Play and gender**

All informants explained that boys and girls would usually play at the same place, and sometimes they would share games. However, some pointed out that girls and boys would only play together until the age of six, and girls would be forbidden from going out in the street by the age of ten, and sometimes even at an earlier age. They also explained that worrying about girls mixing with boys was controlled since girls were not allowed to go out after that age. Islamic teaching requires that children should be introduced to religious obligation, such as the daily five prayers, by the age of seven. By the age of ten they should be obligated to fulfill them, and segregation between boys and girls in their sleeping place should be obtained by this age. Therefore, reaching the age of 7 was often considered as a turning point to adulthood in the traditional society.

The informants often described boys’ play to involve more physical games, while girls would play house or with dolls and group games with songs. They also described girls playing close to the house while boys could play at a distance. However, the informants' answers describing what they
actually liked to play did not always coincide with their general statement about the role of gender in the division of play. Their general statements reflected stereotypical views of girls' play, which conform to stereotypical female domestic roles. Meanwhile, they remembered that they actually joined in some of the games with boys, such as playing with hoops (Dandana) or with marbles.

Some games were however divided according to gender. For example, girls would play with dolls, while boys would play Knucklebones (keayba), for which they used the knucklebones from legs of mutton (Alsuwaida, 1983:334). This game was popular in various parts of the ancient world, where the roles were slightly different from one place to the other (Unicef, 1982:162).

The divisions of play according to gender usually affect children's behaviour and prepare them for their expected future roles (Barrie, 1993). Punch, studying children in Bolivia, has highlighted this role. She concludes:

Boys' play is much more competitive than girls'. When they play marbles, the winner wins the loser's marbles, and football is a competitive game where each team strives to win the most number of goals....boys games revolve around competition, trying to prove who is the most able or skilled. This is where girls' play differs fundamentally from boys, since girls' games consist mainly of fun for fun sake, where they take
turns to play rather than compete against one another. Girls vary their play much more than boys, and have a greater range of games to enable them to frequently switch between them (1997:2).

In the discussion of gender roles in setting the relationships between boys and girls, the informants explained that children would usually avoid unaccepted behaviour, such as girls getting involved with boys. They pointed out that religious rules and social moral values, which were strongly adhered to in traditional society, governed these relationships. Um-Khaled, explained how she used this fact to defend herself and to gain victory after losing a fight with another girl. She remembered:

> Once I had a big fight with a girl in my neighbourhood, as we were competing in collecting dung, which was used for cooking fires. She took part of mine and claimed that it was hers. I got into a fight with her trying to get back my share; I really hit her hard and almost won, until her brother helped her in beating me and they took most of what I had collected. However, I had my especial way in taking vengeance. I spread the word that she was involved with a man, and that was enough. However, my mother did not know that I was the source of such information or she would have killed me.
This indicates the importance of gender in structuring relationships within the society and in socializing girls. It also provides evidence that children would mix work with other activities, over which they held control and could make decisions. Further discussion regarding children’s participation in structuring their own culture will be carried out later in this chapter.

Other informants also talked about the way they were self controlled regarding relations with males, and they were happy to follow religious as well as social values related to this issue. They also mentioned that after ten years old they would usually be kept inside the house and they would be given work inside the house in order to prevent their going out. If girls at this age had to go out, they would be veiled with a head cover (Shila). Altorki and Cole point to similar conditions and they describe its link to the social stratification in ‘Unayzah:

The women of wealthier merchant families, however, were more restricted to their homes. The daughters of such families almost never left the house from the time of puberty until after they had been married and had children. When they went out, they left home before the suq\textsuperscript{2} opened in the early morning and did not return until after it closed at night in order to avoid contact with men. They were always accompanied by other woman. So restricted was the movement of unmarried

\textsuperscript{2} Suq: The market.
girls of the past that women of today are fond of reminding us that a girl did not even have an ‘abayah’, the cloak required for movement outside the house, because she had no need of it. If she had to go out, she wore that of her mother (1989: 214).

As explained earlier, economic conditions required both men and women to work in traditional societies. Therefore, in such conditions, both parents had to work, often from sunrise to sunset, and a considerable part of their work took place outside the house, while women were also responsible for domestic work. Men and women herded and cared for their animals, or worked in the field collecting crops, planting and chopping firewood. Thus, most informants explained that in their childhood, little attention was given to them. As one informant said:

Nobody minded children, only God took care of them.

Children were left on their own for long periods of time, and parents had to adopt methods which would be used to control children from a distance. For example, religious teaching accent the importance of obeying parents, and therefore these morals were emphasised, and the notion that God watches people’s behaviour, and will punish or reward each person according to his/her behaviour was an important part of the socialisation process. This method also worked in another way: parents could go out to work and leave their children for long periods of time believing that God is the only one who could harm or protect them. Another way of controlling children was frightening them with
the punishment they could receive, or the danger they could get into, if they did not follow what their parents were asking them to do.

Introducing the emotion of fear to children is part of the process of growing up elsewhere, such as in traditional Japan. In contrast to domestic security, which is fostered in the very early period of Japanese childhood, the child learns gradually to avoid certain things such as dirt or danger. Threats of punishment tend to be directed to things outside of the home, to supernatural beings or strangers passing by. The development of fear is always associated with important boundaries, so the child is quite safe if it follows the adults' directives. Hendry illustrates this process:

The dirt and danger associated with even approaching the outside door is the beginning of an important distinction which is being developed between security and safety of the inside of the home, established by early attentiveness, and the dangers and associated fears of the outside world....Thus at the age of about three years a child is usually allowed to play outside with its friends, for by this time it will have acquired by going out with a caretaker an understanding of places to play and places to avoid (Hendry: 159-160).

Ammar, in his analysis of children's play in the Egyptian village, Silwa, discusses how play always took place outside the dwelling house, for children of all ages:
When a child starts playing in the house, the normal reaction on the part of the mother, father or any older member of the family is to expel him from the house, as if play, by its nature, should be indulged in beyond the dwelling premise. While such a reaction may be attributed in some measure to the fact that children might break things or create undue disturbance, the substantial reason is that the house is a place for work, and for carrying out of serious domestic, social, and economic tasks. The notion is instilled in the child's mind at a very early stage, not only after it knows how to walk confidently, but even as a toddler, when his older sister or brother carries him outside the home to sit or crawl around while others play (1954: 157).

However, since children played most of the time out in the street, they also needed to learn their boundaries at an early age. As explained earlier, pre 1950, the community played a role in controlling adults’ as well as children’s behaviour. The data provided by elderly informants emphasized that. Neighbours would usually watch for children’s behaviour, especially when their parents were away. Elderly family members left behind at home would watch children and warn them against misbehaving. Other times, as the informants pointed out, it could be relatives such as older siblings, sisters in law, the wives of their uncles, and in two cases, housemaids. This job of watching at a distance was not so difficult, as the houses were usually left
open, and their design, as explained earlier in this chapter, made access to them easy. Moreover, children were playing outside in the open most of the time. Some informants talked about this. Comparing childhood nowadays to that in the past, Um-Abdulaziz said:

*Everything was open, nothing was hiding behind walls,*

*as it is the case now. Therefore, as children we seldom had problems.*

The informants explained that children in traditional societies were left alone to decide the time and the place to play. However, the simplicity of life and the limitation of choices, led to the similarity of their experiences. For example, all children from different age groups played out in the street, with the same natural materials that were available in their physical community (see Schmarsman, 1978; Stevens, 1977). This was also related to the equality of the socio-economic level of life shared by most members of traditional society which accentuated the role of the community in controlling the behaviour. The shared experience, the shared morals and beliefs, and the limitation of access to the outside world and other cultures, unified their culture, and emphasised the function of the community. Meanwhile, children were free to make their own decisions regarding their play, and often mixed play with work. For example, as they went out to collect grass (*ushub*) they would play in the sand or mud, or at other times they would tell tales. These kinds of activities were also said to take place for girls after marriage, as will be discussed later.
For children, these conditions allowed the creation of their own community, which experienced tension between freedom, autonomy and control. While children were physically free, they were at the same time controlled, in the sense of access to knowledge and the world of adults. While they experienced fewer gaps between their daily culture and that of adults’, they were regarded as different from adults regarding their cognitive skills, and were treated as group whose behaviour needed to be controlled. Similar conditions can be recognised in other traditional societies. For example, Punch in studying children's social worlds in rural Bolivia explores how children and young people negotiate their independence, and form their own strategies to assert their autonomy as individuals, despite the constraints which restrict them as children in an adult world (1997: 1). She concludes:

Children make full use of their natural surroundings to create their own toys and games, which enhances children's creative autonomy as they use their imaginations to produce their own fun rather than depend on manufactured goods. Children negotiate ways to assert control over their use of time and space which is largely restricted by adults. Children find strategies to prolong play, and combine play with both school and work in order to play when and where adults are unaware of their actions. Such strategies highlight the fact that they are competent social actors not passive, exploited victims, merely dominated by adults (1997:10).
Relations with the community and neighbours were governed by religious and social moral values. Prophet Mohammed’s traditions emphasised that such relations should be close and warm. Therefore, society members were obligated to protect and help each other, as well as to watch for their behaviour, and control any misbehaviour. For example, if a person failed to complete his prayers at the mosque, it was the duty of his neighbours to investigate the reasons and to ask him to fulfil his obligations. Some informants explained how a person would be punished in public if he failed to attend the mosque for three days.

Neighbours were usually very close. They would support and protect each other, exchange necessities such as food, and children would play together. Many informants expressed their current longing for such close relationships with their neighbours. Um-Abdulrahman, seventy two years old, described how the walls for the roof of the house (Suteh) would be low, and neighbours would get from one house to the other over these walls. The roofs on the old houses, designed to be an open area, was where the family would gather and sleep on summer evenings when the weather was warm as Um-Mohammed described:

_Sometimes there would be an open area, just like a connecting window between the houses. It was used for exchanging necessities and for chatting; this window was called Aljreeb._

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Most informants emphasised that the neighbours would also help in times of need for as explained earlier, nomads conducted long-distance trading trips, and therefore men would often travel for long periods of time. Um-
Hmmud, 70 years old, a Bedouin widow who originally came from the north part of Saudi Arabia, compared traditional with modern life, saying that nowadays all necessities and facilities are provided for, but the secure and peaceful life which marked the past has disappeared. Male/female relationships were affected by this. Um-Abdullah, seventy three years old, another Bedouin widow explained:

The fear of dealing with strange men did not exist in the past, as men used to protect women, especially when their husbands were away. Boys and girls used to play together, men and women worked side by side, riding camels and donkeys, and it would never cross their minds that men would harm women. As a matter of fact, even when our husbands were away if we, women, saw a man coming towards our camping grounds, we would consider him a guest, and welcome him, and serve him with whatever we had: coffee, dates, milk or food.

This feeling of safety and unity in traditional society therefore helped to shape children's everyday lives, allowing them to live without close
supervision from adults and be free to move around their neighbourhoods with boundaries drawn through instilling the fear of God, or other times supernatural beings often mentioned to them in folk tales.

The role of the community in controlling children is especially obvious when examining girls' play. Since girls were usually kept from playing out in the street after the age of ten, and were married at an early age, girls of that age would not be considered as children any more. They were expected to act like adults and fill the obligations of their new roles. The neighbours would participate in watching young married girls, and keeping them off the street. If these girls went out to play, while their families were away, neighbours would tell them when they come back. Married girls at this age would therefore play inside the house, with sisters in law and relatives, and they would be veiled if they went out to the street, as several informants described. Um-Munsor pointed out:

*After marriage we shared housework, sewing, and play.*

Sometimes we would visit female neighbours by climbing from one roof to the other, as the houses were side by side and access to neighbour's roofs was easy. However, these conditions depended on how restricted the family was.

This discussion provides important indications for the conceptualisation of childhood in traditional society. As the discussion here suggests childhood as a socially constructed phase of the life course only
lasted for a short period of time, as girls usually started practising adults’ roles by the age of ten. Before ten years old children were considered to be little adults, who lacked essential cognitive skills and who were physically weak. Therefore, the socialisation process aimed to develop these skills, but did so in a very short period of time when compared to contemporary childhood.

**Girls' Role in Domestic Work**

As explained in chapter two, the extended family of traditional society was structured by a hierarchy of relations, divided according to age and gender: the young would respect the older, obey and serve them, while the old would take care of the younger, as well as supervise and control them. Um-Abdulrahman described how life was balanced. She matched this to the type of relations which people had. She said:

*The older had the respect, and the younger had love and compassion.*

Children pre 1950 played a definite role within the extended family. Informants explained that they were expected to help their families, especially their mothers. Most informants pointed out that girls would usually start helping with domestic work at the age of seven, and would be given greater responsibilities as they grew older. However, some informants mentioned that they started helping at the age of five (see also Nieuwenhuys, 1994: 132). For example, Um-Rashed illustrated how her mother used to tie both her foot and
her two-year-old brother's foot to a string in the middle of their house, and ask her to watch and feed her brother while she was working in the field. Another informant described helping her mother clean the seeds at the age of five.

Girls shared responsibilities regarding housework, such as cleaning the house, washing dishes and clothes, cooking, baking, and grinding seeds such as wheat, which was often used in meals. Girls also helped in work outside the house, such as herding animals and milking them, collecting crops, cutting firewood, as well as bringing water to the house, and collecting animal dung which was used as fuel for cooking. Um-Munsoor pointed:

\textit{Girls used to work hard (allah...allah yeshtakhlon), in whatsoever their families needed them to do.}

Girls also provided care for other members of the family. Therefore, a girl child could be responsible for taking care of her mother after the birth of a baby, and for taking care of her siblings. This often occurred more when she was the eldest. Most elderly informants pointed to this domestic role within their families as an integral part of their childhood, which enable them to develop social and cognitive skills (see also Boyden, Ling, and Myers, 1998: 75). For example, Um-Abdulrahman explained:

\textit{I used to accompany my mother in her joy and sadness, we helped her to do the housework, and sewing. We also helped our families in herding animals.}
Cross-cultural studies have provided evidence of similar conditions in other under-developed countries (see Fyfe, 1989:57; Nieuwenhuys, 1994: 121). For example, older children learn social behaviour through interacting with and caring for lap and knee children. Since girls are more frequently in the presence of younger children and more in the company of their mothers than boys, they have more access to a model of caretaking and the opportunity to learn and practice these behaviours (Whiting and Edwards, 1997: 159-197).

Um-Abdulaziz who was originally from Ha’il, remembered with joy how she used to accompany her uncle working on the farm. She mentioned the collaboration in work and how people used to take turns watering the fields, using animals and large wheels (Al-Swany) to bring up water from the wells. Her mother worked in many different occupations - as a midwife, farming and as a seamstress making men’s beshet (Arabian overcoat)- and she remembers helping in sewing at the age of ten years old. The payment for that was very little, only a quarter to half a Saudi Riyal.

Thus, although children’s work was different from adults’ work, and was also divided according to age, families did depend on children quite extensively in traditional society. Children were obligated to complete some jobs, because there was no one else to do them, and it was defined as part of their duty toward their families, who were working hard to sustain a living.
As explained in the introductory chapters, formal education for girls in Saudi Arabia started in 1960. However, girls' education was originally begun by a number of women who established katatib for girls in their homes to teach the holy Qur'an and to disseminate religious knowledge. Education for girls, therefore, mainly constituted of memorising the holy Qur'an. Altorki and Cole (1989) explain that each girl had a small wooden board on which the teacher wrote a verse from the holy Qur'an by using a dye from a plant that grows in the desert. The girl would take this home and memorise it. When she had committed it to memory, the dye would be washed off and a new verse written. Girls who went to katatib were usually from the wealthier families because it was mainly these children who had the time to dedicate themselves to such activities. However, some of the other social classes also sent their daughters to katatib (1989:95).

The majority of elderly informants were illiterate, although some remembered attending katatib. However, many had forgotten much of what they had learned. A few, however, had made special efforts to obtain some reading material and were able to develop and maintain their literary skills into old age. For example, Um-Khaled put a lot of effort into learning reading and writing, after her father forbade her from attending katatib. She described how she used to sneak into her brother's room to get his books and read them, as he was going to school at that time. Um-Ahmed, also was able to read and write as she went to school in Al-Zubair when her family moved from Riyadh.
during her childhood, as mentioned earlier. Women who became teachers in the katatib for girls had to make special effort to develop the required knowledge. This was usually done through the co-operation of male kin. Um-Khaled mentioned a woman who learned reading and writing with her father’s help, since he himself was interested in reading and studying history. She became an advisor for other women who used to attend her house to learn the Qur’an and prophet’s hadith, and she also read other books to them. Some informants referred to another method of learning, which was through listening to men who would come to their houses to talk about religion; however, this was a family activity and not individual teaching.

Therefore, teaching girls religious rules and obligations was an important part of the socialisation process, which affected their morality and behaviour throughout their life course. Girls would also learn other skills through participating in and watching women’s work, and childhood would be a preparation period for their future role as mothers and housewives.

**Folk Tales and Children**

The telling of folk tales was a mode of socialisation and learning process as well as a leisure activity (see Zipes, 1992). Most elderly informants had the experience of listening to folk tales in their childhood. Nevertheless, some did not and they attributed that to the fact that their parents were too busy with work, and by the time they would come back in the evening they were too tired to tell tales, and many times their children would be fast asleep.
Some informants did not have any explanation regarding the reason for not listening to folk tales. Others referred to family gatherings in the evenings where members would talk about different subjects, but it would not be folk tales.

Those who had listened to folk tales remembered it as a family event in which the extended family took an important part. In this case, the gathering would be of family members only, and the teller would usually be a relative such as a grandmother, mother or aunt. Sometimes it would be the father or grandfather and, at these times, the tales would be told mainly to children and would usually contain incidents that teach children moral behaviour. The purpose of telling such tales in this situation would be to pass time or to calm children before they went to sleep, or to teach them social values. Um-Munsor explained:

_We would finish our work as quickly as possible so we could gather for the tales. We laid out the mattress and kept the food warm if a member of the family had not had dinner yet. In summer, the gathering was on the roof (suteh) because of the hot weather. At other times, when the weather was nice it would be in the inner yard, and in winter inside the house, (alhoy), in one of the rooms; we lit the fire and made coffee._

On other occasions, the gathering would be with neighbours and members of the community in an open yard, where men’s gatherings would be
separated from women's, and children would join any of the groups to listen to folk tales. The teller would in this case be a member of the community, Um-Abdulaziz illustrated her experience during childhood in Hiyel saying:

Gatherings for folk tales used to be daily, between Mughreb and Isha prayer\(^3\), when people came back from work, and wanted to have a pleasant time. Therefore they would gather at the community yard or at their houses, in summer on the roof (Suteh) and in winter they would light a fire and gather around it. No one would miss it unless the family had a special or urgent situation.

The tales would sometimes contain frightening themes and as part of the socialising process in the traditional society, fear was in this case used in order to exert control over children. One example was the invoking of imaginary creatures, for example Homaret Al-Gyla which means afternoon-donkey, an animal which would collect children who were wandering alone in the streets in the afternoon. This idea was used to prevent children from going out in the afternoon, or making a noise when their father was taking a nap at that time. Other creatures were also used as a means of controlling children, such as Abed Albeer (the well's slave) which would grip children to the bottom of the well if they lean toward it, and Awafee Alla (Health from God) which has a good meaning but it was used as a frightening phrase to control

\(^3\) Usually between six and eight o'clock.
children whom did not understand the actual meaning of it, but were frightened by it.

**Family structure and folk tales**

The structure of the family and the closeness to other members of the extended family ensured that the event of telling tales was an important part of the informants' childhood, rather than just the tales themselves. Although they had mixed feelings toward the tales, which often would be experienced as frightening, they enjoyed the warmth of being together with family members, friends and neighbours.

Boys and girls would usually join female tellers to listen to folk tales. This was pointed out in discussion with a male writer, who is one of the important collectors for folk tales in Saudi Arabia. He explained that folk tale's subjects were similar in male and female gatherings. He further pointed out that most of the tales he knew, he had learned from his grandmother and his mother. At a later stage his wife had also played a key role in providing him with more tales. This example accentuates women's role in telling tales and their demonstration by word of mouth. As the informants described, women’s gatherings for the tales would be mostly held inside the house and folk tales would often include moral values, which describe women’s character, and women/women relationships, such as the relationship between the wife and her sister in law or between a woman and her step children. The
tales would often describe animosity between them. The hidden message behind them was to warn people, especially women, of women's character, and the harm they could suffer, as some informants explained.

The tales could be fables, fiction or realistic, or a mixture of all. They could be true stories, or partly true with the rest made up by the teller, or somebody else. At other times, the teller was only passing tales on. Such tales would be fables, which were circulated among people from one generation to the other, or tales about historical characters, which offered a model of bravery and strength. These models would be drawn from Islamic history and present-day religious beliefs.

**Telling the Tales**

Most informants explained that the teller would combine the tale with poetry. Others pointed to the singing or dramatic voices, which the teller adopted during the telling of the tales, and some used sand and mud to create the tales characters. They also pointed out that children themselves would use this method in telling tales to each other. The audience would usually listen carefully to the tales, even if they had been repeated often, as some informants pointed out:

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4 The researcher interviewed this writer, who is also a father of two daughters took a part in the second generation sample.
We liked the tales very much, we would sit down and listen to it even if it was repeated.

The role played by the audience was mostly listening; occasionally, they would participate in clapping or singing or repeating the poem included in the tale.

Feelings toward Tales

Most informants explained that they liked folk tales in their childhood, and they used to ask for more, even if they had frightening themes. Occasionally, a tale would be presented to them as a reward for doing a certain job that the teller had asked them to do. The informants often claimed that the frightening side in the tales led them to be brave and strong. Um-Saad, a 100 years old who is a widow, from the south part of Saudi Arabia remembered that sometimes she would be frightened by tales. She believed the tales were told to scare children and prevent them from activities which could be dangerous. However, she thought that listening to those tales made her brave, and she grew up to be noted for her bravery. She had also worked hard all her life in the fields, chopping firewood and carrying it back home. She herded camels and rode them, just like men did, she had to travel for long distance and no one dared to harm her, as she was well known for her ability to defend herself.
Um-Mohammed remembered that her mother used to tell her tales in the evening. At that time they had no electrical lights, only a very weak lamp, which used to be turned out during the tale. She remembered that she used to get scared by some of the tales, but she added:

However, my mother taught me to be brave by believing in God and depending on him, and not to be frightened by anything except human beings.

Um-Khaled pointed that she liked folk tales in her childhood. She remembered that children used to do different jobs for an old lady in the neighbourhood, whom she used to tell tales to children as a reward for helping her or getting her what she needed. She said:

I would try to finish whatever she asked me to do, in order to listen to her tales, even though these tales had frightening themes. I remember one time she asked me to bring her a locust as a reward for telling me a tale, so I carried as many as I could from our house in my dress and gave them to her, without my mother’s knowledge. At that time, locusts were considered as rich food.

Um-Saleh remembered that she had listened to tales by the mushata; a lady who used to come over to their house in order to do a job similar to what a hair dresser would do today. She would tell her the tale, while she styled her hair. Although the tales were often frightening she enjoyed listening to them.
Other times the tales were told by her elder sister, who would often ask her younger sister to perform some tasks for her in return.

Um-Ali, 65 years old, remembered that tales used to be told to her at different times, one while she was feeding camels. She said:

*You call it folk tales, we call it (Sealoah) because it often contains stories about the (ghoul) frightening creatures.*

However, Um-Hammed, talked about tales in a Bedouin society, she listened to folk tales and poetry during her childhood said that she was sure that children were not scared by the frightening themes in the tales, because they were brave. She added that it was common for a man would compose a poem as a wedding gift for the woman he wanted to marry. Um-Abdulrahman also pointed that she liked the tales, and was not frightened by them and thought that some of the expressions which were used to exert control over children were harmless. She added:

*When children, older than seven years old behave badly, they would be reminded of the punishment they could get. The punishment would be inflicted by certain fabled creatures, such as Awafy Allah (mercy from God), or Almeggrassa Alhamia (the hot pan). These are imaginary images and won’t hurt children, many times they would not*
understand the true meaning of the expression, but they would take it into account.

Other informants, however, explained that the tales would not be told immediately before going to sleep at night. Instead, this time would be used for repeating holy prayers and hadith (prophet Mohammed's sayings) and the tales would be told some time before that, so that children were not scared or kept awake by the tales.

Um-Naser, 65 years old, said:

*I used to like folk tales, and I was able to memorize them easily, so whenever one of my friends was not able to come to the gathering to listen to them, I would tell them to him/her the next day.*

Many informants mentioned that they were able to understand the tales, their meanings and language easily, because they were dealing with everyday language. However, others said:

*Even if we did not understand parts of the tales we would not ask about it, in any case, we enjoyed listening to them.*

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They also pointed out that as children they memorized the tales and told them to each other, often using mud and sand to recreate the stories.

Therefore, folk tales were used as a way of education as well as for entertainment (see also Zipes, 1992). The subjects, which they contained, were part of the physical as well as the social environment within which those children were growing up and although the tales contained frightening themes, the informants emphasized the joy of gathering to listen to them. However, we cannot be certain about the effect of the frightening side in the tales on children, since older people may view their memories with romantic nostalgia and see the past in terms of strength and community closeness, control over their lives and the life of their families. To confirm their judgement and reach an accurate conclusion, further studies would have to be carried out regarding this issue.

**Girls Getting Married**

Girls would get married at an early age during the traditional phase. Most informants reported that their age of marriage was between 10-17, and though they were not always able to remember the exact age, they would often relate it to the time of their puberty. The number of informants who were able to recall their age of marriage was only eleven. One of them was married between 10-12, four of them were married between 12-14, 3 between 14-16, one between 16-18, and two between 18-20 (Table 6).
Table 6

Age of Marriage of the First Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14–16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They all pointed out that the usual age for a girl's marriage was between 12-14, and that a 16 year old girl was usually considered too old for marriage. Other studies have reached similar conclusions. Alsuwaigh explains that the average age for marriage among the older generation of women in Saudi Arabia was fourteen; and the girl who reached eighteen years of age without getting married was considered too old and regarded as a burden on her family (1989:76).

Religious and social aspects encouraged early marriage, especially for females. Many informants considered that the main reason for girls' early marriage was to provide them with protection, the Arabic term used is (Sater), which basically means safeguard and protection for women as well as for the family's “honour”. As explained earlier in the section on ‘traditional socialization’ in Chapter Two, the female is considered in the Arab family as the symbol of the family's honour, and it is the male's duty to protect this.
honour by controlling female behaviour and mobility. When a female is
married, this duty is transferred from her father and her brothers to her
husband. However, women continue to carry their family's name, and
therefore if they disregards modesty in their behaviour, they will bring shame
for their families, most of all her father and brothers. Some informants also
pointed out that a girl's marriage was considered an upgrading and an honour.

Most of the informants had between 8-10 children (Table 5), which
could be considered high when compared to the contemporary Saudi family,
and certainly to western families. This high birth rate in the traditional Saudi
family was related, to some extent, to the high level of child mortality due to
the limited health services available pre 1950. Some informants, who had only
2-4 living children, explained that 7-9 of their children had died in early
childhood. Medical birth control methods were not available, and as the
informants explained they would breast-feed the child for two years in order to
limit the possibility of pregnancy.

Table 5

The Number of Children for the First Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 – 4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – 10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 13</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, as explained in Chapter Two, religious values, as well as socio-economic conditions were also involved in encouraging the tendency toward a high birth rate, as explained above. Prophet Mohammed’s traditions (Hadith) encourage a large number of births, for children are considered as a source of strength (See Chapter Two). The economic system also regarded children, especially males, as a supply of labour. Male children would also inherit the biggest share of the family’s productive resources and maintain them within the family, along with the family’s name. Therefore, as noted earlier, traditional families used to welcome a boy’s birth more than a girl’s birth. Nevertheless, there are additional factors influencing women’s evaluation of motherhood; such as the early socialisation of girls as future mothers. Al-khateeb illustrates this in the case of women in Saudi Arabia:

The religious believe that children are one of the precious gifts of God, and having them is a religious duty. Women get more power and a higher status in their families when they have more children, especially male ones. Many women believe that having many children keeps the stability and unity of the marital relationship (1998: 176).

The structure of the extended family supported the value of a large number of family members, due to the economic need for a large number of people to join in the family’s work, and it created a link between social status and the number of children in the family. This phenomenon occurs less in current society, and some comparative studies have pointed to the increase in
the age of marriage for women and decrease in the number of children per family (Alsuwaigh, 1989; Kattan, 1991).

Traditional marriages in Arabia were usually prearranged, either between cousins from the same family or between members of the same tribe (Alsuwaigh, 1989:72). Considering the fact that Saudi Arabia is a society segregated by sex, the informants explained that the arrangement would be made between adult members of both families, and therefore women played an important role in choosing the bride (see also: Altorki, 1986).

However, they pointed that the prearranged marriages were not necessarily between relatives; the bride could also be a neighbour or any suitable girl who was suggested by other women, though, descent was main element in decisions regarding marriage. As noted, usually by the age of ten girls would be asked to veil their heads if they needed to leave the house, in view of their marriage prospects. Um-Munsor described:

*The girl had no opinion on her marriage. Girls usually would be kept home by the age of ten; no one would see them except other women visiting. Choosing the bride would be through these women. However, men were responsible for approaching the girl's family for marriage.*

The informants pointed out, male members often were responsible for taking final decisions regarding female marriage. Although Islamic rules
require a woman’s acceptance of her future husband before marriage, many informants explained that girls were usually not told about their marriage, till the night of the wedding. **Um-Ibraheem** described:

*On the night of the wedding, the bride would be cleaned and dressed up as if she was going to a wedding ceremony of relatives or friends. She would be taken to the house of her husband, and she will be told then. Her clothes and other items, which usually her family would prepare for her before the wedding, would be kept at a relative’s house during the preparation, in order for her not to be aware of the family’s intention.*

However, some diversity in this process could be observed, and relates to other factors such as being in an urban or rural region. For example, some studies conclude that girls who were working in rural areas were able to participate in choosing the man they wanted to marry, as they would see each other while working in farms, or bringing water. (AlSuwaigh, Aloshban, and Alkhateeb, N.D: 22).

The socialisation process also emphasised the role of religion in setting out male/female relationships. The obedience of a woman for her husband was considered as a holy practice. Therefore, girls were brought up to learn to obey their husbands and serve them, as well as their parents in law. Many informants talked with appreciation of this female character in traditional
society, and considered obeying the husband as one of the main roles a woman would play after marriage. **Um-Abdulrhman** illustrated this while she was describing the preparation of a bride on her wedding day:

_The bride would colour her hands and feet with Henna. Her hair would be decorated with flowers and Mushat, and she would wear beautiful long golden jewellery from her neck down to her waist (Rshrsh). We were so shy, and would obey whatever our husbands asked us to do. We could not look him in the eye. Even when having a meal, women would eat after men. When a woman sat in the same room as her husband she would often cover her face with a light veil (Shaila), and this could go on for one year after marriage. Unlike women in current society, who would fight with their husbands head to head._

Other qualities frequently mentioned by the informants included being hard working, patient, and brave. These characteristics in women are also valued highly in other traditional societies.

_These conditions reflect the male/female relationship in traditional society, where the male was dominant. In this structure of relations, the female held a subordinate position in the family, and therefore men held authority and took important decisions for other members of their families. Meanwhile, girls would grow up learning this dominance and accepting it._
Islamic laws allow a man to be married to four wives at the same time. However, this right is controlled by certain conditions. For example, he may take another wife when his first wife is barren or ill. Furthermore, polygamy is conditional on the male's ability to provide equal treatment and financial support for his wives. Since polygamous marriage occurred in traditional extended families, a young girl might enter into a large household of adult women, composing sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law and other older wives. Women, in some cases, shared husbands, the house and family life with new wives, some of whom might be the same age as their own children. Although some informants expressed their patience and acceptance for those conditions, others described them as disturbing situations, which they suffered living through. For example, Um-Saleh explained that as a child she had had no time for folk tales because she was concerned about being married to a man who had another wife, while at the same time, she had a son from a previous marriage.

Um-Abdulaziz had also been married twice, and her first husband had married a second wife. She remembered both marriages as mental and physical suffering. Other studies also point to the diversity in women's judgement, and add that a woman would some times accept these conditions because the second wife would provide help in child care and domestic work, as well as other types of work, which women in traditional societies were in charge of (Al-Suwaigh, Aloshban, and Alkhateeb, N.D: 22). However, the incidence of polygamy in traditional society is not clear. Some informants
explained that it only occurred among members of the upper class or those who worked close to them, and this class was the smallest percentage of the population. This is also emphasised in Alkhateeb’s study, as she points out that polygamy in pre-oil Saudi was very rare, and limited to rich families. After 1970, the increase of wealth has enabled men to marry more than one wife (1998:185).

A few informants talked about situations when they refused to join their husbands and leave their children behind with members of their extended family. This happened when the husband was intending to travel for a long period of time looking for a better livelihood. For example, Um-Salleh said:

I knew that he would get married if he travelled alone,
but I refused to travel with him to Mecca and leave my children with my mother.

Several informants also pointed out that they were married more than once. They explained that a second marriage for a woman was common, and sometimes it was easier than the first one, though, they did not clarify the reasons behind that. Um-Munsor commented:

A woman who was divorced or a widow could get married more easily than one who had never been married.
She could get married more than once and have children from different husbands. She could take her children from the first
marriage with her, if her husband agreed, or leave them with their father. Other times children could be left with her daughter in law if her son was married. One of my aunts was married for seven times.

After marriage girls would take great responsibility toward their families, working at home and out in the fields or deserts. A married woman was responsible for domestic work and caring for her husband and his parents and later on for her children. As explained in chapter two, the socialisation process in traditional society emphasised the values of respect according to age and gender, and this was applicable in the case of a wife serving the husband’s family especially parents and the elderly. Therefore, living in one house as an extended family was a suitable structure for such conditions.

Since girls often were married at an early age, after marriage, the new extended family became part of their relation network, and young girls, in return, were obligated towards them. Some informants pointed out that after marriage they played with sisters in law inside the house, as well as sharing the housework, and taking care of elderly parents in law. Um-Munsor illustrated:

The family used to depend on girls’ work, and after marriage the girl would work for her in laws as she used to work for her family. Yes, after marriage she would be given the whole responsibility, even if she was young or she did not know
how the work was done. She would learn through participating. She would live with her husband’s family in one house, even if there were ten brothers. She would be cooking, milking, grinding seeds, and doing all other types of domestic work. She would share this work with other sisters in law. Either they would work together every day or each one of them would do the work in turn. The mother in law would seldom do any work, often she would be sitting leaning (Tesnād).

Other women pointed out that the reason for marriage would sometimes be to provide help for the husband’s family in taking care of their elderly members, since the daughter in law was expected to play that role. Um-Ali noted:

"It was common for girls to get married at an early age, and to respect and serve parents in law. Sometimes when a man needed help in caring for his parents due to their illness or being handicapped, his main intention for marriage would be to get this help."

Moreover, women worked outside the house, herding animals and planting crops, other times developing handicrafts, sewing clothes, and working as midwives. Um-Abdulrahman described the old life with longing, she said:
Men and women worked very hard, starting before sunrise. Women's work was as hard as men's work, inside the house and outside. Women would often carry heavy pots from farms to their houses, they would milk and herd animals. They sometimes cooked camels, which were very heavy, and they had to handle it themselves.

Um-Mohmmmed added:

We used to work hard; we would cook, milk animals, clean seeds and grind them (neshleb, nejresh), and cut wood fire. Moreover, we would work in the fields and take care of animals. A woman could start working two days after giving birth. She would get up to slaughter animals and cook them.

Women's work was a main source for providing a living for their families. It was seldom possible to provide paid help since the social stratification at this period of time was limited and, as young wives, young girls would join in with this work of adult wives. Almost all members were in need of work, as several informants pointed. Women would often help each other in housework, especially on occasions and special events. A few informants, however, mentioned paid help. This would be provided by local women from their neighbourhood, who used to come to help with housework during the day. Altorki and Cole discuss women's work in 'Uniza:
Women, though segregated and veiled, worked outside the household in a wide range of agricultural activities—sometimes within the context of domestic and kin unit but also as neighbours and as hired workers on the farms of nonkindred. They also bought and sold in the market, some of them on a full-time and regular basis (1989:7).

Most informants remembered that as young married girls they would wake up before sunrise to clean the house, knead bread (Gorsan) and bake it, also they would milk goats or camels and cool their milk. After that they would go out to herd animals and chop wood. Some of them would work on farms, if they were living in a peasant area. On coming back home, they would clean seeds and grind them, cook and take care of children. Handicrafts were also part of women’s work. Using palm trees leaves and fibres, they would design housewares, which would be used in their daily life for several purposes. Women would also spin animal’s wool to be used for clothes and tents. Some would even help in building houses.

Remembering their early-married days, elderly women often talked about the freedom in their mobility while working in the fields. Um-Munsor described how they used to wear only a head veil, without wearing the whole black cover (Abayah) while working in palm fields (Al-Nakheel). Um-Abdulaziz also remembered that women in Ha’il would often sit in the afternoon at the community yards. She said:
After we finished working in the fields, we would come back home and clean the house and cook, then we would gather outside the house. At this time, women would beautify themselves with kohl, nice clothes and jewellery, and sit in the sun, chatting.

Um-Hammed, who lived in the desert, talked about similar types of work, which Bedouin women used to do. Nostalgic to the point of crying while talking about her role in her family, she used these words:

I was in charge of everything. After getting married I built my own house together with my husband, I knew every detail in my house. I was in control over my life. Even when I delivered my children, I did that on my own, and the next day after the delivery I would go out to work.

Um-Hammed today is considered of the low social status and she depends on social services to maintain her living in the city of Riyadh.

The above indicates that training girls to do the housework was part of socialising girls. Moreover, working hard was a daily activity which children watched both parents doing. This could start in early childhood, as some informants described carrying their own children or laying them close to them while they were working. Um-saad explained that working as midwife and in laying out women for burial, she often had to travel on her own for long
distances. She also pointed out that she travelled several times on foot to Meccah for (Haj). She said:

*Life was hard, that is all I can remember. I had to work in the fields, collect firewood, and grind seeds. At the same time, I had to take care of my nine children. Most of the time I had to tie my child to my back while working.*

Other studies similarly describe how women had to carry their children or keep them in a shed while they worked in the fields. At other times they had to leave them on their own when they went out to work. (see for example: Al-Suwaigh, Aloshban and Alkhateeb, N.D). Women’s work was an important source of living for their families through out the different periods of their life course, but, it was unpaid, considered as part of domestic work, and their duty towards their families.

**Conclusion**

Considering the above information we can see that, girls’ childhood in traditional society lasted for only a short period of time. The shift to adulthood entailed certain roles and obligations, which the socialization process emphasized. By the use of various methods of introducing religious as well as social values and norms, girls were prepared to contribute to family life as well as for their future obligations as wives, mothers and members of extended families. However, as children, girls were able to perform these roles along
with other activities, which they regarded as part of their life. For example, although girls were obligated to do domestic work as well as work outside the house, they often mixed work with play, even after their marriage.

Childhood pre 1950 was perceived as a path through which children had to pass in order to get to adulthood. As a result, children were given little attention, based on the belief that they do not have special needs. They would be left alone during the daytime, when parents were busy working, and in the evening they were free to join the gatherings and listen to tales. Meanwhile, there was a belief that children should be taught moral values and their behaviour should be controlled. Therefore, adults would use several methods for this purpose, one way was to introduce fear. Children learned to fear God punishment when they disobeyed adults. At other times fear was introduced in folk tales which contain frightening themes and characters. These methods were basically used to obtain children's obedience and to limit children's desires and activities.

The methods used in traditional socialisation reflect the understanding of childhood in traditional Arab society. Childhood was considered as an irrational stage of human life, and this was regarded as the main difference between adults and children. Children were not considered to have special needs, though they were thought to lack rational capacity, and to be physically weaker than adults. However, they could be trained to work for their families. It was also considered adults' job to control children's deviance and desires and, although children had freedom in mobility, they were more controlled
with regard to access to information. For example, most informants confirmed that folk tales were told for everybody; it was accepted for children to join adults in listening to folk tales. And when they were asked how adults dealt with tales that contained sexual themes, the answers mostly were:

_We would not understand it or ask about it. We were not like today's children who are able to know about every thing, and dare to ask about every subject._

Some of them added:

_We were able to understand the sign language of our mother, one glance by her was enough for us to know that we should leave._

Nevertheless, the distinction between adulthood and childhood was blurred with the key factor being the short period of time childhood lasted.

The next chapter will deal with girls' childhood in the second generation, looking at continuity as well as change in the socialization process, and documenting the emergence of a new understanding of childhood.
Chapter Five

The Childhood of the Second Generation
(1955-1970)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the childhood of girls who were born between 1955-1970. As explained in the methodology chapter, most of these informants have lived their childhood during the traditional phase and started their families after the rapid socio-economic changes.

The childhood of the second generation is studied through examining girl's daily life, as well as their shift to adulthood. Comparison between this generation and the previous one is important when analysing the data provided by these informants, in order to understand continuity and change in female socialisation. Therefore, this chapter deals with issues similar to those discussed earlier when studying the traditional childhood in Chapter Four, such as: girls' roles within the family, play and work, relations between family members and with the community, learning and education, as well as the function of folk tales.

As this chapter will show, continuity in socialising girls of this generation with the previous one is reflected in the moralities related to female roles and through religion and education. Meanwhile change occurs through the emergence of schooling and the impact of formal education, as well as the advent of literacy, and the gradual global contact with the outside world. All
these conditions lead to the emergence of a different kind of childhood and the creation of a new understanding of children's needs, such as the separation between play and work and the importance of formal education for children.

Although one could argue that the experiences of the informants who were born in the 1950s might differ from those who were born in the 1970s, the informants have sufficient similarities to represent 'the second generation'. According to the development plans which started in 1970 in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter One and Chapter Three for further details) the actual social impact of the economic changes brought by oil income only came into efficient effect in the 1980s (El Mallakh & El Mallakh: 1982). Therefore, all these informants to some extent, lived their childhood in similar socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, they are all contemporary mothers of young children or teenagers.

The importance of studying this age category is related to their position and roles in the society, which has been created by the socio-historical circumstances they have been living through and which enable this generation to be the connecting ring between the past and the future. They could also be considered as the connecting ring between heritage and contemporary social life, tradition and modernity. The character of the second generation, as explained earlier, was developed by the fact that the majority of them have been living through two distinctly different historical periods. They have experienced living the simple life of traditional society and witnessed tremendous social change. They also witnessed the growing autonomy of most
Arab countries from Western colonisation and the power of concepts such as ‘Arab world’ and ‘Arab unity’, which are all centred on Arab identity and heritage. This generation also lived through the time of a high national income for Arab Gulf societies, and the increasing interaction with other cultures through education and travelling, as well as the establishment of a huge trade market, the presence of foreign labour, the growth of the media and of globalisation. This generation also witnessed the reduction of the call for Arab unity and the concepts related to that, which accompanied the Arab defeat against their new enemy (Israel) during late sixties. These historical circumstances have, it is suggested, contributed to creating a particular standpoint for the second generation who often hold responsible positions within their societies and toward the new generations.

All these conditions and historical events had a particular influence in Saudi Arabia on the development of new roles for women, with education and employment being the most important indicators of this change and it is the impact of some of these factors on childhood that will be examined throughout the analysis in this chapter.

**Background**

The informants in the second generation interviewed for this study were aged between 28-48. Only six of them were younger than thirty, and the majority of them were aged between 35-40 (Table 7).
Table 7

Ages of the Second Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location of Interviews</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P.Library(1)</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) King Abdul-Aziz Public Library.
(2) Social Services Center

These informants attended schools when they were between 5-10 years old. However, completing a high degree in education is influenced by several social conditions, especially in the case of women since their traditional roles continued to be highly valued, as explained in earlier chapters. Therefore, although a few informants were illiterate, the education levels of the others ranged between elementary school and Ph.D.

The diversity in the social value of women's education is reflected in the informants' educational levels¹ (Table 8). Twenty nine informants have a university Bachelor degree, twenty completed the Secondary school, four passed intermediate level, six completed Elementary level. Six have a university Masters degree, three of whom are now studying for a higher degree, and two women have Ph.D. Out of all the informants only nine were illiterate.
Table 8
The Location of the Interviews
And Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Library</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Serv</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Market</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Illiterate: does not read or write, or reads the Qur’an only.
(2) Elementary: Six years or under.
(3) Intermediate: Nine Years.
(4) Secondary: Twelve years, or teaching diploma.
(5) University Bachelor Degree, or College Diploma in Education.
(6) University Master Degree.

As explained in Chapter One, during the enlightenment period (The Nahda), in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, education was one of the most important elements in the development process. Arabs were also concerned to combine tradition and modernity without losing their local culture in face of Western influence and globalisation (Al-Jabry, 1988 and 1991; Ammara, 1984; Ghalyon, 1990). As explained in the Introduction, this was most obvious in the case of Arab Gulf societies and in particular in the

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1 Education in Saudi Arabia is divided into stages: Elementary (primary) school (six years), intermediate school (three years), and Secondary (high school) (three years).
case of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, women's education in the development plans has always been conditioned to the moral values and to the customs that characterise Arab Muslim women. The new roles for Saudi women were planned to be approved by the state and the public, and this can only be achieved if women's education and work did not contradict with tradition and with women's traditional roles (Abdul-Rahman, 1982; Al-Rumaihi: 1983).

Altorki discusses this issue:

The justification given for educating young girls when the government introduced this reform in the early 1960s was that education would help these girls be better Muslims and enable them to teach their own children to become so. But the men who at that time were predisposed to educate their daughters did not rationalize this step exclusively on that ground. They no doubt accepted the argument that education will enable their daughters to become more worthy Muslims, but they had also in mind the general principle that education befits one's family members, in accordance with the saying attributed to the prophet: "Seek knowledge, even unto China" (1986:152).

The majority of the informants are working; thirty-one of them are teachers at elementary schools. These teachers were also mothers of students, who were included in the children's sample. Three other informants were also interviewed at schools, one of them is working in the administration and the
other two are working as cleaners. The rest of the informants were interviewed at different places: five at the public library, three of which are working at schools. Twenty eight informants were interviewed at home, some at their own homes, others at friend’s houses (Table8). The informants who were interviewed at home, and have a Ph.D. Degree are working at King Saud University, and also some of those with Masters Degrees; others are working at schools in different positions. Four illiterate informants working as sellers were interviewed at traditional markets, another five non working women were interviewed at the social services office, though one of them had finished her elementary degree and was looking for work. She described the type of work she is looking for:

*I am looking for work that doesn't contradict with our traditions. This is more important in my case because I belong to tribal (qabili) descent and our traditions limit women's work to few types, which convey gender segregation and morality. I found a job as a bus censor in public transportation, but I couldn't take such a job.*

Despite the fact that this informant was in need of work due to her low-income, the moral values conducting women's social status held equal importance for her, which reflects the powerful effect of the process of socialising females and the transition of such values.
Referring to their monthly income, most informants identified themselves as middle class and some as upper middle class. Only those who were interviewed at the social services office or in the market could be considered as lower class or upper lower class.

Most informants are living with their nuclear families, with only a few mentioning members of their extended families living with them. Usually this would be one or both parents. All second generation informants are married women; three women were in polygamous marriages. Their age of marriage ranged between 14-30, however the majority were married between the ages of 19-22 (Table 9). Marriage at an age younger than sixteen occurred in thirteen cases, and marriage aged twenty-five and older occurred for only five informants. Comparing the age of marriage in the second generation to the first one, the rise in age of marriage is notable although early age of marriage did not totally disappear.

Table 9

The Age of Marriage of the Second Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>S.S. (1)</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 - 19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 - 22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 - 25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 - 30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1).King Abdul-Aziz Public Library.
(2) Social Services Center
This provides evidence for continuity alongside change in the moral values related to women's role in contemporary Saudi Arabia. It also indicates the correlation between higher degrees of education with the delay of marriage, as well as the age of having the first child (Table 10).

**Table 10**

*The Second Generation’s Age When They Had The First Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>P.Libra</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>S.S. (1)</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>25-28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) King Abdul-Aziz Public Library.
(2) Social Services Center.

The data also indicate the increase in mother's age when having the first child, as well as the decrease in the number of children in contemporary families. Many informants had their first child, between the ages of 22-25, then between 19-22 (Table 10). The highest number of children per family was between 5-8, then between 2-5. Only a few informants had either less than 2 children, or between 8-11 (Table 11). Kattan (1991) has analysed some of the changes in women's roles and its effect on family size. She concludes:

The traditional attitudes leading to a large family size are being challenged by the modern employment of the mother and the use of contraceptives. Although the reduced infant
mortality rate, the increased birth rate and the free health, welfare, and educational services maintain the large size of the Saudi family, it is anticipated, with the government's new trend towards privatisation of most of these services, that the Saudi family will find it more economically convenient to reduce the number of children (1991: 204).

\[\text{Table 11}\]

**The Number of Children for the Second Generation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>S.S.</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – 11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, despite the decrease in the size of the contemporary Saudi family when compared to the traditional family, the number of children continues to be higher when compared to the family in Western societies, as mentioned in Chapter Two. This reflects continuities in the moral values related to woman's status as a mother, as well as children's social values in the family.

Most of the second generation informants are originally from different parts of the Najed region, with only a few cases of women originally from other provinces who moved to live in Riyadh City. Most informants live now
in villa type houses. However, many of them during their childhood lived in traditional dwellings or in smaller villas when compared to contemporary ones, as the informants described.

The housing industry in Saudi Arabia has experienced major changes during the last four decades. The mid 1950s saw the introduction of the gridiron street pattern and the detached villa-type dwelling. With it came new design and layout and new style furniture, and major changes in the construction techniques and the building materials used. Whereas the traditional dwellings were built according to the immediate needs for the family, as mentioned in Chapter Four, the contemporary villa type dwelling is built as a final product of new design concept that was adopted through municipal rules and regulations (Bahmmam, 1998; Al-Hathloul, 1981).

These changes were first inspired by the housing introduced by the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) in the Eastern province at the beginning of oil exploration and later by the ‘Al-Malaz’ project initiated by the Ministry of Finances in 1953. This project, as mentioned in Chapter Four, was to accommodate government employees transferred to Riyadh. The project consisted of 754 detached (villa-type) dwellings and three apartment buildings; by 1957 this project was in operation and marked a turning point in Riyadh's urban pattern. Since then the villa has become the prevalent model with hundreds of thousands built across the country (Bahmmam, 1998: 558).
The contemporary villa-type dwelling differs from the traditional dwelling in several aspects, such as the organization of internal spaces, the external appearance, the whole size, and the construction details. Thus, although the villa has remained basically a two-storey detached dwelling with yards on the four sides, its size has kept increasing over time (Bahmmam, 1998: 559).

Therefore, a main feature of the contemporary villa is its large size. This reflects some of the socio-cultural changes and their effect on everyday family life. For example, the economic boom in Saudi Arabia has increased the wealth of the population, resulting in a new lifestyle which the contemporary dwelling has to accommodate, while also retaining the previous traditional customs. As a result, many spaces are duplicated and new ones have been added. Bahmmam points out further that the attitude toward privacy is a major factor that has influenced the shape of the house:

In Saudi society, as in some other Muslim societies, dwelling privacy is defined by explicit Islamic teachings. These rules have existed for many centuries and their influence is clearly visible in traditional dwellings. They define the following three different spheres: (1) privacy of the whole dwelling, (2) privacy between the sexes, and (3) privacy among individual members (1998:567).
However, for most second generation informants the expansion of dwellings reached its height during their adulthood. Further discussion regarding the changes developed in the size and function of dwellings during late 1980s and in the 1990s will be carried out in Chapter Six.

**Being a Girl**

As explained in earlier chapters, traditional socialization theories have emphasized the significance of the female role within the family. It also considers a woman’s fertility and maternal role, and her obligations toward other members of her family and domestic work to be of core importance. The previous discussion in Chapter Four illustrated how the relationship between members of the traditional family was defined according to age and gender. As the discussion of the first generation concluded, female members were obligated to respect male members, who could be a father or husband or brother. It also accentuated the importance of the young in respecting older members and the latter to take care of the younger.

Continuity of moralities and values related to female status and roles can be seen in the socialization process of girls in the second generation. As the analysis in this chapter will show, girls were brought up to absorb these conditions, and to treat male family members with respect, even if this was a younger brother. Girls in general, therefore, continued to experience two kinds of control. The first was shared by all children through adults controlling children's behaviour. The second was generated by the fact of being a girl. The
discussion in this chapter aims to provide evidence regarding continuities in socialising female children during 1955-1970, despite the great changes which also occurred due to the impact of education and other socio-economic and political factors which distinguish this historical period, and was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.

**Literacy and Education**

Starting public schools for girls was one of the most important factors that brought social change, and distinguished this historical phase from the previous ones. Through education women were actually prepared to take part in the labour market, and this meant giving them new social and economic roles. Traditionally, as this study has shown, women’s role was defined differently for, although women of the previous generation were responsible for domestic work as well as working outside the house, their work was considered to be for their families and was evaluated as part of domestic work (see Al-Mana, 1981; Altorki, 1989 and 1992). Therefore, female enrolment in formal education, and afterwards in the labour force has brought significant changes in family relations and obligations since education and paid employment are often now seen of being of personal benefit to the woman herself rather than for her family only, as will be further illustrated in this chapter.

As explained in Chapter Four, girl’s education had started pre 1940, in the form of the katatib. The first private school for girls was opened in 1943 in
Mecca and then other private schools followed, mainly in Hejaz rejoin. All were sponsored by elite families (The General Presidency for Girls Education, 1992: 19). Those families, as Altorki argues, had experienced exposure to other Arab countries such as Egypt, and therefore they carried the lead for girls' education (1986:19). More advanced private schooling for girls emerged in late 1950s when King Faisal and his wife opened 'Dar-Alhanan' in Jeddah. Another 15 private schools followed in different parts of Saudi Arabia: five in Mecca, three in Riyadh, six in Jeddah, and one in Dammam (The General Presidency for Girls Education, 1992: 20).

Formal public education for girls started in 1960 with the establishment of The General Presidency for Girls Education (GPGE). This basically maintains girls' education according to Islamic rules and aims to train girls in their social and religious obligations, as wives and mothers. Therefore, girls' schools were and still are segregated totally from boys', and have their own curriculum.

Although some people at first rejected girls' enrolment in public schools, they eventually sent their daughters to schools and the number of girl students escalated rapidly. However, some girls who were of school age were still kept home. In 1960 fifteen primary public schools were opened in various cities in the country and by 1999 there were 12186 schools, although this number does not include private schools and universities which have female branches (Al-Amroo, 1999:27). The expected number of girls graduating from primary schools in 2001 are 173.000, in intermediate school 146.000, in
secondary school 118,000, and from teacher's colleges 7,1 thousand (The seventh Development Plan, 200-2004: 291). These statistics indicate the growing number of girls attending schools and other educational organisations.

The majority of girls pre 1970 were going to schools, therefore, and here they spent part of their day and experienced new authority, which contributed to their socialisation, whilst still accentuating the importance of traditional values and moralities. Several informants talked about their mothers encouraging their education and their enrolment in schools, despite the fact that most mothers were illiterate. At the same time, however, they were keen to prepare their daughters for traditional roles. Suha is 45 years old, a professor at King Saud University, and she talked about her own mother's role in providing education for her daughters when they lived in a neighbouring country for part of their childhood. She explains:

*My mother refused to join my father going back to Al-Ahsa our home city. This was because my eldest sisters were already enrolled in schools, and going back meant a delay for their education. Therefore, we stayed and my father went back and forth to visit us, until my elder sister finished high school. Then we had to go back because at that age girls were expected to get married, and my father wanted us to be home for that to happen. At that time I was in the fifth grade.*
Wadha is 40 years old, works in women’s administration branch of the GPGE. She described how she used to take off the collar of her school uniform, while walking back home from school, in order to save some time to play. She knew her mother’s rules; after lunch she would have to wash the dishes and then start doing her homework, and that would not leave her much time to play.

This is reflected in many cases and informants often talked about their mothers encouraging them to study. For example, Monira is 37 years old and a medical surgeon, her mother (Um-Khaled) is a case that represents a unique attempt by a woman of the first generation to get an education and a job. As explained in the previous chapter, she went to school after marriage and was also employee at school. The effect of this on her family was obvious, as Monira describes:

We always admired my mother, and picture her busy studying and working. She was also taking care of my father most of the time, since he was forty years older than her and often ill. After his death she continued taking care of us and she raised my younger brother all by herself.

Mothers often encouraged their daughters’ education, though they were seldom involved with girls’ school-work, and girls were usually left alone to manage their time studying and doing some of the domestic work (see also Altorky, 1986). Um-Khaled, for example, cared for her children’s
education, and she was always encouraging them regarding school-work. In this she was perhaps more intense due to her own involvement with studying and work, for women of her age would seldom have attended school or worked as employees. Monira talks about her mother caring for her daughter's education:

At the fifth grade I had to repeat my final exam for one subject, as I failed to pass the first one. My relatives were going to Taif for summer vacation, and I wanted to go with them more than any thing. However, my mother thought this would keep me off studying. Finally she agreed, however, and toward the end of that summer break, my mother joined us. She kept helping me with my studying until it was exam time, which I passed successfully.

Although the case of Monira's mother is unique, in some ways it indicates the importance of women’s role in the family. Monira’s mother’s work was a main source of support to her family, alongside her role in caring for other members of the family and domestic work, and reveals the continuities and changes in the socialisation process of female children. Here, the transition of the value of education, reading and learning from a mother to her daughter is obvious. Monira is still doing research work to get an advanced degree. Moreover, this example illustrates women supporting each other through their life course(cf. Moen, Erickson, and Dempster, 1997). Although her mother (Um-Khaled) is retired now, she still plays an
important role in her family, caring for her children and grandchildren. Further details regarding this role will be given later in the next chapters.

However, the importance of men in supporting women’s education and providing them with access to readings, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Four was also important for some women of the first generation (See also Altorki, 1986), as it has in the case of Um-Khaled. Monira talks about her parent’s relationship:

Although, my father was much older than my mother, he cared for her and always gave her support to study and work. Her work was also a necessity for our family when my father left work. At those times when my mother was going to work and my father staying at home, he would always help in the house work, preparing ingredients so that when mother come home she would cook lunch. As he got older he was less active, and I don’t really remember him strong and young, most of the time he was ill in bed. Therefore, his death was not a surprise for me or for my sister.

This insistence on women’s education was a reflection of the social change in Arab world, which carried with it a literacy revolution. Although most women in the first generation were seldom enrolled in formal education, as the sample for this study has indicated, they were nonetheless affected by the changes that were taking place, not only in their local society,
but also in the Arab world in general. For some, mainly the elite, travelling to neighbouring Arab countries was one important means for access to other cultural ideas, which emphasised the importance of girls’ education and therefore of some change in women's roles. Referring to women in Jeddah City, Altorki explains:

The initiative for girls education, whether in informal tutorial groups or in formal schools, often came from their mothers, who, through repeated appeals to their husbands, actualized these possibilities for them. These innovations, along with the partial adoption of Egyptian values, created a distinct life-style that provided incentives for other ahl al-balad 'local' families, which gradually began to emulate ideas and attitudes held by the elite (1986:19).

However, for the general public other means of contact also paved the way for the emergence of new images. For example listening to the radio linked illiterate women with the outside world and introduced them to new cultures. Radio public broadcasting began in 1948 from a small station in Jeddah, followed three years later by a station in the Holy City, Mecca. In 1964 the Riyadh broadcasting station and the ‘Call of Islam’ station began transmissions (Al-Farsy, 1990:242) and although these stations were on the air for no more than fourteen hours a week, mainly broadcasting recitations from the Holy Qur’an, the sayings of the Prophet, news and cultural
programs, nevertheless they introduced a wider cultural perspective to the Saudi people because, unlike reading, the radio was accessible to all.

Another source of knowledge and exposure to other cultures occurred through relatives travelling abroad to study. The government provided scholarships to enable male students to get higher degrees as part of the development plans. Older brothers, travelling mostly to western societies, such as U.S.A. and England, brought back information about other cultures to their families. Several informants, especially highly educated women, pointed out that they themselves had travelled with husbands, after marriage, and got their higher degrees at Western universities and a few of them also travelled with brothers, or other relatives.

**Reading**

The historical circumstances in the Arab World have accentuated the role of literacy for the second generation. As explained in Chapter Two, during the enlightenment period (Al-Nahda), intellectual activities were of core importance and therefore reading, writing and publishing were dominant tools in this intellectual movement and development process. These conditions emphasised the role of education and played a part in creating class and stratification in Saudi society.

People were attracted to reading, for example, by a number of members of the community who were interested in reading and literature and
history. Also by gaining access to reading materials brought back by those who were able to travel to neighbouring countries, and who thereby often communicated the importance of reading to their own local community. Other times the importance of reading was emphasized by radio programmes, as well as in magazines and newspapers. Publishing newspapers had started in the Arabian Peninsular in 1908, and local production started in mid 1920s in Saudi Arabia (Alshamekh, 1981: 149). The skill of reading gave a particular social status, a factor which distinguishes this generation from the previous one and equipped them with the capacity to lead future development plans, which their country was looking for.

The majority of informants explained therefore that reading had been a dominant activity for leisure time during their childhood and teen years. Daily life took on a rhythm around reading. As the women described, school hours were short with little homework and children had freedom in managing their studying time. They pointed out that this was also emphasised by the lack of other leisure activities, since television only started broadcasting in 1965 from stations in Riyadh and Jeddah, for only few hours a day (Al-Farsy, 1990: 243).

Informants described how they had put a great deal of effort to obtain reading materials during childhood. Some used to save money to buy books, others would ask older brothers or relatives to bring them books and magazines when they travelled, and children exchanged reading materials with friends and relatives. Suha illustrated this:
It was all our effort. I remember myself saving the money I would get from relatives as a gift during Eid. I would use that money to buy books. This was our decision and our choice as children, and parents were not part of it. I would go with my sister to buy books when we were living in Bahrain, and we enjoyed reading so much, and still both of us do till now.

In their childhood, most informants read a series of stories, which was popular in Arab World and known as the production of ‘The Green Book Store’. These were translated stories, some times given different titles than the original, such as ‘The Magic Merrier’ which originally was ‘Snow White’, and ‘Layla and the Wolf’ which was originally ‘Little Red Riding Hood’. Others were given the same title, such as ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Cinderella’. They also read translated journals, such as ‘Mickey Mouse’ and ‘Super Man’. Some had read religious books and stories about the Prophet Mohammed and his companion.

During their teen years as young women, they would generally read stories and novels. Some were written by famous Arab writers, such as Najeeb Mahfoth, Ihssan Abdul-Kudose, Al- Manfloty, and Yousef Al-Sbai. They also read translated books, such as the works of ‘Shakespeare’, ‘The Miserables’, and stories by ‘Agatha Christie’. Some informants had read folk tales, which were collected and published in books by a local writer (Al-Johyman). As mentioned earlier, the girls also had access to magazines and newspapers,
which were printed in other Arab countries, and also to teen magazines, such as *Abeer* and *Summer*. As those were centred mostly on male-female relationships and they were basically love stories, access to those magazines was not therefore available for all girls. Those who got them had to read them without the knowledge of their parents, as girls were not given permission to have access to such information. This is due to the fact that the changes occurred in considering girls' needs did not bring with it changes in the moralities regarding the importance of women's modesty, and the need to keep control over women's behaviour in order to conserve family's honour. In this way therefore, the control over access to information that was regarded unsuitable for girls continued to exist at this period, much as it had been in the traditional era.

The tendency toward reading varied among informants. While some described themselves as 'book worms', others explained that they would read only occasionally. *Maha* is a 34 year old teacher who lived her childhood in Sedyer, a rural area in Najed. She described how she liked reading and that she used to read anything and everything, to the extent that at night she would sleep over books while reading. She used to sneak to her brother's room to get the books that he would not allow her to read. Books such as *Anter* and 'One Thousand and One Night', which she would read all night. She adds:

*My family had a television set only when I was at high school. Therefore, watching television did not interfere with my readings while I was at Sedyer. However, but when we used to*
come to Riyadh City, we would spend most of our time watching television.

Gender in an important factor in such conditions, as girls often are more controlled in regard to access to information. For example, in contemporary families boys often control their sisters access to computer and video games (see McNamee, 1998).

Several other informants had similar experiences, not only in relation to the time they spent reading, but also the material they read, as group discussions revealed. Although getting hold of reading materials was not easy, especially for those who were living in rural areas, girls living in the cities were sometimes able to buy books from the few book stores available, or borrowing books from male relatives. For example Mody, who is 32 years old from Al-Qasim, enjoyed reading during her childhood and teen years. She mentioned that her father had volumes of books on many subjects, which she spent a long time reading.

Most of the highly educated informants talked about the importance of reading in their childhood. Fatima, 45 years old, is a professor at King Saud University. She explains:

I used to spend hours in reading, and while I was reading I would forget every thing around me. Once we moved to a house, at the upper floor I found a cupboard full of books,
I think it belonged to the people we rented the house from. I read all those books. I also remember that at an early age I advised my father to buy books for the children in the family, when he wanted to give them gifts.

Reading was an important element of daily life for girls during childhood, and often they started reading at the age of seven. As mentioned earlier, girls were often encouraged to read by family members. For example, although Monira’s father was illiterate he encouraged her to read. She described how he gave her the chance to choose the books she would like to read by taking her to the only bookstore which was open in Riyadh at that time. At an early age, and as most girls did, she read the stories published by ‘The Green Book Store’. By the age of ten she started reading translated novels, such as Jane Eyre and The Miserables. These books belonged to her mother (Um-Khaled) or friends of her mother, as they too were exchanging books. Monira described her eagerness to read saying:

Summer time was the best time for me, especially when I was on my own, as I would have enough time to read. I would read and read for a long time. Some books my mother would keep away from me, as she did not want me to read them. However, I found my way to them and read them.

Parents’ role in encouraging girls to read is noticeable in this case, and some change in girls’ reading can be traced by comparing the situation of
Monira with her mother. While her mother (Um-Khaled) was forbidden from learning to read (see Chapter Four), Monira was encouraged to attend school and to read. However some books she was still not allowed to read and this control was exercised by a continuity in moral values related to rearing girls and to the values appreciated in female character, such as innocence and shyness. By contrast boys were encouraged to have the opposite characters, to be knowledgeable and daring, characteristics similar to those included in children’s songs, as explained in Chapter Four.

Only a few women reported that they had not been allowed to read at all. Meizna, 37 years old, explained that this was because control over reading was taken by her father. He would not allow magazines or newspapers in their house. His judgement was built on the belief that they contained pictures and information that could be against religion and tradition.

Reading was emancipation for some children who had difficulties. Latifa, aged 43, had an accident that kept her from being with other children and she saw reading as an important way to create her own life. She explained:

After the accident I isolated my self. Reading was the only way for me to keep alive. I read all sorts of literature, such as most important translated novel in Russian and English literature, as well as Arabian novels.
A 34 years old Huda was interviewed with her two sisters in her house. She remembered an incident during her childhood. She describes:

*I liked reading so much. I used to read in the classroom, and if I started to read I would usually lose sense of every thing around me. Once I was reading a book of Al-Jothyman folk tales, I was hiding it on my lap and reading, I was deeply drawn by it, so I did not notice the teacher standing over my head, until she shouted at me, then spanked me. I really hated being punished for reading.*

For this generation, therefore, reading was a new skill, which became an integral part of children's daily activities and was part of constructing the new emerging understanding of childhood. It was also a new element which contributed to socialising children alongside the traditional means of socialisation. Reading combined leisure and learning, as folk tales had done for an earlier generation. The next part of this chapter deals with the role of folk tales in socialising girls who were born between 1955-1970.

**Folk Tales and Socialisation**

As was illustrated in Chapter Four, folk tales were considered as means of socialisation, as well as a leisure activity in traditional society. However the socio-economic changes and the development of new ways of understanding children and their needs affected the role of folk tales in children's culture. The
introduction of formal schooling and new leisure activities such as reading, listening to the radio and watching television and movies also had an impact on the role of folk tales, as the following section will go on to show.

As mentioned earlier, the process of socialising the female in traditional society had emphasised her character to be one of obedience, to be dutiful, patient, make sacrifices, and to show loyalty to her husband and her family (see Altorki, 1986; Al-Khayyat, 1990). As was explained in Chapters Two and Four, such moralities for female behaviour and women’s social status were emphasized throughout the life course. With the introduction of education and literacy towards the mid twentieth century such images continued to be carried by the school’s curriculum and in children's literature (Al-Mnofi, 1988). Female characteristics in folk tales were highlighted in children’s literature to great extent (Al-Mana, 1996; O’connor, 1989), and women would often appear in folk tales as lacking in wisdom, and as being weak physically and emotionally. Thus women needed to be controlled and oriented, and this would be the adult’s job and mainly the job for male family members to ensure the family honour.

However, in comparing this to women's roles and characters in reality, as was illustrated in the data provided by the first generation, a difference can be noticed. In the previous generation women were playing an important role in sustaining a living for their families. They were facing a hard life, and bearing great responsibilities. However, the ideology behind the processes of socialising female had nonetheless continued to emphasise an earlier
understanding of the female character and the marginal importance of women. In the following section I compare the experience of the first generation to the second, in order to study continuity as well as change in the function of folk tales in girl's culture.

**Folk Tales and Children**

Despite the changes in children's culture which started to grow by the mid 1950s, most second generation informants illustrated how folk tales continued to be a leisure activity during their childhood. As with the previous generation, some informants did not listen to folk tales during their childhood for similar reasons. However, the majority of them did.

For most informants gathering for listening to folk tales during childhood was, as with the earlier generation, a family event, where warmth and closeness to other members of the family were part of it. The joy of such an experience is part of being a member of a large group, extended family and neighbours, and often mixing with different age categories. For many informants the time and place for telling the tales was part of remembering the joy of such event. The time for telling the tales would often be in the evening before going to sleep, as many informants explained. Other times would be in the afternoon or at family gatherings or social gatherings with neighbours. Another occasion would be when the family was camping in the desert or at a farm².

² Such activities were becoming common, as people had started moving to live in the cities in the 1950s.
The design and the use of the house were also important aspects of the informant’s correlation to the event of gathering for folk tales. The place would change according to the seasons. During summer it would mostly be in an open area because of the hot weather, and in winter it would be inside a room, mostly around a warm fire. Although the shape of the house has changed for most new areas in Riyadh City, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, still it could be adapted in response to the weather conditions. For example, the roof (Suteh) was built at the top of the house, and was a flat open area surrounded by walls. Therefore, it was an open private place that could be used for different purposes, such as sleeping and gathering during summer nights. However, in other parts of the city, as well as the rural areas where some informants lived, the traditional dwelling was still in use. In such dwellings the gathering, as with the first generation, often would be in summer, in the inner court-yard or in the roof (suteh), and in winter inside the rooms, on the lower floor, where, occasionally, they would light a fire and gather around it. Many informants talked about their experience of listening to folk tales with a lot of yearning. Assma, a 38 year old teacher at primary school, recalls the experience:

*We used to run to the roof (Suteh), we would clean it and lean the mattresses, and wait for my mother to come and tell us the tales.*
The tales they heard as children were told for everybody, and in few cases, especially for them. Suaad, 40 years old and a teacher, describes how this took place:

*The tales would usually be told for everybody,* occasionally when it was only women gathering it could be told for adults. Only at that time my mother would beckon, so we would leave.

The subjects of the tales were similar to the ones told by the first generation, and mostly concerned family relations, such as a stepmother harming her stepchildren or a sister in law harming her brother's wife. Folk tales also contained themes around villainy and goodness or beauty, where the wicked person would be punished. The gathering would also some times be for telling jokes or tales about the old life and their parent's experience.

Although children at this generation started to have variety of information through various sources, folk tales continued to play such a role. Most informants pointed that the purpose of telling the tales would be mostly to pass the time, and also to teach children moral values. Children themselves would sometimes ask adults to tell them tales. At other times, however, the tales would be told after incident, and in that case the tale would be to confirm specific values, such as the punishment for not listening to a parent's advice or going outside the house without asking permission. Most times the tales would be imaginary. On other occasions, adults could be
talking about historical events or about the more personal experiences of previous generations, as mentioned above. Sometimes they would mention a traditional saying and they would tell the story about its origin. Some informants mentioned that the tales would some times be about prophets and religious events. However, such information was most often provided from schoolbooks. Some informants also talked about tales which they later read during their teen years in books.

Therefore, these subjects were similar to those in the childhood of the first generation and were often the very same tales. This indicates the continuity and the transformation of experience between generations. It also shows that adulthood and childhood were not yet totally separated.

This discussion highlighting the emerging change in the experience of the different generations, thus also emphasises continuity. Education was providing information and skills for the second generation, not available for the first, and worked to empower members of the second generation. Meanwhile, the socialising of girls according to the traditional moralities continued (see also Rossie, 1993: 194).

The informants explained that they were able to understand the tales, since they were familiar with the language. Sometimes they would ask their grandmother about the meanings if they needed to. On the whole, children would usually listen carefully to tales, and would seldom ask questions. **Nora**, a 33 year old teacher, says:
We used to listen in concert to tales. We were able to understand the tales because it used the same daily language we used in communication with each other, therefore, seldom would we ask questions.

As with the first generation, introducing fear was one way to control children and this method continue to be used during the childhood of the second generation. The informants explained that most of the folk tales or the phrases that were used to control children in general contained frightening themes (see also Ali, 2000). Therefore, in part there is continuity in the role of folk tales as a means of socialising children.

Girls’ reactions to the frightening themes in folk tales varied (see also Trousdale, 1989). For some, being a member of large group of children in the family had eased the fear. Older children were sometimes there to support younger ones and they would often explain to them that it was imaginary and not reality. Therefore, when adults were trying to keep children from going out during the afternoon, in order for the adult to get rest, children would sometimes go to their relative’s houses across the connecting roofs. Suha talked about this:

My mother insisted that there are frightening creatures wandering in the streets in the afternoon to collect the children and take them away. Those were called: Um Al-Saaf Wallef.
Homart Al gayla, and Um-Homar. She was telling us that in order to keep us from going out while adults are resting in the afternoon, and also to keep us quiet during that time. However, my cousins were older than me and my sister and they used to tell us that we should not believe that, and they encouraged us to go out. As our houses were connected by one roof it was not difficult to go to their house.

Other children were also frightened by the characters in the tales, and some explained that they have carried their fear until now. Fatima illustrated her fear saying:

When I was a child, a tale was often told about a woman who was wearing dirty, ragged clothes (Um-alkhlageen) and wondering in the streets every afternoon to kidnap the children who were not staying home. I was frightened by this character, and it will often cross my mind when I am alone or in a dark place. I started wondering about the logic of this character when I was about 14 years old.

Hanna is 32 years old, and a teacher at kindergarten. She was interviewed with her three sisters and expressed her feelings in the following way:

The electricity would go off sometimes, and it was the best time for my aunt to tell us tales. They often contained
frightening themes. I was frightened by those tales, and continued to have these feeling until I went to college. I remember at that time I would not dare to climb the stairs to the second floor unless someone accompanied me, as I was frightened to be alone.

However, only a few of them remembered they did not like the tales, and remember it as frightening experience. Haila is 36 years old, and she is the daughter of Um-Mohammed. She had lived with her grandmother after her parents were divorced, and she describes her experience of listening to folk tales:

_I lived with my father and my grandmother. I was responsible for the housework and for caring for my younger brothers and sisters, at a time when I was too young to handle that. My grand mother used to tell us tales, and I did not like those tales because they were frightening. It was part of dreadful relation with my grandmother._

Sometimes these childhood fears would reappear in their dreams. Tarfa, 40 years old, and a teacher at elementary school, is one such case:

_Yes, I think the frightening themes in folk tales have affected me. Until now I have a dream that I am running in the street without wearing the Abayah._
However, the majority explained that they liked the tales in their childhood, regardless of the fact that sometimes they were frightening and indeed they would ask the teller to tell them tales, again and again. **Lulwa**, 39 years old and a mother of some of the children who were interviewed at the public library, explains:

*Although my father died during my early childhood, I had a wonderful stepfather. My mother along with my stepfather used to tell us folk tales. Some of these tales were frightening. However, lying next to my mother at bedtime, on the roof *Suteh*, gave me the feeling of being safe and secure. Both parents were very kind to me and I was not frightened.*

Other informants explained that the tales told to them were not frightening. A 37 years old **Sara**, talks about the tales:

*The stories were told to us by my grandmother as well as my mother were not frightening. They were similar to Cinderella, I remember the one about the king’s son (*Iben Al-sultan*) who loved a poor girl. Others were about animals such as *Um Al-Anzian*, and some had sequences of events. We liked those stories.*
Most informants described their feelings while listening to the tales during their childhood as a mixture of astonishment, marvelling, imaginative joy, fear, worry and sadness. They relate their childhood enjoyment to their enjoyment of fantasy and the value of such family gatherings and often also to their more specific relation with the storyteller. Other feelings were drawn out by the events in the tales and it is obvious that listening to folk and fable tales was seen as an important social event, involving emotional relations (see also Zipes, 1992: 12).

**Telling the Tales**

The discussion with the informants showed that the relation between the children and the storyteller is an important one, especially when the storyteller is an elderly person from the family. The elderly family member in traditional Arab families has special status and respect and it may be that their emotional relationship with children has grown deeper, as their past economical role has decreased. Elderly members of Arab families in the traditional period, though they might have become physically unable to play an active role in the family’s economy, would still play an authoritative role in the family to great extent. Furthermore, often the decrease in their physically active role has also been partly replaced by playing a role in children’s daily lives, with whom they could share time and experience. The family, pre 1970, therefore carried on the traditional moral values, such as respect and care between its members, and these continued to be a central part of family relations and obligations.
The storyteller was in most cases the grandmother, or the mother. Other times it was other members of the family, such as the eldest sister, or the father, an elderly woman who could be a relative or some one living in the neighbourhood. A few cases pointed to their stepmother, uncle, and grandfather. Budria, 38 years old, and originally from the south part of Saudi Arabia, works as a cleaner at school, pointed out that elderly women in her old neighbourhood used to tell the tales. They would gather in an open courtyard in the neighbourhood and everybody would join the group to listen to the tales. Children’s own feelings toward the tales were an important part of the construction of their relationship with such people.

The storyteller could play a variety of roles, such as singing, reciting poems, acting out parts. Different materials could be used, such as sticks, sand and mud to create the characters involved in the tale. The teller would occasionally ask questions to attract the audience’s attention; at other times they would pose conundrums to the audience, or talk about past community life. Some informants remembered themselves participating by singing the songs in the tales, which they were able to memorise easily since the tales were often repeated. Though these activities did not take place in all situations, this could have been one of the factors that so attracted children to the storyteller, and to the event as a whole. Shikha, a 38 year old administrator at elementary school, explains:

*My grand mother used to tell us tales, and poem about fighting in war. I liked her and always related her to the tales.*
Many informants had similar experiences to this and they highlighted the role of the storyteller in attracting them to tales, even if they contained frightening themes. They described their feelings toward the tales at the present time in terms of a longing to go back to that time. They thought the tales had taught them moral values, such as being brave, honest, and generous. Some of them explained they would laugh at themselves as they remember how they believed the tales during their childhood.

However, unlike the previous generation, they often thought folk tales contained themes unsuitable for their own children. Maha explains:

*As I think about the tales now, I know that some were not suitable for children. Therefore I don’t tell them to my children. Some of the tales were about male/female relations, and it was not proper for children to hear it. Since my mother was busy with the housework and her younger children, she did not have time for the tales. We used to listen to tales told by an old relative woman. These tales were mostly frightening and often had sexual themes, which until recently I was frightened by them."

For Monira, however, the subjects of folk tales were not frightening, for her family would avoid telling frightening tales to their children. However, she remembered a tale about demon who occupied the body of a
girl, this tale, as she described it, was a bit frightening and contained sexual elements. However, as a child she did not understand those parts. She added that she had two books of folk tales, one of them she did not like much because of the frightening themes it contained. The other one was a collection of folk tales that she used to read as a child:

Recently I found this book at my parents house, coverless and thrown carelessly. I still remember the cover of that book and the joyful readings. I am keeping this book now, and I am planning to introduce it to my children.

This suggests that these women have a rather different perception of children and children's needs than earlier generations of mothers. Further discussion regarding the generational diversity in evaluating the role of folk tales in socialising children will be carried out in Chapter Seven.

Family Structure and Folk Tales

As mentioned above, gathering for the telling of tales represented a warm relationship within the family. The structure of the extended family continued to help in providing the teller, as well as affecting children's feelings toward the event of listening to tales, as was the case with the first generation. For some it was the time when they got to be close to their mother, who was busy all day, working in the house and with younger siblings. Others had similar feelings toward the teller, as he/she would often
be a member of the family, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or older sisters or sisters in law, and in some cases the teller was a member of the local community, such as women who would help in domestic work or in taking care of younger children. Many informants described the warmth and closeness between family members. For example, Aziza, 42 years old and a lecturer at King Saud University, talks about her memories:

In winter we used to gather around a fire. Usually we would be drinking hot milk, as my father would tell us tales. I remember some times my father would set me on his lap and cover me with his over coat (Beshet) to keep me warm. Those times were the best.

Monira remembered listening to folk tales as a social event where she felt close to her parents, siblings and other relatives. The teller played an important role in attracting the attention to the tale. He/she would act, sing, change voices, and some times tell poetry. The tale would usually be long when large groups of relatives gathered but at other times, especially when Monira’s family was alone, the tales would be based on daily life or refer to memories and incident in the past. The shape of the house, and the place where the family sat to tell the tales were integral to this affectionate remembrance. Monira explained:

We used to live in a house with a large open area at the entrance (Branda). We used to bring the coffee, me and my
sister, and sit listening to my mother and my father talking about our grandparents and the old life. Other times, especially in the evening before sleeping, we would go to the roof (Suteh) and spray the floor with water to cool the heat in the summer, then would lay the mattresses. My mother would talk to us while we all laying down ready to go to sleep. Sometimes she would tell us folk tales. Those were relaxing moments as we were tired as well as my mother. However, long tales would mostly be told when gathering with other relatives. They would be long interesting tales, just like movies. These could be folk tales that are spread between people by word of mouth.

The details described by Monira were repeated by other informants and highlight the fact that the tales were a social event and related to the place and the time they were told in. The resemblance in the tale’s role to the cinema in Monira’s illustration sharpens the role of folk tales as a live activity, where the audience becomes involved with their emotions and imagination. It also emphasises the role of the teller role in attracting an audience and getting them to associate with the events in the tale. Children’s great interest in folk tales, at that time, relates to the absence or limited role of media and television.

Hanna and her sisters, Hebah, Hessah, and Nouf, enjoyed listening to folk tales during their childhood. They explained that folk tales would be
told almost every night, between the 6-8 o’clock Al-mogreb-Al-isha prayer. During summer time they would gather on the roof of the house, or at the yard (Al-Hosh), while in winter it would be inside the house. They described those tales as magic spells. Although they thought that they would often include strange ideas, they were not frightening. Hessah (36 years old) explains:

My grandmother’s tales were like magic spells. We used to finish our work quickly in order to listen to her. Her local dialogue (Gusymee) was beautiful, all her tales were fanciful, and they also had information, which we were not able to gain from another source. Some of her tales were about the devil and spirits, however it attracted us and it was not scary, other tales were about the step mother and the conflict with her step children, or about the conflict between the wife and her sister in law, where you could see a resemblance with Cinderella and other children’s current stories.

The above confirms that the experience of telling and listening to folk tales were joyful activities that fitted the daily life of the second generation during their childhood. Folk tales would bring people together at the end of a day to share time and experience. Also the structure of the house created less boundaries between individuals and provided space for shared activities. Therefore, folk tales were part of the function of the extended family, and the
relations that constricted its structure, the mixed feelings, which children pre
1970 had toward them need to be understood within that structure.

**Girls in the Family: Work and Play**

The structure of the Arab family emphasised the need for girls of the second generation to take responsibility in domestic work and toward siblings, as was illustrated in the analysis of the previous generation (see also Nieuwenhuys, 1994: 86). These issues continued to be of a core importance for female members of the family. Family size in the 1950s-1970s was still large, compared with contemporary families, and this was due to the continuity in the moral values associated with high fertility. The high child birth rate was still encouraged by religious, social and economic aspects of life in Saudi Arabia, by the limitation of birth control methods, and to some extent by the improvement in medical services. As pointed out in the analysis for the previous generation, it was also in part, a result of polygamous marriages, which became more possible by the mid 1950s with the rise in income. This led in several cases to a noticeably high number of children in a single family, whose ages often ranged between 5-20. Those children would usually be living together in one house, sharing play and work and all other matters in their daily life. Therefore, there is an increase in the number of children per family when compared to the family in the first generation.

Children’s roles were constructed within the structure of the family. Hanna, Hebah, Hessah, and Nouf explained how the housework was divided
between them, and according to their age. They illustrated this by saying that their mother used to cook, while two of them would help her in the kitchen and the other two would finish cleaning the house. They pointed out that the afternoons were an active period: their mother would usually visit friends or relatives, especially at times of special occasions, such as marriage or death or illness. Visiting at such times was a social obligation. The girls were left to finish their home-work on their own, and to tidy the house (see Nieuwenhuys, 1994: 69; Punch, 2001: 27). Nouf who is 46 years old and works at the administration of a school talked about children’s role in the family and compared it to current childhood:

*We knew that we were responsible for cleaning the house, therefore we would not make a mess. After lunch we would clean the kitchen and go out in the yard where we used to have a rug lain out for us. We would sit on that rug doing our homework, and when we finished we would collect everything. If you compare this to children in current society you would notice that a great change has happened. Today a girl at elementary level is considered as a little child. She would come back from school to rest and watch television. By contrast, we started working in the house by the age of seven. Our responsibilities were graded according to our age.*

The change in family income provided the ability for some to hire help with domestic work. This help would sometimes be local women from low-
income families. They would do part of the housework as well as help take care of younger children. The family would often need this help at times of childbirth, illness, or when mothers were busy with social occasions. These women could also be the tellers for folk tales, as mentioned earlier. Other types of help were also provided by migrants from low-income neighbouring countries. For example, it was common for the family to hire house boys, mostly of Yemeni ancestry, to help in the domestic work, and they often worked for few hours a day. This phenomenon was widespread in different cities in Saudi Arabia, such as Riyadh and Jeddah. Other studies mentioned that this situation developed only in the late sixties, with the increasing contact with other societies (see Altorki, 1986:31).

Although this situation might seem to indicate of an easing in male/female relationships, as families accepted the fact that young men would be working inside the house where they would be in direct contact with female members including their daughters. The possibility of such situation existing could, however, also be related to the perception of male/female relationship in Saudi society. This continued to be considered strongly restricted and controlled through religious regulation. Therefore, the general expectation was built on the belief that people simply would not dare to break the boundaries around it.

Although help was sometimes provided, girls still took part in domestic work, and this went alongside the girl's role in helping their families. It was part of identifying female membership within the family. Several
informants accentuated this fact (see also Boyden, Ling, and Myers: 1998). For example, Amal is 45 years old, and lived during her childhood in a big family with sisters and stepsisters, as well as other relatives. Her father was a merchant and therefore his income allowed him to hire house helpers. However, during the summer school break, he would usually ask the girls to take over the house work. Amal and her sisters explained that they remembered times when they carried all the responsibility for the house and for their father’s needs and his guests. Other informants had similar experiences.

Housework has always been considered a woman’s job in Arab families and therefore boys were not asked to help (see Rossie, 1993: 194). In this study, only a few women mentioned different aspects of female work in the family. Hind is 41 years old and a mother of children interviewed at the library. She describes her experience:

*I was the only girl with six brothers, my mother would not let me do all the work. She taught my brothers to take care of their clothes and to help in all house work.*

Another case was mentioned by Gada, 36 years old and working as a supervisor for a kindergarten. She explained that the children in her family were not asked to do housework as their mother, along with a servant, was responsible for that. She added that despite the fact that her family’s income

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3 Several informants pointed to their father’s role in arranging such situations, which could be part of male authority to take decisions regarding female roles according to society moves.
was considered as upper middle class, their house was small: one master bedroom, two children's bedrooms, and sitting areas. Moreover, the daily needs were simple and easy to attend to. Therefore, the housework was easy and children did not need to work.

However, the exception in this case could be explained by the fact that Gada's mother (Um-Ahmed), as mentioned in Chapter Four, is originally from Syria. Therefore, her interaction with another culture could have affected her understanding of girl's role. This is indicated perhaps in the fact that she gave the children time to play and study, rather than to do the housework, and in caring about their appearance and their food, suggesting a new concept of childhood and children's needs. However, it is important to remember the influence of the dominant Arab culture, and that therefore any diversities in female roles could only be limited. These issues will be further illustrated in the following sections of this chapter.

**Girls' Role in Domestic work**

The Saudi family was affected by the main trends in the development of the Arab world. Thus the main goals of women's education were to train them to be better mothers and housewives. Therefore, the socialisation process at home and in school emphasised preparing girls for family roles. Girls were asked to help their families in all types of domestic work, such as cleaning the house, washing dishes, washing clothes, ironing, laying mattresses out for sleeping, and some times cooking or helping with that. On some occasions,
when a mother was sewing for a living, or just for her family, girls would help too (see also Nieuwenhuys, 1994: 86). Girls were also often responsible for serving tea and coffee when other women were visiting their mothers. Most informants explained that they started taking part of the housework at the age of seven, and as they grew older they would usually take more or even full responsibility. **Wadha** talked about her experience:

> I remember when I started washing the dishes I had to use a chair in order to reach the sink. However my mother was helping me.

Girl’s participation in domestic work varied some times between informants (see also Punch, 2001: 27). This was related to different circumstances, such as age, birth order, the number of siblings, the absence of a mother or both parents due to illness, death or work. At other times, a girl’s work was related to the family’s socio-economic level. The discussions with informants illustrated that they all helped in housework, sharing with their sisters, where the eldest would usually take the greater responsibility. **Sara** mentioned that, for her, as the eldest daughter, she took great responsibility in domestic work and even when her mother delivered babies, she used to take care of her. This happened when she was in the sixth grade and she was 11 years old. **Fatima** who is also the eldest, talked about her experience:

> I started working at early age, by the age of seven I was doing all sorts of housework. As my mother gave birth
almost every year. I had to take care of my younger siblings. During the time of her delivery I had to take care of her and stay all the time beside her, as there was a belief that women should not be left alone during the six weeks following giving birth, otherwise their body will be occupied by the devil. I remember how anxious I was to go out to play with other children, and during those times I would stand by the door, placing one foot inside the house and the other one outside, in the street.

Jowaher, a 40 year old teacher, also explained that when her mother gave birth to twins, she and her sister and each took care of one child. Hila, as mentioned earlier lived with her grandmother, because her mother was divorced. She explained that as the eldest sister she had to take care of her siblings and by the age of twelve she was independently sewing clothes for her family and herself. Nora (aged 44) by the age of nine was taking full responsibility toward her parents and siblings, because of her mother’s illness.

The informants talked about the simplicity of the house-hold and therefore the work they were asked to do. Tarfa, for example, said:

Although we had certain jobs we had to complete as part of the housework, we were mostly left to manage the time and the way to do it on our own. Furthermore, the simplicity in the furniture made cleaning easier. We had cement floors and
small rugs and few pieces of furniture over it. It was easy to move them around and clean, therefore we were able to participate in housework.

40 year old Wadha adds:

Our life was simple. We used to have animals in the house such as chicken and pigeons, and it was not big deal if our clothes got dirty or the house. The house was also designed in a simple way, therefore cleaning and housework were simple and we were able to participate.

Girls’ responsibility would change according to their age. They often took bigger responsibilities as they grew older and this change in responsibilities across time is clear in Sara’s situation. Changes in her family life created the need for her to work. She talked about her experience in the following way:

We had housemaids, but my parents arranged the housework, so we would take part helping in certain jobs. When I was twelve years old my mother died while she was delivering a child. One year later my father died too. Our lives changed completely. I had to stop going to school and take care of my younger sisters and brothers, because I was the eldest.
Only a few informants mentioned that they participated in work outside the house, and these were those living in rural areas during their childhood. They remembered that they helped herding animals, and milking cows or goats, bringing in crops and fruit and, some times, assisting with carrying water to the house.

Some informants explained that they did not do any housework during their childhood. However, this was only under certain rather special conditions, often related to being the youngest child. Liyla, 30 years old and a teacher, talks about this:

_ I did not do any housework, though I wanted to. I was the youngest, and my mother did not want me to work. She thought I should concentrate on my studying._

In the second generation, girl's role in domestic work was still a necessity for most families, as parents would usually depend on girls to do certain jobs. Monira's family represents a somewhat unique situation, since her mother went to school after marriage and was also working, as explained earlier. Therefore, her mother spent long periods of the day either studying or working. Monira and her sister were therefore obligated to take care of a large part of the domestic work, and it was their duty, as daughters, since there was no one else to do it.
However, it was left to the girls themselves to manage the time for completing these jobs, and they often mixed work with play or with other activities. **Monira** talks about work at home:

*We had no choice. This was more accurate for me as I am the eldest. My mother at the beginning was a student, then a working woman. Therefore, we would go to school and come back and find the house as it was in the morning when we left it. We had to clean the house and help my mother with the cooking, and after lunch we had to wash the dishes. However, I was not a very dutiful daughter, as I always tried to find a way not to complete the jobs, and to take my time in that. I would play with the soap, along with my sister, and listen to the radio, and this might take all afternoon till sun-set.*

Girls often mixed work with play, a phenomenon which also occurred in the previous generation, and in other cultures according to comparative studies (see Punch, 2001; and Chapter Four). However, in the second generation girls were working less outside the house. Therefore, the circumstances related to mixing play with work are different, and mainly centred around domestic work.

Comparing girl's role in domestic work in this generation with the previous one, we can notice some changes. The type of work girls had to do has changed and is linked to the socio-economic conditions, including the
migration from deserts and rural areas to urban societies, which reflects the economic changes that were taking place in the society during the sixties. However, girls work continued to be important for their families as the cultural expectations continued to view children obligated to such conditions. Nevertheless, girls in this generation, as was the case with the first one, were often interpreting these tasks and inserting their own agenda with adult’s. Furthermore, during their adulthood as they remembered in the interviews, they regarded their participation in domestic work a positive experience, which they viewed as part of family life and also as a training process which empowers them for future life. Comparing their childhood to contemporary children, they often consider children have lost the value of work due to the debates related to the abusive nature of child work (see also Boyden, Ling, and Myers, 1998).

**Family Structure and Relationships**

The social roles of children during the second generation was a function of their being members of large families. In many cases children would be actively involved in constructing their own culture, within the family, as many informants illustrated (see also Kosonen, 1996). For example, **Zahra** is 43 years old and a teacher. She has 20 siblings, and she described her relationships with them to be close and warm. **Mureim** is 36 years old and a teacher also remembered well the relations between members of her family. She described her stepmother as caring person, both as their mother and for them as stepchildren. She also admired her role in telling tales for them.
She talked about her experience:

*I enjoyed visiting my stepmother, who was living in a house my father built for her in the middle of his farm. She was rich in telling folk tales, I used to help her and bring her needs in order to tell me tales, along with my stepbrothers and sisters. If my mother knew about this she would be very angry with me.*

The anger of Mureim’s mother is related to the social belief that women are usually jealous of the other wives of their husband. Therefore, it is thought that their children should not have good relationships with their stepmother or stepsisters and brothers. This idea is emphasised, for example, in many of the folk tales that informants listened to during their childhood. However, children were often actively involved in creating their own relations, despite these cultural beliefs (see James and Prout, 1997). This is obvious in the case of Amal 45 years old, and her stepsisters, Mashail 44 and Huda 34, who lived together during their late childhood. They were the daughters of several mothers, one of them is Lebanese, while the other lived her early childhood in Kuwait with her mother. They enjoyed living together when they moved to Riyadh, and established strong and warm relations that have lasted till the present day. Mashail talked about their experiences:

*Moving to Riyadh was difficult at the beginning, because this meant a great change in the society and in relations, above all to be separated from our mother. However,*
we as girls, started to build a relationship. Our age was close, and we were part of a big group of children, spending a long time together and sharing several activities. We shared play, reading and housework. We developed warmth and interest, and this went on through our teen years, and adulthood.

In their daily life children were therefore interacting with different members of their extended families (see Altorki and Zrig, 1995). Many informants, for example, talked about their grand mothers’ role in helping their mother to take care of them, as was the case of Suha when her grandmother joined them to live in Bahrain, since their father was not always able to stay with them. She talked about her grandmother’s role in getting them ready to go to school every morning, feeding them, and telling them tales in the evening. For other informants, other members of the extended family were important. Amal and her sisters talked about their uncle, who used to take them for rides in his car. He was also a musician and, therefore, his music added joy to their life. They also remembered him talking to them, and providing them with knowledge about different subjects – important for girls, for whom education was still a much prized commodity.

**Girls and Play**

Most informants explained that until the late 1960s girls were able to play both inside and outside the house, and with neighbours and relatives. They would usually play games similar to those played by the previous
generation. Most games depended on what was provided in nature or by the community, such as sand and mud, stones, and sticks, as there were still few commercial toys. Amal, who has a bachelor degree in education, talked about her experience:

*I do not remember that I had ever owned a toy. I used to play with relatives and neighbours outside our house. We played with sand and mud, some times to create characters in tales, other times for different games.*

The informants who lived during their childhood in rural areas pointed out that most of their play took place out doors. They played under the trees, swam in water springs, and played with date seeds in the sand. All girls played social games similar to those played by the older generation, such as visiting each other in pretend houses and cooking. Singing group games were also popular as well as jumping ropes, games which were widespread at home and at school. Some children enjoyed rolling around inside large barrels, others played with marbles. Most of the games played by this generation of girls were shared games, such as ‘war’ and ‘school’ where children were taking turns to act out teacher’s and student’s roles. Playing school was, however, a new game, which was introduced in this generation and reflects the change that was taking place (see also Rossie, 2001).

Other new games had also entered into girl's play, such as playing with cards, and monopoly. Other girls would use the lids of empty ‘Pepsi’ bottles,
along with rubber bands, to create catapults. Another popular new game was caroms, which is a board game and has black and white discs and a red 'queen' and a 'striker'. The goal of this game is to strike more number of discs including the queen. This game is described in the UNICEF edition about games of the world:

When they have finished helping their parents in the marketplace, Yemeni children like to join their friends for a game of caroms. If no one thought to bring a board along, the children scratch a game diagram in the dirt. The game has been a favourite in India, Burma, and the Yemen for the past hundred years: it is probable that this simple type of pocket billiards was first played by the Egyptians or the Ethiopians (1982:98).

Most of these new games therefore reflect the global effect on children's play and the growing contact of other cultures. This bears witness therefore to the emergence of a new understanding of childhood where play was becoming a more specialised activity of children and special games were beginning to define 'child's play'.

Dolls continued to hold an important part of girls play, as most informants remembered playing with dolls during their childhood (c.f Rossie, 2001). These dolls were often made out of clothes or sticks, which mothers, and sometimes children themselves, would make. The informants
pointed out that the doll’s face would occasionally be made out of photos of actors, which they would cut out from magazines. Comparing this with the previous generation, this change provides indication of the introduction of reading material and publications into the everyday life of girls.

**Fatima**, 45 years old, talked about her mother making dolls for her and her sisters. She says:

*My mother was a good tailor. She used to sew clothes for customers and sell them. She used to make dolls for my sisters and me. They were made of materials stuffed with cotton, and dressed in dresses made out of left materials. Using eyeliner we would draw the eyes and face features.*

**Mashail**, who has a masters degree in chemistry, as a child also sewed dresses for her sister’s dolls. Other informants talked about older girls making dolls for younger ones and some children had also used empty carton boxes to create dolls’ houses.

**Rugya**, 39 years old, who is illiterate, lived her childhood with her grandmother at ‘Alnamas’ in the southern region. Her mother used to send her dolls from Mecca, which were brought by the pilgrims who were visiting the holy mosque. She remembered that those dolls were made out of cotton.
Some cases showed the introduction of commercial toys in their play. For example, 36 year old Gada talked about the other games which were played by girls inside the house:

We used to have some toys to play with inside the house, such as china set. We used it to serve each other while playing imaginary games. We would wear high-heeled shoes and we tied our gowns from the back to look like ladies dresses, and we would pretend to visit each other and drink tea and coffee. We would play some times, mothers and fathers, and would dress up like men and women. We had nice modern dresses, because my mother cared a lot about the way we look. She used to bring our clothes from Kuwait.

Other informants also talked about having plastic dolls. 45 year old Saiwa, an administrator, described a doll she had with two faces, and her favourite doll was able to open and close her eyes. Few other informants also reported that they had bought toys or that somebody had bought them, but only Mashail, 44 years old, had a ‘Barbie’ doll. She talks about this:

I had toys, which I bought while I was living in Lebanon. When my father used to come to visit us he would buy me toys too. A friend of my mother bought me Barbie as she travelled abroad and Barbie was already on the market at that
time. When I moved to Riyadh, I had my toys with me, but seldom would I allow anybody to play with them.

Therefore, under such conditions, children in general had more sense of a community of children, as they were part of big groups of children, and members of big families with large number of siblings and relatives. Children themselves mostly controlled these social relations and were actively involved in creating their roles toward other children. However, children were playing with other children from different age categories, and therefore the age boundaries (characteristic of contemporary childhood) had not yet emerged as a distinguishing feature (see also Opie, 1969). These boundaries of childhood, i.e. the division into age stages, only slowly started to appear with the growing influence of schooling. Further discussion regarding these issues will be carried out when analysing contemporary childhood in Chapters Six and Seven.

**Family and Play**

Being a member of an extended family continued to be an important element that affected children’s play. The role of large family as well as the extended family is clear in Monira’s case: her siblings, nieces and cousins all played together. Monira has 6 siblings; three of them are stepsisters and brothers. Although she was living in Riyadh with her family, other members from her extended family, cousins and nieces, would often visit for long
periods of times, such as during summer vacations and they would stay over at Monira’s house. Play would usually be mixed, and boys and girls would play together. She explained that she liked playing with boys more than with girls. They would play hide and seek, chasing each other, and war games. Monira illustrated this saying:

*The most joyful time in my life was when my relatives came from the village to visit us. Our house was in Malaz, and it was close to a mountain. Those mountains were our playground, we would climb them and play different games such as war games. We used to divide ourselves into two fighting groups, and most of our play took place out in the street. I don’t remember myself playing with girls much.*

For Amal, who has twelve siblings (of whom some are stepsiblings, three brothers and nine sisters), being a member of big family also affected her play during childhood. Her father, who was a merchant, was able to build houses for himself and his brothers side by side in one big yard, and surrounded by one wall. Play took place, therefore, mostly in this yard, with other relatives. Although girls chose in this case to play in their yard most of the time, they were also allowed to play in the street, although, as in earlier generations, most informants explained that by the age of ten they would be stopped from playing in the street.
Mashail illustrated her feelings toward being a child in a big family as follows:

*I lived in Lebanon with my mother and my youngest sister. We were living a different type of life, where access to several leisure activities was available. However when I moved to Riyadh at the age of twelve, leaving my mother behind, I enjoyed being with my other sisters and surrounded by relatives. I enjoyed most of all going to the desert. I was ready to do anything in order to be able to go camping in the desert.*

Hanna, Hebah, Hessah, and Nouf, as mentioned earlier are four sisters, and they have three brothers. They talked about the effect of living in a large family during childhood. Their house was at Al-Malaz in Riyadh, next to their extended family, and they shared the yard with their grand father and their uncles. They used to play with neighbours and relatives, and even with their aunts, who were close to their age, and therefore they were part of large children’s playgroup with boys and girls often playing together. Studies in other traditional Arab societies have shown similar phenomenon, where different age groups will share play with young children (Ammar, 1954; Rossie, 1993), which accentuate the role of the extended family in children’s play.
Although, play would some times be divided according to gender, as noted above, shared games were also part of children's play (see Thorne, 1993). The separation between girls and boys was not a big issue, especially when children were under 10 years old. As explained in Chapter Four, religion considers the age of ten is the time when boys and girls should be obligated to complete prayers. It is also the age when they should be segregated, starting with separating their beds, and girls would usually kept from playing in the street.

However, as the informants illustrated, gender was not a big issue in shaping children's play, and the children themselves would choose what to play and with whom. Girls would often share boys' more physical games outdoors, as, for example, Aziza, who talked about playing different games with boys, such as climbing trees. Suha, 45 years old, described her ability to defeat boys in playing marbles:

Although boys were not often happy with me playing
with them, some times the losing team would have no choice
but to call me to play with them, in order to win.

Living in one extended family, boys and girls had the chance to play together. Moral values within the family, which consider male members
responsible for protecting their relative females, could be an element that helped ease these gender relations. Moreover, an adult’s awareness of children’s sexuality had not yet influenced male/female relationships in childhood (see also Rossie, 1993:195). Children still had limited access to information about sex and the knowledge which they did have was mostly gained through their local community, as compared with the more global understanding available to contemporary children via the Internet and TV (see Chapters Six and Seven). Thus, children were often regarded as innocent, and unable to understand, what were considered as adult's issues.

Fatima thought that boys and girls were free to play together because the families, living in one neighbourhood, were already close and knew each other. Therefore they would trust children to play together. 29 year old Salha, who had completed elementary school only, explains this in relation to the simple life people were living, where their houses were open to each other and nothing was hidden.

After the age of ten, girls would now more often be playing inside the house and also they would be given more jobs in domestic work. Thus girls became subject to the control of their parents, brothers, and grand mothers, as Amal describes:

My parents were usually busy, and couldn’t always keep an eye on us. Therefore we would some times sneak out to play or just stand by the door watching, other times to buy from
door to door sellers. However, my grand mother was always around, and would often keep a grip on us inside the house.

In only a few cases girls were not allowed to play in the street at any age. This occurred, for example, in one case when the family had only one daughter, or in one where one or both parents were dead and a relative had taken care of the child. Zainb 28 years old, from the southern region, was interviewed at the social services office and she explained that she had never played with other children at the street because, during early childhood, her mother had died. Therefore, she accompanied her father while he was working in the fields. Other women explained that their fathers would not allow girls to be out in the street, one to a more puritanical value system.

**Play and Community**

The neighbourhood continued to provide children with playing areas and with people with whom to communicate and build up friendships (see Stevens, 1977; opie, 1969). Children would play outdoors, inside the house with relatives and neighbours, walk to school, or ride the bus together. The relationship between neighbours, as with the first generation, continued to be important. Neighbours were usually close, they would support, protect each other and exchange service and help. The celebration of holidays continued to be shared activities, such as the month of Ramadan followed by Eid. People would exchange visits and food more during these occasions. Helping the poor people and those in need continued to be of a core importance during this time.
of the year, and children would participate in all these activities. On the day of Eid, for example, they would wear new clothes and visit relatives and neighbours and collect sweets and gifts. Isha during her interview remembered these times warmly:

We were happy during childhood. We had a close relationship with our neighbours, and families were helping each other. I remember that my mother, along with women in the neighbourhood, would prepare cookies and sweets together during the last week of Ramadan. When it was Eid we would go out to visit friends and relatives. I used to accompany my father in watching the king’s escort riding in Jeddah streets. People standing at the sides of the street would sing and clap and it was such a joyful time.

Other informants talked about similar experiences. Suha, who lived part of her childhood in the Eastern province, recalled:

Toward the middle of Ramadan we would walk as a group of children, from door to door to collect sweets, which would be already prepared for children. This tradition was common activity called Greagan.

Children’s play was obviously affected by nature and community, as all informants remembered. Gada described her experience of living at the
Eastern part of Saudi Arabia. This region, as explained in Chapter One and Three, has its own subculture. For example, living by the seaside played its part in creating daily life for the people living in that area. Fishing and diving to collect pearls were the most important types of work for the majority. Contact with other Arab countries near the coast, as well as with Iran and India was possible through sailing and trading, and therefore this helped the emergence of new cultural patterns. The existence of ARAMCO (Arabian American Oil Company) in the area also initiated qualitative changes is to the type of skills required and new patterns of discipline and routines, which was also involved in creating the subculture for this region since 1940 (Altorki, 1989: 104-107).

Thus, the relation between community and play can be illustrated well through Gada’s comparison of her childhood experience in Al-Kobar in the Eastern region with her childhood at Al-Qasim in the centre of Najed. She describes:

*I still keep wonderful memories. Our house was at the sea-side, and therefore the sea was an important part of our life. Our play was related to nature, and to the changes that could be developed in nature. We would play with sand and mud to create islands, and built bridges to connect these islands. We would also make balls out of sand and mud, dividing our selves into two groups, each group will have to find the balls of the other group. Most of the games we played*
were shared games, boys and girls were playing together until
the age of 10 years old.

Comparing this to her experience in Al-Qasim she added:

*We lived at Al-Qasim for one year, and we also had a
wonderful time over there. We were living in big fields, as my
father was responsible for construction of this new area.
Therefore, we were not living in a village or in a regular house.
We used to catch animals every day and take care of them. Our
play was different than Al-Khober but it was also a joyful time
of my life.*

Other informants talked about similar experience. 33 year old Al-
Johara is a teacher, and lived part of her childhood in Al-Qasim before
moving to Riyadh. She explained that in Al-Qasim they played with sand, and
they also used it to create events and characters in tale; in Riyadh they played
more inside the house.

A few informants mentioned swimming as part of their leisure
activities. These were people who had been living as children in housing for
military employees, which provided a recreation centre. However, access to
such activities was limited, since working in the military sector and
providing such facilities was only very newly introduced in the society.
The above examples indicate that much of children's play continued to the natural world, as was the case with the first generation. Children's imagination played an important role in creating different games, using the simple materials available locally. For example, while raising animals was part of children's play at the agricultural areas, and going out to the desert and playing in the sand or on the hills was part of children's play at the desert areas, that was not so for urban children. Meanwhile, the changes that were occurring in the society had also affected children's play. For example, the development of an industrial community, as it was the case of the city Al-Khobar, enabled children to use the remains of old cars to create games.

The socio-economic and political changes, which began to grow in Saudi Arabia by late 1950s, highlights the onset of the fragmentation of what was a more coherent experience of childhood in previous generation. The beginning of differentiation between social and economic class, urban/ rural areas, education as well as schooling and the early beginning of the division of children into age groups which schools introduced all affected children's culture. These factors contributed then to the emergence of many new childhood features and started a continuous pattern of change in childhood, increased in its intensity by the 1980s, as Chapters Six and Seven will explore.
Other Leisure activities

The informants mentioned other types of leisure activities they enjoyed during childhood. As noted earlier, watching television was one of the newest activities introduced to the society during the childhood of the second generation. ARAMCO in the eastern province started at first to broadcast American television channels and other channels followed. However, at the beginning, broadcasting was only for a few hours a day and informants talked about the effect of television on their daily life, and as a source of information. Some talked about the effect of television on their play. For example, 42 year old Aziza mentioned that when her family lived in Dhahran in the Eastern province, she stopped playing in the afternoon, as she preferred to watch Aramco television. Others also talked about how television reduced the time they spent reading.

Watching movies at home was an exciting event, as many informants described. They would gather with family, friends and relatives to watch a movie, which older members of their families would rent from special stores along with the cine film projectors. Most of these movies were Arabic Egyptian, dealing with social issues, mainly love stories and male/female relationships.

Listening to the radio, and reading newspapers and magazines locally produced and in other Arab countries, were also an increasingly important part of children’s leisure activities, as well as a way for learning,
and bringing information to Saudi society and helping consolidate identity with other Arab countries. Arab radio channels started broadcasting earlier than local ones and most informants pointed out that they had listened to Egyptian radio channels during their childhood (including those who lived in rural areas), such as Mezna who lived in Al-Jouf. She said:

The only leisure activity we had at that time was listening to the radio. We preferred Egyptian channels, and my mother liked the Bedouin programmes in local channels, such as Madareb Al-Badyah.

By the mid 1950s, Egypt was one of the leading countries in the Arab world. Radio channels broadcasting from Egypt played an important role in creating public conscious and disseminating ideas. Radio was, however, also providing a source of political information for the public including children, as well as being used simply for entertainment. Suha describes:

We used to gather beside the radio to listen to Gamal Abdul Nasser, Egypt leader during the sixties, while he was talking to the public. During the month of Ramadan it was the most joyful time when we listened to serials broadcast on Egyptian channels and some local ones.

The eagerness among the second generation adult informants regarding the need to hold on to Arab culture and identity can be understood when situating it within the historical circumstances, which Arab countries
were experiencing by mid of the twentieth century. As discussed in the introduction of this chapter and in Chapter One, historical events were emphasising the importance of unity and Arab identity at the time when most second-generation informants were children, and they were listening on the radio to these live events and issues as they took place. A few informants explained that they listened to the Arabic speaking London's Channel. This experience was shared with older members of the family and one informant mentioned that she preferred this channel to the others.

Some informants pointed to radio's role in providing access to information for different generations. For example, their mothers were listening to some of the programmes, as Wadha points:

*My mother cared about her house and her children. She used to listen to programmes dealing with family matters and managing house holds. I think it affected her way in dealing with her family.*

**Conclusion**

As has been noted, a number of different factors were involved in the creation of a situation where some continuity in cultural moves could exist along side change during the childhood and teen years of the second generation. One important feature for change that is childhood by the 1960s lasted longer when compared with the previous generation. An important
indication for such change is the delay in the age of marriage. As the data has shown this age has shifted from being between 12-16 in the first generation to 19-22 in the second. Although the cultural aspects which traditionally controlled the selection for marriage (i.e. descent) continued, girls at this generation tended to be more involved in making such decisions, as their agreement would often be sought before the final decision was made. The informants explained that although marriage was usually prearranged between families, girls were often able to meet the groom's family, and in some cases meet the groom himself in the presence of other male members of their family.

Other aspects of continuity and change appear during the life course of females. For example, after marriage most informants lived within nuclear families. However, the relationship with their extended families continued, and traditional values such as respect and obedience between older/younger and male/female, continued to be regarded as of core importance. Some changes can be observed in spouse's relationship, as they have begun to share activities and to cooperate in making decisions, mainly relating to upbringing their children (Altorki, 1986:51).

The discussions in this chapter have suggested that the socio-economic changes and the growing use of literacy and contact with other cultures encouraged the emergence of a new understanding for children and childhood. However, regardless of those material changes in female roles,
moral values continued to be dominant in structuring female status (Al-Rumaihi, 1982).

Traditional female ideologies continued to be respected by girls, since they were watching their mothers practising this role, which suggested the continuity of such a model despite the apparent forces of change. Also, although new elements were effecting childhood, the family continued to train girls for female traditional roles. One way to do that was for girls to join their mothers in taking responsibility for housework. Most informants recalled this happening at ten years old when they were not allowed any more to play in the street, although helping with domestic work some times began as early as six or seven years old. Meanwhile, several indications showed change in the understanding of childhood. For example, schooling and formal education became regarded as a necessity for socialization as well as for training children. Although girl’s education was viewed as a tool to provide a better preparation for their traditional roles within the family, other conditions were brought up by this change. Childhood became a period of preparation for future economic investment, rather than a time when the family could depend economically on children’s work.

Therefore, another important feature for change in perceiving childhood is the delay of the economic investment of children’s work through schooling and education, which led to a growing separation between work and play. The discussion of this generation has shown that girls were less obligated to work outside the house. This came about as a result of the growth of the
institutionalization of work, the migration from rural to urban areas and therefore the growth of cities. These conditions contributed to the separation between domestic work and the labor work. Consciously, females became more tied to domestic work, thus girls participation was more and more centered inside the house. Nevertheless, despite this change in the type of work girls were doing in this generation, girls continued to be obligated towards their families through participating in domestic work, as the data in this chapter has shown.

For children, change has also brought the separation between work and play. The discussion with the first generation showed that children in traditional societies were often mixing work with play. Although this occurred in the second generation to some extent, the new daily activities which children became involved with led to the emergence of new arrangements for children’s time. Their day became mostly divided between school, homework, domestic work, and leisure activities such as reading and play. The majority of them managed their time on their own, and parent’s involvement was limited. Certainly, the new skills children were getting through education and literacy, which often parents did not have, did empower this generation. However, continuity in moralities and in respecting older generation was emphasized in religion and socialization.

Another example of the continuity of traditional socialisation practices is the use of fear to control girls in this generation. Gathering to listen to folk tales and the subjects in the tales accentuate the fact that,
despite the changes in defining childhood that were taking place, the separation between the adult’s world and the children’s was still limited during the childhood of the second generation. This fact is also highlighted in girl’s play, which was similar to the first generation to great extent, where nature and the local community played a significant part.

Therefore, by the 1960s in Saudi Arabia more attention was paid to childhood as a distinct period in human life, and concerns about children’s special needs had started to grow. Thus a few steps were taken to meet those needs, such as providing formal education and schooling, and the introduction of commercial toys in children’s play. Such features contributed to the fragmentation of childhood, which began to reflect growing diversities and class stratification between members of adult society due to differential access to the material world, access to information and to other cultures through education and travel, as well as to the use of mass media. Furthermore, this generation witnessed, during their teen years and for some after marriage, the rapid socio-economic changes, which had started, by the mid 1980s, to make family life more fragmented.

Education and reading provided this generation with key skills that distinguished them from the previous generation. Children also experienced freedom in managing their time and activities, playing outside and inside the house and doing school work and this was the case until they reached the age when their parents thought they should take an adult’s role, or at least be around them to join in adult activities such as housework. Socio-economic and
historical circumstances explained in the introduction to this chapter, have
created the standpoint for this generation, and, as I shall suggest later in
Chapter Seven, has also shaped the way in which they deal with change and
with the tension between tradition and modernity in contemporary children’s
childhood.
Chapter Six

Contemporary Childhood

(1985-1990)

Introduction

As explained in the introductory chapters, Saudi Arabia has witnessed rapid socio-economic changes during the last thirty years. The discussion in these chapters referred to the five-year development plans, which have been carried out by the Saudi government since 1970 and also illustrated the social impact of the economic changes which had, by 1980, begun to occur in Saudi society. The children who were informants for this study were therefore born and raised during a period that has been experiencing great changes.

In this chapter, the analysis of the data provided by children will look at the continuations as well as changes in perspectives, which have occurred towards ideas about the family, moral values, their network of relations, and what it is like to be a girl in contemporary Saudi Arabia.

Background

Girls included in this study represent current childhood, as they were born during the years 1985-1990. Therefore they ranged in age between 8 and 13 during the ethnographic study. This age is most accurate for the informants interviewed at schools, since they were usually chosen from the third to the sixth grade. Other children, who were interviewed at the public library or in
their homes, were sometimes older or younger than that age. However, it was important to interview all these girls since this research aimed at a complete generational study, and these informants were members of the families who took part in this study. They also still represent the current phase and the new generation.

As pointed out in the methodology chapter, 66 informants were interviewed for this generation, the majority of them in the 8-10 age group, then 11-13, and the fewest were aged 14-16 (Table12).

Table 12
Children’s Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. Library</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16(2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Highly Educated Families: The educational level of both parents or at least one of them starts from Bachelor degree.

(2) Only five informants are older than the pattern (13 years).

Family size for informants at public schools ranged between 5-11. However, the number was smaller in the families of the girls who were
interviewed at the public library, being from 5-7, and in the highly educated families it was 4-6 (table 11). The position of the informants at public schools ranged between the first and the eighth child, at the public library between the first and the fourth child, and in the highly educated families between the second and the third. The age differences between siblings were higher in families with fewest children. For example, in families with 5-11 children, the difference in age was two to three years, while in families with 4-6 children, sometimes this age gap would be as much as seven years (Table 11 and Table 13).

Table 13

The Age Gap Between Siblings in the Third Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>P.Library</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H.E.</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of girls were living in villas, and there is at least one housemaid living in the same house, and one private driver who is usually accommodated with a place of his own, a part of the household in the front yard. Some girls shared rooms with their sisters in the same age range, while
older sisters had separate rooms. Some girls in small families would have rooms of their own. Some had TV and Video in their rooms, although the majority would share such facilities with other family members in the living room. Some girls pointed out that there was a special room for children in their house, where they could watch TV and Video, play and have visitors. This information indicates a transition in family type to the nuclear, a decrease in number of children as well as a decline in the number of adults in these families, while at the same time there has been an increase in the number of non-relative adults living with the family, such as domestic helpers. Other studies on Saudi families have obtained to similar results. Alsuwaigh notes:

In addition, children of the young generation were reported to eat more frequently with their parents in comparison to the traditional patterns of eating with women only. Also the pattern of sleeping has changed notably from sleeping in the same room with parents... to sleeping either with siblings...or with maids... in the young group (1984:224).

The discussion in Chapters Four and Five showed how cultural aspects influenced the traditional dwelling. It also described how family life was in correspondence with such structure. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the villa type house started to take place in Riyadh City in the 1950s, and expanded in the 1970s during the economic boom. The change in the size and function continued to be carried out during the 1980s and 1990s. Concerns about accommodating the new life style while also retaining the previous
traditional customs affected the size of the contemporary villa. As a result, many spaces are duplicated and new ones have been added.

In order to maintain privacy while shifting to villa type dwelling, makeshift alterations were attempted. Barriers or fences became a common sight, which produced physical discomfort, as well as causing families to feel isolated since the residents no longer had means of socializing freely because the space was either very public or very private. Saleh further illustrates this point:

Modern streets were wide, ranging from 10 to 20 m in width. This resulted in a decreased spatial relationship between buildings and streets, reversing the traditional relationship of buildings to open space. Free movement was hindered particularly for women who were embarrassed to emerge from their homes directly onto the public streets. Their children had no safe area outdoors in which to play under supervision, as previously afford by the intimate alleyways of the traditional environment. Also, the possibility of person-to-person interaction in the environment decreased as a result of increased distances between residential buildings (1998:584).

Thus the expansion of the number of reception rooms in contemporary villas, which usually have more than three receptions, is related to the fact that hospitality has a special place in Saudi tradition. It is also due to gender segregation, and the need to maintain privacy between the sexes such that new
elements have become a permanent part of the villa, such as female guest reception and dining rooms which are only used occasionally (Bahammam, 1998: 567). A young people's reception room is another new element added in many contemporary dwellings. In the past, older boys would immediately be considered and treated as adults as soon as they reached puberty, and therefore they joined adult's reception. However, new concepts and understanding of youth has meant a new way of life in which adolescent boys now need an informal private gathering place (Bahammam, 1998:566). This also has occurred in the case of children. Children are often now provided in contemporary villas with private places for play or reception, whereas in the past they used to play in the street or in the inner courtyard of the traditional dwelling, and they often joined in adult's gatherings. Maid's and chauffeur's rooms are additional parts added to contemporary dwellings. Bahammam illustrates:

Having a maid(s) is a new luxury and often a necessity to maintain the large well-furnished villa. An extra room for the maid has thus become part of contemporary dwelling. ...Therefore, since women do not drive in Saudi Arabia and with lack of a sufficient public transportation system, many families have also hired a chauffeur. Providing him with a place of his own, apart from the household, requires the addition of an extra room and bathroom in the front yard (1998:566).
Western style furniture is now used, which is hard to move and store and has limited the degree of flexibility for families to use the same room for various functions. As a result the villa suffers from duplication rooms (Bahmmam, 1998: 559) and the contemporary villa, through its size and appearance, has become a symbol of status, achievement, and of social acceptance to many Saudi residents (Al-Yamamah weekly magazine, 1993). The size of most traditional dwellings was not apparent from the street, and it was difficult in Riyadh's traditional neighbourhood, to tell where one dwelling ended and the next began. The detached villa, by contrast, has more emphasis on the external appearance and size of the building. Its outward concept has encouraged a sense of public display of status and individual identity (Bahmmam, 1998:568).

The increasing exposure to European and American lifestyles and the rise of the national as well as the individual income have encouraged the change toward an easier life, as Saleh describes. He adds:

People wanted the kind of homes they saw in the films, magazines and on television, complete with attractive furnishings and all the benefits of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century technology; however what remained constant throughout this transformation was the religion and traditions of the population (1998:585).
The attempt at the integration of tradition and modernity is reflected in the contemporary dwellings in Riyadh City, as an amalgamation of history and economic interests, Riyadh City has a symbolic importance and seems to be a perfect place for the emergence of different forms of engagement between tradition and modernity. Thus, for example, the move toward the villa type dwelling came rapidly, many residents added elements such as a Bedouin black tent and some times a hearth in the yard in order to satisfy the need for a traditional way of life (Bahmmam, 1998: 567). To compromise between tradition and modernity is reflected in the architecture of contemporary dwellings, Saleh describes:

By using the spatial structure of the indigenous form together with modern technology, one could maintain continuity of style and more importantly, preserve a traditional way of life now under threat. Technology should be used to improve the quality of life and ease labour. It should therefore be geared towards the specific demands of the society in which it operates. People should not have alter their lives to fit their homes, rather the home should meet their needs and fulfil their desires (1998: 585).

This has affected the life style of Saudi families, and informants often talked about this during the interviews. For example, the majority of them mentioned one or more maid as well as chauffeurs living with them. They also talked about the structure of contemporary dwellings and the difficulties this
brought with regard to housework. Further details related to this change will be pointed out through this chapter.

Parents' education for informants at public schools ranged between elementary school and Bachelor degree. Since the majority of the informants were daughters of teachers, the level of their mothers' education ranged between high school and Bachelor degree. However, fathers' education in some cases was lower than that, and it ranged between elementary to Bachelor degree. In one case, the father was a medical doctor. The diversity in parents' education accentuates the fact that women's education has been the main factor in providing social mobility, and to improve their social status. Therefore, women tend to turn to education as main source of change. It also provides indications of continuity in traditional morals, whereby a woman's marriage is the main factor in her social status. Therefore, women could get married to men with lower levels of education, as was the case for some teachers in this study. As explained in the methodology chapter, all girls were interviewed in Riyadh. However, some girls were originally from other parts of Saudi Arabia, such as the East or West Province.

All the girls from highly educated families, who are interviewed in this study, attended private schools, as did some of the girls who were interviewed at home and in the public library. Others were all at public schools. Education at public schools is free, while it is not in private schools. Fees for attending private schools vary, from around five thousand Saudi Riyals to thirty five thousand a year. Public and private schools for girls are all under the
supervision of The General Presidency for Girls' Education (GPGE). As mentioned in previous chapters, when women's education started in 1960, this organization was given responsibility to ensure that religious as well as moral values linked to women's role in Arab Islamic culture would be reflected in schools' curriculum and regulations. Therefore, public and private schools for girls are similar in those regards. However, private schools provide extra courses, such as computing, English and sometimes French, and some schools include simple types of sports for girls, such as basketball. The schools usually run monthly exams for all the courses, and the grades for these exams are totaled with those for the final exam. Grades for monthly exams amount for 40% of the total, and the final exam for 60%\textsuperscript{1}. However, all the extra courses are not counted in girl's final evaluation.

**Being a Girl: Family Structure and children**

As explained in Chapter Two, socio-economic changes have brought new patterns of life to the family in Arab Gulf societies. The nuclear and the modified extended families are the most dominant in current societies. Previous discussion about traditional socialisation in Arab societies also pointed to the continuity in moral values where the extended family and kinship play significant roles in structuring the culture of the contemporary family. Therefore, although roles and obligations have changed to some extent, family relations continue to be structured according to age and gender (Al-Najar, 1994:22-30. See also Chapters Two, Four and Five).

\textsuperscript{1} These regulations are subject to change, however they were taking place during the period of the field work for this study.
In the last two chapters, the analysis for the first and second generations has provided evidence for continuity in the transmission of moral values in socialising females. Therefore, the following discussion aims to investigate such information when dealing with data collected in interviewing the third generation. Although girls in this study were not asked direct questions regarding their feelings toward their extended and nuclear families, these issues are looked at through examining their weekly and daily activities, as well as their relation network.

Most girls were living in nuclear families; only two cases reported that they were living with their extended families, and a few cases referred to other members of their extended family living with them, usually one or both grandparents. However, girls often explained that relatives, including grandparents, lived in separate houses close to theirs. They talked about their relations and expressed their feelings towards them. Giyda, aged 11 years old and interviewed at the public library, said:

"My grandparents live in a house close to ours. We gather with other relatives at my grandparents house every weekend. We often visit them during weekdays when we do not have a lot of homework to do."

13 year old Sara, also was interviewed at the public library, added:
I love my grandmother. Although I was never able to see her as she died before I was born, I know her because my father always talks about her.

Comparing family life in this generation to the previous two, we notice a shift from being a member in a big family to a small nuclear family. The current debates regarding the position of the elderly in the contemporary Western family argue that the change in the family had decreased the dependency between family members, and therefore have marginalised the role of the elderly within the family. It further suggested that their isolation is due to the diversity in the experience of the different generations, and also because of the growing privatism within the family and family's dependency on institutions. However, as explained in Chapter Two, in order to have an accurate understanding of the changes that have occurred in roles and relations as well as obligations, it is important to examine family practices before reaching any conclusions about the extent to which link with the extended family still plays a role in socialising children. This is what this chapter is aiming to look at when studying contemporary Saudi family.

Although children are living in nuclear families in contemporary Saudi society, they usually gather with other members of their extended families at grandfather/mother's house on a specific day every weekend. Other children in their extended families continue to be important part of their play groups. Most girls pointed out that they shared leisure activities with girls who were also relatives. This is particularly true for girls, because of the continuity in the
values related to female role and position within the family. As explained earlier, the family continues to link female behaviour and the family’s honour. Therefore, the family would prefer their daughters to spend their free time with female relatives, and indeed this has become increasingly more significant, given the fragmentation and diversity within contemporary society. On the other hand, religious and social norms usually allow boys to have more freedom in mobility and provide them with wider access to public life. Therefore, in contrast to an increasing attention to girls’ public life, less control is exerted over boys visiting friends, and attending public places such as sport centres, shopping malls and cafes.

Discussing their relations and the shared activities with parents and siblings, girls provided various information. 12 year old Sara and her 9 year old sister Johra, interviewed at the public library, illustrated this when they said:

Sara: *On Wednesday we visit our relatives. Thursday we usually go out with my parents to the desert (Al-Bur), or any other place. On Friday we have to do homework.*

Johra: *In Ramadan we mostly watch TV. We don’t go out often. I like to play and stay home with my father*

Giyda and her younger sister Reem (9 years) explain:

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2 During the month of Ramadan TV programmes become main attraction for the public. The different channels broadcast through the night a variety of programmes, both local and from the Arab region.
On Wednesday we visit our relatives, on Thursday we go shopping or to the playground with my mother.

The majority of girls pointed out that on one day of their weekend they usually visited their extended family, and they generally joined their parents, especially their mother, when going out for other activities such as shopping. This was especially for girls at public schools.

Some girls from highly educated families had a slightly different situation. For example Mody, aged 8 years old, and who was interviewed at home, said:

I visit my grandmother during the weekend with my parents. All my sisters and my brother are studying abroad, so I usually go to visit my friends on weekends and sometimes my cousins.

Rasha is 12 years old, and comes from highly educated family. She said:

I have only two older brothers. Both are studying abroad, and my grandmother lives in Dammam. Therefore, during weekends I often go out with friends or they would come
to my house. Other times I go with my parents to have lunch or
dinner, or with my mother shopping.

Comparing these girls' activities to those of the previous generations,
we can notice some changes towards girls having a certain amount of freedom
to engage in private and separate activities, while in previous generations the
family would usually share all their activities. This is more apparent in the
case of highly educated families, as they are usually more concerned with the
new trends in raising children. Further discussion regarding the second
generations' attempts to manage change while dealing with children will be
given in Chapter Seven.

Describing their daily activities, girls seldom mentioned participating
in domestic work as a regular job, unlike their mothers and grandmothers. The
work that some of them did was centered on their own needs, such as tidying
their rooms, but this would seldom be for their families. The reduction in
families' dependence on children's work has mainly been brought about by
the rise in income and the growing dependence on housemaids in the Saudi
family (see Al-Eidän, 1984, Abdul-Moatee, 1982). Other circumstances also
contributed to creating this change, such as the expansion in households, and
women leaving home for work or education. Children are also spending a
great part of the day at school and doing homework and therefore, the
rearrangement of children's time has been a phenomena in Saudi Arabia as in
other contemporary societies where children's time is now more
institutionalised (see Qvortrup, 1994; Ennew, 1995). Furthermore, as pointed
out in Chapter Four the debates related to children's work have encouraged children to draw back from work, including domestic work. When Reem was asked about her daily activities, she explained:

When I come back from school, I tidy my room if the maid has not done it. But she usually does, I watch TV, have lunch, do my homework and sometimes I watch TV before I go to bed.

11 year old Arowa, interviewed in the public library added:

My mother always tells me: the least you could do is to tidy your bed. If I were not in a rush to go to school, I would do that.

Some girls mentioned cooking as one of the activities they did in their free time. For example, Sara described how she would celebrate the holy month (Ramadan):

I like to decorate our house, cook some light meals, and prepare our living room for watching TV.

Wejdan, who is 15 years old and was interviewed at home with other members of her family, had the new look, with modern clothes and hair style, and a pager fastened to her pocket. Nevertheless, she pointed out that during
weekends she would clean the house and cook lunch for her family. She also explained that she prefers traditional meals to fast food.

It is important to realize that a girl's participation in housework can differ between families. For example, when interviewing Sara's mother and grandmother at home, Sara and her sister Johra were serving tea and coffee. Their mother mentioned their cooperation and help. On the other hand, while interviewing some other families children showed less participation, and the mothers often complained about their children's dependency on housemaids. These cases provide indications of the diversity between families in dealing with issues related to children's role in domestic work, and therefore the work housemaids are expected to be responsible for. Although the family in the second generation often used help in domestic work, this help was to do only certain jobs and for limited hours, while in contemporary families' housemaids usually live with the family and do all sorts of work. Therefore, the continued presence of housemaids and the growing reliance on their work was often viewed as a factor that contributed to changing relations between family members and children's understanding of the family (Abdul-Moatee, 1982).

The decline in the number of children in each family has limited children's opportunities to spend time with their siblings, and they are instead building their own relationships with friends, mostly at school, whom they often visit. Compared to previous generations, this is an important change in

3 During an interview with a family, the mother asked the maid to cover her daughter's notebooks with plastic wrap, which some schools ask children to do in order to keep them tidy.
family relationship. However, it is important to remember that this change in family size, as well as in relations with the extended family, is rather different from what is happening in Western families, because there are also several indications of continuity in traditional morality within the family, according to age and gender. The size of the Arab family also continues to be large when compared to the Western family. It is also important to notice that these issues are related to social class and can be vary from one class to the other, and from rural to urban societies.

Children in this generation usually have a wider relationship network than children in the previous generations, through making friends at schools, and spending part of their free time together. However, as mentioned earlier, they often continue to have members of their extended family, from the same age group, as friends. However, an emerging change can be noticed here, in that age is becoming a main element in grouping children, in contrast with previous generations where different age categories were considered as one group and all children played together. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that the role of the extended family in children's daily life is more limited, when compared with the two previous generations, and it is mainly centered around visiting during weekends or spending their free time with other girls of the same age.

Thus, another important change in family relationship is the shift from siblings to friends as main companions for the girls in this study. The decline in the number of children in the family, and the greater age separation between
siblings, are contributory factors in creating this change (see also O’Bien, Alldred and Jones, 1994). Furthermore, a more general and growing concern about age as a main element in defining and categorizing childhood into different stages has, in turn, contributed to changing family relations. Therefore, children tend to spend more time with friends, and this is most significant in the case of girls in Saudi Arabia, due to the limited availability of public activities for girls, as explained earlier. Therefore, women’s friendships are becoming an increasingly dominant part of their social life and visiting friends is becoming the main leisure activity for girls. This was highlighted in both the girls’ discussions and those of their mothers (see also Altorki, 1986).

Since the change in family income in the upper and middle classes has provided the ability to hire private drivers for almost every family, children are often able to visit friends without requiring much effort by parents. However, as the mothers stated in their interviews, parents’ decisions regarding this issue could differ from one family to the other. While some families allow the driver to take their daughters to friends’ houses, others required them to be accompanied by an adult, who could be a housemaid. For some, it was considered the responsibility of either parent or both. This decision could also be related to the child’s age; while an adult would often accompany younger children, older girls might not be accompanied. However, the situation varies according to the family’s attitude towards religion, social norms and traditions. For example, some families will not allow girls to go shopping unless they are accompanied by an older female relative. This was
for example difficult for a 13 years old Hessah, who had to keep this activity hidden from her father, as he would not allow her to go to the market under any circumstances. Other families, by contrast, allow their daughters to travel abroad to study. For example, some families who were interviewed in this study encouraged their children, both boys and girls, to study for higher degrees abroad. This would usually be at the age of 18 after finishing high school in order to start their college degree, which could be in another Arab country or in Europe or America. Three families in this study were in this situation, and in one family, a 15-year old daughter was studying in a neighbouring Arab Gulf country in order to later join her two sisters and brother in the USA.

Mona is a 16 years old girl, talked about her free time activities:

*We go visiting mostly. I go out often with my mother, she will be with her friends and I’ll be with mine. We could plan for this a week ahead, sometimes a month ahead.*

The data provided by the informants regarding visiting friends showed diversity. Some girls visited their friends less, and went out with their parents more, especially with their mothers to visit their extended families. These tended to be students at public schools, where they are exposed to a more conservative education traditions. These girls also have larger numbers of siblings with whom they spent more time than with friends.
Clothing was another element looked at in order to investigate continuity in considering female modesty as a moral value, and to search for change and any Western influences. When girls talked about their clothes, they explained that they liked simple clothes such as jeans and T-shirts. Some clothes have pictures of cartoon characters or movie stars, but the girls did not think it was very important for them to have such clothes. Other girls who were more exposed to Western culture through travelling or through access to media, showed tendency to have Disney clothes, and the older ones in this group would be inclined toward modern Western styles. However, most girls from all groups showed respect for tradition related to female clothing in Arab culture, as the following conversation with 11 year old Giyda shows:

- H: Do you like to wear clothes with Disney characters?
- G: Yes I do. I have some of those such as T-shirts, but not too many.
- H: What type of clothes do you like to wear?
- G: I like to wear a skirt and blouse. However, my mother says it is better to wear long pants when I go out to the library or to the market because they are decent and comfortable. Therefore, I usually do that.

Other girls talked about wearing formal dresses during family gatherings or on social occasions, such as during the main holidays (Eid).
The global effect on female clothing can be noticed in the clothes advertised in shops and in women’s wear in general. However, one way of compromising between Western modernity and traditional culture is for girls to wear the traditional cover (Abayah) over their clothes, when going out. In this way, they have more freedom in choosing their clothes while visiting girl friends, since they are not mixing with boys, while at the same time they avoid putting themselves in a position where their dress would be considered unacceptable in public. Girls usually wear the Abayah in public by the age of ten. However, attitudes towards girls’ clothes and the age for wearing the Abayah differ among families.

**Play and Leisure Time**

As explained above, girls in Arab societies are usually aware of the boundaries which restrict their leisure activities. These are part of the religious and cultural beliefs, which encourage females to stay at home unless going out is necessary for them or for their families, such as going out to work. It also stems from the link between females and honour, which men are responsible for protecting by keeping females away from unrelated male adults (For more details see Chapter Two). Hanouf, a 12 year old girl, expressed her knowledge about these norms by simply saying:

*If my father is not busy working, we would be able to go to the garden. However, we do not often do that because he*
always is. Any way I'm growing up and I know it is not appropriate for girls to wander in public gardens.

Girls in this study explained that they were not allowed to play in the street. Most of their games were played indoors, although those who lived in villas could play in their gardens or in courtyards. They often expressed their desire to play in the street, and regarded that as a main reason for wishing they lived in a previous era. Giyda talked about this:

I told my mother I wish that I lived in their time because they were able to play in the street when they were children. However, my mother told me that children were also stopped from going out by telling them that there was a spotted donkey wandering in the streets to collect them. This donkey is called Homaret al gtyla.

Najla and Amjad (15 and 13 years old) added:

Life in the past was better because it was safe. Everyone was responsible for his/her behaviour, boys played with girls, even the diseases were less. It is not like that any more.

They explained that they usually played with dolls, electronic video games and computers, which could be played with other children or
individually. However, diversity occurred to some extent between girls in their play and in the toys they played with. Some girls who were interviewed in school pointed out that they were not allowed to play with dolls since their parents considered dolls against religion. *Asma*, 9 years old, said:

*I do not play with dolls. My mother told me it is forbidden (Haram) to play with dolls. I have other toys such as kitchen appliances, which I like to play with.*

Others said:

*I have Islamic dolls[^4], and I can play with those.*

In contrast, other girls also interviewed at public schools played with dolls, such as ‘Barbie’ and her accessories, as well as her boyfriend ‘Ken’, whom they identify as her husband, which indicates the increasing diversity in childhood. Although some of the mothers in this study did refer to having some toys as children and most of them attended schools, which could be considered as indications of the emergence of new type of childhood was early at the 1960’s, childhood was however less fragmented, and had greater similarities in girls' play and in their roles in the family with previous generation.

[^4]: Islamic dolls are usually made out of cotton, and do not have shape by figures or facial features.
Toys are usually imported from Western countries and the Far East. For example, the doll Barbie is made in the USA, and is sold widely in the global and the local market. It is considered as a representation of a wealthy girl and of a feminine look, and therefore it has been criticised for its contribution in creating inappropriate images in girls’ understanding of female identity (see Rogers, 1999). In consideration of such issues, this doll was sometimes taken from the market for a period of time in Saudi Arabia. This reflects the tension when dealing with issues related to continuity and change in children’s culture.

Some girls showed more tendencies toward creative play such as creating plays and then acting them, or playing with dolls' theatre. Although this study did not carry out further statistical analysis of the variables that could be involved in creating such diversity, the interviews with the families of those children provide indications that they usually had a shared interest in reading with their children, or in passing tales from one generation to the other. At the same time they showed more interest in local culture. 11 year old Giyda, in the public library said:

*I like to play with my sister. We will make up a play then we will act it out using our dolls. Sometimes when our cousins are visiting, we make up a play then we would act it; each one of us will take a part.*

Nojod, 10 years old, also said:
When we visit my aunt, we play theatre. Sometimes we design a bulletin and write different things on it.

Some girls showed more interest in computer games and in using computers for learning purposes or for communication and information. However, when dealing with these diversities it is worth noting that not all members of each group have similar interests. Therefore we cannot conclude that it is a characteristic related to education or social class. For example, the daughters of the highly educated parents were more engaged with computers in this study, though, a few other children at public schools, and some of those interviewed at home also showed interest in computers.

The data provided by girls show that age is becoming a significant factor in structuring play for this generation. Most girls pointed out that their friends from school and relatives are the same age as themselves, and some of the older informants mentioned preferring to spend their time with their peers, rather than with younger relatives. They also explained that their play has changed through time. They experienced different types of play according to their age. For example, they had played with dolls, when they were younger than nine years old, but this interest became less, as they grew older. Shams, 11 years old, talked about that:

I had a big Barbie dolls when I was 8 years old. It was almost my highest, I used to play with it, but I don’t any more.
Imaginative play was also part of their games, such as playing “house”. However, this also occurred more when they were younger. Mona talked about her experience:

> When I was younger I had to go with my mother to her friends and had to play with their kids, but now I have gained my freedom. We used to play hide and seek. Other games we played and still do such as cards, monopoly and Ono. We also played “ladies” visiting each other, inside the house and in the garden. Barbie was also an important part of our play.

Physical play had only a marginal part in these girls’ activities. Nevertheless, some girls mentioned it as part of their play when they were younger. Some played Hide and Seek, or chasing, others liked riding bicycles. Rasha, Liena, and Rana play with roller skates with friends or by themselves. Others played with sand and water in their gardens (using a hose pipe for watering) or when going camping in the desert.

Comparing children’s play in this generation to the previous two, we can notice the shift from playing with natural materials, to playing with imported manufactured toys and games. It is also worth noticing the increase in parent’s control over children’s toys, and at the same time the diversity in dealing with this issue, from being not allowed to buy any toys, to having access to buy whatever is available in the market. This reflects the
fragmentation, to some extent, in children’s experience regarding their play and their toys, and therefore, is linked to family’s changing view of children and childhood. In comparison, in the two previous generations, as their mothers illustrated while talking about their childhood, children were more free, climbing trees and hills, swimming in the sea and water springs, and playing out in the street. The change in children’s play in contemporary Saudi Arabia is part of global change. It is a shift from playing with natural materials to manufactured toys, and from outdoors to indoors (see Rossie, 2000; Boyden, Ling, and Myers, 1998). It is also part of the change in the pattern of every day activities and interaction, which now limit the time and space for children’s play (Ennew, 1994; McNamee, 1998). Further discussion will be carried out in Chapter Seven, however, the next section will look closely at the change in play as part of change in space and community.

**Play, Space and Community**

Concerns about providing children with a safe space to play has been a feature of the changes that contemporary families deal with (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Jones, 2000). As explained earlier, girls in this generation are not allowed to play in the street. They explained that their parents were trying to protect their children from danger in the streets, because of the growing diversity in society. Playing with other children would usually take place when visiting relatives or friends, and usually, children were taken to the friend’s house to by car. Children expressed their feelings toward this situation. The isolation that this can produce was most clear in Rana’s statement:
I like playing in the garden at my house in the afternoon, however I play alone, with the air, imagining that I have a friend playing with me. I seldom have friends to visit during weekdays as we all busy doing homework.

Unlike the previous generations, when relations with neighbours were part of daily activities, children in contemporary societies are only able to meet their neighbours under certain circumstances. This even occurred when the informants were living in private housing development, which is usually built for the employee of a certain agency such as a hospital or a university. For example Rasha and Liena, who lived in the same private housing development were able to see each other more often and this was also because their mothers were friends. However, in the discussion with their mothers (Suha and Gada), they explained that their daughters did not visit other neighbours.

Some girls might be able to spend more time with neighbours when they are friends from the same school or relatives, as was the case with 16 year old Mona. Her friends from school lived in the same neighbourhood; therefore she could visit them during weekdays. Mona talked about this:

We could visit even during weekdays if we finish our homework, and when we need to discuss schoolwork. I spend
the time chatting with my friends about teachers at school,

listening to music, or dancing.

Nevertheless, she was still not allowed to walk alone, and she would be
taken to her friend by car, or walk with an adult, even if it was the maid along
with the driver.

In contrast to the previous generation, people who live in the same
neighbourhood in contemporary Saudi society could have totally different
backgrounds and interests, and sometimes beliefs, due to the different
nationalities now living in Riyadh City. Therefore, the role of the local
community has changed. It does not provide the traditional source of moral
protection, or other children to play with, or natural materials that children
used to play with, such as sand and stones, sticks, or even trees and hills.
Therefore, contemporary children do not identify with their local community
in the same way, since they have became more isolated from its people as well
as its nature.

This change in the space provided for children, the time for play and
other children to play with, is however part of a global change in children’s
culture. The growing concern about children’s special needs in contemporary
families has in many other societies also often led to children being provided
with a special space inside the house. It is argued that this situation has
contributed to the growing separation between children’s culture and that of
adults (Qvortrup, 1994; Christensen, James, and Jenks, 2000).
Children in contemporary societies are often bound by different rules set by adults who are taking care of them. Parents and family members are most involved in these issues, since they usually have several intentions, such as protecting their children from strangers or danger in the street, and sometimes from other children if they do not approve of their behaviour or their background. However, we have to consider the diversity among families regarding these issues in Saudi society. As explained in the introductory chapters, although education has been a main force for change, other factors were also involved in shaping the culture of each individual family. The emergence of social class in the society was correlated to change in income and diversity in interacting with forces of change. Therefore, the occurring diversity between families could be defined in accordance to their backgrounds, their access to other cultures, as well as their position toward tradition.

Nevertheless, in general girls in the third generation are experiencing a totally different type of play, compared to the two previous generations. It is obvious that the rapid change has developed a gap between the third generation and the two previous generations, although at the same time, there remain some continuities, as discussed in previous sections.
Globalisation and Children’s Play and leisure time

As explained in the introductory chapters, in the Arab world today there is great concern about continuity and change in children’s culture. Children’s play and other leisure activities have been affected by the global market and the changes in children's toys. The western influence has been brought to children by satellite TV, in toys and fashion, in books and school stationery, as well as in fast food restaurants. For some, travelling has also been an important means of access to Western culture.

When examining some of these issues, diversity among informants was noticed, and it was to some extent related to their access to Western society. Some girls have more access to western culture, and therefore they seemed to be more affected. Their contact with western culture was available through the media and the Internet, books and magazines, as well as travelling. Sometimes their global contact was through relatives, such as elder siblings, travelling or living abroad, as was the case for Rasha and Mody, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. At other times girls themselves had accompanied their parents, who lived abroad for work or education. However, the effect of such experience would vary between informants, since other important factors were involved, such as class, family’s background, and individual qualities.

Most girls expressed their desire to travel abroad during the summer vacations. Rawan, 14 years old and her sister Hayfa, 11 years old, lived in the U.K for two years. They said:
While we were living there, we were dreaming of coming back. However, when we came back, we wished to go back there.

Some girls, such as Rasha, travel to the USA or Europe every year, while others had done so only occasionally.

Rasha: I travel to the USA, I go to camp in Seattle, when we go to visit my aunt in Washington, and I can go swimming. Last summer we went to Paris and visited Disneyland.

Rana: We usually stay the first month of the summer, I could go to American summer camp. When we travel we go to the UK, or USA. Last summer we went to Turkey.

Liena: Sometimes I go to the same summer camp. I like it because there is a variety of activities: reading and library, sports, swimming, and others. Last summer we travelled to Holland and Paris, in the way back we went to Lebanon.

Mona: Sometimes we go to London.

Rawan: Sometimes we travel to England or USA.

Lojain: Sometimes we travel to England, other times we come to Riyadh or stay at home.

Talking about their favourite places, they said:
Rasha: *I like most Seattle and Disney.*

Rana: *I like most Boston and London.*

Liena: *I like most Lebanon because of its historical antiquities.*

Holland has great fun fairs, I liked that too.

Other girls travelled less, often to local areas in Saudi Arabia, and some travelled to other Arab countries. Only two girls who were interviewed at public schools had travelled to the USA and they explained that they liked visiting Disney. Some at the public library had travelled to other Western countries, and they also liked Euro Disney and other fun fairs. Attitudes toward traveling and exposure to other cultures would vary in the society. This could be related to education and social class, as the analysis indicated that girls in the highly educated families and who are attending private schools are frequently traveling. Although statistical information is not available, it is clear that upper class families are more capable of travelling.

The global effect on their play is obvious. Some of them played imaginary games, such as pretending to be the Spice Girls, or Miss World. Rawan describes:

*I have a group of girls, we get together weekly. We usually visit each other during weekends from 6 o'clock till 11:30. We play cards, monopoly, fashion show, Miss Universe show, and Spice Girls. We used to play with Barbie a lot, but now less.*
Comparing girls in this generation to the previous two, we observe a change in the role models in their imaginative play. While girls in the past played “house” and pretended to be mothers visiting each other, girls are turning now towards Western fashion models. Their global taste is also reflected in clothing, hair styles, and music.

Other informants at the public library were also interested in Western products, and TV cartoons. Arwa talked about this:

*I like to buy school stationary every semester. I like it to be a set of Disney characters, such as my school bag, along with pencil case and pencils, as well as the lunch bag. However I buy a school bag only once a year.*

Although other children, such as informants at public schools, showed less interest in such products, they still had access to Western culture through the media and commodities targeted at children. When girls were asked about their tendency toward buying school stationery and clothing decorated with cartoon characters, most of them explained they liked to buy them. However, some of them did not because their parents would not allow them for religious reasons. Others thought they were for younger children and not suitable for their age. Others explained that school would not allow students to use this kind of stationary. This can be explained in relation to the policy which ensuring that religious values should be upheld in schools.
Fast food outlets are widely targeting children in Saudi Arabia. Most informants explained that they prefer fast food to traditional. However, most mothers exerted control over this. Children had fast food at most once a week and for some it was only once or twice a month. Some girls explained that fast food was cooked at home, and some pointed out that they did not go to restaurants, as their families would not allow them to do so. This is again related to religious and moral values. Most restaurants require females to be accompanied by a male in order to be allowed in the restaurant. The restaurants girls liked to go to were usually Western ones, such as McDonald’s, Burger King and Pizza Hut. Mona was however more interested to go to a quiet place with friends, without being accompanied by her younger siblings. As mentioned earlier, some families would allow their daughters to go out with girl friends; however, attitudes to this differed between families.

Girls in highly educated families were also controlled regarding the type of food they could have, as well as the frequency of attending fast food restaurants. They were aware of the danger of fast food; some of them pointed out that they would read the labels before buying sweets or drinks. If they went to restaurants, for these children, it would usually be once a week, and sometimes with friends, or with family.

Discussion was held with the informants about other activities they liked to do in their free time, such as hobbies. However, the concept of ‘hobbies’ would often be confused with general play and other activities, and
this occurred with all groups. When girls were asked about the hobbies they practised in their free time, they would simply repeat their play activities:

I play with dolls. I go to visit my friends. I go shopping.

I play computer games.

This was also the case with older girls, as 16 year old Mona, talking about her hobbies, said:

In my free time, I like to do different things, such as watching TV, reading, dancing, visiting friends, or going shopping.

Such activities girls are often interested in (see McNamee, 1998). The discussion in the interviews showed that girls generally set no definite time aside for hobbies. Rasha said, when asked about her hobbies:

When I am bored I read, and if I am still bored I watch TV.

Other girls also emphasised the fact that they did not have a certain schedule for hobbies:

It depends, wherever I feel like it, if I do not have a lot of homework.
If they did have a hobby, for the majority of girls in public schools it was painting. This could be partly due to the social approval of such an activity for girls. However, some girls in highly educated families did refer to hobby-type activities such as playing the piano, or gymnastics, which they were encouraged by their mothers to practise. For example Liena said:

*I have piano lessons every Wednesday, which I hate. However, my mother won't let me quit.*

Rasha: *I have the same feelings and the same teacher.*

Liena: *My mother with some of her friends has organised gymnastics classes. At the beginning it was ok, but now it is so boring. All the girls want to quit but our mothers won't let us do that.*

The conversation with their mothers, as will be discussed more in Chapter Seven, indicates their concern about children's time, with regard to the activities children should have. This provides evidence for the emergence of a new perspective on childhood where childhood is increasingly seen as a period of investment for later adult life, and in which therefore 'time' should be spent purposefully. These issues has become of core concern in contemporary families, and most of all in modern societies (see Jenks, 1996; Qvortrup, Bardy, Sgritta and Wintersberger, 1994).
Continuity in hobbies was also not apparent for most girls. Children would try different activities, but they would seldom continue practising those activities, and therefore had little chance to develop skills. Such conditions raise questions regarding the adult-child contribution in making decisions regarding the way in which children should spend their time, and the continued stress on the need for children to fill their free time with “useful” activities (Qvortrup, 1994; Christensen, James, and Jenks, 2000, Montandom 2001). Rawan, talking about her hobbies, said:

*I do not have a hobby that I practise every week.*

*However, I can try different things, and if I like something I could do it for a while and maybe join a club. Such as swimming, I went to Al-Manahil to learn swimming for a while then I stopped.*

In Riyadh City there are a few sport clubs for women. However, sport is not allowed in public schools and in private schools it is limited to certain activities such as basketball. Recently, the newspapers carried a debate on this issue. One party rejected sports for girls at school, even though girls’ schools are segregated from boys and sports would take place indoors. The other party approved of girls’ sports and discussed their legality, in the light of tradition. Thus, there is little external encouragement given to girls to practice sports.
Some girls in highly educated families talked about hobbies, which they would like to do, but were not being able to, such as swimming and horse riding. Lojain explained:

*There are things I dream of doing, but I cannot, such as swimming. In Al-khobar there aren't any public clubs for girls.*

*I would like to go horse riding too, but I can't for the same reason.*

Some families had a private place outside the house, to spend time in at the weekend, such as a garden or a farm. They often had swimming pools, which they could use while keeping their privacy. Some girls referred to doing such activities shared with both parents, or with extended family, during weekends. However, the family's ability to provide such a place depends on their income, and other social factors.

The above findings emphasize therefore the role of societies in constructing particular kinds of childhood, through controlling children’s access to time and space. Therefore, they provide evidence that childhood is a phenomenon which is socially constructed and culturally relative (James and Prout, 1990).
Schooling and learning:

Reading

As explained in Chapter One, when girls' education started in Saudi Arabia in 1960, at the beginning it was resisted by some parties. However the number of girls attending schools escalated rapidly. Therefore, the majority of girls in contemporary society attend schools, and school has become part of their daily life.

It is argued that in modern societies children’s lives are increasingly controlled and institutionalized (Montandon, 2001). Economic change in Saudi Arabia has contributed to changing children’s economic roles and, as noted, families in the second generation gradually became less dependent on the income provided through children’s work. This trend continued as new patterns of work emerged, and therefore children’s work outside the house has become less needed for middle and upper class families in contemporary Saudi society. Therefore, the economic investment in children and childhood has been shifted away from work, towards the long process of training children at schools and afterward in colleges. Children in contemporary society spend a great part of their day at school, and at home in doing homework, or watching TV, and visiting friends. Thus, other institutions rather than the family are involved in constructing children’s culture, and in the socialization process. Children in contemporary society have access to various sources of information and the family plays only a marginal role in
that. In return, their roles and obligations towards their families have changed, as the discussion in early parts of this chapter illustrated.

The role of Arab children's literature has been addressed in discussions concerned with local culture. Various problems are thought to constitute obstacles in achieving progress in the quality and quantity of children’s publications, as well as in attracting children towards reading in Arabic. These problems arise from different elements, such as the quality of the materials used in the publications, the subjects addressed, the vocabulary used in the text, the adult/child relationship and how adults’ authority imposes itself in the work. It is also considered to be a result of schools’ and families’ disregard of encouraging children to read (Alwani, 1995)

Some of the problems involved in the process of publishing and distributing children’s books are linked to the absence of a powerful organization to supervise and finance the projects involved. This has interfered with the progress of publishing for children, and, for example, some periodicals have had to stop due to financial problems (Batweel, 1995:479). Therefore fewer people are becoming interested in publishing their books for children, since they are not financially protected and they would be taking a risk if they decided to publish at their own expense. There is also a conflict between the interest of the commercial publishing companies, and those who are concerned with publishing books of good quality, regarding the paper used and the illustrations. Some of these problems have been addressed in local newspapers, in which people involved in these issues were interviewed. Some
writers pointed out that they would rather not publish their books in low quality editions. Nevertheless, in their view, commercial publishers continue to deal with these issues in terms of their interest in profit. This is considered as a particular problem affecting the quality and quantity of children's books in Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, 1995:10254-10253).

The significance of this can be discerned by examining the numbers of materials published for children each year. In its annual report for the year 1995, the Arab Council for Childhood and Development pointed out that only 27 books and 2 magazines were published, even though 45.27% of the population of approximately 17,000,000 are children under 15 years old (1995:228). These figures show that there is still a long way to go to develop a better situation as regards the publishing, distribution, and circulation of children's books.

The distribution of children's books encounters various other difficulties, such as publishing companies only being centred in the main city. Furthermore, problems in the process of distribution limit children's access to books (Batweel, 1995:291), especially as only a few of the main public libraries are establishing special sections for children. The Arab Council for Childhood and Development pointed out in its annual report for the year 1995 that there is only one public children's library in Saudi Arabia (1995:229).

Children's attitudes toward reading are yet another problematic subject, which has been addressed in studies and seminars held by different
educational organizations. For example, in 1995, Dhahran School started a research programme to study the problems facing children reading in Arabic. This research pointed out that reading in Arabic for Arabic speaking students in this school is more problematic than reading in English, usually because of the linguistic features of these books, and it often leads to children avoiding reading, especially in Arabic. The school established a project for publishing children's books using a limited vocabulary, which was chosen according to the results of previous studies concerned with this field in other Arab countries, and the books were demonstrated by authors and illustrators.

Moreover, there are other factors involved in the difficulty of establishing the child-book relationship. These include the lifeless role of school's libraries, the large quantity of homework children are asked to finish at home, combined with the attraction of children's television programmes.

The discussion with the informants regarding their interest in reading showed diversity. The girls from highly educated families who were interviewed in this study were all studying in private schools. Some of these girls were more interested in reading, mainly in English. For this group, reading in English gave them high status. This was noted when they said:

*Arabic is everywhere, but English is only when we are travelling. We like to speak in English with our friends at school when we are not in the classroom.*
Rasha pointed out:

*I don’t like Arabic reading classes. I like the English language. When I was in the first grade, my mother encouraged me to read. I started to read a lot and I held the first position in reading in English.*

Rasha and her friends were proud of their knowledge of English and western culture, showing that in the way they pronounced the words, and in competing to say first the titles of the western serials that they watched on TV. Their mothers, by contrast, emphasised the need to hold on to Arab culture and identity. Rasha’s mother explained in her interview that she was trying to attract her daughter to read in Arabic. However, her attempts were not successful, as Rasha preferred to read and speak in English. Her mother explained that unlike her two elder brothers who were born in USA and went to elementary school over there, Rasha was born and attended school in SA. However, her mother had faced with Rasha the same problem she had faced with her brothers, in trying to introduce Arabic books to them. Although Dana’s mother was able to understand the effect of Western culture on her two sons, because of their having spent their early childhood in the U.S.A and attended school there, she did not have an explanation for her daughter’s inclination toward reading and speaking in English.

However, Rasha’s situation could be related to the influence of other members of her family who also spoke and read in both languages, who travel
almost every year to USA, and attend summer camps over there, and to the impact of observing her two elder brothers, as well as her parents. Moreover, other patterns of Western culture were brought to her in media, computers and games, toys and books, fashion and stationary. However, other informants who had travelled less to Western countries, also showed interest in English books and media. Some of them attended American summer camps, watched western TV programmes, and read western magazines. The effect of these elements was reflected in their interest in reading and speaking in English. Nevertheless, although these conditions seem to be main factors in children’s culture, some diversity occurred between informants. A few girls from highly educated families showed less interest in Western culture than the others. This was reflected in the books they chose to read, TV programme and the language they used in talking. However, their exposure to Western culture could moreover be traced in some of their fashions, and in their play, as explained earlier.

The diversities between the second generation and third when dealing with Western elements in children’s culture reflect the change in their priorities. It also illustrates the shift in the general view and definition of contact with western culture. Children in the 1990’s seemed to be keen to belong to their own time and its global culture, while the second generation were concerned with keeping the roots of their local culture, which was a social priority during their own childhood in the 1960’s. Therefore, such conclusions emphasise children’s contributions in structuring their childhood, and that childhood is culturally relative (James and Prout, 1990).
Girls in highly educated families referred in their statements to other elements involved in their tendency toward reading in English, such as the quality of the books themselves, regarding the subjects and illustrations. Some explained they liked books about children, such as ‘Matilda’ by Roald Dahl. The child in this kind of story is playing the main role and takes responsibility for defending him/her self against mean adults in a funny and cheerful way. In addition, these girls had watched a film based on this story, therefore, this could be an important element in children’s attraction toward this story in particular.

Some of these girls (aged 9-12 years) explained what type of reading they enjoyed:

**Rasha**: *Scientific, chapter books and imagination such as fairy tales (Cinderella, Pinocchio).*

**Liena**: *Novels built on movies such as “Mathilda”*

**Rana**: *I don’t like stories such as “Three Little Pigs”, I prefer books such as "Matilda" and “Space-Jam”. I like most books in English, but with Arabic books, I like only real stories and stories about history.*

The effect of globalisation in choosing books and in getting hold of them was obvious among this group, who mentioned that they often bought books when travelling.
Older girls (12-16 years) showed different interests:

**Mona:** *I like to read Arabic novels by Al-Mnfloty. Teen magazines such as Abeer. I also like books about tradition.*

**Najla** mentioned similar interests. Some of that reading matter deals with love stories and human relations, which are often of interest to teenagers.

**Rawan:** *I only like to read magazines.*

**Lujain:** *I like to read translated stories.*

As explained earlier, girls at public schools start their English courses only at secondary school and since all informants were at elementary schools they did not read in English. Furthermore, most of them did not choose to read Arabic as their a free time activity. The few of them who did read showed a tendency toward reading translated Disney books and magazines. Their second choice was to read traditional books such as stories about prophets and their companion, and heroes in Arab Islamic history.

When discussing the methods they used in reading, they explained that they preferred to read by themselves than to listen to an adult reading or telling them a tale, although they did not explain the reason for that. However, girls at the public library who made a similar choice explained that they were more interested in reading because it gives them the freedom to understand the text
as they wanted and not to have an interpretation imposed on them by the adult reader. This could be considered as an indication of change in children’s life, from belonging to the traditional community, and the separation of child/adult communities; the creation of a children’s sub-culture, in which children themselves play an active role in creating their understanding and colouration of the world.

The interviews also discussed girls’ evaluation of reading classes. Although most girls at public schools pointed that they liked these classes, they were not able to provide an explanation. Some of them had never been to their school library, as the schools did not arrange for them to attend the school library regularly.

Reading classes played a part in the lack of interest in reading in Arabic, as explained by girls from highly educated families. All girls in this group found these classes boring because they had to memorize words and also because they did not enjoy the ways they were taught. Rana said:

I don’t like Arabic reading classes. It is boring because we have to memorize all the answers to questions and the word meanings. Sometimes we don’t understand the words or the meanings but we have to memorize them. The worst time is exam time when we have a lot to study.
However, Maha, 11 years old, who went to another private school had a different experience, to some extent. She said:

*I like the Arabic reading classes; I enjoy listening to the teacher when she reads to us. The part I don’t like is having to memorize word meanings and answers to questions. I like English reading classes too. We usually use the school library during English classes.*

Most girls' answers pointed to the marginal role which reading played in schools. Since most schools do not have library classes, students only use the school library when a teacher is away (see also Abulnaser, 1985; Al-Salem, 1997). Rana talked about attending the school library:

*We only go to the school library when a teacher is absent, we don’t have a special class for the library. However, when I go to summer camps, such as Camp Nova (an American summer camp), I like the environment over there, which encourages me to read in English, and we can borrow books and magazines from the library.*

Mona when talking about the ways she obtained the books she reads said:
I buy the books, I haven't borrowed from the public library or school library. School do not encourage us to use the library. Sometimes in reading classes we go to the school library. However, the teachers don't ask us to look up books or help us to choose any.

Rwan talked about her experience:

We have a borrowing system at school, but I have not borrowed, because I do not like the books in the school library.

However, Lujain, who lived in Al-Khobar and was visiting Riyadh when interviewed, had a different experience with the school library. She said:

I like to exchange books in the school library and with friends. Sometimes when I don’t need some of my books any more, I give them away to my school library.

One of these factors that could be involved in creating different experience, in Lujain’s case is the fact that she lives in a different city, which is smaller in size and in population, and in class fragmentation, and therefore has its own subculture.

Rasha also talked about using the school library in a different way:
Sometimes the teacher reads to us at school, but I prefer to read by myself mostly books in English. We can barrow books from the library. We have different sections: Arabic, French, and English. But I usually read in English.

The discussion with teachers of the factors which created this situation pointed to the long curriculum that they have to complete through the year, which does not leave time for reading in the school library. Although girls from highly educated families all went to private schools, considered among the top schools in Riyadh, they had a similar experience to those in public schools, which highlights the need for general plans to improve the use of the school library in order to contribute in developing reading habits among students, especially reading in Arabic (see also Abulnaser, 1985; Al-Salem, 1997).

Girls also pointed to the teacher's role in making reading classes interesting. Their attitude toward reading classes, whether Arabic or English, is partly affected by their relations with the teacher and the activities done during the class. Talking about the teacher's role, some of them said:

**Mona:** Some chapters in Arabic reading classes are interesting. It depends on the teacher, she could turn it into an interesting hour; however, it is usually boring.

**Rwan:** It is usually boring. I would rather read a story myself. This way I have more freedom.
Leina: *I like reading classes, but it depends on the teacher.*

*Some teachers help us to choose nice books from the library.*

Rana, talking about her experience with the reading teacher, said:

*It is boring because the teacher only selects the clever students to answer her questions.*

However, in general comparison, these girls thought English classes were more interesting than Arabic.

Some studies consider adults responsible for the problems encountering children's attitude to reading (Abulnaser, 1985; Jafar, 1992). Therefore, social attitudes towards children and towards reading, in general, are part of the factors affecting the whole cycle which children's books seem to go through. It is adults who control school regulations and libraries, the printing and publishing of books and, moreover, the structuring of reading habits at home. Abulnaser points further to a number of factors shaping children's reading in contemporary Arab societies:

- The high level of illiteracy especially among mothers. Equally both parents, even if educated, often fail to present good examples that would encourage children to read.
• The overload of the school syllabus, and the failure to attract children to enjoy reading classes. And therefore, the marginal attention given to non-curricular activities of which reading could be one.

• The lack of good and attractive Arabic books for children. Because people who usually write for children are often not specialists, many of the books are translated, and therefore represent other cultures.

• Many publishers put out books with low quality, having regard only to their desire for profit.

• The lack of bookshelves in homes, schools and community libraries. Even if these do exist, they are not used in an appropriate way, since children are not playing an active role in using them (1985:24-37).

Writing stories was part of the activities for some girls in highly educated families, which they practiced when they were younger. For some of them, this activity was related to being in school abroad, as was the case for Rasha and Leina. Those girls pointed out that after leaving the schools abroad, they continued to write for a while then stopped.

Talking to girls about the kind of stories they wrote, they had different experiences:

Rasha: I wrote a story in English, using a computer program (My Own Story) helped me in creating this story.
**Leina:** Once I wrote a story in English: “The balloon that was scared of people”. I used to write a lot when I was little in the USA.

**Rana:** When I was seven or eight years old, I used to have a notebook. I wrote stories in it. They were about my dolls, and a story about a giraffe.

**Mona:** I don’t like writing in any form. I would rather read.

**Rwan:** Some of my friends write poetry, but I don’t like writing.

**Leina:** I used to write when I was younger, I wrote a story about a lion and a deer. My father typed it for me and designed a cover for it. I was very proud of it and showed it to relatives. One of them started making fun of me. I was shocked and I have stopped writing since then.

Other girls who had taken the initiative to write stories did not give any explanation why they did not write any more. However, in interviews with teachers, they considered that the long curriculum which children have to cover in reading classes is the main obstacle to practising any other free activities.

However, some informants at the public library showed more tendency toward writing. **Arwa** said:

*I have a book, I write my dreams in it.*
Reem also commented:

*My hobby is writing stories. I would often do that during summer vacation, and when I have free time.*

Other literary activities were mentioned by other girls at the public library, such as sharing reading with older relatives during weekends, or spending time together designing a bulletin.

Girls at public school did not show any interest in writing. Only a few of them mentioned that they tried to write. For example Busma, 9 years old, said:

*I tried to imagine events and write story, but I could not. Sometimes I would read in my school’s reading book, and write what I have read.*

There is a growing concern about children’s libraries in Arab countries, although there is still a need to establish library services for children in most of these countries. In comparison with the services available for western children, there is still a long way to go. The first public library services for children started in America in 1800 and in England in 1861. On the other hand the first in the Arab world was in Jordan in 1979, the International Year of the Child (Al-Salem, 1997:133-148).
King Abdulaziz Public Library opened a children’s section in 1995, and it is the only one in Riyadh City. Therefore, visiting the public library in new phenomenon in the society, and it was not an important activity for most girls. At public schools, only two informants visited this library. Some girls from highly educated families explained that they did not know about the library or did not visit it. Although the public library sometimes provides activities which are usually not provided at schools, such as acting with group of children, Rana who participated in some of those activities, had a discouraging experience.

**Rana:** *I went to the public library with my mother several times. I was rehearsing my part in a play recital. However, they kept delaying the time for showing the play until I travelled with my family in the summer. It was really disappointing, when I came back and watched the play. I asked them to let me join the group sometimes, since I could still play my part, but they would not let me.*

This experience is an indication of the similarity in the role played by the public library to the one played by schools, where girls themselves have only marginal participation in decision making.

Most girls explained that they were the ones who decided regarding the time for reading. They also pointed out the limited time available to share
reading with parents. Girls at public schools decided about the time for
time for
only one informant reported out that her mother would occasionally
ask her to read at certain times. When these girls were asked about how they
obtained reading matter, they explained that they usually bought it by
themselves, followed by their fathers, then mothers, parents along with
children, relatives, as gifts, and the last way was by borrowing from the school
library.

However, some girls, often from highly educated families, pointed out
their mothers used to read to them before
bedtime, and now they usually read themselves before bedtime. The
conversation with these girls showed the importance of their mother’s role in
shaping their reading habits, and in some other activities at home such as
eating, clothing, watching TV, visiting friends, and practicing hobbies. Girls
would sometimes talk about their fathers’ roles regarding these issues; for
example, Rasha talked about the shared interest between herself and her father
in computers. Some girls talked about how they were used to this situation
where the mother is more involved and the father is not. Mona talking about
this:

When we are travelling, we go everywhere with my
mother. I can’t imagine going to places with my father,
because he is the one to make decisions and we have to follow,
while with mother we can discuss things.
Nevertheless, the above discussion of girls’ daily routine and arrangements for their times, parents involvement in making decision for such issues were obvious, and provide indications for change in adult–child relationship, further discussion will be carried on in Chapter Seven).

**Television and other leisure activities**

Television is considered a powerful force in children's lives and recent studies suggest a link between aggressive behaviour in young children and violence on television (Salkind: 1990, 346 and 354). In Arab countries concerns about this issue have been growing increasingly, since television is taking an important part of children's daily activities. On average, Arab children watch TV for 33 hours every week (Duckak, 1995:176). The role of television in children's lives has been the focus of studies in Arab societies. For example, the first seminar to discuss this subject was held at Baghdad in 1978, and the second one was in 1985 in Tunisia. Looking at the results of these two seminars, we learn that little progress has been made in relation to dealing with children's TV programmes. In the second seminar, it was pointed out that 30.78% of the imported TV materials for children was from the U.S.A, 15.39% from England, and 7.69% from West Germany and Japan and France and other European countries. The local production on the other hand was only 7.68% (Duckak: 1995,175).

Arab children are therefore watching Western programmes and cartoons, and the fear of this influence is related to the social desire to
maintain cultural identity (Bshore, 1994:84). In 1995 for example, local TV stations carried 118 hours of children's programmes and other stations from various countries are also available for children. Some of them show children's programmes for 12 hours each day such as the 'A.R.T.' station. In addition, the introduction of satellite television in recent years has made it possible for most social classes to watch stations where western programmes are available. The cry for a return to Arab heritage in children's literature, and the use of traditional folk tales for contemporary children represents an attempt to maintain social identity, and to protect children from the strange and damaging values, which they are thought to be exposed to via TV.

Watching TV was a daily activity for all informants. Compared to reading, most girls at public schools preferred watching TV. Some explained:

*It is easier to watch TV than to read.*

*TV gives variety of information, and gives it easily.*

These girls preferred to watch mainly Disney productions, in English or dubbed in Arabic. Their second choice was Arabic children's programmes. Some pointed out that they also watched adults' films or programmes. When discussing decisions about what to watch and when, most girls explained that it was their decision and said they often watched about two hours a day. Some commented further:
The time for watching TV is decided according to the programme I am watching.

Satellite provides a variety of choices, and therefore the time for watching is not limited.

I like watching TV in the afternoon, when my parents are taking a nap and the house is quiet.

For some girls, the other activities they did during the day were related to watching TV. Some explained:

I like to watch TV, then do some homework, and then watch again.

I do not like to do my homework alone in my room. I would do it while I'm sitting in the living room. When I am tired I could watch some TV, then go back to work.

Some girls from highly educated families however explained that they liked reading, and sometimes preferred it to watching TV. Rasha talked about the negative effect of watching TV:

I like reading. Watching TV for long time is not good for your eyes. My mother said that my grandmother used to watch TV for a long time, and that's why she can hardly see and she wears glasses all the time.
Rana: Sometimes when the story is long, it is boring. But I don't prefer watching TV or reading, they are both the same.

Mona: When I'm tired I like to watch TV. I read before going to sleep, and I prefer reading to watching TV.

Other girls in this group expressed themselves more openly. This could be related to teenagers liking to express their own ideas. When they were comparing their tendency toward reading or watching TV, they said:

Mona: It depends on what is on TV, or in the book. However, I like watching TV more than reading a book.

Rwan: I like TV. It is an important part of my life. The time depends on what is on TV. The programme I usually watch is about 45 min. I might watch more than one programme. When I have time off watching TV, I read.

Lojain: I like watching TV, but not for a long time. It gives me a headache. I like to do other things even while watching, such as sewing, drawing, and crafts. I like both TV and reading and it depends on the subject.

Although girls expressed their inclination toward reading, this discussion still provides indications of the domination of TV in their daily activities, and for example, they could seldom remember the subject or the
title of the last book they had read. However, the importance of reading and

the negative effect of TV and media are often addressed in public, as well as

some private discussions, so those girls comments might be a reflection of

those ideas. Moreover, for these girls, being in families where at least one

parent was involved in working with books, would be an additional element

that might make them show an appreciation toward reading.

Rasha, for example talked about relatives encouraging her to read:

Five years ago I was ill, and my relatives gave me gifts.

They were all books, except one toy. However, I liked the books

more than the toy.

For these girls in highly educated families too, the time for watching

also was mostly their decision. Their mothers would interrupt only if

homework was not done, or during exam time. Leina was the only one who

talked about her father setting the time for TV during exam time.

Most girls pointed out that they like watching Disney movies on TV or

videos. Arwa at the public library said:

I like watching Disney movies, such as Pocahontas, and

the Hunchback. I have all these on video tapes, and I do not

mind repeating them to the extent of memorizing them.
Some girls showed a particular tendency toward watching western programmes. They shared the experience in watching teenagers’ serials, and this seemed to have quite a status among these girls. Talking about the programmes they watched, **Rasha** and **Rana** said:

*American teenagers’ serials, such as: Boy Meets World, Home Improvement, Thunder all, Student Valley.*

**Maha:** *We used to have satellite and we used to watch similar programmes. But not since our membership finished. Now I watch videotapes, Disney movies mostly.*

Therefore, watching TV is a main element that affects other activities in girls’ daily routine, such as doing homework, or joining the family, as it was obvious when **Sara** and her sister **Johara** talked about preparation for Ramadan.

The use of computers was also featured in girls’ discussions. The Arab Gulf countries are considered one of the most important markets for electronic equipment, which is imported from different parts of the world. Approximately one billion dollar worth of computers are sold every year, and five billions for other electronic equipment. Children are considered an important target in this market (Al-Mshygh, 1997:48).
Most informants at public schools mentioned that they had computers, and they often used them for playing games. Only a few of them mentioned using them for both play and work. They also pointed out that they used computers mainly at weekends.

For girls in highly educated families, computers provided access to western technology and culture. Girls in this group showed, however, diversity in their use of computers. Some of them used them for work and games, and sometimes they would get the materials for computer programmes or games while travelling, or through relatives who were travelling. However, their access to computers varied:

**Rasha:** *We have a computer, it is windows 98. I also use it for typing. One time I typed a whole paragraph and read it. We also have computer games, such as Gameboy. My elder brother has Nintendo 64. Sometimes I play with it. At school also we play computer games.*

**Leina:** *We have a computer, but it is not working now. When I was five years old, at school in America, I typed a long story, though it was full of spelling mistakes. Once Rasha came over to my house over here, and we wrote a story together. I don’t do this any more, I stopped when I was eight years old. We have computer games at home: Nintendo, and Super Sonic. I play with those along with my brother.*
**Rana:** We have a computer, it is my mother’s. I don’t get to use it often. We have computer games at home, such as Super Nintendo and Gameboy. At school we have computer classes. Sometimes we play with computers during these classes.

The older girls in this group also talked about their experience with computers:

**Mona:** I don’t like computers, or computer games. Sometimes I would type a paper for school on the computer, that’s all.

**Rwan:** We have computer games and p.c. Sometimes I play or work on the p.c. but not every day. I like working on the p.c. more.

**Lojain:** I like working on the p.c. a lot, the developments in its use attract me, especially the Internet. I use it to find out about songs, and new movies. My parents think computer games are useless, therefore, until recently they refused to buy one. However, we bought one recently.

The girls’ answers therefore, provide some indication of the role which computers have in providing girls with access to Western culture. Furthermore, it was those girls who were traveling most and who have global contact through speaking the English language who shared greatest interest in using computers.
Computers and the Internet have recently become popular in Saudi Arabia. Internet cafes are a new phenomenon, which have spread widely in Riyadh City. These cafes usually have segregated branches, some for males and others for females. Control over the use of the Internet is organized by King Abudlaziz City for Science and Technology. This organization aims to supervise the use of the Internet in line with local moral values and tradition. However, the Internet provides global contact through the world wide web, and young people can use it for several purposes, such as chatting and it can be assumed, therefore, that the Internet enables social contact between males and females, which would in other circumstances not be possible, especially among youth. Although this assumption needs further empirical study in order to reach definite conclusions, it indicates the potential explosive impact which such access to Western technology might have on young people’s social relations.

**Folk tales**

The discussion in the two previous chapters accentuated the importance of folk tales as a socializing mechanism, during the childhood of the first and the second generations. It also illustrated the role folk tales played in transmitting moral values, in addition to their function as a leisure activity. The analysis in this section aims to provide evidence regarding continuity and/or change in the role of folk tales in contemporary childhood, looking at girls’ experience and evaluations of folk tales.
In discussing relevant issues with girls, the majority showed an interest in folk tales. Some called them old stories, others thought of them as any story told to them. They also often talked about historical and heroic stories while talking about tales, and admired stories about the prophet Mohammed and his companions.

Diversities occurred between girls. Some girls denigrated folk tales, or had not experienced listening to or reading them. For example, Luma, aged 9 and who was interviewed at home with other members of her family, said:

*I do not know anything about folk tales. The only thing I know from the old life is the adobe house, I would like to see them.*

Her sister (13 years old) mentioned that she had read some folk tales, however she did not like them. She preferred to read about prophets. When their grandmother at that interview told folk tales, the girls thought the folk tales were all right and not frightening, and the younger girls (8, 9 years old) said that they preferred watching Disney movies.

**Dana** (9 years old) was also interviewed at home, in a three generational gathering with relatives and friends. Her grandmother told a folk tale, but she did not understand it, so her mother explained the tale for her. When I asked **Dana** about what she had understood in the tale, she pointed out that the tale was talking about divorce, but later she added that she preferred
stories about children’s lives. This case provides an indication of the growth of a children’s culture in Saudi Arabia, which differs from adults’. Although contemporary children continue to be part of the community, they show an interest in creating their own sub-culture, which deals with the real every day world of the child.

Other girls, however, had different experiences. They enjoyed listening to folk tales. Furthermore, they memorized them and were able to tell them to others. These girls found listening to tales told by relatives interesting. The teller would usually be the mother or the grandmother; at other times it would be their father. The difficulties in understanding some of the words in the tales did not seem to be an obstacle to their enjoyment of those tales. They explained that the meaning would be clarified through the events, otherwise they could ask for an explanation.

When girls were interviewed at the public library, some of them told tales and talked about their experience. For example, Sara said:

My father told me some tales, and I like them. He also talked about his life as a child and the tales he listened to. The last time he told me a tale I was about five years old. I memorised those tales and my father asked me to tell them to others.

Her sister Johara added:
My father used to tell us tales while we were travelling by car or going somewhere, so when we got there we would be ready to sleep.

Giyda and Reem also commented:

My grandmother used to tell us tales. We also like to buy books about folk tales and read them. There was one tale in a book that I could not understand, but my mother explained it to me. She knew that tale as a child.

Arwa commented:

Last year my mother told me a folk tale, I know some folk tales, which I read in books. My elder brother who is 13 years old, likes to reads tales, and sometimes he tell those tales to us.

The girls often explained that they liked the tales because they liked their grandmother, and because she treated them kindly, and also because the tales gave them some information about living in traditional society.

Therefore, although most girls liked the tales when relatives told them to them, especially their grandmother. It was clear that folk tales in contemporary society have lost their socializing role and the main purpose of
telling the tales now is for leisure. Thus, although we can observe continuity in
the link between children’s interest and the relationship with the teller, at the
same time we can notice the change in children’s relation with the tale itself.
In traditional society, tales were used for moral purposes as well as for leisure,
dealing with episodes that were meant to be applied to life at that time. On the
other hand, when tales are told for children in contemporary society they
would be for leisure and often to talk about a life that they had never
experienced. Therefore, the effectiveness of these tales as a socializing
mechanism is limited.

Girls described their feelings toward the tales. Sometimes they found
the tales scary, at other times they described them as unrealistic. For example,
Johara told this tale during an interview at the public library:

Once upon a time there were a boy and a girl. Their
mother went out and told them not to talk to anybody. A cow
came, and the girl started talking and playing with it. Her
brother told her: Don’t talk to it, mother asked us not to.
However, the girl continued talking and playing with the cow.
She thought: My mother will not know. The cow ate the girl, for
it was actually a demon. The cow started walking away and the
boy was following it, but it did not know. He carried with him a
small bag full of stones. As he walked, he threw stones in the
road so he would know the way. He went back home and told
his mother. They went together where the cow was staying.
They opened her stomach with a knife and got the girl out.

Sara told another tale:

Once upon a time a family went to the desert. They found a house and inside it was a sheep. When they saw that sheep they decided to cook it for lunch. When the father wanted to slaughter the sheep, it started laughing. The mother asked: Who is laughing? The man answered: Nobody. Because he did not expect the sheep to laugh. The mother was scared and thought the sheep was a demon, she decided to take her children and go to her house in the city. The father stayed alone, and after while the sheep ate him. This sheep went to the city and entered the house of that family. The sheep told the mother that it had eaten her husband. The women said: Please wait before you eat me and my children I would like to sing and dance. The sheep agreed. The woman started singing and dancing and the sheep danced too. The woman in her song was calling her neighbour (Abu-Hammed) to help her, but that was not clear for the sheep, as the women was clever in choosing the words. So the neighbour heard the song and realised that the women was calling him to save her. He came to her house, killed the sheep, and saved the women and her children.
The girls had different feelings towards the second tale. **Johara** said:

*My father told us this tale. It was scary, I used to imagine the sheep like an American sheep, with thick hair and large eyes covered partly with locks. I am still scared by the dark.*

**Sara:** *I imagined the sheep with glowering eyes and scary features. My father used different sounds, those also used to scare me. However, I like tales because they enrich my imagination. Even when I am watching horror movies I try to add ideas to events.*

Most girls mentioned that they had liked listening to tales or stories when they were younger. However, they added that now they preferred reading. For **Mona**, as mentioned earlier, reading gives freedom to think and to understand from the reader’s point of view, while listening to tales leads to meanings being imposed on the listener. Her judgment shows the change in children’s perspective on their relations with adults and awareness of their own autonomy.

Another way of studying girls’ understanding and evaluation was through introducing tales as well as modern stories during the interviews. Girls often found these tales less interesting than when they were told to them by a relative.
One of the tales was told to some girls from highly educated families, and they found it frightening and disgusting. The tale, ‘sufuof’ is about a stepmother, who was jealous because her husband loved his son, so she killed her stepson and buried his rings. Later she cooked the boy and invited her family to dinner. When her husband came back home, he was looking for his son. Then he sent someone to search. When this man was walking by the cemetery, he heard a voice calling him. It was the mother of the boy. She told him what had happened and where to find the rings. He went back to the father and told him. He did not believe him. However when they dug for the rings and found them, he knew it was true. So he went home and killed his wife and invited her family for dinner. After they finished eating, they asked him about his wife, then he told them: you have eaten her.

**Rasha** who was most frightened by this tale said: *It is frightening; I would dream about it.*

**Rana:** *It is scary, I would think about it before I go to sleep, especially the part about cemetery. There is nothing good about it. It would teach us to be frightened.*

**Leina:** *I'm not frightened by it. But there is nothing good about it.*

Most of these girls, however, read frightening stories, often in English, which they found more interesting. They thought the way the events in the
story developed made them look real and interesting, even if they were horror stories. However, this tale was frightening in a way they did not enjoy.

Other girls were not frightened by this tale. However, they did not enjoy it for several reasons. Mona explained:

I have listened to this tale from my grandmother, and I liked it then, even though the idea of the stepmother eating the boy was disgusting. There are folk tales, which you can enjoy and almost believe, not like this tale.

Comparing these kinds of stories to a tale that was told to them, Leina said:

I like mythological stories, but I don’t like this tale; it is monstrous.

However, Hanouf enjoyed telling the same tale at the public library, and she later repeated the songs included in the tale.

In an attempt to study the impact of the subject of the tale on girls’ judgment, another tale was told. The tale is Aroom and it is a modernized tale about animals, and contained no frightening themes.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Aroom is a folk tale, recently published in new version. It is about two goats, one of them was trying persuade the other one to come back home when it started to rain.
The girls liked this tale. However, some of them were familiar with the original one, and they preferred it to the modernized one. They found some moral values in it, although they questioned some events which they considered not convincing. This suggests that children's interest in tales has become more realistic (see Sampson, 2000).

Another way of looking at girls' knowledge about traditional society in order to explore continuity with the past was through asking them about traditional characters, and the source of their information. They referred to only to a few of characters, which they had heard of from TV or books; for example, Sinbad, in videotapes and books; Joha, Ashab, and Antar, from reading classes, Aladdin from Disney cartoons. Arwa said:

*I saw Ala-Alden in Disney's movie, and I did not realize he was originally an Arabian character.*

**Johara:** *I knew he was Arabian, but when I watched the video I thought he was Indian, because of his clothes.*

Their information about old artefacts was also limited to such things as animals, clothes and the use of feathers for writing. Mona had some traditional artefacts, and was able to describe the shape and the name of some of them, while other girls learned about them through visiting the yearly traditional festival Al-Jenadriah, which is held in Riyadh. Some families kept some traditional artefacts, mostly as a decoration. Others would have a tent in the courtyard of the house, which they would use as a sitting area or for
friends visiting and artefacts would be used in these tents. This could be considered as part of the family’s attempt to keep the continuity in tradition passing from one generation to the other, and a living experience, even if only for a few hours.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to explore continuity as well as change in the experience of girls growing up in contemporary Saudi Arabia, looking at changes that have occurred in family life in relation to changes in family size, the role of the extended family, and relations with parents and siblings. This chapter also examined children’s play and changes in the role of the family as well as the community in this regard, highlighting new patterns in children’s culture, such as elements of globalization in their play and in leisure activities, such as fashion and reading. Continuity and change were also looked at through examining girls’ previous experience with folk tales, and experimenting with introducing folk tales to girls during the interviews.

The findings in this chapter point to change in family structure and size and a move toward a nuclear family with fewer children. Although the informants continue to have contact with their extended families, changes have occurred in roles and obligations. Their shared activities are mostly for leisure proposes, and girls are not responsible for housework any more. Friends often replace siblings, as a wider gap in siblings’ age is occurring. There is also a noticeable concern about age as a main element in categorizing
children and dividing them into separate groups. This also emphasizes the growing separation between adults and children, of which both parents and girls showed awareness. For example, providing a separate space for children to play and toys, time and transportation to visit friends have contributed to the creation of a child’s community, as well as individualism and increasing privatization of family’s life. This was reflected in girls’ tendency to have their freedom in solitary reading rather than listening to folk tales as part of group, and to have their private space and time to spend with friends or to watch TV, or to choose their own clothes. However, most girls showed respect for the traditional moral values controlling girls’ mobility and behaviour, in adjusting their fashion and maintaining respect with extended family members, especially grandparents.

Girls’ experience with folk tales was varied, and provided indications of attraction to the tales when they were part of the family’s activity and when parents shared this interest. However, the role of folk tales in passing on moral values is decreasing, and the main purpose of introducing them to children in contemporary society is for leisure. Girls’ engagement with tales is different from the two previous generations, as they are now questioning the ideas and showing more interest in subjects related to children’s culture. The change in children’s position in the family could be part of the change in the function of folk tales. In traditional societies, children were usually considered to be in a “weak” position, as all their knowledge and needs would be provided through their families. Telling children folk tales was part of this relationship, as Peter Hunt explores:
In many ways, the use of fantasy was at the heart of the adult-child relationship in literature...using metaphor or allegory to simplify and characterize human traits to simplify concepts of good and evil, and to gratify the simple wish to overcome them...in folk literature and legend, such traits have emerged in the need for the weak to inherit the earth, and who weaker than that excluded group, children? (1994: 185).

However, in contemporary Arab societies, children have wider access to knowledge through the mass media, the internet, books, and travel etc. Sometimes they may even have knowledge which their parents do not possess. It can be seen from the discussion in this chapter, therefore, the contemporary children’s interaction with folk tales, as well as with the wider society, has changed.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Managing Change

Introduction

Once upon a time there was a tent. Women from different age categories gathered in this tent, along with one little girl named Nora. The tent was not in the middle of the desert; it was in the front yard of a villa in Riyadh City. Um-abdulrahman, 72 years old, and Um-Mohammed, 70 years old, were continuously encouraged to talk about the past, about their childhood and their shift to adulthood and to compare that to contemporary life. Both of these elderly women exemplify the traditional era, their dresses were in traditional design (Durrah) with also traditional light head Veil (Shila), their golden jewelry, and even their dialogue was often different. However, despite carrying the past inside them and in their appearance, they often questioned my contemporary interest in that past. Um-abdulrahman and Um-Mohammed assumed that the new generations could understand and appreciate only a little about the past. It was not too long ago when they lived its reality, however today it looks like it happened a long, long time ago, for the changes which have occurred have brought an almost completely different life style. Therefore, talking about their past life was like telling a tale.
In that same tent younger women were dressed in various ways, some in local costume, others with more western fashions. Some of them were relatives, others were friends. Um-abdulrahman was accompanied by her youngest daughter in law, who lives with her in the same house, but in a separate section in order to give privacy for the young couple. Two daughters accompanied um-Mohammed, each from a different marriage. Those two sisters looked different and acted different, 36 year old Hiya who left her mother early and lived with her father and grandparents, was married before finishing her college degree. Therefore she stopped studying and stayed home, and had six children. She is now living with her husband's family in one house. Her daughter Nora, 8 years old, also joined the gathering in the tent waiting to be interviewed, not complaining even though she had to wait for a long time. The other daughter of Um-Mohammed, Asma, 32 years old, lived her childhood with her parents, finished her diploma in education and works as a teacher in elementary school. She is married and has four children. However her daughter was not there that day as she was visiting friends. The teenage girls were the daughters of our host, and, wearing jeans and T-shirts, were generously serving us with coffee and dates, as well as other different types of modern snacks.

The players in the above cameo represent the great diversity which exits between members of contemporary Saudi society and the diversity in
their appearance and dealings with every day matters, reflect their different perspectives with regard to the continuity of traditions and the forces of change. As was explained in the Introduction, dealing with tradition and modernity has been seen as a problematic issue for most Arab societies. This is more acute in Saudi Arabia because of its special position in the Arab Islamic world, as well as its global economic role. As also discussed in the introductory chapters, attempts to make a compromise between tradition and modernity in the Arab world have stimulated different debates and produced different trends which can be divided into three groups: conservators of tradition; those who want to compromise between tradition and contemporary life, and those who view traditions as an obstacles in the face of change and development (Ammara, 1984: 13; Hanni, 1998: 50). The influence of such views on daily interactions and in particular on children's daily activities was also highlighted throughout the analysis of the data provided by three generation's informants.

The findings of this study reveal therefore that the socio-economic and political changes which have occurred in the Arab world have affected children's culture, and through looking at the experience of three generations who were born between 1925-1990, childhood in Saudi society has been shown to be a changing phenomenon. According to the discussion carried out in the previous ethnographic chapters, key elements of change involved in children's daily culture for each generation can be summarized as follows:
Thus, while children's culture in the first generation was mainly constructed through interacting with family members and their local community, other additional elements started to influence children's culture in the second generation, such as schooling and reading. These new conditions indicated the emergence of new understanding and construction of childhood. Comparing the early years of life for girls pre 1940s to the global understanding of contemporary childhood we conclude that childhood, according to such definition, only started to emerge in the late 1950's in Saudi Arabia. The creation of childhood as a special social space in the life course was emphasized through the growing concerns about children's special needs and linking them to age. Consequently this gradually sharpened the division between adulthood and childhood. Meanwhile, during the childhood of the second generation, the role of the family and the local community continued to be of dominant importance.

Examining the elements involved in constructing children’s culture in contemporary society, we notice that there are a variety of factors involved in this process. Although the family continues to act as the main institution in socialising children, the neighborhood has become less effective and indeed
has often totally disappeared, as the data provided by the informants indicated. Within contemporary society there is a greater diversity within neighborhoods, rather than a unified community, a fact which was also clarified during attempts to locate the sample for this study. Visiting a certain neighborhood was not an accurate method to have access to a particular social category (see Chapter Three). It is also clear that school is an important element in contemporary childhood, as is shown in the above chart (p.433). However, detailed generational similarities and diversities in the actual role of school as a social institution was beyond the scope of this study to investigate. Therefore, in order to formulate greater understanding of school in constructing children's culture further empirical studies would need to be carried out. Other new elements taking an important part in contemporary children's daily life is their leisure time activities, such as playing with commercial toys and games, watching television and videos, and access to the internet and media. Also the analysis of children's data showed that children are now considered as an important consumer target group, in food, fashion, toys, stationary. It was also clear that peer groups, rather than sibling groups, are becoming of core importance for children, and they could therefore be considered highly effective in constructing their culture.

These new elements are contributing to the formation of contemporary childhood in Saudi society, which at the same time is making this childhood take on a global character, as the progress in usage of media and other means of contact with the outside world had made it possible to interact with other cultures on a daily basis. Therefore, it can be suggested that processes of
globalization have made local childhood take on a more cosmopolitan appearance (see also Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Douglas, 1998). However, as the theoretical arguments that were adopted in this study suggest, it is important to look deeply into the actual social practices of everyday life and the ways in which the family is enacted before reaching judgment regarding change in family function, and the position and role of children in the family. Despite the change taking place in female roles within the family and in the society, for example, my discussion with girls has often showed continuity in core moral values regarding girls’ position within the family and the impact of their behaviour on the family.

Therefore, these findings indicate continuity, going side by side with change, as processes which some times contradict each other. Different attempts to force a compromise between continuity of morals and forces of change, as the analysis showed in the ethnographic chapters, are carried out by members of the three generations. Attempts to adapt and modify current elements with traditional culture have become the engagement for those who are dealing within children, such as the state and parents, while children themselves have also become part of this situation, as they are living in a society which is wide open to other cultures and rapidly changing, and yet they are only perceiving and experiencing a socialization process that is emphasizing the importance of holding on to local identity and avoiding Western influence.
In this chapter I shall look at the ways being developed to deal with the dynamics of change and how the state, parents, and children themselves are managing change. The following sections will highlight the generational attempts to manage change and also discuss views and evaluations regarding change and living in contemporary Saudi society.

**First Generation Managing Change**

The discussion in Chapter Four with first generation informants embraced a number of different topics. It looked at girls’ childhood in traditional society pre 1940s and also investigated the ideology behind role divisions within the family and how this was emphasized through the socialization process. It was shown that folk tales were a leisure activity as well as a means for controlling children’s behavior.

Elderly informants reported that they have witnessed great social and economic changes during their lifetime. The interviews with them contained discussions around the socio-economic changes which developed in different sectors, and more precisely in childhood in Saudi society, and their evaluation of these changes. They were also asked to compare and evaluate current life to their life in traditional phase. These discussions included general ideas about their views and the ways they themselves adapted to these changes.
Managing within the Family

The discussion in Chapter Two aimed to formulate a theoretical perspective for the different arguments regarding socio-economic change and its impact on the family, which has led to the transformation and redefinition of family structure and functions (Hareven, 1995; Finch, 1989; Morgan, 1996). Some of those arguments suggest that change has led to the isolation of older people in the contemporary family. As social and economic functions became more closely linked to age, the age of family members became more streamlined, and there was greater isolation between the different age groups as well as local community and in the society as a whole. Hareven concludes:

In earlier time periods, the absence of dramatic transitions to adult life allowed a more intensive interaction among different age groups within the family and the community, thus providing a greater sense of continuity and interdependence among people at various stages of life... this transition led to the loss of power and influence of the old people of the family...the retreat and growing privatism of the modern middle-class family led to the drawing of sharper boundaries between family and community and intensified the segregation of different age groups within the family, leading to elimination of older people from viable family roles (1995:130).
Examining the data provided by grandmothers as well as mothers included in this study, about the traditional family, and comparing it to current family life, we notice that socio-economic changes in Saudi Arabia have encouraged new patterns in everyday life. The family developed changes in the functions and roles of family members, which has marginalized the elderly as well as created gaps between the different age groups of family members, and with the local community.

As was shown in discussions in previous chapters, the rapid socio-economic change created diversity in the experience of each generation, which is more obvious when comparing the first generation with the third (see also the elements effecting children’s daily culture in the chart above). This growing gap between the generations can also be traced when comparing the views and images of the younger to the older generation and the grandparents’ roles in socialization has been affected by the diversity in the experience of each generation as well as the change in family structure, which has in turn affected continuities as a means of socialization. Therefore, the childhood of the first generation is rather different from that of the third, and grandparents’ role in children’s daily life is more limited in contemporary family when compared with their dominant role in the socialization process in traditional family (see also Cohen, 1987).

The discussion throughout the chapters showed that the transformation of family structure from an extended family to a modified or nuclear family was an important element in generating changes in the role and function of the
family and family members. The reduction of the power and influence of older people in the family is also a consequence of the diversity of experience between the first and the second generation as a result of education and employment. As discussed previously, women's formal education and employment are new phenomena, which started in 1960's and encouraged new images and perspectives in dealing with family daily life as well as with children. These conditions have cultivated new ideas about rearing children and the methods that should be used in controlling their behaviour. The creation of a new understanding for childhood was also influenced by the contact with other cultures, mainly western.

In the discussion of development in Saudi society, it was explained that although the rise in the national income has brought rapid economic change, social change was slower. Thus, traditional moralities and behaviours continued to exist despite the rapid material change that the society is witnessing (Abdul-Rahman, 1982; Al-Rumaihi, 1983). Therefore, despite some change in family structure the family, in general, still holds to the basic rules which work to maintain relations with other members of the extended family, and most of all the elderly. Therefore, the second generation continues to carry out family obligations toward older members in their families, especially parents, even if they are living in another city or village. Several times parents will move to live with one of their children, and often this would be their son.
However, the present day dynamics of these relations, as well as the effectiveness of their roles, are rather different when compared to the traditional ones. While during the childhood of the second generation grandmothers played an active role in socialising their grand children, their role in contemporary families is marginal now. For example Um-Saad, 100 years old, and originally from the south region, moved to Riyadh to live with her eldest son who is working as professor at King Saud University. Her son studied for several years in England, and when he came back he brought her to live with him and his family, in order to take care of her. Although she was a brave and active woman, as illustrated in Chapter Four, she now plays only a marginal role in her family life and in socializing her grandchildren. Those children have a totally different childhood than hers, as they grow up in Riyadh City and in London. Walking with a stick toward the room to be interviewed, she composed a poem describing her weak bones and sight, and her broken teeth and her being useless.

Despite the fact that this family showed evidence of being more traditional in daily life, such as in clothing, furniture, and in serving beverages and snacks; the children are not interested in traditional aspects of life, such as folk tales. Their mother described how the children disapproved of a poem that she had composed, and that they think it shameful to tell it to anyone else.

Another example is Um-Abdulaziz, who used to live with two of her sons, but then one of them decided to move out. She is living now with the youngest, along with his wife and children. Um-Abdulrahman used to live
with two of her sons. The eldest is married and traveled to the USA to study and, after coming back, he lived in a separate house with his nuclear family, while she continued to live with her youngest son and his wife, as he recently got married.

Nevertheless, looking at these new circumstances we can notice some shifts in positions and therefore in relations: elderly people in the past were the owners of the household, and they were in control of economic resources, while if they chose to live with their children in current society, they would often be in the opposite position, unless they owned the house. Other studies on Saudi family have reached similar conclusions. For example, in her study (Alsuwaigh) explained:

The transition from the extended to the nuclear type of family unit is one of the most important changes currently occurring in Saudi Arabia ... the very isolation of the nuclear family increases intimacy between the husband and wife, and bring them into closer contact with their children. In addition, while mothers in extended family used to have numerous women around to help them with domestic tasks and child cars, mothers in the nuclear family are bearing the burden alone. Consequently, the process of change in the family structure has contributed to the resultant loss of the traditional support system and an increase in isolation (1989:75).
The changes in the Arab family, as discussed in the introductory chapters and further in the ethnographic analysis, indicates change in the position of the elderly. The development of education and new patterns of work have limited their importance in transforming work experience. Also as mentioned above, the diversity in the generational experience has caused them to draw back from their role in the socialization process. Nevertheless, contemporary families are concerned about maintaining the status of the elderly, at least within the family. This would be usually through showing care and respect, financially as well as socially, although the elderly in the current Arab family have lost their practical economic roles, and as well their social roles to some extent.

The discussion with the grandmothers illustrated that their daily activities would be usually centred around completing religious obligations, such as prayers, reading or listening to the holy book (Qur'an). Their physical abilities and health conditions often limit their daily activities, and some of them would only occasionally be able to cook, wash their clothes, or tidy the house when they are living on their own. When sharing the house with members of their families, they would tidy their rooms and some informants said that they would supervise the housemaids in their work. Um-Abdulaziz talked about her daily life saying:

*When my health was in a better condition I was always busy, I would not have time to sit down. I would tidy up the house,*
check the storage room. However, I did not cook the food because my daughter in law did.

Despite being interviewed alone, she added whispering:

Now the maid is the one who cooks, but we don't tell my son because he refuses to eat the food if the maid cooks it. However, my daughter in law goes to work and she does not have time for cooking.

Her concern about keeping this conversation a secret reflects her belief that cooking is one task which the wife should be responsible for. This is an example of a general belief which continues in the family in the second generation, despite the changes in women's role (see also Altorki 1989; Kattan 1991).

Visiting relatives and friends were activities for some informants who were physically capable. Two informants mentioned going to the elderly club, which recently opened in Riyadh, and one informant pointed out that she would some times take care of the garden.

Comparing these activities to family life and the role of the elderly in traditional society, we notice a big change in their function. The data shows generational support between female family members, where the grand mother often played an active and direct role in socializing her grandchildren.
For example, Suha’s own grandmother was directly involved in the every day tasks of caring for her. Other cases also indicated similar relationships (see Chapter Five).

The data provided shows, however, a general limitation in grandmother’s family roles and social interaction in contemporary Saudi Arabia although this varied to some extent according to their age, health and experience. Some informants, who had unusual experiences during childhood or during their youth years such as going to school, or having jobs, now seem to be engaged with variety of activities. 63 year old Um-Ahmed, who, as mentioned in Chapter Four, lived her early childhood in another society and went to school till the fourth grade, pointed out that she would spend the mornings reading newspapers, and listening to the radio and watching TV. She is also interested in knitting, and she would go to elderly club once a week. She is financially supporting herself as her past husband left her wealth, and she can afford to travel with members of her family three times a year to other Arab countries or to Europe.

Um-Khaled is 61 years old, and, as mentioned in Chapter Four, went to school and finished her degree after marriage and recently retired. She spends her time between work and family obligations. Her role toward her family continues to be important, and since she is the eldest, her sister and brothers as well as her married daughters often gather at her house, and seek her advice and help with their children.
The majority of the informants pointed to the importance of the family gathering every weekend. Usually all their children and grandchildren will gather at the grandmother’s place. However, the grandmother seldom takes direct responsibility towards her grandchildren. The informant’s role in their children’s and grandchildren’s lives is limited, as many of them illustrated this role saying:

*We don’t interfere with our children’s or grandchildren’s lives.*

Others described their grandchildren visit:

*When they come to visit, they don’t sit with me, they are always running around.*

Sometimes taking direct responsibility occurs more often when the grandmother is living with her grandchildren in one house, and their mother is working in a day job outside the house. However, a house maid would also often help take care of the children. Many times, the grandmother’s physical and psychological ability would also limit her contribution in socializing her grand children.

Um-Abdulrhman mentioned that some of her grandchildren had lived in the UK when her son was studying abroad. They brought toys back with them, with which they rather play than talk or listen to tales. Some of these toys she did not like them to have. However, her grandchildren still keep
telephoning to ask her to come visit them. The activities done with grandchildren when they are visiting are usually, sitting talking to them, eating together, some times watching TV. Only Um-Rashed added that she would play wrestling with them.

Despite this limited role, only a small number of the informants showed dissatisfaction towards their relations with their children and grandchildren. These were those who did not have regular contact with their families, and therefore suffered from isolation and neglect. The isolation of elderly people was some times related to social stratification, as it was more severe in the case of low-income informants. The rapid change has widened the gap between their life styles and the contemporary ways of living in the larger society. Their lack of ability to provide for the needs of modern life has accentuated their isolation and their marginal role. As explained in Chapter Four, class stratification occurred less in traditional society and, therefore, members of the society were integrating actively with the community, regardless of their age or social statues.

Um-Rashed, who was divorced four years ago, is considered now as a low-income citizen and receives benefits from the social services office, talked about this type of isolation as did Um-Abdullah, a Bedouin widow who came to Riyadh ten years ago, and left behind her old life and friends. She cried more than once talking about the change that happened to her and the neglect she suffers from, especially since her children are busy with their
lives and with providing their children's needs. She said, describing her relation with her family:

*We used to gather every day, each time at a house of a relative or at one of my son's, but not any more. My sons and daughters are busy earning their living needs and for their children. They have many children, one of them has thirteen and he hardly earns enough to feed them.*

These previous cases accentuate the fact that not only has age generated the gap between generations, but also the diversity in their experience, according to social class and the informant's personal background. However, although the upper classes and sometimes the middle classes are able to provide elderly people with modern material needs, such as housing, medical services, transportation, house maids or nurses, and even traveling, which would be sometimes to Europe or America, the diversity in their experience still creates a feeling of cultural isolation. Elderly people continue to believe strongly in moral values and traditional practices, which sometimes contradict or at least differ from the life style that their children and grandchildren are living through in contemporary society. This can range from simple aspects, such as clothing to more complicated issues such as gender and role division, children and social control. Altorki further illustrates:

*The grandparental generation now plays a much smaller role in the socialization of its grandchildren than in the past.*
Dissemination of cultural knowledge by means of storytelling and the recounting of past events and family episodes by providing models of behavior for the children are now done much less by the old. Their interaction with the younger generation, although not eliminated, is greatly reduced in the nuclear family situation. The new messages and the new lifestyle, modified values, and changing norms acquired from the school, parents, peer group, and media all serve to make grandparents respected but irrelevant or, at best, marginal to grandchildren’s present lives (1989:212)

Elderly and current Childhood

The discussion with elderly women in regard to current childhood aimed to look at their views and evaluations. They pointed out the great changes that have affected childhood, and therefore, often adjudged children in current society as extremely different than those of yesterday. The informants viewed two sides of change in children’s culture. The positive one which they recognized was the availability to provide and maintain a good quality of life for the family, as well as for children. Many of them described this saying:

*Children are now living a life of ease, they are free from work and all their needs are provided: food, cloth, toys, travelling, and activities for leisure time.*
In defining the negative side, the informants identified different aspects. One of the main ones often repeated was not following Islamic rules and obligations. For example, Um-Abdulaziz did not like what is happening to children in general, because she thought that parents are offering their children less time, since they are busy with their own life. She did not accept the fact that her daughter in law was going to work and leaving her children behind with the housemaid, or even with her. She thought that women who have young children should not go out to work, because nobody can replace the mother’s role. She repeated that God has asked parents to carry responsibility toward their children and that they will be punished for neglecting this duty. She also criticized the way that her children sometimes would treat her grandchildren. She would like them to be more patient and not to punish them.

Um-Abdulaziz showed great affection toward her children and grandchildren, and she cried more than once talking of memories and incidents with them. One such memory was about the feelings she shared with her grandchildren when they moved to a separate house. She was sure that they all have the same warm feelings towards her. Um-Abdulaziz’s judgements reflect a traditional Islamic perspective of childhood which considers parents to have responsibility in rearing children and caring for them as a religious obligation.

Um-Abdulrahman also talked about the great changes happening. In general she thought that people are now less obliged toward their religious
duties, and therefore this is causing a lot of difficulties in their relationships. Children are also growing up in such a community and have problematic relations with their families. She added:

_In the past we had balance, the elder in the family would be admired and respected by other younger members, at the same time the young ones would be treated with a lot of warmth._

Nevertheless, she did not show a total rejection of the changes taking place in the society, and in the life of the new generation. She thought that every thing can be controlled if people have great faith in God and followed Islamic rules. This was obvious in her judgement of her grandchildren, as she considered them to be behaving well and as respecting the older generations. She emphasized the role of religious socialization, which her family is still using with their children in the socialization process. The change in family relations and responsibilities toward each other was often repeated as a major negative change in family life as observed by elderly women:

_Children are no longer taking any responsibility towards their families. Children today are spoiled because parents are providing for them every thing, and more than what they really need. Therefore children are not appreciating what they have because they have a lot and they received it easily._
Grandmothers often criticized the way children are spending their time. They thought their time is always occupied with play or schoolwork, which leaves only a little time for family relations and obligations. They also disagreed with parents’ concern to fill their children’s time with activities such as summer camps and also talked about the negative effect of toys and computers on children, as well as TV and satellite. They thought that parents should control the use of them and not encourage their children to use them because they encourage children to be engaged with the material world and it isolates them from the family. For example, Um-Sulman talked about her grandchildren’s visit while their parents were travelling, she said:

_They brought their computer with them, and they spent most of their time with it, until some thing wrong went with it._

_Their parents were calling from abroad, and they were trying to get it fixed or to provide a replacement, again they spent long time on this, I don’t understand the importance for all of that._

Change in the community was often considered as the main factor in creating problems within contemporary childhood. Many informants thought that the community is not safe any longer. Therefore, children are often controlled inside the house and they have lost their freedom. For example Um-Abdulaziz thought that children today are missing the feelings of being safe and secure, and described them as ‘frightened’ and ‘not safe’. She further pointed out:
The family used to frighten children by animals, such as the wolf. Now they are frightened by other people 'thieves'.

Some informants talked about the effect of friends, and the western influence of youth culture. Um-Mohammed who is 70 years old has an eighteen year old son and therefore her case represents different generations in one family, since this woman has older children and grandchildren, and meanwhile her youngest son is a teenager. As was explained earlier, women in traditional family used to continue giving birth until they reach the menopausal age. This was due to the limitation of birth control methods, as well as the social encouragement. Um-Mohammed suffered from a very problematic relation with her 18 years old son, and showed great rejection of the changes and change in children's behavior. She thought children today are spoiled, cannot take responsibility, especially teenagers who are behaving very badly. As to children's activities, their clothes, and their relations with other generations, she thought the major reason for these is the change in the socialising of children, and the moving away from Islamic values. She thought that parents are responsible for their children's behaviour, because they provide them with all material needs but do not advise them about their religious obligations. She compared her children with her grandchildren by saying:

*My children were very polite; they respected their father and me. My daughters never left the house without being accompanied by me, until they got married. And even after that,*
when they needed to go shopping they would ask for my company. Today's children are different. My grand daughter who is eight years old understands everything and knows about things she shouldn't know about, and she would ask about any thing, unlike my daughters when they were at her age.

She talked about the difficult times she was having with her son, and how his behaviour is changing and his grades at school were going down. She explained how he was wearing awful clothes, which she described as short trousers, long socks and big boots. She thought that his friends were in part the cause of what is happening to him. In the second meeting, Um-Mohammed hardly participated in the interview. She was upset because her son did not pass his exams, and she was seeking advice on dealing with him.

Most informants reported that great changes were happening in their grandchildren's behaviour and life. Comparing their own children to their grandchildren and the new generation to old generation in general they explained:

Children in traditional society would accept moral values, good behaviour, and whatever adults advised them or imposed upon them without questioning, or trying to find explanation for the way things are, including folk and fable tales. Their needs were limited, therefore they were happy and
satisfied with what ever their families provided for them, in 
food, cloth, toys, activities...etc.

In comparison to contemporary childhood, she added:

By contrast, children in contemporary society are 
questioning every thing, not easily accepting of adult's culture. 
Moreover, their needs are not limited and they are always 
asking for more. They have lost the joy of owning some things, 
because they can have every thing easily and can have more 
every day. This led children to feel that life is boring despite the 
fulfillment they receive.

The Importance of using Folk Tales

Most of the elderly informants no longer use folk tales. Their children 
are grown up and most of their grandchildren are living in separate houses, 
and when they visit playing and watching TV is their first priority. 
Grandmothers are some times not interested or able to tell folk tales to their 
grandchildren. The circulation of the tales has therefore almost stopped as the 
majority of the informants pointed out that nowadays a social gathering 
wouldn't include telling tales. One informant described how in their current 
gathering women would prefer talking about daily life such as fashion or 
cooking or problems with house maids.
The majority of the elderly view current society as being so changed that folk tales cannot be part of children culture. They had various opinions on the importance of using folk tales with children in contemporary society. The first reaction of Um-Ali, when trying to clarify to her the outcome for this study in an attempt to encourage her to participate in the interview, was:

_for what reason should children know about folk tales? Let them not learn about it, it is not important._

Other informants who had similar opinions regarding the use of folk tales in contemporary childhood, had different reasons: some called today's children "computer's children" since they spend a great deal of their time using computers, or watching TV and videos. Therefore they are too busy to be interested in listening to folk tales. Others thought that children could be exposed to folk tales by reading them in books, or by watching it on TV. Only a few informants thought that folk tales are too scary to be told to children.

Some informants, however, thought it is important to present folk tales to children they had several justifications for that: Um-Khaled thought it is important to introduce folk tales to children today. However she accentuated the need to choose only the suitable ones, or changing some parts of the folk tale, such as the frightening and sexual themes. She pointed out that she does that with her grandchildren and that they usually enjoy them. Moreover, her own experience in listening to folk tales in her childhood made her certain that some changes should be introduced into old tales for the importance of telling
the tales to children, in her judgment, is to help in passing cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

Many others joined Um-Khaled in seeing the importance of the folk tales' role in keeping heritage, and allowing the opportunity for children to learn about social history and traditions. Some illustrated that it is important for this generation, who are living a life of wealth, comfort and pleasure, to know about the difficult life that the past generations experienced. They thought this would lead children to appreciate their life more fully, and it could limit their involvement with material world. Some thought it is good manners to teach children moral values, wisdom and patience which are personal qualities that children miss today. Others thought it is a way to strengthen the relationship between family members and attract children away from computers and TV.

The above discussion therefore illustrates grandmothers' views of change in the family and in children's culture and describes their attempts to manage change and to adapt to contemporary patterns of living. Although they have rejected many aspects of contemporary childhood, they often considered their own grandchildren to behave well, and related this to the family's care to continue carrying Islamic moralities. The second part of this chapter deals with managing change in contemporary family, looking at how the second generation manages to deal with continuity along side change.
Second Generation Managing Change

As was illustrated in Chapter Five, the standpoint for the second generation, which was created by historical and socio-economic factors, shapes their position as a connecting ring between tradition and modernity, the past and the future. These conditions have also affected their attitudes towards dealing with current childhood. It is reflected in their concern about keeping local identity while also gaining benefits from the new methods in socialization, suggested by the developed world. Meanwhile, they are often concerned about the global effect on children, of Western media and marketing.

Although changes in the perception of children's needs started during the childhood of the second generation, the general traditional view and understanding of children was going along side by side with those changes. Therefore, as the data showed, the process of socializing girls continued to train them for their traditional roles and obligations. Meanwhile, employment had become a new possibility for women, and therefore for married women this added new roles to their traditional ones, as housewives and mothers. However, women's education and employment continued to be conditioned to the cultural and religious factors. The percentage of employed Saudi women is 5% of the local labour force (The Development Plan, 2000-2005), and a large number of employed women are working in the education sector, since it is one of the areas which provides total gender segregation and receive social approval regarding its role in child rearing.
Therefore, although education and employment have brought some changes to women's roles, moral values continue and can be noticed in the way relations and obligations are actually enacted within the family and in the society as a whole. In fact some argue that the attempt to form a compromise between change and continuity in women's role has further emphasised traditional ideology behind the division of domestic work (Abdul-Rahman, 1982; Al-Rumaihi, 1983). Nevertheless, daily family life has changed, and the new roles for women have led to change in relationships with spouses' and with their children (see Altorki, 1986:77). Women in contemporary families are also taking a significant role in arranging family daily life, such as providing the needs for other members and maintaining the relationship with kin, organizing children's activities and school work and friendship, as this was often pointed out by the informants (cf. Zeiher, 2001).

Meanwhile, when talking about parenthood, mothers in the second generation showed a change in perspective. New elements have occurred to extend the involvement of parents in their children's daily life, such as the improvement of parent's education as well as family income, the opening up of opportunities to interact with other cultures and the exposure to different and new means of socialization. All those factors have contributed to the development of parent's desire to provide "good and happy" lives for their children. Their judgment for such a childhood would often be made in comparison to their own childhood, and childhood in the developed countries.
Therefore, regardless of widespread social change, the family continues to be an important unit in the transition of tradition from one generation to the other in current society. In fact, it can be argued that the family has become a more effective agent in linking children with local culture, despite the involvement of other institutions in the socialization process, such as schools and media. For example, while schools emphasise the continuity of tradition through their curriculum, on the other hand, peer groups at schools have great influence on children, and therefore they have been an important factor in creating children’s culture (see Douglas, 1998).

A concern about the continuity in moralities and in experience was often pointed out by informants. For example, comparing her childhood to current childhood, 37 year old Monira said:

There is a great change, I was brought forth by my local culture: history, environment, community, beliefs, readings and people. Therefore, I am part of this culture: my beliefs, my thoughts, feelings, concerns, and taste. Every part was originated by being part of my culture, and therefore I belong to it. By contrast our children are growing up surrounded by strange culture. Therefore, they cannot distinguish the local elements in their native culture, nor in Arab character. There is a desperate need to highlight the broader lines for them. I do not want my children to be a copy of me, however I want them to be part of their local culture in order to have the feeling of
belonging and identity. The great influence of western culture on this generation make their future not clear.

The discussion with mothers accentuated the fact that parents are trying to protect their children and to provide for all their needs, and that the way that this is carried out is taking different forms (see also Ennew, 1994). For example, taking away responsibilities within the family to provide time for school and other childhood activities, giving them short cuts and providing them with solutions, preventing them from failing and collating their grades in school with parent's success in raising them, taking care of them by providing a clean house and clean clothes (see plate 2, p. 460a)

However, although they are trying to provide better conditions for their children than they themselves had, most of them are not satisfied with the way their children spending their time and their every day activities. They think children today are not given the appropriate chances to develop social or cognitive skills. Compared to their own childhood, they found that the socio-economic changes have created an environment which has limited children's engagement with reality and isolated them from the community. Many mothers talked about children's daily life:

*It is not clear what is the meaning of childhood today. This is lost between parents, teachers, media, and leisure activities.*

*Therefore, children today are under a lot of stress, at the same*
time they are more dependent and do not appreciate the value of time.

Analysis of the data provided by mothers in the second generation illustrates the fact that they are facing challenges when dealing with children. These challenges are mainly related to their attempts to compromise between change and continuity and arise also from their standpoint and position as responsible toward children and the society as a whole.

**Play and Leisure Activities: Children and Risk**

The discussion regarding children's play and change indicated that children in contemporary Saudi society are more controlled regarding the space and the time allowed for play. This study contends that control over children and the transmission of moral values in traditional society was achieved by using frightening tales or cultural images, many times using images of fierce animals such as the 'wolf' to prevent children from staying too far from home. However, children in current society are facing another type of danger in the street. This time it is other strange people. Thus the contemporary Saudi family has to protect children in a manner different to the traditional ways.

Change in the community has created diversity between people in their backgrounds and interests. Protecting children from danger in the street, and control over children's access to space appears as part of the socio-economic
change in other societies, as the fragmentation in modern societies in general has created a fear of the risk for individual in going out in the street (see also Qvortrup, 1994; Brannen and O'Brien, 1996). These conditions are also applicable in the case of Saudi society, and more precisely, when dealing with girls, due to the continuity in moralities related to gender. Therefore, many families will not allow their children to play in the street, and replace this by providing toys and games inside the house, often inside children's rooms. Therefore, children often play indoor games, with manufactured toys, and electronics, video games and computers, which can also be played individually. Playing with friends would only usually take place when visiting relatives or friends, and children most of the times are taken to friend's house by car. Play is often segregated according to gender, although occasionally young children who were relatives could play in mixed-sex groups.

This situation has limited the space for children, and in addition has created isolation between adults and children in play and other leisure activities, and between children from different age categories. It also led to a limitation in the relationships between children and community. Although boys are provided with public activities more than girls and are less socially controlled, mothers worry about the risk for children in the street was generalised. Similar conditions are found in England, as parents worry about boys being the street more than girls (Valentine, 1997). The informants often repeated:

Nowadays, you worry about boys as much as girls.
Therefore, children's social networks and interaction with the community is limited. Thus although some mothers have tried to arrange for their children to play out in the street and to have friends in their neighbourhood these attempts have often failed. Monira explained that different reasons prevent her children from playing with other children in the street. For example, she argues that the street is not provided with a bicycle path, and her neighbour’s children do not share similar interests or moralities as her children. Although Monira’s husband wanted their children to go out in the street and have a ‘normal’ life, as she described, she found that too dangerous. Therefore, her children would mostly play football inside the house with other children who are also relatives, or with friends from school.

The data provided by other informants indicated similar conditions, where children would be mostly inside the house. Other times, when the house has a garden, children would get to play out doors, but still inside the boundaries of the house. As the description of the contemporary dwelling in Riyadh City in Chapter Six illustrated, the most common is the villa type, surrounded by walls to keep the family private from the public, a process which contributes to creating isolation within the local community.

The contemporary neighbourhood would now usually include groups of people with very different backgrounds and this sense of fragmentation is one of the reasons for the isolation between neighbours. However, some of the modern neighbourhood is designed to provide some facilities for public activities. Monira explained, for example, that when they were living in a
different area they were able to go for a walk during the night, and at that time her children would ride their bicycles and make friends with other children in the neighbourhood.

Gada, a 36 year old mother, also talked about the limited interaction between her children and other children in the neighbourhood. They would play mostly with relatives or with children of close family friends, often inside the house. Their relationships with other children from school are only related to schoolwork. She clarified that she had tried to encourage her children to play with other children at their neighbourhood. However, they were not able to start a relationship with them as the diversity in their interest and behaviour created a gap between them. Moreover, her husband did not agree with the idea of allowing their children to play in the street. He thought children could be exposed to bad experiences through the influence of other children. This is despite the fact that Gada is living in university housing. As mentioned earlier, while this housing is only provided for university employees and therefore it is expected to have congenial community, fragmentation can still be observed. These diversities could be related to their personal background; the area they originally came from, family culture, education, and exposure to other cultures.

Although children’s play is therefore now more controlled inside the house, many mothers still feel that children are exposed to danger and are in need of more control (cf. McNamee, 1998: 215). This is a result of being exposed to adult culture and information that children should not have access
to via western media and the Internet, magazines and other commodities. These introduce new cultural manners that parents may not approve of. Therefore, mothers of the second generation were not satisfied with what is happening to their children, they evaluated the change saying:

*Children in the past had a better chance to interact with nature and society. Today they are more isolated from that, as school is the first priority in their lives and as children are exposed to a variety of information via the media, it is believed that they need more control.*

**Children and Control**

Children in contemporary society have been drawn away from the family, the change in their daily lives is creating a gap between them and the adults in their families. They are spending more time at school and with friends, the decline in the number of siblings accentuating the need for children to look for friends and relationships outside their families. This became even more acute with family’s tendency to have larger spaces in children’s age, which is one important change in Saudi family structure, as pointed out earlier. The greater separation between adults and children in the contemporary Saudi family arose along side a growing concern with age as the main factor in characterizing human life into stages. Therefore, children are increasingly connected to their peer groups rather than the family, which has created worries for parents about their children’s choice of friends whose
family background may not be known to them. As pointed out previously the growing fragmentation in the society and the growing diversity between people have added a new worry for parents, who try to maintain the continuity of family moralities in the face of youth culture. Therefore, another challenge seen by mothers in managing change is controlling the influence of friends on their children.

Introducing feelings of fear was one traditional way in keeping control over children, as already noted, and in discussion with elderly informants about this, they thought it was not harmful and that it taught children to be brave. However mothers in the second generation disliked using this type of socialization with their children, and they thought children should be protected from being exposed to fear and, therefore, they often disregard telling frightening folk tales to their children. This change reflects a shift in perceptions of children confronting danger to protecting them from danger.

Therefore, in the attempt to effect a compromise between the continuity of tradition and heritage and new trends in socialization, the use of the folk tales in socialising children varied among the informants (cf. Trousdale, 1989). Some did tell folk tales to their children, and they had different reasons for that, while others did not. 44 year old Mashail said:

*I do not think that any mother who wants to bring up her children in a good way would tell them folk tales.*
In contrast her stepsister Amal who is 45 years old said:

*I think it is important to tell children folk tales because it is a way to keep our heritage alive. However, we have to add changes to those tales, we have to delete the images that characterize women to be in a low status, as well the violence, and sexual themes.*

Some thought it is important to keep our tradition alive, or to keep a memory of a relative alive, such as the grandmothers. Others thought it is a way to teach children moral values. Sometimes they were used to keep children quiet and to pass the time.

Some mothers were telling tales to their children. Some of these tales are the same ones they had heard during childhood. Although they contain frightening or sexual themes, some mothers thought that children could listen to those tales. Hessah explains:

*We listened to those tales during our childhood, and we liked them, our children will do.*

However, most mothers thought that tales could be told to children, only if they did not include sexual or frightening themes, and that these themes should be replaced by other events which children could understand and was more suited to them.
Some had other ideas, as Mody suggests:

*It is important to tell tales to our children, but they may not like or enjoy them. Therefore it should be developed into videotapes.*

Many informants did not tell tales to their children for different reasons, such as they did not remember them or could only recall parts of them. Some mothers thought tales not suitable - because their language could be ambiguous for children. They thought children would be more interested in books, as these ideas and language would be more applicable for children in contemporary society. Hiya explains:

*I do not understand the folk tales, so how will my children?*

Some mothers do tell their children stories, though not folk tales. These stories would compare traditional childhood with current, and tell about the activities mothers used to do when they were children. Some mothers also tell their children tales that they have read in books. Monira, for example, explained that she would make up tales for her children about cartoon characters and include Arabic traditional characters in the tales, such as Sinbad or Ala Aladdin. She says:
It is very important for children to keep their Arab identity, though it is not easy. I am trying to keep my children off the western influence which is delivered to them by mass media and commercial products. However they like to buy toys such as Power Rangers and Ninja Turtles and all the accessories with them. I try to attract them to traditional Arab characters by making stories where western and Arab characters are taking part in it, they usually like these stories.

Monira had listened to folk tales during her childhood. However, she did not tell them to her children, although her mother (Um-Khaled) sometimes does. Um-Khaled had also always changed some parts of the tales, even when she told them to Monira.

Salwa also uses cartoon characters in tales she makes up for her children. She explained that such tales would be about children’s daily life in order to teach them moral behaviour. Other times she would tell them about the past life.

However, the mothers said that their children mostly enjoyed listening to tales about traditional childhood. The time for telling the tales varied; sometimes it would be before bedtime to calm children and help them to go to sleep. Other times, it would be when children are noisy, to keep them quiet and attract their attention. Nevertheless, unlike the previous generation, the
tales are not told on a regular basis because children are spending time doing their homework and watching television, as many mothers said:

*The time is not enough, we are busy and children are busy as well.*

Mothers also talked about children’s responses. Some children liked the tales and asked for more to be told. Other children found the tales strange. **Mody** talks about this:

*My son asked me to tell him about traditional life and folk tales. When I did, he found it very strange and he reacted like if it was from another world. He kept repeating: I cannot believe you have lived that way, or enjoyed those tales.*

Therefore, such diverse experiences have created a gap between the three generations, which can be clearly observed within the third generation. Parent’s desire for continuity is once again therefore challenged by forces of change.

**West versus East**

The Western influence on children’s culture is part of the problem mothers in the second generation are trying to deal with. Global contact and western influences have been brought to children through toys, in television
and videos, computer games and the Internet, food and clothes. However, informants are dealing with issues in different ways. For example, with regard to toys, Aljohara explained:

_I never let my daughters buy Barbie, I don’t think it is appropriate for Muslim children._

Latifa, who used to live in a rural area during her childhood where her extended family still live, said:

_My children would never buy toys or dolls, they would play with each other in the house, or when we go to visit relatives._

However, some have totally different experience, as Lulu explains:

_My children would never get enough toys. Every time we go out they like to buy some more, and we usually end up buying more toys for them._

Despite the fact that the society as a whole has been exposed to other cultures, some families in this study had more contact with Western culture. This has happened mainly through education and travel. Therefore, they showed great concern about western influences as their children were playing with toys and computer games that contain western images. Some of these mothers tried to make use of this influence by orienting their children towards
educational games. However, most of them pointed out that children showed less interest and patience in playing with this type of game. Huda compared this to her childhood, when, along with her sisters, she had had the patience to play for days with one game such as Monopoly. Although it was not educational, they were able to play it for days without being bored or restless, as she described children are today.

Children have also begun to demand on their families with regard to their leisure time. Although mothers would not always agree with what their children are asking for, they would often in the end get them what they want. Different elements are involved in such decisions. For example, the influence of other children at school or of relatives means that parents may wish to keep their children happy and equal to their friends by buying what their children are asking for, although this may be determined also by the parents being able to afford such a purchase.

The data provided by mothers indicated that they are also trying to control the Western influence which TV programmes may have on their children. Monira talked about that:

*I think the worst thing in our children's lives is the western influence on TV. My son before he was able to say his name, was calling out Power Rangers. Both of my children love to watch western cartoons and they are familiar with all the details about them. Even when we go to a bookstore to buy...*
books, they would pick up stories or coloring books about cartoon characters they have already seen on TV. And this goes for their toys, their clothes, their school stationeries, their rooms and every thing in their lives. They would like to buy a toy, and all the accessories that go with it. I am against all of this, but they spend a long time with relatives during my working hours, and therefore pick up their interests.

Monira suggested that there are two major elements affecting her children's lives: TV and computer games. Other informants also talked about the bad effect of TV and computer games on their children, and it was often boys who spend more time in such activities (cf. McNamee, 1998). For example, Fatima described how her two children (both boys) spend most of the day playing computer games or watching TV. She thinks this situation has isolated children from nature, as well as from interacting with other people, including adults in their family. She believes that it is also affecting their taste and feelings toward the world, as she describes:

*What is happening to youngsters is unbelievable. My friend has a daughter who is 15 years. When I call her mother in the phone and she answers, she does not know how to greet me. Others would answer in English. We have reached a stage that we need to do something about it. The problem is that some believe this is part of being young or modern, which is not true at all.*
Although Monira’s children, also two boys, own two sets of computer games they are asking their mother to buy them another two. She admitted that she would often buy her children the toys they like, as they always pleading with her for more toys which they have seen in cartoons on TV. Other times it would be because their relatives have them. However she is trying to attract their interest to educational games, which, along with their father, she teaches them how to play. She explained that they showed some interest in a few of them and they were able to play them by themselves. However, this was not always the case, as they would often be restless or need an adult to a guide them. This is one of the major differences between educational games and watching TV or playing with computer games. The latter do not need much effort to enjoy and can be experienced alone (see also Brown, 1976).

Although some mothers were trying to control their children’s exposure to western culture by controlling the time they spend watching TV and playing computer games, children were still watching or playing it at relatives’ houses, and their mothers thought that this had a great influence on them. Indeed, Monira thought that the nuclear family, working alone by itself to solve these problems, was not strong enough and that it was the duty of the whole society to participate in finding practical solutions for those matters. One of the important objects then, she argued, would be to find Arabic substitutes for the toys, books, TV programmes and computer games that
children like. She thought that the destruction of westernizing influences on children’s culture is not only a short term goal, but also a long term one.

One of the most important activities which mothers try to attract children to is reading. This was sometimes related to their own experience, since many of them enjoyed reading during their own childhood, other times to the general belief in the value and importance of reading (cf. McNamee, 1998). However they also have to control western influence on children’s reading since children tend toward reading in English, as the discussion with children in Chapter Six illustrated.

The mother’s role in encouraging her children to read is clear in Monira’s case. Her children (7 and 5 years old) have their own bookshelves, with different types of books. Although they are still unable to read accurately, they would go to bed every night with a selection of books. Socializing children through stories was one way in which she was attempting to bring literature into their daily life. She explained that sometimes when her children face a problem, such as being frightened or crying a lot, she would read or create for them a story related to the issue. Many times these created stories would be put together from her own memories.

Monira highlighted the importance for Arab children to speak and read in their native language. Thus she does not use English language or phrases with her children on a daily basis, as some of her relatives do with their children. She pointed to this in the following account:
I am restrictive in this issue, I don't like anybody in my house to speak in English, neither would I encourage the spread of this habit. I am not against children learning English as a language, however I am against using English language as a replacement for Arabic in daily language. This could be the reason why my eldest son does not speak English very well. Thus, I don't see this as a problem, I did not start learning English until secondary school, and he will learn it.

Her children would try to read in both languages, English and Arabic. However, finding suitable Arabic books for children at this age is a problem, for as she explained, children of these young ages need books with nice illustrations, where the pictures take a bigger part of the page than the writing. However, most Arabic books have more writing, and this presents an obstacle for a child to learn to read by him/her self. Moreover, the subjects and the illustrations in most Arabic books do not attract children to reading. Although her eldest son would feel more comfortable with Arabic language, he still faces a problem in reading in Arabic. Therefore, most of the time she reads for them. Another difficulty she found in reading Arabic books to her children is the difference between the written and the spoken language. While reading her children would often stop her to explain the meanings. She thought this would make reading tiring and would require a longer time. Comparing herself as a child with her children, she said:
I do not remember myself stopping my mother from reading to ask word meanings. I was able to understand and enjoy the story. Even when I read the folk tale book at the age of eight I was able to understand it and spend wonderful times. I tried to read it to my children, but they didn't enjoy and kept ask questions.

**Monira** represents a fairly unique case with her attempts to mix local characters in children's stories with global ones. Since her children are fond of characters in western TV cartoons, such as Power Rangers, or Ninja Turtles, she would create stories for them, where these characters, along with Arab characters, play the main roles. Therefore, for example, the story would be about Sinbad and the Power Rangers. She was keen to keep her children from Western culture and link them to Arab culture. However, her attempts were not always successful. She has decided not to have satellite in her house, in order to control the Western influence over her children. However, they still watch it when visiting their extended family.

Other highly educated mothers made different attempts to attract their children to reading, and to read in Arabic. For example, they would have books in the car and read them, for example, when waiting while visiting a doctor. Mothers would read to their children in restaurants, and at other times they would read history books to encourage children to learn about Arab history and heritage. For some, leaving books lying where children can reach
them easily, without being pushed by their mother, was more successful than asking them directly to read.

The global effect on children's culture is a material fact for many families. It is also becoming a more common condition that the family is sometimes in opposition to the community. Friends and youth culture are becoming part of children's culture to a greater extent, and this therefore highlights that children are being drawn away from the family, as mentioned earlier. Thus, Western culture has spread to the world of children despite their family's desire to maintain their traditional culture, and introduce them to it.

**Children's Time**

In contemporary Saudi Arabia, parents are often concerned about children's time and compared to the previous generations there are big changes in parents' involvement with children's time. The change in parents' education and experience, and their access to other cultures has accentuated the importance of sharing time with their children, as well as planning to fill their time with useful activities. Studies about children's time show that this is part of the new role for parents in Western society, and they also conclude that adults' views about use of time can be quite different than that of children. The quality of time for adults is, for example, related to the activities done in that period of time, whereas for children the quality lies in the freedom to make their own decisions over how to use that time period (see Christensen, James, and Jenks, 2000).
The shift to an increasing institutionalization of childhood has reinforced significant changes in the social organization of their time. Thus, the data showed that school and homework, visiting friends or watching TV, mostly occupy girl’s time. Some were spending time on computers and the Internet and only a few girls were spending time developing skills, such as reading or learning languages and playing musical instruments (cf. Qvortrup, 1994; Ennew, 1994).

Second generation mothers explained that, although children are now surrounded by toys and computers, provided with food and clothes, visiting friends and travelling, they are usually bored and always asking for more. Some informants thought this to be very clearly related to the type of activities they are engaged in. Maha said:

*We did not give them their rights. Yes, we provide their needs, but we do not spend enough time with them and we do not talk to them. Moreover, there is such a lot of schoolwork to the extent that my daughter some times cries while studying. Add to that our expectations for them to have high grades at school.*

Highly educated mothers showed most concern about children’s time. They often pointed out that children should make ‘proper’ use of their time, therefore, some of them are planing for their children to have piano or sports lessons, or painting. Others thought that allowing girls to go out to visit
friends needs to be controlled, because this limits a more productive use of
time. Mashail said:

Visiting friends is the main activity girls are doing at
school breaks. We have to reconsider the time spent in visiting
friends, it is taking a lot of their time that could be used in a
useful way.

Some mothers talked about children’s hobbies, and how they tried to
encourage their children to enroll in different activities. However their
children would seldom continue to practice these activities. As mentioned in
Chapter Six some mothers were worried about the future effect of this on their
children, in that they may not be able to develop the appropriate behaviour
that would help them in achieving success in later life. They argue that is
partly due to mothers being over-anxious for pushing their children. Therefore
it is mothers making decisions to engage in hobbies rather than the children
themselves, which may explain why they are not interested and soon drop out.
(cf. Ennew, 1994).

From work to leisure: Children in the family

Another challenge for mothers in the second generation is getting their
children involved in taking part in family obligations. Children in current
Saudi society do not take responsibility toward their families or in domestic
work. Taking away responsibilities from children was mainly to provide them
with more time for school and homework (cf. Boyden, Ling, and Myer, 1988; Brannen, 1996). In addition the rise in income provided the family with the ability to hire housekeepers to do the domestic work and some times to take care of young children and elderly. Although this varies from one social class to the other, it is a common phenomenon in contemporary Saudi society. As explained earlier, the change in the house size and in furniture has made the job of taking care of the house more complicated, and therefore children’s participation in such processes has decreased. By contrast, children growing up in the contemporary Saudi family are learning to be served by others. However, dealing with this issue varies from one social class to the other.

Most informants criticise children for taking less responsibility toward their families. They also criticise their dependence on maids and other members of the family. They often compare their children to themselves during their childhood and some mothers are trying to give responsibilities to their children and encourage them to take part in the housework. Others, however, thought it is more important to train children to be able to face the adult world than to train them to do house work.

The information provided by mothers in this study stresses the fact that girls are no longer obligated to perform certain domestic tasks, nor are they obligated toward their families. How to deal with this issue commonly left to the mother, who could often fail. Mashail explains:
I tried to give my children part of the housework when our maid left, I had to force them to do it, and I had to keep reminding them. Finally I got tired of all of this as I ended up doing all the work, therefore I decided to hire another maid. They are not like us, you have to force them to help, and while we used to know our role and do it without having our mothers keep reminding us.

However, children are more dependent on their families, and this could be related to the change in the family itself: in the past children had certain jobs and they were obliged to work because there was nobody to replace them. Children today, on the other hand, will be given some jobs because they ought to learn to take part in housework and to share responsibilities with their families. Nevertheless, often there will be someone else to do the job and the family is not really in need of children’s work. Therefore, neither children nor their families will be keen in children’s participation in domestic work. Sara adds:

They are not convinced by the idea that they should take part in domestic work. As long as we are hiring maids they would think somebody has been paid to work, therefore, why should they do the job for her.

Children’s needs are viewed as endless, as many informants described. They are perceived as insisting on what they want, and not accepting parents’
roles or decisions, always seeking explanations, and knowing their rights. Meanwhile, though provided with all their needs, they are not happier or satisfied. They are always bored and asking for more. Latifa talks about this:

Comparing ourselves to our children, there is big change in children’s behaviour. Today they are spoiled, more aggressive. They do not respect older people, and this was caused by the high income provided for their families and for them.

Tarfa adds:

Children in the past had more self confidence. Today they are provided with luxury, but they suffer from displeasure and could quickly be angry. The child would bring lunch to school, at the same time he/ she will be bringing money to school to buy food or drinks. In our time we had never experienced things like that.

Understanding the change in children’s behaviour varies between informants. Highly educated mothers connected children’s behaviour to changes in wider society, as children are behaving according to what they are seeing in society. Others thought it is children themselves who are changing. Hessah illustrated this saying:
This is a generation, if you call they do not answer, and

if they leave they do not come back, and if they eat they are

never full.

Children as consumer targets

That children have been targeted as consumers is another challenge families are facing in rearing their children (see also Douglas, 1998). Children are often attracted by commodities imported from Western societies, such as toys and clothes. Fast food advertising is also widely targeting children, and mothers are trying to control this effect.

Mothers explained that boys are usually more attracted to playing football, electronic games, computers, and video games, and thus they buy more of these kinds of things (see also McNamee, 1998). Nevertheless, girls are also interested in buying school stationery especially the ones with cartoon characters produced by Disney. Some explained this would happen almost every school term.

Some mothers criticised themselves, as they would provide children with such things and then they point out their bad effects. They felt this placed additional stress on children. However, it is argued that parents often provide their children with electronics such as computers and video games for educational purposes over amusement (McNamee, 1998: 216). Other
informants talked more generally about children as a consumer targets and pointed out fact that many of the advertisements on TV are aimed at children. **Wadha** describes:

> *We cannot blame children for being consumers. Have you ever seen an advertisement about a play in the theater or educational activities for children? All advertisements are about fast food and toys.*

Going to fast food restaurants is considered to be one of the leisure activities for children and most mothers explained that their children like to eat fast food every day, although they tried to limit this to once a week. Some of the fast food restaurants have game rooms which children prefer to go to at the weekends with their families.

Another type of modern leisure activity for children is going shopping. Mothers explained that they would take their children during the weekend to one of the malls. Riyadh City is considered one of the important trading centres in the Middle East. Several shopping malls are located at different parts of the city. These malls provide different types of products, which appear as the latest fashion in Europe and America, including children’s clothes and toys. Girls often consider shopping as an important activity, and it is something which they can do in public, and is an activity marketed to them through travel and satellite TV.
Children at School

School is the core of children's life in current Saudi society (cf. Hill and Tisdall, 1997: 118). It is the main environment where children interact with their friends, and highlights the importance of peer groups in constructing children's culture and the decline in the role of the neighbourhood and their involvement with family and siblings. Therefore, schools are considered to be one of the most effective environments in children's daily life, regardless of criticism of schools' curriculum. Parents, as well as schools, emphasize the role of formal education as they consider children's evaluations and grades as the most important indicator of their own success or failure, as explained in Chapter Six.

However, many mothers criticise school for its long hours and the amount of homework which children are given. Highly educated mothers thought that the quality of public education is not suitable, and that teachers are not well trained to deal with children. They also thought the school curriculum only provides children with limited training while ignoring non-curricula activities, which are seen as important for the development of social skills and other abilities. Therefore, as pointed out earlier, some mothers were trying to provide alternative activities for their children, in order to give them a variety of skills. School work is limited to providing students with information and, their wider job in preparing children for social roles is less clear because of the lack of plans for children and teenagers to participate in social services or other similar activities which has limited their involvement with society.
Who’s fault is it? Evaluating current childhood

The enormous change in children’s lives and behaviour over three generations is at the center of many negotiations and there are many different evaluations and explanations for these changes that have occurred. Some informants thought that parents over protect their children, and that many times this has prevented children from learning through experimenting and limited their chances to learn through correcting their mistakes, a process which could take them closer to the real world. Suha, a mother who has a Ph.D., compares her own childhood with current childhood:

*We were 5 sisters and 3 brothers, the difference in each child’s age was about 18 months. My mother was busy taking care of younger children and the house work, therefore, not much attention was given to each child. We had to try success and failure in school on our own. Despite that I was able to get my degree and built my interests as I grew older. We are preventing our children from learning throughout experimenting, as we count our success by their grades in school.*

Other informants talked about adults being confused regarding dealing with children because of the tension in issues related to tradition and change. Others thought it is the type of change which is happening which has led to
fragmentation and therefore widened the gap between the generations.

Mashail described:

*We are like big planet, made out of squares of different materials. We do not match, quite isolated; we don't share a public life. Every one had different window to change: for some it was the West, others money, etc. Therefore, what is happening for our children is part of this.*

Considering the above conditions, it can be concluded that mothers in the second generation face a number of contradictions when dealing with their children and trying to manage change. These can be identified as follows: East verses West, tradition verses modernity, locality verses globalization, family verses institutisation, and control verses autonomy.

**Children managing Change**

Contemporary Saudi children are themselves facing challenges, which are generated by living in a society that is rapidly changing and open to other cultures. As the data shows, children have to deal with an emphasis on global culture alongside a tendency to keep tradition and locality. However, living in contemporary society is the only world children know; unlike the two previous generations they did not live through the traditional phase. Their source of knowledge about living at that period of time is what they receive and what is described to them by adults, not through their own experience of
actually living during that time. When interpreting children’s views and understanding for continuity and change, it is important therefore to consider that the myths of the golden age in viewing the past, is a general phenomenon that can be observed in most cultures (see Gullestad, 1996). This often affects children’s views and understanding of the ‘present’ and the ‘future’. Nevertheless, while this factor could influence the judgment of the first and second generations, it can not be the same for the children who did not live the past. This adds to the dilemma of the tension between tradition and modernity which Arabs face in their development projects, and, these conditions also affect each generation’s perspective in understanding continuity and change. In negotiating diversity between generations in their perspective of time, McNamee adds:

Childhood is temporally bounded and separated from adult time and space, and yet adults can maintain a link with history in terms of their own childhood (1998: 218).

Examining the chart (p. 433) we notice that youth culture is created through different areas: family, school, friends, global contact through TV, satellite, internet, mobile phones, magazines, and traveling, as this chapter also explains. Therefore, children’s culture is the result of the mixture of all these elements, which are sometimes located in opposite positions and lead to contradictions. Although, as noted, there is a general social and political concern about the continuity of traditional moralities and culture, the family is rapidly becoming the center for such process, a role crystallized through the
growing fragmentation of the society and the weakening effect of the local community. The discussion and the data in previous chapters showed indications for change in family structure in Saudi society. Although the nuclear family often appears as a dominant form, the modified and extended family has not yet totally disappeared. This confirms the theoretical argument which suggests that families will take on different types when the societies are less homogenous. Furthermore, it suggests continuities in the effect of the extended family on contemporary childhood.

Considering the fragmentation in society, which, as was explained earlier, has led to diversity and some times opposition between different groups in the society, highlights that the school community is not necessarily a key player in the process of maintaining tradition. Local media is an important means in shaping public opinions. However, the media is also a good source of information, through which children are getting global contact and access to different cultures. This has increased contact with other cultures, which many times contradict local traditions and morals (cf. Rossie, 1993: 200). In this way, then, all these circumstances have accentuated the importance of the family in the process of continuity.

Examining children’s contemporary culture, we notice the transition of the tension between tradition and modernity from one generation to the other. Nevertheless, the youngest generation is considered to worry less about this issue (Mansfield, 1992: 539). Looking at the data provided by the third generation in this study it could be noticed however that children are facing
certain problems living in current society. There are two main factors: the past, which is often admired by older generation in comparison to their present, is one in which they cannot live or make come back. The second factor is the life style of the developed societies, which they have continuous contact with, and of which it is tempting to copy the life style. However, this often cannot necessarily become a reality, sometimes due to material conditions or moral considerations.

As the data showed, Western culture has had an effect on children’s play and leisure time activities and for girls and young women in particular, the Western female figure on TV represents another challenge (see also Gilbert, 1998). This was obvious when some girls talked about their free time activities, such as playing with Barbie or performing Spice Girls or Miss Universe. However, some diversity between informants was also observed and this was often related to the way family handled the forces of change in children’s culture.

Another obstacle children have to deal with is physical control, which is more acute with girls. As illustrated in the discussion with the second generation, parents attempt to protect their daughters by limiting the space they can use, as well as their social contact with the wider community. The children often repeated their desire to play in the street. Hanof, a 12 year old girl, talked about this:
What I like about the past, that girls were able to play in the street. You were lucky.

On the other hand, children often have access to global information and to adult culture, which parents also try to limit by controlling children’s mobility. Therefore, children endeavour to maintain a balance between traditions and a more globalized culture.

As explained before, girls have less access to public activities, and therefore females are developing their own sub-culture within these boundaries. Although all children, boys and girls, are sharing a childhood which has global features and which is to some extent similar to western childhood, there is more control over girls, especially at a later stage in their life. Therefore girls’ have to deal with such changes over a shorter period. For example, in this study girls clothing was one area in which girls had to make a compromise between their global taste and local conditions. In coping with a global youth culture girls often wear modern ‘Western’ clothes underneath the traditional cover (Abyah), 16 year old Mona illustrated this saying:

*It is not according to my choice, but to the occasion and the place I’m going to. If I’m going out with my mother for visiting I have to wear formal cloth. Otherwise, I like to wear sport clothes, such as jeans and t-shirt. I do not like t-shirts printed by movie stars or cartoon characters. The only one I have is*
Titanic, I bought it from a friend at school as she was selling it.

I don't think I'll buy something like that again.

As explained earlier, the limitation of social space for children is more acute in the case of girls, and becomes even more controlled by social boundaries as they grow up. This creates yet another challenge for girls to deal with. Therefore, the creation of a girls' culture and the emphasis on women to women relationships is one way to deal with this situation. As the data showed visiting girl friends was one popular option for girls to spend their free time, despite families often trying to control this. Mother's desired their daughters to spend time developing certain skills or being with the family, rather than friends, whom they may not approve of. 14 year old Rwan expressed her opinion about these restrictions:

Adults usually forget that we are individuals. They like to control our lives. For example, my mother insisted on meeting my friends before I could visit them. However, we reached an agreement regarding this. I was convinced by her judgment, and convinced her that I can wear high heels.

Children also have to endure the social fragmentation which is growing between them. Diversity in family culture produces differences between children, with regard to manners and behaviour which could contradict the socialization they are receiving within the family. For example, children from an upper class family could have more consumerist practices, which influence
other children, others could be more westernized, or more conservative, something which became very clear when discussing play and leisure activities with girls.

Children are also facing the pressure of being the target of consumer culture. While parents are trying to control their access to western commodities and fast food, the local market is wide open to world trade and consumer practices. Children have to compromise between families targets and the tempting market. Friends could also cause some tension in this regard. Unlike the two previous generations, therefore, children are growing up in a wealthy society, and being raised in system that provides plenty. Therefore, children often have many choices and need to make decisions regarding these choices. They also have to compromise between the main culture, their family’s culture and that of their peers.

The data provided by both mothers and girls in this study, showed that this issue is not out of control in many cases. Although mothers express opinions about current childhood and children’s needs, when it comes to talk about their own children they would often explain that they feel able to control the situation and to set boundaries. Children themselves showed understanding of social control and their parent’s attitudes. For example, when talking about food girls often showed an understanding about the limitations placed on this, and they even showed a tendency to prefer having traditional meals. Also in discussing shopping for clothes or toys and school stationary
they often talked about their mother’s opinions. For example, 13 year old Wejdann explains:

Yes, the new fashions are tempting. But I do not like to be a burden on my family, thus I buy what they can offer me. I can cope with this, because I think when I grow up, one day I will be able to buy all the things I like.

However, the above discussion is not only to point out what consumer culture provides children, but also to remind us that there is diversity in dealing with these issues, and to be cautious about making general conclusions without considering specific conditions.

Looking at the girl’s own interpretation of the forces of change and continuity, two sides can be noted for dealing with these challenges: the implicit, which is usually embedded in their links with tradition and locality, such as religious moralities, and social norms and beliefs. The other is more explicit, which sharing global images of youth culture, such as fashion, music, and food. However, the extent to which girls utilize these two positions varies from one class to the other and needs further investigation. Douglas (1998) further points out to the global implications of children’s consumer culture:

Most children know the same commercials, television programs, movies, and music. By wearing their media preferences on their sleeves and carrying their most prized possessions everywhere
they go, children make visible their identifications with those more ephemeral objects of consumer culture-namely, films, videos, and television programs. Consumer culture provides children with a shared repository of images, characters, plots and themes: it provides the basis for small talk and play, and it does this on a national, even global scale (1998: 297).

As was discussed in earlier chapters, socio-historical circumstances emphasized the tension between the traditional heritage and modernity (Amara: 1984, 5-14; Al-Jabry: 1991, 15-19). Children and childhood are part of this conflict; thus they are facing a challenge regarding their role in keeping local identity. One way to confront this, as some of the adults in this study thought, is for their children to read in Arabic. However, children in this study seldom read as a main leisure activity, and explained their views regarding reading. Mona talked about this:

_I like to read teen magazines, they are relaxing.

Though, my mother does not like me to read them. Maybe one day I will read books such as those written by Agatha Christie because everybody say we should read them._

Introducing folk tales to children has been suggested as one way to link heritage and tradition, although, as the data showed, folk tales are no longer considered as a means of socialization, and its affect as a leisure activity depends on particular conditions. Most girls liked folk tales when they
were told to them by a relative, such as their grandmother. They appreciated their closeness to the storyteller, and saw them as part of familial relationships. They also thought folk tales gave them some information about living in traditional society. However, children questioned the ideas in the tales, often finding them unrealistic, or not interesting. In general, discussions with girls regarding folk tales revealed their awareness of the distinction between fiction and reality, and therefore shaped their response to folk tales. Although children’s play in contemporary societies is linked towards fantasy, however children in this study did not accept the fantasy as it is in folk tales, they were interpreting fantasy and selecting what they can interrelate to (see also Trousdale, 1989; Hunt, 1994; Sampson, 2000).

Their feelings toward their grandmothers often revealed a strong sense of caring for her and an appreciation of her way of life so that the relationship between grandmother and grandchildren provides evidence for the continuity of moral beliefs across generation. Although grandmothers, as was explained earlier, witnessed great changes in children’s behaviour, which often they did not approve of, they nonetheless usually described their grandchildren as behaving well, and as continuing to carry religious and social values. Therefore, such data indicates continuity in the value of respecting older members in the family and family’s moralities. Despite the changes in family structure and relations this value appears to be of a core position in the family, as other studies have also concluded (Al-suwaigh: 1986; Altorki, 1986).
In conclusion, childhood has been a changing phenomenon in Saudi Arabia. It has been structured by the cultural context of each historical phase. However, children’s own participation in childhood is also part of the construction of childhood throughout generations. The analysis of the data in this study has provided evidence, which indicates that although childhood is socially constructed and culturally relative; children are competent social actors in such a process.

Looking through the ethnographic chapters, we realize that although the emergence of a new understanding for childhood started in late 1950’s in Saudi Arabia, there was also continuity of traditional definition of childhood within the family and the society as a whole. Consequently, the rise of national income and the increasing global contact and position of Saudi society have paved the way for rapid changes in childhood. These conditions cultivated the moral panics regarding the influence of global contact on children’s culture, and also brought concerns about children’s use of space and time, which created new features in the adult-child relationship.

The data provided by the mothers in the second generation showed that the contemporary Saudi family is facing different challenges when dealing with children. One important factor is the attempt to compromise between continuity of local tradition and to deal with forces of change. The analysis showed the emergence of new parenting roles, where mothers are concerned about how and where children spend their time. They are often concerned about sharing activities with their children which poses a tension because as
working mothers this becomes less possible in term of time available to do this.

Despite the changes which have developed in the structure and function of the family, the family in this changing society has become a dominant agent in the transition of traditional cultural aspects and in finding a pattern to deal with change. Such a conclusion indicates the importance of looking at family practices in order to evaluate the changes that developed in the family. Although the contemporary Saudi family is playing a different role when compared with the extended family, this does not mean that the family has lost its importance in the socialization process. It also highlights the importance of considering social diversity when looking at the family, such as class, education, and urban/rural location. Therefore, these conclusions contradict the classical approach in studying the family and development. This can also be relevant when we look at changes in childhood in Saudi Arabia. As this analysis has indicated, although global contact and the influence of Western culture have created similarities between children in different parts of the world, diversities can also clearly be observed. This again accentuates children’s own role in constructing their culture and the fact that they are actively involved in interpreting the cultural aspects they deal with in their every day life.
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