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**IN THEIR VOICES:  
THE CHILDHOOD ORIGINS OF LEBANESE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S  
DREAMS**  
by  
**VANESSA A. CHARTOUNI**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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**Abstract****IN THEIR VOICES:  
THE CHILDHOOD ORIGINS OF LEBANESE PROFESSIONAL  
WOMEN'S DREAMS****By****Vanessa A. Chartouni****Adviser: Professor Anderson J. Franklin**

The purpose of this study was to explore the earliest influences on Lebanese professional women's Dreams (Levinson, 1978). A focus was placed on achieving a deeper understanding of the Dream's origins in childhood. There was an examination of how the Dream initially developed and who influenced its nature, what the earliest precursors to the Dream looked like, and what ways Lebanese cultural and societal values impacted the development of the earliest precursors to the Dream.

Nine Lebanese professional women from the ages of thirty-one to forty-eight were interviewed using semi-structured, in depth interviews designed to elicit the early experiences leading to the formation and implementation of the origin of their Dreams. All of the women were born and raised in Lebanon and completed at least a portion of their college education there.

The findings of this study strongly supported Kathryn A. Furst's (1983) conclusion that there are significant childhood precursors to the Dream, and these childhood precursors were identified, described, and operationally termed the "Young Dream". From a very young age, all of the women in this study imagined themselves occupying a professional role in the future. The data suggested that the women's family

environments and the nature of their relationship with each parent seemed to have the most salient impact on the development of the Young Dream.

There were some observations regarding the unique and important effects that the women's relationships with both their fathers and mothers had on the development of the Young Dream: (1) despite some ambivalence regarding gender role definitions, direct and explicit support from fathers during childhood was a critical factor in the initial development of Lebanese professional women's occupational aspirations; (2) the women in this sample deeply admired and identified with their mothers in many respects, and their Young Dreams consisted of future imaginings of themselves in occupational roles, not simply because they did not want to live the sorts of lives their mothers did, but because they wanted *more* than their mothers had.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

*The status of women in society is the barometer of civilization.*

**-Kumari Jayawardena**

In the Lebanon of the twenty-first century, women find themselves at a crossroads. As a result of a long, destructive, and deadly war, Lebanese women were thrust into the workplace and given opportunities in the realm of higher education and the occupational sphere that they had not experienced before, and they thrived. However, traditional patriarchal structures are still very much in place at all levels of Lebanese society and culture, thus inhibiting and limiting women's progress by keeping them from important decision making positions. Women today are struggling to use the momentum created by the increased opportunities brought on by the war, to promote change and the removal of social strictures and constraints on women.

This is potentially a time of great transformation in terms of gender roles for women in Lebanon. More and more women are pursuing professional degrees, entering the workforce, and assuming important positions. Therefore, an understanding of the factors that have impacted their professional choices, from the earliest influences to those throughout their adult development, is crucial. However, there is a dearth of literature on the progress of these women's development throughout the life cycle. In terms of research on Middle Eastern women, in general, the relatively small amount of literature that exists, focuses on sociological and historical perspectives, often discussing Arab women as a homogenous group. There are very few writings on Lebanese women as a distinct group, and the ones that do exist are not psychological in nature.

Therefore, the present study is timely and necessary. If there is to be any hope for change in terms of women's acceptance and advancement in the occupational sphere in Lebanon, their voices must begin to be heard. Images of working women and the impact and meaning that work has in their lives, as well as an illustration of the origins and development of their occupational aspirations, must be expressed. The stories of women that began their careers before the war, as well as those that began their climb up the professional ladder during the war must be told in order to provide examples for young Lebanese women today. As will be demonstrated in the literature review to follow, there are virtually no images of successful professional women in the Lebanese popular culture. These women do exist, to be sure, but they are rarely seen or heard. Instead, women occupying the traditional roles of mother and wife are portrayed, esteemed, and encouraged as the ideal. Those that are attempting to expand their roles to include their professional dreams and aspirations are left to fend for themselves in a patriarchal culture whose traditional ideals are supported by laws and social structures that limit women's control to the domestic sphere.

### *Statement of Purpose*

The main intent of the present qualitative study is to give voice to Lebanese professional women, and allow them to share the ways in which they made their earliest life choices. There will be a particular focus on gaining an understanding of the origins and development of their professional aspirations during their childhood and adolescence. *The Dream* (Levinson, 1978, 1996) will be used as the vehicle through which these women's life stories will come alive. As a concept that has long been portrayed in

mythology, the arts, literature, as well as in popular culture, the Dream has also received some attention as of late in academic research (Levinson, 1978, 1996; Stewart, 1977; Adams, 1983; Furst, 1983; Brewster, 1999; Roberts & Newton, 1987; Kittrell, 1998). Levinson (1978) defined the Dream as a “vague sense of self-in-the-world”. He writes, “it has the quality of a vision, an imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality” (p. 91). The Dream has its roots in pre-adult experiences and arises out of a “complex interaction of internal (personality, temperament, talent) and external (family and cultural environment) influences” (Furst, 1983, p. 321). It forms throughout the life structure and requires “years of struggle to maintain the commitment and work towards its realization” (Levinson, 1978, p. 92). As a transitional phenomenon, it facilitates separation from the pre-adult world, and it, in turn, is facilitated by significant relationships within an individual’s life, beginning with the members of the family of origin, and continuing with mentors and other significant individuals throughout the person’s development.

The primary questions that this study will address are as follows: 1) What were the earliest influences on these Lebanese professional women’s Dreams? 2) How did these women come to develop their professional aspirations, and who or what influenced their nature? 3) Because Lebanese culture is traditionally very patriarchal, what were the influences of various members within the family of origin on this Dream? 4) Throughout childhood and adolescence, in what ways did Lebanese cultural and societal values impact the development and implementation of the precursors to the Dream?

Because the Dream is conceptualized as more than simply one’s goals in life, but rather is composed of “the meanings *underlying*” those goals, the “deeper psychological

matter necessary to sustain a sense of valued purpose”(Furst, 1983, p. 338), it provides a rich tapestry from which to illustrate and begin to understand these women’s life choices, decisions, and changes. It is hoped that through the analysis of the earliest influences and initial development of their Dreams, some of the unique challenges and struggles facing Lebanese women will be illuminated.

We are in a time when a true appreciation of the differences among women from various cultures is crucial due to the changing face of the workplace. Because greater numbers of women from all cultures are breaking through traditional stereotypes that have long dictated women’s roles, and are entering the occupational sphere, it is crucial to explore their unique circumstances. While sharing, as a gender group, many of the same struggles and adversities, women have also come along very different paths, each with their own unique challenges and obstacles that shape their personalities. “The more we advance as women and as a society, the more we learn about ourselves and about women as a group, the more we understand that women themselves have different histories, different interests, and different hopes” (Harris, 1995, p. 167).

The literature that informs this study comes from three primary domains of research and theory. The first area is the literature on Lebanese culture. There will be some discussion of Lebanese culture in general, including some relevant historical material. However, the primary focus will be on traditional gender roles and the impact that these roles have on women’s careers, both today and in the past. The second domain concerns the research on women’s professional development, with an emphasis on theories conceptualizing the meaning of work in women’s lives. The third area of review

**will be the literature on Dreams, as well as a discussion of the writings regarding the importance of role models and mentors to women's career development.**

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Lebanese Culture

*The mother is everything- she is our consolation in sorrow, our hope in misery, and our strength in weakness. She is the source of love, mercy, sympathy, and forgiveness. He who loses his mother loses a pure soul who blesses and guards him constantly.*

*-Khalil Gibran (Lebanese Poet)*

As in most Middle Eastern cultures, Lebanese culture possesses a strict patriarchal ideology, which dictates to women their primary, and at times, sole function as “mother and wife.” Despite the fact that there have recently been significant increases in the number of women attending universities, participating in the labor force, and involving themselves in the political sphere, there is little corresponding change in the way that Lebanese society views women. Potential reasons for this lack of transformation of women’s role and image in society, as well as the impact this “traditional” view has had on women’s professional involvement will be discussed in order to ensure a clear understanding and appreciation of the context within which the women in this study were born and raised.

#### *Women and Patriarchy: Traditional Gender Roles*

In a study on women and history, Gerda Lerner (1986) defines *patriarchy* as the “manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in society” (p. 239). Lattouf (1999) elaborates by explaining that historically, “one of the

precepts of patriarchy was hierarchy, where there was always one group superior and thus another subordinate". One of the ways patriarchy divided groups was according to biology, thus "one sex was male, the superior, which would control the other sex, the female, the subordinate" (p. 40). Women in Lebanon, regardless of their religious background, have traditionally been regarded as being inferior to men in many respects- from their capabilities, to their work opportunities, to their dependability. Yet they "embody the so called 'family honor'" (Shehadeh, 1999, p.6). As a result, they are protected and cared for, but excluded from virtually all decision-making positions. The only place where they have any sort of authority is in the domestic sphere, and there are even restrictions there because of the man's role as ultimate "leader of the household". Traditional sex role divisions of labor that are characteristic of patriarchal family structures define women's work in the following terms: "to maintain the home and the family, bear and rear the child, prepare the food, and nurture the man and children" (Lattouf, 1999).

Because in Lebanon, "family life is at the center of everything" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 132) the role of the woman as "mother" carries its own special reverence. The Mother is seen as a sort of martyr, who sacrifices herself to nurture and care for her children and her husband; she represents the "ideal woman" in Lebanese culture (Haddad & Findly, 1985). Lebanese author, Joanna Kadi (1994), writes,

...She knows exactly what to do. The knowledge is inside her. She carries this important knowledge of how to sustain family. She learned it in the hills of Lebanon; now she repeats those same acts, carries out those same steps. It comes from within. It has been passed down from so many generations back that I cannot conceive of our numbers. She knows how to create things that allow her loved ones not only to survive, but to flourish (p.232).

Despite the value placed upon and the benefits (e.g. protection) garnered from this idealized image, there are serious limitations in terms of a woman's sense of self and sense of agency. The Lebanese woman derives her identity from her role as mother and wife, which defines her almost exclusively in terms of others (i.e. mother of \_\_, wife of \_\_), and provides her with little authority and control beyond her domestic duties of the home. She is not afforded the opportunity to expand her role and define herself in terms of *her own* desires, aspirations, and talents; to develop a sense of self existing apart from or outside of her relationship to someone else (i.e. husband, children, family of origin). "Women get respect by following prescribed roles of being wives and mothers; otherwise they are seen as being disloyal and challenging men's manhood" (Hijab, 1988, p. 11).

### *Women and Education*

Compared to the rest of the Arab world, Lebanon has a more modern, liberal, and democratic society, which they credit, in part, to the emphasis and importance placed on formal education for both males and females (Gilsenan, 1996). Women have been part of the educational system in Lebanon since the early 1800's. The *Nahda* or renaissance of the nineteenth century, "allowed the public acceptance of women's intellectual abilities as contributors to the general maturation of the community, and defused the idea of female education as a threat" (Lattouf, 1999, p. 137). However, this call for girls' education was always "packaged within the notion that by educating them, they could be better mothers, help teach their children, and find better marriage prospects" (Lattouf, 1999, p. 141).

Given the pervasiveness of such an attitude in all aspects of Lebanese culture and society, it is not surprising that even though women have had ample formal opportunities and access to educational institutions, this privilege has not transformed the basic patriarchal ideal of the image and place of the woman in Lebanese society. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (held in September, 1995 in Beijing, China) discovered that its greatest challenge was not simply improving women's access to education, but rather affecting the results of this learning. The Conference confirmed the "already-known fact that formal education of girls and young women has not accomplished the anticipated miraculous social transformation...It has not resulted in women entering industry in the higher echelons of management, in obtaining political decision-making power at all levels, or in changing their socially-constructed roles as primarily providers of biological and sexual services, and unpaid labor" (Lattouf, 1999, p. 16).

Part of the reason for this is that women's education and employment are highly regulated by value systems and regulations that give priority to marriage, motherhood, and domestic activities. Lattouf (1999) explains that, "theoretically, education is perceived as the magic wand that will provide complete equality of the sexes. Realistically, gender formation is molded by the ideology that is already an integral component in the educational programs of that group...So, education may not change gender disparity; rather learning reshapes and reinforces it" (p. 37). For example, Abu Nasr and Batrouni (1995) conducted a study examining the image of women in Lebanese children's textbooks. The books that were analyzed were printed between 1973 and 1993, and were designed for children between the ages of three and fourteen. One focus

of the analysis was the image of women and their sex roles in Lebanese society. The authors found that “the majority of the roles given to female characters converged on the nurturing and dependent qualities of women in the family” (p. 20). Specifically, they discovered that “more than seventy five percent of the functions assigned to the characters of mother, wife, and young girl are traditional domestic functions as if to emphasize the importance of domestic skills for the female in society” (p. 22). When the women were depicted as working, they were engaged in traditionally female activities that were described as being “extensions of their household chores” (p. 21). Furthermore, these images depict the “working women” as “dependents on male professionals in the same occupational categories”, and when girls were mentioned, they were usually referred to as “little mothers” or “helpers”. This demonstrates the socialization, very early on, of Lebanese children, as to the role and expectations of women. This also illustrates the way in which the ideals of a culture are expressed in its educational system. Lattouf (1999) argues that the history of education in Lebanon has “demonstrated and perpetuated a conundrum between the appearance of modernity and a firmly grounded, antiquated social system” (p. 18).

### *Women and the War of 1975*

For fifteen years (1975-1990), the Lebanese were engaged in a long, violent, and destructive war that ravaged their country. Along with the destruction came significant changes in the status of women. The beginning of the war marked a turning point in Lebanese attitudes towards female education and employment, by highlighting “the importance of developing human resources and the negation of traditional and deeply

entrenched beliefs regarding the education of women and their employment” (Shehadeh, 1999, p. 54). Women were propelled into the labor force out of economic necessity. Young men left the country for work and to pursue educational opportunities, as well as to avoid conscription, while others fought and died as a result of the war. Many women were left alone, and had to work for the first time in their lives. The number of women in the labor force increased significantly during the years of the war. Whereas the “economically active” population in 1970-1975 included 17.5% of the female population, female participation increased steadily during the war until it reached 27.8% in 1990 (Shehadeh, 1999). Similarly, many young women were given opportunities for advancing in educational pursuits because their marriage prospects were slim. Colleges and universities, which previously may have denied women’s admission, accepted them due to the decreased number of male and foreign applicants (Lattouf, 1999; Shahadeh, 1999). This increase can also be attributed, in part, to the opening of branches during the war, by most universities, in the different regions of Lebanon, making it easier for female students to pursue higher education without leaving home. Although “most of these students... studied literature, the humanities, education, and the social sciences, which would prepare them for socially acceptable employment in the service sector”, it is also true that between 1980 and 1990, there was a dramatic increase in the number of women in the category of “professions” (i.e. medicine, engineering, pharmacy, law and teaching) (Shehadeh, 1999, p. 52).

Despite the great strides that Lebanese women made during the war, in terms of greater involvement in the education and labor force, these advancements have failed to affect the actual perceptions and expectations of women and their roles in society.

Shehadeh (1999) provides one explanation for this discouraging fact in the following passage:

**Women in Lebanon today are found in a number of key positions, from which they are able to wield influence on the quantity and quality of the labor force. They are mothers and housewives in the private sphere and professionals in the public sphere and leaders of nongovernmental organizations; yet they have almost no presence as policy-makers in the government or in decision-making positions in the public domain as a whole, including the very important economic one... This absence from policy-making positions is mostly due to deeply ingrained traditional and cultural values that even the war could not diminish (p. 57).**

Traditional and cultural factors, however, are not the only constraints on “economically-active” women. The government, through its legislation of so-called “protective laws” as well as other laws that limit the work benefits of women, has set barriers in the path of women’s quest for economic independence. “Protective legislation, under the guise of helping the fragile woman, has actually made it more difficult for her to compete for jobs or to earn a living wage... This discriminatory legislation can only reflect the traditional concept of the male as the only breadwinner of the family” (Shehadeh, p.59).

Such discrimination is found in many Lebanese laws regarding women. Lattouf (1999) states, “The Lebanese legal system can be described at best as very confusing, chaotic, and archaic” (p. 67). Because the Lebanese political system, which controls the legal system, is based on religion, it plays a major role in the maintenance of such a strong patriarchal ideal in Lebanon. The structure of the government itself (called the Confessional System) is organized in terms of religion, whereby each religious group has a right to a certain office. Similarly, the Lebanese legal system incorporates a range of traditions, many of which are religiously based. Relevant to the status of women in

Lebanon are the existence of “Personal Status Laws”, which govern most aspects of women’s lives, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and personal behavior. These laws are controlled by the religious courts, which themselves have very traditional and patriarchal views of women (Lattouf, 1999). Furthermore, because all communities in Lebanon are religiously based, and all sects regard their religious laws as “divinely ordained, natural, and ideal”, there is a great deal of hesitation and unwillingness by the general public to question the laws or traditions that are connected to them. Taken together, these factors “legitimize” male dominance over the female. The strict interpretation of these laws has allowed men to control women’s daily lives, self-perception, and contribution to the public sphere. For example, even though the introduction of formal education can be linked to Lebanese women’s achievement of the right to vote (in 1953), today’s Lebanese women still require a male guardian to represent them in all legal matters (Shehadeh, 1999). And it was only in 1994 that the Lebanese cabinet canceled Articles 11, 12, and 13 of the Commercial Law that forbade a woman to work without her husband’s written consent (Lattouf, 1999). One can easily imagine the message that such laws communicate to a woman about her self-efficacy and sense of agency. Wherever she looks, the Lebanese woman is being told that she is incapable of taking care of herself without a male figure in her life-- she has few individual rights and very little control or authority outside of her domestic responsibilities. And even with regards to her children, the law dictates that they automatically belong to the father, and share his religious affiliation. As the “head of the family”, the father has legal guardianship rights (Lattouf, 1999). This illustrates the paradox that Lebanese women live. While on the one hand they are becoming more visible and proving their abilities in

the occupational sphere, they continue to lack any actual control or power over their accomplishments or any other aspect of their lives, including their “prescribed” domain of the home. They are seen as the symbol of honor and strength of the most important institution in Lebanese culture, the family, yet they possess no true control or authority over that institution.

Although virtually all structures in Lebanon work to reinforce its patriarchal system and ideals, the woman herself also carries some responsibility for the maintenance of her predicament. Dependent and therefore vulnerable, Lebanese women internalize, to some degree, their inferiority and at times are complicit in reinforcing patriarchy. For example, although the Lebanese Council of Women has been in existence since 1951, and represents around 130 organizations from different regions, religions, and ideologies, it has failed to “carry the banner of women in their struggle for freedom, equality, and the right to be heard in matters of national concern... Thus, once Lebanese women won the right to vote in parity with men, they were lulled into complacency and turned their attention to ‘feminine’ and social affairs” (Shehadeh, 1999, p. 34).

Both, men and women, as well as the structures that make up Lebanese society (e.g. religion, government, education, etc.), all collude in keeping the current situation static, as well as in reinforcing the existing patriarchal ideology. Hijab (1988) states, “Resistance to change comes due to fear of the unknown; loss of control and change in family relations. The real fear is that if women allow their key prescribed role in the family to be overtaken by other roles, then the whole social order and men’s position in it will fall apart” (p.13). Lattouf (1999) explains this resistance to change as being due, in part, to women’s uncertainty as to whether or not there would be any benefits to such a

change. She also identifies “fear of rejection and the loss of protection and the status they have as wives and mothers” as contributing to this reluctance to challenge the traditional structure (p. 203).

### *Lebanese Women and the Work Role*

“Work is the factor that underpins man’s struggle for survival, advancement, and development; it is the guarantor of his humanity and, therefore, civilization. All work, but especially wage labor, comprises a large segment of one’s sense of worth” (Shehadeh, 1999, p. 45). As mentioned previously, a study of the Lebanese labor force in 1970 (before the war) indicated that women made up 17.5% of this population. They were employed, however, in traditionally “feminine” occupations, such as elementary school teachers, nurses, secretaries, or housemaids. Women that had college degrees in social science, literature, and law were unable to obtain appropriate work and often were forced to occupy positions not related to their fields of expertise. This resulted in “overqualified and underemployed women in the administrative sector” (Shehadeh, 1999, p. 47). Shehadeh (1999) states, “In short, occupations readily available to women normally required less education and vocational training and women, regardless of educational attainment were confined to a limited number of socially acceptable occupations” (p. 47). The overwhelming majority of working women were underpaid and single. This can be explained by the fact that most women would stop working when they got married, regardless of their socioeconomic background (Chamie, 1977). According to a 1973 study conducted by the Lebanese government in collaboration with UNESCO on the impact of marriage on women’s participation in the labor force, it was

revealed that 64 percent of the working women were single, 30 percent married, and 6 percent widowed or divorced. Among those who did not work, it was calculated that 18 percent were single, 74 percent married, and 8 percent divorced or widowed (Chamie, 1977). Therefore, these statistics confirm the strong adherence of women, during this time, to the patriarchal ideals of Lebanese culture. "Because marriage is a mainstay of life in Lebanese society, a highly educated woman often finds herself simultaneously at the heart of a male-dominated household and society and at the center of economic activity. She is more often than not forced to sacrifice her job and her professional aspirations for the sake of her husband and family" (Shehadeh, 1999, p. 47). Therefore, it is safe to say that most married women in Lebanon were working "not as a manifestation of emancipation and economic independence as much as out of economic necessity" (Shehadeh, 1999, p. 48). In a study conducted in 1982, Dr. Hassan Hammoud found that "socialization is heavy toward women", and all priority is focused on her as mother and wife being the primary role, while all other ambitions are secondary (p. 10).

This still appears to be true, to some degree, even though the changes in women's educational level, brought about by the war, have widened the female employment spectrum. In Lebanon, like many other Middle Eastern cultures, the concept of "becoming a woman" is still "juxtaposed" with that of "relinquishing the identity of a student or career woman" (Lattouf, 1999, p. 52). Lebanese women have rarely viewed work as a means for self-expression and stimulation. Instead, work has always been a means of economic support to be ceased once financial stability is achieved. Lattouf (1999) describes the dilemma that working women in Lebanon face in the following:

To many, a woman's drive to have a career is synonymous with rejecting marriage and family...She can work to help her family; to

admit to a desire for a career is tantamount to renouncing one's kinship group and its customs...Due to implicit and explicit conditioning, girls and young women abandon their unrealized *dreams* (italics added) so as to conform and comply with the values of those who dominate. Otherwise, they would risk being shunned and ostracized from the group. In many cases, young women come to believe and identify with the roles assigned without ever contemplating other choices (p. 52).

The societal pressure of defining a woman's role as mother/wife is so great that women who work in the absence of financial necessity very often justify publicly that their "first and foremost duties" are at home.

Although there have been significant strides in terms of women's career advancements and their infiltration of all fields, Lebanese women continue to face frustrating challenges in all professions. Discrimination towards women comes from both men and women. A 1995 article (in a Lebanese periodical) entitled, "A Capable Woman is Fought All the Way", documents an interview with a female physician in Beirut, in which she states that "people still do not accept a woman surgeon... They do not trust her as readily a male..." (Sfeir, 1995, p. 21). When recounting her struggle to become a doctor, she credits her father with promoting her education and supporting her dreams to become a physician. She declares that her mother was opposed to this idea and tried to discourage her from pursuing a career. She wanted her daughter to follow tradition and get married and have children. Nevertheless, Dr. Saba held steadfast to her dream, and was accepted to medical school, where she excelled. However, when she declared her desire to pursue a specialty in General Surgery, her professors discouraged her, pressing her to consider the question, "Who is going to visit you?" She ultimately chose gynecology and obstetrics, and still reported initially having a difficult time obtaining patients because she is a woman.

### *Women in Lebanon Today*

Lebanon today, known as the Second Republic of Lebanon (a term the Lebanese gave their country at the end of the war, in 1990), is in the midst of a struggle with “its identity, structure, and place in the region” (Lattouf, 1999, p. 184). Numerous changes on many different levels are taking place. For instance, the government has dedicated itself to the rebuilding of the country’s infrastructure, and there has been a move towards dismantling the Confessional System of government as a way of limiting the use of religion in a divisive manner. What such changes mean in terms of the status of women in Lebanon remains to be seen.

There is much contradiction in the position of today’s Lebanese woman, and similar contradictions in the forecasts by researchers as to the future status of women in Lebanese society. Some, such as Shehadeh (1999) believe that the cumulative effect of changes brought on by the war should continue to open new opportunities for women in terms of career development. She argues, “While it is still impossible to see the final outcome, and the struggle is far from over, I believe that the momentum built so far by women’s awareness and their accomplishments is difficult to reverse... This effect is enhanced by the growing global participation of women in the labor market” (p. 327). However she also admits that “although war may have forced women out of the domestic sphere, fortified with better education, capabilities, and experience, and at times even joining men on the battlefield, women were unable to break through the hierarchy of power” (p. 327).

Lattouf (1999) provides a more pessimistic outlook when describing Lebanese lawyer and human rights activist, Laure Moghaizel's, views on the situation of women in Lebanon today, in the following statement:

She argues that although there is a tremendous increase of women attending tertiary level education, participating in the workforce, and representing in parliament (three women), there is little change in the way society views women... 'Women were powerless and still are in all domains'. The war might have provided women with a break from the traditional roles, yet the aftermath of the war has made conditions worse (p. 191).

### *Conclusion*

The literature on the images and roles of Lebanese women today and in the past demonstrate the ways in which most institutions in Lebanon work to reinforce its patriarchal systems and ideals. While women in this small country have stepped out into the occupational sphere and have succeeded beyond the expectations of most (including themselves), in terms of their competence and achievements, they continue to face enormous limitations based on the gender biases and divisions that accompany a patriarchal structure. The prevailing ideal of the woman's primary (and most often solitary) role as wife and mother permeates all aspects of Lebanese society, from the legal system, to the educational system, to the media (i.e. books, magazines), to the home. This study aims to gain an understanding, through the life stories of Lebanese professional women, of the impact that such a patriarchal structure has on the origins of the Dream. Who helped to support and nurture its initial development during childhood and adolescence? What were the various challenges that were faced along the way? What inner conflicts did these women struggle with throughout their childhood and

adolescence? These and many more questions will be raised, and hopefully, through the voices of the women themselves, answers will be found.

### **Women's Development and Work**

Professional work has always been viewed as a crucial and central aspect of a man's identity (Rotundo, 1990). However, it is only recently, in the past seventeen years or so, that a true consideration and exploration of the meaning and value of work in the lives of women has been undertaken. The findings of such investigations are demonstrating the profound ways in which "a woman's relationship with her work is intimately connected to her identity, her sense of self, and her ongoing development across the life span" (Brewster, 1999, p.39). This is a time when women of all cultures are striving to acquire professional degrees and to assume positions at all levels of the occupational sphere. Taking this existing trend into consideration, Brewster (1999) writes, "As women assume a greater presence in the paid workplace and enter positions traditionally occupied by men, issues regarding gender, women's development, and the work role intersect and interact in a complex, multi-determined way" (p. 6).

Until recently, the majority of the literature on women's development has focused almost exclusively on a woman's reproductive capacities and related responsibilities as defining her sense of self. There was little consideration of the significance of her career to her identity or to other aspects of her development (Barnett & Baruch, 1978; Gergen, 1990). Gergen (1990) suggests that such a narrow view of women sustains a patriarchal

system of power by defining the value of women in terms of their fertility and attractiveness. Contemporary theorists of women's development are working to free women from this exclusive focus on their reproductive roles, by redefining and reconceptualizing theories concerning women's development across the lifespan. Given the earlier discussion of the pervasiveness of the patriarchal structure at all levels of Lebanese society and culture, the present study intends to be a step in the direction of expanding the image of Lebanese women. Because for as long as women's sole purpose in life is viewed to be her procreative and nurturing abilities, and her capabilities in terms of occupation, leadership, and decision-making are not recognized, encouraged, and utilized, patriarchal systems of power will remain in place.

### *Work and Women's Identity*

Researchers are finding that work and career are increasingly recognized as a primary source of a woman's identity (Giele, 1982; Gilbert, 1993). Work often serves as a setting for the development and expression of competence and a sense of worth. For many working women, their career provides them with "economic independence, intellectual stimulation, collegial affiliation, feelings of efficacy and self esteem, and a sense of self apart from the men and children in their lives" (Brewster, 1999, p. 39). These benefits have a significant and lasting impact on a woman's overall development. For example, James (1990) found that committed employment and financial security have a positive impact on a woman's well being at midlife, in that they ease the transition from young adulthood to the middle years (Brewster, 1999).

However, in order to appreciate the effect of work on a woman's development in a full and appropriate way, one must also understand the conflicts that come along with a woman's role in the occupational sphere. Although to date, there is no unified, comprehensive theory of women and the impact of work on their development, the literature in this area is growing. There have been significant contributions regarding the experience and meaning of work in women's lives from the points of view of both psychoanalytic theory as well as theories of adult development. These two perspectives offer some very useful insights into the nature of the internal and external conflicts that women face when incorporating a career into their life structure.

In the past, some psychologists considered women who desired professional degrees to be "aberrational". For example, in 1944, psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch wrote that women who competed professionally with men identified primarily with their fathers, and were "deviates" that really wanted to *be* men. She argued that these women suffered from a "masculinity complex", and sacrificed the "warm, intuitive knowledge" of womanhood to the "cold, unproductive thinking" of manhood" (Harris, 1995, p. 27). Similarly, in the late 1940's, journalist, Ferdinand Lundberg and psychiatrist, Marynia Farham, wrote that "the 'shadow of the phallus' lay over feminists and that working outside the home turned women away from their true instincts- of passivity, dependence, and the desire to raise children" (Harris, 1995, p. 27). It was only recently that psychoanalysis changed this view that "women's strivings toward a career represent misdirection of normal drives and, in general, are the expressions of masculine currents" (Applegarth, 1986, p. 212). Work is now recognized as accomplishing more than simply "sublimating drives" and "gratifying narcissism", rather, "for both sexes, work clearly

also satisfies important social needs as well as the working out of important object relations” (Applegarth, 1986, p. 213).

Women who enter the world of work, especially those arenas that are male-dominated, are faced with a number of external and internal barriers that create and intensify internal conflicts. Reciniello (1999) argues that these traditionally male work environments raised conflicts in women around femininity and sexuality, activate unconscious guilt and envy regarding aggression and competition, and pose threats to women’s desires for connection and relatedness. She writes, “in an attempt to control these overwhelming feelings...women often act out certain roles, such as denying success, adhering to perfectionistic work standards, engaging in self-defeating behaviors, and attempting to maintain a façade of a compliant, passive ‘good girl’” (p. 308). These actions serve to inhibit women’s ability to work effectively and to their potential, thus leading to a great deal of anxiety and distress.

“Gender role differences affect how men and women experience their aggression as well as personal ambition, achievement, and competitive strivings” (Brewster, 1998). Traditional models of femininity encourage females to be passive, compliant, and cooperative. Aggression and competition are discouraged and are seen as destructive and detrimental to relationships. Men, on the other hand, are encouraged to be fearless, independent, and competitive, thus their aggression and quests for power are admired and rewarded. It is precisely these “masculine” traits that lead to success in the contemporary workplace. Therefore, women’s conflicts around competition, power, aggression, and ambition are brought to the surface while carrying out their roles in the occupational sphere. “As a high-achieving individual, one is supposed to be assertive, independent,

self-motivated, intelligent, and career-oriented, but as a woman, these characteristics seem less feminine” (Farmer, 1997, p. 102). As a result, women are faced with the challenge of balancing the aggressive and competitive strivings that are stimulated by the work environment, while maintaining their “womanliness”. Nichols (1996) addresses this struggle when she states that “the very first thing that a woman must learn to manage [in the workplace] is her femininity” (xiii).

Bernadez (1983) asserts that women’s presence in the workplace also arouses men’s unconscious fears of female power originating, not only from the “mother from childhood”, but also from “the idealized and feared image of her” (p. 44). She argues that the tendency for men to devalue women and to deny or ignore their competence stems from the potential humiliation they face if the ability and competence of a woman is apparent and leads her to a position of power. This feeling of humiliation is based upon the culture’s “injunction” against a man being “female-like”. Bernadez (1983) explains:

This negative identification with women places men in a continuous struggle with aspects of themselves that need to be warded off, and in many cases, the splitting of those aspects and their projection onto women permit a temporary equilibrium. The male thus controls in the female aspects of himself that he fears and devalues. The domination of women is encouraged by the culture, but its strength comes from the need of males to control and dominate the female-self in themselves. This defense is threatened when a woman in power appears to have control. Not only is the male not in control of the satisfaction of his dependency needs but he may fear the loss of control of aspects of himself that are frequently projected onto women (p. 46).

Furthermore, women are raised with a corresponding fear of the potential consequences resulting from the dominance and control of men, such as the loss of love and security, as well as the image of being destructive and “castrating” (Stiver, 1991, p.231).

Along with fear come feelings of guilt as professional women ascend into positions of power and control. This guilt is due to their unconscious belief that “their achievement is purchased at the expense of internal objects and the rest of the world” (Brewster, 1999, p. 52). Furthermore, for some women, professional success arouses unconscious guilt because of the Oedipal victory that such success symbolizes. Reciniello (1999) explains that “women may feel a tremendous amount of unconscious guilt for having left mother to be there, for devaluing mother, for being selfish and taking care of their own needs, and for fantasies of publicly playing with father, having and essentially getting away with and being rewarded for breaking taboos” (p. 311).

Taken together, the above conflicts demonstrate a “fear of success”, which is a common phenomenon for many professional women (Stiver, 1991; Levinson, 1996; Reciniello, 1999; Homer, 1972). Stiver (1991) argues that there is “an intrinsic conflict between success, as defined in our culture, and the qualities that women value for themselves” (p. 236). Homer (1972) conceptualizes this “fear of success” as concerning the anxiety that women have about their connections to others and their sense of femininity being jeopardized by success. Such an explanation is consistent with Gilligan’s (1982) assertion that females develop within the context of relationships. She writes, “since masculinity is defined through separation, while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation” (p. 8). Therefore, it is not the “fear of success”, per se, but the fear of what consequences it would have that is the threat for these women (Levinson, 1996).

Harris (1995) conducted a qualitative study in which she interviewed over forty successful career women in their mid-thirties in order to understand the conflicts that professional women struggle with. Her findings confirm the notion that these conflicts are rooted to a significant degree in feminine identity itself. She writes, "Outwardly, these professional women were all highly successful. Inside they had deep questions about what success really meant. All were grappling...with defining themselves in relation to their mothers and to women of the future and of the past" (p. 18).

Levinson (1996) conceptualizes the conflicts that women experience when incorporating work into their life structure in terms of the ongoing battle between the "Internal Traditional Homemaker Figure" and the "Internal Anti-Traditional Figure". He argues that most women form both of these figures, and must deal with the conflict between them throughout their adult development. When describing the results from his study of the adult development of women, he writes,

Each career woman heard from within herself the voice of the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the voice of the Anti-Traditional Figure. She wanted greater freedom of choice yet found herself deeply rooted in the traditional pattern by virtue of her own personality development as well as the shaping influences of our social institutions. Numerous voices and social pressures from the external world pulled her in different directions but offered her no clear-cut resolution of the conflict (p. 55).

Farmer (1997) also speaks to the contradictory messages coming from both within professional women, themselves, as well as from the outside world. She describes her findings that women often espouse traditional ideas of the role of the woman in a marriage and the power distribution in a relationship, while simultaneously holding nontraditional ideas about women in the workplace. She offers no solution to this

ongoing dilemma, but simply acknowledges that it is a conflict that must continuously be managed.

The aforementioned literature demonstrates the complexity and multi-determined nature of the conflicts that professional women struggle with. These issues go beyond simply balancing work and family, but instead extend deep into women's psyches, arousing and challenging long-standing conflicts, values, experiences, and desires. In order to achieve a more thorough understanding of the origin of these conflicts as well as a more complete appreciation of the role of work in women's lives, one must examine the impact of the family on their professional development.

#### *Family and Women's Career Development*

The impact of the family on the development of a woman's initial career aspirations is a central area of interest for the present study, particularly because of the vital importance placed on the family in Lebanese culture. Research suggests that the family of origin plays a very significant role in the professional development of women (Farmer, 1997; Grimstad, 1989; Harris, 1995). It is within the family context that a child's initial sense of self develops and basic identities, motivations, values, and beliefs are formed (Grimstad, 1989). Families continuously communicate messages about the meaning of work and the value of education. Furthermore, studies have found that support from one's family can make the difference in overcoming negative societal influences that create barriers to achievement for many women (Farmer, 1997).

Research suggests that parents apply gender stereotypes when forming achievement expectations and perceptions of ability for their children (Parsons, Adler, &

Kaczala; Entwisle & Baker, 1983; Harris, 1995). Grimstad (1989) reported studies that indicate the tendency for parents to reinforce certain behaviors in males that they do not reinforce in females. In such research, the findings often reveal that “parents expect their sons, more frequently than their daughters, to be independent, self-reliant, highly educated, hard-working, ambitious, career-oriented, intelligent, and strong-willed. In contrast, the daughters are expected to be kind, unselfish, attractive, loving, well-mannered, have a good marriage, and be a good parent” (Grimstad, 1989, p. 38). Rothman (1987) argues that by the time children enter school, they have already formed ideas about the labor force and their place in it.

In discussing her qualitative study of over forty successful career women in their thirties, Harris (1995) writes, “what I would come to understand was that despite the impact of economics, religion, education, role models, the media, and other societal forces, much of what we do and believe is shaped by less accessible, less tangible forces: the interplay of historical events and family memories going back generations. First and foremost, however, a woman is influenced by her relationship with her parents” (p. 26). In her study of “high achieving women”, Farmer (1997) notes that all of the parents of these women emphasized, from very early on, the value and importance of education. She explains that although some parents did not have the opportunities to pursue higher education themselves, they stressed the importance of education as a precursor to success. Study after study has found that the parents are the “primary vocational advisors or facilitators” for the children (Grimstad, 1989, p.48), but investigations into the precise nature of *each* parent’s influence have revealed more variable results.

One level of this variation reveals a trend in terms of the overall status of working women at a particular time in history. A brief review of the “generational” patterns in the United States shows that in the 1940’s and 1950’s, for instance, many psychologists believed that women who wanted professional careers identified more with their fathers than with their mothers (Harris, 1995, p. 27). Among those that chose legal careers during this time, 70 to 80 percent had mothers who were *not* professionals (Harris, 1995). In another study during this era, women who reached the top in business, science, or mathematics were often the only or eldest daughters in families with no sons, and had felt close to their fathers, who encouraged them in their careers (Lozoff, 1973). However, in the 1960’s, there appeared to be a shift in this trend, and studies began to show that women who pursued “nontraditional” professions identified more with their mothers than with their fathers, especially if their mothers worked, even part-time. Tangri (1969), in her doctoral dissertation entitled, “Role Innovation in Occupational Choice Among College Women”, found that the college women that were most likely to say that they wanted “innovative” professional careers (i.e. careers in which women were less than 30% of those working) had supportive fathers and mothers who worked. However, Harris (1995), in describing Tangri’s results, states, “most women who said they were more interested in innovative careers than marriage reported feeling close to their mothers, but believed they resembled their fathers more than their mothers. This was, perhaps, because their fathers tended not to esteem their wives, who ordinarily had little education, worked at low-status, low-paying jobs, and did all of the housework” (p.88). Again, study results seemed to change according to the era- as it became more socially acceptable for women to work researchers began to find that women who desired careers

often had working mothers. However, the influence of family is very complex, and an analysis of “trends” fails to capture this complexity. Instead, an examination into the nature of a woman’s relationship with each parent as well as other members of the family, throughout the lifespan, will facilitate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the family’s impact on women’s professional development.

An article in the October 25, 1999 edition of *Fortune* magazine entitled, “Behind Every Successful Woman There is a Woman”, looked at the lives of the “fifty most powerful women in American business”. The focus of the article was on the profound influence that the mothers of these successful women had on their professional development. The author, Patricia Sellars, writes, “...what does a powerful woman need most? A larger-than-life mother. When we asked the women in our Power 50 to describe their childhoods, we heard a lot about kind, supportive fathers. But the women talked a lot more about unusual, influential mothers who became their role models and biggest fans” (p.129). A great deal of the literature on working women and their families of origin focuses on the complex relationship between mothers and daughters. Harris (1995) describes the existence of a “push-pull” dynamic that women experience in relation to their mothers. She writes, “through a process of emotional separation and connection, women grow and change along the life cycle, struggling to develop as individuals different from their mothers in some ways, but like them in others” (p. 19). Interviews with professional women reveal, time after time, the existence of powerful, complex, and conflicted emotions in relation to their mothers (e.g. Levinson, 1996; Harris, 1995; Farmer, 1997).

Reciniello (1999) writes of the unconscious guilt that professional women experience as a result of feeling as though they have “left their mother behind” by achieving and succeeding in the workplace. She explains women’s tendency to deny and externalize their success as a way of “acting out” this troublesome guilt. She writes, “success for a woman, in many cases, can only feel legitimate when she has done nothing to cause it or done nothing that will expose her efforts to pull away from mother” (p. 312). She points to the consistency of this theme as it has been expressed through “the predominant female role models through the ages- fairy-tale princesses who were *chosen* and film stars who were *discovered* (italics added) ” (p. 312). Both of these examples illustrate the passivity and lack of agency that are typical of many traditional images of “admired” women.

The “perfectionistic style” characteristic of many professional women has been attributed, in part, to the attempt by many mothers to maintain an attachment to their daughters in order to fulfill their own dependency needs (Reciniello, 1999). Such attempts lead these mothers to “project feelings of inadequacy onto their daughters”, thus expressing their ambivalence by holding on to their daughters at the same time that they are quite critical of them (p. 313). Mothers can become “competitive and fearful, as well as gratified, as they see their daughters move forward in a positive and competent fashion” (Stiver, 1991, p. 232). The daughters are left struggling to defend against their identification with their mothers, whom they perceive to be critical, devalued, and unhappy, by attempting to break the bond and establish an identity separate and distinct from them. However, they carry with them “the guilt of leaving their mothers along with their internalized harshness and high standards” (Reciniello, 1999, p. 313).

Despite their unconscious feelings of envy and neediness, mothers most often want their daughters to have more in their lives than they, themselves, did; they want their daughters to live out the dreams that they left behind. The following vignette illustrates this notion:

As much as Nancy admired her mother...she felt at an early age that her father held the power in the family, and that her mother had been stuck with children and restricted freedom. While Nancy's mother had seemed to enjoy her nurturing role, she gave her daughter, *if subliminally*, a second message: to have a career as she had not. As a consequence, the harder Nancy's mother tried to make Nancy conform to a stereotypical role, the less Nancy wished to follow in her footsteps" (Harris, 1995, p. 32).

It is hypothesized that the situation presented in this excerpt will be very representative of the circumstances in which the Lebanese women in the present study have lived.

Harris (1995) describes the tendency for women to come "full circle" on their journey through development. In discussing the results of her study of professional women, she writes that along a "complicated transition path...women resolve quite early to live lives different from their mothers'. In their late teens and early twenties, they rebelled; then, through careers, they sought to attain power over their own lives as their mothers had not. In their thirties, well on the way toward establishing their own separate identities, they expressed a renewed desire for emotional connection with their mothers' ways" (p. 33).

The literature provided a much less thorough and less dynamic picture of the ways in which a woman's relationship with her father impacts her professional development. A few studies referred to the supportive, yet somewhat secondary influence of fathers. For example, the career women in Levinson's (1996) study portrayed their fathers in "less dramatically negative" terms than their mothers were. He

was also often a “distant” or “absent” figure in the girl’s life, and she often experienced “a marked ambiguity in [his] feelings towards her” (p. 208). However, the importance of fathers to the formation of a woman’s career aspirations must be studied more intensely and cannot be underestimated or taken lightly. In fact, for the sample in this study, Lebanese women, it is suspected that the nature of their relationships with their fathers throughout their lives, will prove to be of crucial importance to their quest for professional careers. When a woman is raised in a patriarchal society, where females have little actual control or authority and are encouraged to direct their energies towards their role as wives and mothers, it seems likely that support and encouragement from a strong male would be a determining factor in her decision to step beyond traditional expectations and break through long standing barriers. However, whether this hypothesis proves to be true remains to be seen.

Another aspect of family influence on a woman’s professional development, and one that is virtually neglected in the literature, involves siblings. Siblings provide “a source of comparison, competition, and mutual assistance” (Farmer, 1997, p. 112). They often help to create a context or “reference group” within the family, beginning very early on, for youngsters to use in order to help understand the importance of their own successes. Through this atmosphere of competition, many women are motivated to achieve and to continue to move forward towards success, while others develop feelings of self doubt that hinder their progress (Farmer, 1997). The particular reasons behind such disparate reactions have not yet been explored in the literature, and therefore provide an interesting and as of yet untapped area of investigation.

It should be apparent, from the literature presented above, that the family of origin has a formative and enduring impact on a woman's professional development and the meaning that work has in her life. The following section will present the literature on Dreams in order to provide a basis for understanding this notion of "future self in world" (Levinson, 1978, 1996), that will be used as the vehicle through which to view the professional development of the Lebanese women in the present study. There will also be a discussion of the literature concerning the importance of mentors to the development and implementation of the Dream.

### **The Dream**

As a concept that has long been portrayed in mythology, the arts, literature, as well as in popular culture, the Dream has also received some attention as of late in academic research (Levinson, 1978, 1996; Stewart, 1977; Adams, 1983; Furst, 1983; Brewster, 1999; Roberts & Newton, 1987). Levinson (1996) describes the Dream, in its "primordial" form, as "a vague sense of self-in-world, an imagined possibility of one's adult life that generates excitement and vitality" (p. 238). This image of a future self is an idealized fantasy of the kind of person one hopes to become, the kind of life one hopes to live, and the kind of world one hopes to live in (Newton, 1983). The Dream serves as an "organizing passion" that gives life a sense of purpose and direction (Gooden, 1989), and thus has a profound impact on an individual's growth and development.

Levinson (1978) was the first to introduce the concept of the Dream and systematically examine its role in an individual's adult development. Through his

extensive study of the lives of forty men, he developed a theory of Adult Development, in which the Dream emerged as a key concept. Though its origins are in childhood, Levinson identifies the Dream as a “distinctively adult phenomenon” that gradually takes shape over the course of early adulthood (p. 238). He maintains that although it is not assumed that everyone has or should have a Dream, its presence or absence has a significant impact on an individual’s development. For the young adult, “the Dream may direct initial choices and motivate the subsequent decisions that structure adult life” (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p. 156). Levinson (1978) found that the more a young man can organize his initial life structure to be in line and “infused” with his Dream, the more his chances of fulfillment and satisfaction will be increased. If he creates an initial life structure that is in conflict with or in direct opposition to his Dream, he will later have to live with or attempt to rectify the consequences. Levinson (1996) concedes that “pursuing a Dream is risky, since the outcome may be grievously disappointing, but life without it is less intense and exciting” (p. 238).

Levinson conceptualized the Dream as originating as a transitional phenomenon during the early twenties, much like Winnicott’s (1958) “transitional object” of early childhood. According to Winnicott, a child’s sense of self begins to take shape through play, as the illusions created in fantasy are gradually transformed in to more reality-based phenomena. In Levinson’s theory, a similar process takes place during the early stages of adulthood, when the Dream is taking shape and is gradually becoming integrated within the adult life structure as something that is viable for both the self and the world. Furthermore, the Dream, as a transitional phenomenon, facilitates separation from the pre-adult world during the initial adult period (Furst, 1983).

Levinson's initial conceptualization of the role of the Dream in adult development was based on the results of his study with men. The concept of the Dream in relation to women's lives was first examined by Stewart (1977) in a study exploring the relevance of some important aspects of Levinson's theory to adult women. She found that women's Dreams have a strong relational component to them (i.e. the desire to get married and create a family) in addition to the individualistic aspect (i.e. career aspirations). This is in contrast to the men in Levinson's (1978) sample who had "exclusively individualistic Dreams focused on becoming a certain type of individual, usually related to occupational choice" (Furst, 1983, p.13). The women in Stewart's study exhibited "an almost paralyzing conflict" in their early adulthood over which aspect of their Dream to focus on first (Levine, 1986, p. 4). She found that the women who initially tended to the relational aspects of their Dreams formed "less provisional early life structures", most likely due to the fact that bearing children and creating a stable home entails an inevitable commitment (Furst, 1983, p. 14). When the children were old enough for these women to begin to consider their own needs, they found themselves longing to fulfill the individualistic aspect of their Dreams, and thus were faced with major life decisions. Those women who initially concentrated on individual career pursuits, resembled the men in Levinson's sample during their twenties. However, at around age thirty, these women also switched the focus of their Dreams, and began to concentrate on the relational component, namely the task of creating a family within a marriage. In discussing Stewart's findings, Furst (1983) writes, "it was difficult for a woman to maintain a solely individualistic Dream, especially when it conflicted with the highly internalized values of the family of origin" (p.16). Stewart observed that even within this "individualistic Dream", instead of

describing an image of “self in an occupational role”, the women in her study carried “images of self defined in relation to others, specifically husbands, children, and colleagues” (Brewster, 1999, p. 41). These findings therefore lead to the hypothesis that for women, career success has less to do with her personal satisfaction and happiness than with the quality of her interpersonal relationships (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

Results of Stewart’s (1977) study also suggest that it is very difficult and stressful for a woman to attempt to simultaneously integrate both relational and individualistic aspects of her Dream. As a result, those who choose to have both a family and a career generally have to live out one part of the Dream at a time, which presumably mandates an eventual dramatic reordering of priorities to make room for whichever aspect of the Dream was initially ignored. Furst (1983) notes that a number of authors (e.g. Bardwick, 1971; Chodorow, 1978; Scarf, 1980) have hypothesized that it is precisely this role conflict that exacerbates women’s “confusion and prolonged search for a firm identity during adulthood” (p.19).

The results of Stewart’s (1977) study support Levinson’s contention that “the creation of a Dream plays a critical role in development, particularly as a means of separating from the family of origin during the Early Adult Transition (age 17-22)” (Roberts and Newton, 1987, p.157). Stewart identified qualitatively different types of initial Dream formation among her subjects, each with different implications for the course of their adult development. She found that some formed “overly restrictive” Dreams, others formed “diffuse” Dreams, and still others formed flexible ones. Her findings suggest that “a woman who forms an overly-restrictive Dream tends to be highly influenced by perceived parental expectations, and her Dream reflects her attempt to

comply with or defy her parents” (Furst, 1983, p. 17). Furst (1983) likens this to Erikson’s (1968) concept of “identity foreclosure”, which is a pathological response to the developmental stage in his theory entitled *Identity vs. Role Confusion*. In the case when a woman failed to form a “viable” Dream during the Early Adult Transition, “her provisional life structure remained diffuse and unsatisfactory and there appeared to be more than average difficulties in separating from the family of origin” (Furst, 1983, p. 17). This “diffuse” Dream can also be conceptualized as a pathological response to Erikson’s (1968) stage of *Identity vs. Role Confusion*, which he describes as a state of “acute identity confusion” (Furst, 1983). Furthermore, Stewart (1977) observed that women who were unable to form a Dream at around age twenty had suffered greater amounts of childhood and adolescent experiences of personal deprivation, such as separations from their parents due to divorce or death, physical abuse, or multiple moves, than those who were able to form a Dream (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

In Adams’s (1983) adult developmental study of African American female attorneys, she found, similar to Stewart’s (1977) results, that marriage and career were both considered desirable goals. While these women tended to their occupational goals first, thus initially focusing on the individualistic aspects of their Dream, at around age thirty, their priorities shifted to the relational components. All of these women stated that they had always intended to marry and raise children, but values of “hard work, financial security, and advancement”, instilled by their parents, encouraged them to pursue their professional success first (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p. 160). The decision to address relational needs during the age thirty transition was approached with ambivalence as the result of internalized parental expectations for continued occupational success, and the

women were faced with the challenge of resolving this conflict and its accompanying distress. While their careers continued to be an important aspect of their lives, they no longer were the sole focus of their Dreams. The notion of the “split dream” was very characteristic of the women in both Adams (1983) and Stewart’s (1977) studies (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p.157).

Furst (1983), in her Levinsonian study of eight women, “probed downward into the origins of Dream creation” in an attempt to understand the factors that influence the formation and eventual shape of the Dream (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p. 157). She conceptualizes the Dream as “a vision of the self in a particular kind of world...in this definition of the Dream, the sense of *place* is as important as the sense of *self* [italics added]” (Furst, 1983, p. 2). For example, one’s projected occupational identity is inextricably entangled with the particular environment that one imagines oneself in. Furst (1983) maintained that the Dream develops as the result of the combination of both internal (e.g. personality, temperament, talent) and external (e.g. family, cultural environment) factors that interact during an individual’s pre-adult development. She asserts that the Dream is made up of both *endogenous* as well as *compensatory* elements, the former being those that “appear to emerge from within the self”, and the latter being “those images of an adult life which promise to compensate for perceived flaws in the individual’s pre-adult world” (Furst, 1983, p. 321).

Particularly relevant for the present study was the finding, by Furst (1983), of the significance of the pre-adult era in Dream development in women. Her data suggest that unresolved conflicts from childhood were largely responsible for the compensatory aspects of the Dream, and that these aspects were gradually worked out during early

adulthood. However, the extent to which these conflicts inhibited the articulation of the endogenous aspects of the Dream, seemed to be dependent on the nature of support that each woman received during childhood. Furst points to the need for research that examines further these childhood support systems and influences on the Dream. The present study intends to address this need.

Furst (1983) also found that there were significant childhood precursors to the Dream. The data she collected suggested that it was important for the subject's parents to have encouraged an environment of autonomy and freedom of expression, in which the child's criticisms were tolerated. "Given the freedom to consider the flaws in her family of origin, the child was better able to imagine a happier life for herself in the future. These early imaginings were the precursors to later Dreams" (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p.157). Furst (1983) also argues that the mother-daughter relationship has a particularly significant influence on "a young woman's ability to first develop an initial purpose and then satisfactorily live it out" (p. 322).

For most of the women in Furst's study, childhood precursors of the Dream were transformed into an initial, yet vague, image of the self in a particular kind of adult world, during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. While undergoing this transition, the Dream serves to provide the young woman with purpose and direction as she starts "to differentiate from her childhood identity, to transform previous relationships, and initiate her first adult choices" (Furst, 1983, p. 322). During this initial phase of Dream formation, its compensatory or reactive components are the most salient, and the endogenous elements are more undifferentiated and vague. However, with age comes

more experimentation and exploration, which result in increased articulation of the more innate elements of the Dream.

Like the women in both Stewart (1977) and Adams's (1983) studies, those who Furst (1983) examined also identified both individualistic and relational aspects of their Dreams. However, she specifies that in contrast to Stewart's (1977) findings that after the Age Thirty Transition, women changed their focus to the aspect of the Dream that they had neglected in their twenties, the women in her study merely *added* the other aspect to the previous one. Nevertheless, her data suggest that trying to give equal time and attention to both components (i.e. family and work) causes more conflict and distress, and she recommends that concentrating on one, to the greater exclusion of the other, at least during the age thirty transition, reduces the conflict. However, she proceeds to note that this solution is not very realistic for most women with "split Dreams" because of both "the biological time-clock for bearing children" and the competition inherent in the pursuit of a career (p. 327). A woman can't afford to implement *either* a career or family because she stands to lose the opportunity for one or the other. The results of her data also revealed the fact that this conflict between women's individualistic and relational desires are very much embedded in the "unquestioned cultural expectations of themselves as women" (p. 330).

For the career women in Brewster's (1998) study, pursuing their professional Dreams was a "means of separating and individuating from families of origin, identifying with a beloved father, and making amends for a mother's lost hopes and dreams" (p. 212). While their occupational successes and goals gave their lives meaning and direction, and brought them a great deal of personal validation and admiration, they all

felt that these benefits came with a great price in terms of their relationships with others. Brewster found that the women who left their corporate jobs during midlife, felt strong developmental pressures at this time, urging the expression of parts of the self that were ignored or suppressed while they pursued their occupational Dreams.

Taken together, the data gathered from the various studies on women's Dreams illustrate the significance of the formation and implementation of these Dreams for their adult development. A young woman's identity is developed in her quest to pursue her Dream, as she "articulates and lives out its different components" (Furst, 1983, p. 337). The Dream provides her with a purpose and direction for making choices, decisions, and changes, and therefore a life without a Dream or one lived in opposition to her Dream most often lacks focus and motivation. The Dream helps to keep a woman "on track" when she faces life's inevitable challenges and obstacles. It gives her the energy, enthusiasm, and drive to overcome these potential disruptions. Furst (1983) describes the importance of the Dream for women during these times of change and often "upheaval" in women's roles, in terms of their increasing involvement in the workplace, while maintaining primary responsibility for the family. She writes, "with so many options pressed, we need more than ever guiding internal purposes to direct our choices" (p. 339). The Dream serves as this internal guiding force.

### *Mentor Relationship and Role Models*

The importance of high-ranking mentors for women to achieve leadership positions has been amply demonstrated in the literature (Bickel, 1995a; Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992). Kaltreider (1997) states that women who manage to find mentors, male

or female, who can guide them in work and family decisions have a clear advantage in terms of career advancement, particularly at the senior level of management.

According to Levinson (1996), the most crucial function of the mentor relationship is the development and articulation of the young woman's Dream. He writes, "a full, complex mentorial relationship supports the evolution of the Dream. A true mentor fosters the young adult's development by nurturing the youthful Dream and giving it his or her blessing, believing in the young woman, helping her to define her newly emerging adult self in its newly discovered world, and creating a space in which she can move toward a reasonably satisfactory life structure that contains the Dream" (p. 239). However, he also acknowledges that due to the scarcity of women available to fill this function in the workplace, women tend to experience less mentoring than men do. Although men can act as mentors to women, and they often do, "attempts at cross-mentoring are more vulnerable to disruption by sexual attraction on both sides" (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p. 158). Furthermore, in the case of older and more experienced male colleagues, they often hold more "traditional" values about women and work, and thus fail to take the career aspirations of young women seriously.

Stewart (1977) and Furst (1983) discovered a connection between the type of Dream formed and subsequent attempts to develop mentor relationships. Specifically, the women who had relational Dreams identified the existence of role models, but they did not form mentor relationships during their twenties. Those women who had individualistic Dreams, also identified men and women who served as "professional role models". However, while "role modeling did facilitate the attainment of women's

occupational goals, it did not approximate the transformative quality and function of the true mentor relationship as described by Levinson” (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p. 158).

A boyfriend or husband often served a mentor-like function in these women’s lives, by encouraging and supporting their career aspirations. For instance, in Furst’s (1983) study, the only two women who formed mentor relationships in their twenties identified their husbands as the individuals who served this role. However, the existence and maintenance of such a situation most often proved to be dependent on the extent to which the woman’s goals remained in line with the interests of her family and love life. Furthermore, in these instances where the husband served as a mentor, there almost always came a point (usually during the Age Thirty Transition) when the wife initiated a shift to a more equal partnership within the marriage, and this often placed great strain on their relationship as husband and wife (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

In the present study, the existence of any precursors to the adult mentor and the function of role models will be considered in order to develop an understanding of *who* the individuals were, early in these women’s lives, that most significantly impacted the origins of their Dreams. Because of the pervasive and deeply-rooted patriarchal structure that characterizes Lebanese culture, such an exploration will be particularly interesting and informative. Who, if anyone, provided the example and encouragement during the pre-adult years for these women’s journey beyond their traditional gender roles and expectations? Although a review of the existing adult developmental studies of women revealed that a remarkably small number of women who formed Dreams were able to find mentors to help nurture that Dream, a thorough exploration of their pre-adult years and the existence of possible alternative sources of guidance and encouragement has not

yet been undertaken. Due to the significant obstacles that Lebanese women face in terms of their professional development, there must be some source of encouragement and support along the way for these women, and if it is not mentors, in the Levinsonian sense of the term, then who is it?

### **Conclusion**

The primary objective of this investigation is to explore the earliest influences on Lebanese professional women's Dreams. There will be a particular focus on achieving a deeper understanding of the origins and development of their professional aspirations during their childhood and adolescence. Some of the following themes will be explored: the influence of various relationships within the family of origin on the earliest development of the Dream; the impact of Lebanese cultural and societal values on the development of the earliest precursors to the Dream; and the nature and components of the earliest precursors to the Dream.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

**There is very little research on the adult development of women in Middle Eastern cultures, let alone their professional development. For Lebanese women, in particular, the present time holds a great deal of potential for change in terms of gender roles and women's status in the occupational sphere. Therefore, as Lebanese women begin assuming more of a visible presence outside of the home, it is important to understand the factors that affect their professional choices from their earliest influences to those throughout their lifespan. Because these areas have not been researched in any systematic and meaningful way, it is important to investigate them with an open and flexible approach, and to err on the side of over-inclusion, rather than risk missing valuable information by employing a more directive, structured research method. The main intent of this study is to unfold the early life stories of Lebanese professional women, in order to generate data as the basis upon which to formulate more specific hypotheses, which can guide subsequent studies. The Dream will be used as the vehicle through which these early life stories will come alive.**

### **Sample**

**Nine Lebanese professional women from the ages of thirty-one to forty-eight were selected based on their occupational achievements. This range of ages was chosen because it was felt that by the time the respondents reached age thirty-one and beyond, they would either be in the midst of their professional training (i.e. graduate school) or**

they would have completed their training and be immersed in their careers. Although this range of ages suggests that cohort effects may have come into play, the relative consistency and pervasiveness of the patriarchal structures and expectations in Lebanon, that persist to the present day, protected the issues under examination in this study from contamination by such effects. All of these women were born and raised in Lebanon, completed their primary education and at least a portion of their college education there. For practical reasons (e.g. this writer's limited resources and time), the women interviewed were all residing in the United States at the time of the investigation.

In terms of nature of occupation, the women were involved in "professional" careers, as defined by Grimstad (1983) in the following: "a work role requiring specialized knowledge and usually an extended period of academic training" (p. 7). Since the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the earliest development of the women's professional aspirations, women still completing their graduate training in their chosen field were also interviewed. In addition to occupational status, guidelines for initial subject choice required that they were within the stated range of age, nationality, and ethnicity. It was felt that marital and family status need not be equal, as these are consequences of choices made during the life span (Furst, 1983).

Due to the nature of this type of in-depth interviewing process, the sample size was small. The extensive time and resources necessary, on the part of the investigator, for the lengthy interview and data analysis processes necessitated a sample size of nine. While this is too small a sample to allow for statistical interpretations regarding any population, it is considered sufficient in size to allow for inter-individual comparisons and to generate hypotheses about these women.

Subject participation was voluntary, and no fee was offered for participation. Potential participants were identified through the “snowball method” of subject selection (Patton, 1990), in which people were asked to suggest others to be interviewed. This writer met with each subject for two to three interviews, each lasting one to two hours. The duration between each interview varied from two days to two weeks, depending on the schedules of both the interviewee and this interviewer. The women included in this study were residing in different cities around the United States, and therefore, some of the interviews required cross-country travel on the part of this writer. The interviews were held where the participant preferred, usually in her home or workplace.

Prospective subjects were informed that the investigator was a clinical psychology doctoral candidate conducting a research project for her dissertation requirement at the City University of New York. They were told that that the research was being designed to “examine the professional development of Lebanese women”.

Participants were asked to sign a release form giving consent for the use of the tape recordings and the interview material in the written presentation of this research (See Appendix C). The consent form specified that all the information shared would be confidential, that the identifying information would be changed in the presentation, and that pseudonyms would be used to preserve anonymity. They were also sent a cover letter explaining the study and asked to provide some demographic information prior to the initial interview (See Appendix B).

## **Psychobiographical Interviewing**

The method chosen for this study was the psychobiographical interview. “A biographical method of qualitative research focuses on the individual’s experience and interpretation of events, and generates descriptive data in the subject’s own language and voice” (Brewster, 1999, p. 66). Psychobiography is a particular form of biographical interviewing in which the psychologist “systematically and self-consciously employs psychological theory to aid in this process of discerning the story” (McAdams, 1988, p. 3). This research approach was well suited to the goals of the present study because it allowed for a deep, yet systematic exploration of the early life contexts of these Lebanese women as they developed their earliest professional aspirations. Also important for the present investigation was that this method allowed a nuanced depiction of the culture to be captured and incorporated in the analysis of the data and the generation of hypotheses.

The basic goal of biography is to portray an individual life as it evolves over the years. The researcher is able to capture the complexity of a human life and to describe the various influences affecting the decisions made in that life span. Furthermore, this exploratory method allows the researcher to formulate the “analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation for the data itself--rather than from preconceived, rigidly structured and highly qualified techniques, that tend to reconstruct reality to fit a prior operational definition constructed by the researcher” (Glaser & Strauss, 1970, p. 6).

Life story research is aimed at investigating the subjective meanings of lives as they are told in the narratives of participants. When describing the usefulness of a life story approach to psychological research, Plummer (1995) writes, “[life stories] take seriously the subjective dimensions of lives, enable them to be placed in a fuller social

context, and fully acknowledge the narrative nature of human conduct” (p. 62). Through the stories of these Lebanese women, a more complete picture will be developed of those individuals and circumstances that facilitated the formation and implementation of the origin of their Dreams.

### **Method of Data Collection: Interview**

The method of gathering data for this study was a series of semi-structured interviews with Lebanese professional women from the ages of 31 to 48. The semi-structured interview was chosen “to enable the investigation to proceed in an open and unbiased manner while allowing the interviewer to probe more deeply into specific questions about the lives of each woman” (Brewster, 1998, p. 69). This technique permits maximum exploration of the complexity and diversity of these women’s lives.

While it is important that exploratory, hypothesis-generating research methods sufficiently allow for the spontaneous expression of thoughts and experiences, a framework is useful for both the investigator as well as the interviewee. Therefore, certain relevant areas of exploration were identified, prior to the collection of the data, based on the research of Levinson (1996), Stewart (1977), Furst (1983), and Brewster (1998). The interview devised for this study was based primarily on the formats used in the “Levinsonian” studies conducted by both Furst (1983) and Brewster (1998), with modifications that allowed for further exploration into areas relevant to the present study, such as the impact of culture on the formation of the precursors to the Dream . However, it is important to note that the interview guidelines were intended to be used provisionally, and modifications were made when necessary and appropriate, in order to

allow for the unique characteristics of each interviewee to have space for expression. Such an approach follows Maslow's (1939) original description of the "intensive interview", as cited in Furst (1983), in which he explains the "first task to be the understanding of the person before him as an individual and only then to attempt to follow through the specific demands of the research. The technique then is something of a fusion of the experimental and clinical approaches..."(p. 24). This description alludes to the importance of the "clinical" aspect of the interview, which is a reminder of the significance of the relationship that develops between the interviewer and interviewee. Charmaz (1995) argues that the interaction between the "researcher" and the "researched" essentially "produces" the data, and thus one must be continuously aware of the quality of this relationship (p. 35).

The interview format (See Appendix D) consisted of questions covering the development of the Dream throughout the subjects' entire life, from early childhood into adulthood. However, most of the data included in the present analysis came from the childhood and adolescent eras. The questions were designed to examine the ways in which developmental processes, life experiences, personal values and ambitions, dynamics within the family of origin, relationships with significant others, and cultural influences all impacted the origins of the Dream in Lebanese professional women. Each woman's story offered a unique perspective that added richness typically not found in quantitative research. Their narratives illustrated the internal and external influences on their achievements and the origins of their Dreams. Through the analysis of these Lebanese professional women's stories, we will achieve a deeper understanding of the childhood circumstances, including the challenges and conflicts, that led to their "earliest

imaginings” (Roberts & Newton, 1987) of themselves in the future, and we will come to understand the various influences that played a role in their occupational aspirations.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data involved the identification, description, and integration of themes and patterns that emerged from the narratives provided by each participant.

“Biographical research is specifically intended to generate and explore hypotheses and suppositions rather than to test hypotheses through variable manipulation. Instead, the variables, or patterns in individual development are an outcome of the inquiry and data analysis” (Brewster, 1998, p. 67).

Following Newton’s (1995) guidelines for conducting biographical research, a biographical sketch was produced for each individual. This sketch was constructed in the form of a “chronologically factual narrative” (Newton, 1995, p. 151), and “sufficient empirical data” was presented “to allow the reader to come to his or her own view of the individual’s life” (Newton, 1995, p. 151). Therefore, any interpretations and explanations were kept separate from the data when reconstructing the biographical sketches. Presenting the empirical data in such a factual and chronological manner had the additional function of restricting investigator bias. After biographical sketches were constructed, empirical patterns and themes were identified. These patterns and themes were then compared between subjects for similarities and differences in individual experiences.

The primary objective of the analysis of the data was to determine the childhood influences on the Dreams of the Lebanese professional women in this sample. The following are some of the questions that guided the analysis of the data:

1. What are the themes that characterize the woman's relationship with each of her parents during childhood? How did she identify with her mother and father during this time? How did these identifications influence her earliest visions of herself in the future? How did these themes and identifications change from childhood to adolescence?
2. What themes emerge from descriptions of the family environment during childhood? What values were encouraged? What role did traditional Lebanese cultural and societal values play in the family of origin?
3. Does the narrative give evidence of how each woman envisioned herself as an adult? What were her initial aspirations during childhood? How were they received by various members of her family? What particular influence did each parent have on these aspirations? Where there people outside of her family that significantly impacted these aspirations?
4. Does the narrative give evidence of how each woman's gender impacted her initial aspirations? What gender role definitions were evident in her family of origin?

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA**

**This chapter focuses on the women interviewed for this study. The first part of the chapter will provide an initial summary of the characteristics of this group as a whole. The second part will consist of a presentation of the edited narratives of two Lebanese professional women, Dr. Samia Naaman and Layla Zaytoun. Samia is a forty-year old physician, who is currently the head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at a large metropolitan hospital. Layla is a thirty-six year old woman currently working as the Director of Marketing at a large U.S. company. The third and final section of this chapter will include a brief description of the remaining seven women that comprise this sample. These abbreviated descriptions will serve mainly as an introduction to these women, depicting their lives at the current time. Excerpts from their complete narratives will be presented throughout chapter five in order to illustrate the origin and pre-adult development of the Dream in the lives of the Lebanese professional women portrayed in this study.**

**The narratives presented in this chapter are done so using each woman's own words. While the focus of this study is on the periods of childhood and adolescence, the two edited narratives include information on the women's lives through the present time in order to provide a complete picture of their professional development. However, the subsequent analysis and the excerpts from the remainder of the subjects will include descriptions from only the periods of childhood and adolescence.**

## **The Women**

The women that comprise this sample were all born and raised in Lebanon. All of them completed at least a portion of their college education there, and five out of nine completed both college and part of their graduate training in Lebanon. Those that left did so to finish their education in the United States because of the dangerous conditions the war created and the limitations it placed on educational opportunities in their particular fields of interest.

All of the women currently work full time and two of them are also in the process of completing their Doctorate degrees (see Appendix A). The two that are in the process of completing their graduate training already hold Master's degrees and worked in their fields for some time before returning to school to obtain Ph.D.'s. The women are employed in a variety of fields including medicine, business, education and engineering. Five are married, four of which have children, and four are single and have never been married.

All of the women were excited and eager to tell their stories. They expressed pride in their accomplishments and were open and honest in depicting the challenges as well as the triumphs that they experienced along the road to their professional development.

### **Dr. Samia Naaman**

*Samia is a 40-year old Lebanese physician specializing in OB/GYN in a major hospital in a large U.S city. She is married and has three children, ages four, six, and eight. Her husband, Joseph, also Lebanese, is a Civil Engineer. They have lived in this city for their entire ten-year marriage. Following is a description of Samia's life in her own words...*

I am a mother and a physician. I really think of myself as a person trying to juggle both jobs- trying to do the best I can at both, and sometimes it's really hard because you are just so short on time...and they are two *big* jobs.

I am an Obstetrician/Gynecologist, so I see my role as being a provider of women's health, and making sure that women get good care, from their teenage years, well into their older years. I support them and counsel them through their pregnancies, menopause, and often end up doing family counseling because at times their medical complaints have more to do with what else is going on at home. I have very long hours. I probably work somewhere between 65 to 70 hours a week, and I am on call for at least one 24- hour period each week.

As I said before, my life right now is a constant juggling act. I take pride in taking good care of my patients. They rely on me, and I take it seriously. You can't afford to make mistakes in my work...And then I have to juggle my kids, and they require a lot of time, a lot of mental stimulation. Outside of their homework and school projects, you have to raise them, talk to them, and explain to them the values that we believe in, other than what they learn in school. I believe in giving them some kind of

culture, instilling in them an identity. It's hard because we have no family here, and my husband and I try to expose them to their Lebanese culture through food, religion, language- I teach them Arabic and French. But it's hard to pack it all in, especially as they are immersed in American culture. But we continue to try because it is important.

I am really happy with my job and I'm happy with my family. The only thing I would change is the number of hours I work; I would cut them down in a flash, but right now that is not an option. So I think I am going to hang in there a little bit longer, probably another couple of years, and then I'll try to cut down.

### *Childhood*

*(Samia began to cry when I first asked her to describe her childhood.)* It's hard to think about my childhood because my family is so far away. We grew up just on the outskirts of Beirut in a big house, a villa. I am the oldest of four children, and I have two brothers and one sister. My father is one of eight kids, and all of his siblings and their children lived around us, so I grew up being very close to my cousins. We all went to the same schools (the girls to one, and the boys to another), and we all got together and did the same activities. I remember after Sunday church services, we would all go to my grandparents' house for lunch, and there were like 70 grandchildren, aunts, and uncles. It was like a huge fiesta every week. And we spent the winters skiing together in the mountains of Lebanon, and the summers at camp together. I grew up around a lot of family.

*(I asked Samia to talk about her relationship with her mother as a child.)* My mother is very bright, but she grew up during a time when women weren't supposed to

actually get an education (she barely finished high school) and do something, so she channeled most of her gifts into a lot of volunteer work, which I remember her doing when I was growing up. That's what she did in the daytime while we were in school. She had a pretty high administrative position in the Lebanese Red Cross. She did a lot of fundraising, ran the blood bank, and taught classes for caring for elderly parents in their homes, because in Lebanon it is not common to put elderly family in nursing homes. She also taught how to care for physically disabled children, and ran the Ladies Guild at a hospital for the mentally ill.

And then she managed to be home when we returned from school. Her day was filled with all that stuff, and then when we got home she was always there, and would help us do homework and prepare dinner. Then when my father got home at around 8:00pm, things would shift to the "adult activities", and they would go out to dinner parties or other social things, almost every night. I used to like to watch her put on her pretty clothes, and sometimes we would pretend we were asleep, and sneak out to watch her put her last little touches to her makeup, put on her gown, and then go out.

My mother was always artistic, which she inherited from her family. She has an amazing sense of beauty, and was wonderful in decorating the house. She also loved music and dance. So that was her thing. I didn't inherit any of that! The more scientific mind and education came from my father's side.

*(I asked Samia to talk about her relationship with her father as a child.)* I've always been extremely close to my dad, because I am the spitting image of him in every way- looks and brain. I am the oldest, and I am extremely close to him. He can just

think something and I can read it just by looking at him. He doesn't have to say anything- it's really scary.

My dad is an interesting character. He is an engineer, and while he was studying for his engineering degree, he studied several other things at the same time, like Arabic literature, history, and I don't remember what else, but he received Honors in all of them. So education was the most important thing to him. My mother believed in it as well, although she pushed it more for the boys in my family. She was a little more traditional in that sense than my father was.

My mother wasn't too excited about medical school for her daughter, because she felt that it took too long. She thought, "she'll be too old and there won't be any guys who will want to marry her". God forbid I should finish medical school and be, what, 25 or 26? That's an old maid in her book. That's something I heard quite a bit.

It was really interesting because my grandfather (paternal) was still alive at the time, and he was very conservative in terms of family values and religion, and even *he* was very much against my mother's idea that I should not go to medical school. He was supportive and said, "Let her go." He was in his late 80's and he encouraged all his grandchildren, boys *and* girls, to seek the highest education possible, in any field they chose. That is why on my father's side, you will find a lot of the kids went into medicine, engineering, and law. Education was *extremely* important. My grandfather used to say, and this was before the war even started, "Just because we come from a family where she does not need to work, you never know what will happen in life... War may break out or she may marry a man who has no money or a man who will fall on bad times, and she must have a degree to pull her out of a bad situation."

*(I asked Samia what she learned about work from her parents.)* The work ethic in my family was unbelievable. My father has always been an extremely hard worker. He begins at dawn and doesn't stop until the night, and he is the most honest person. In Lebanon, you are who your family is, who your parents are. I always grew up hearing how honest my father and grandfather were, and how they always come through for people. So, the three things that were very important to me in terms of carrying the family values, were working hard, getting an education, and being truthful and honest to your work. These are values that I live by everyday.

And on my mother's side, her parents were not the kind to really push higher education. They were wealthy, because my grandfather had done well in business, but education was not emphasized, and he was not very educated himself. My mother's brothers went to school, but they were not really pushed to get a higher education, and the girls, including my mother, were not encouraged *at all* to get an education. But I did learn from my mother to care for people, the selflessness of giving, and the love of healthcare. I get the scientific part of my mind, and the rigorous work ethic necessary for my job, from my father.

*(I ask Samia how she viewed her father's occupation when she was a child.)* I looked up to my dad. I thought he was amazing because he worked so hard. I loved going around with him, and he would point out all of the buildings he built. I remember walking down the main street in Beirut, where there were all the banks and big buildings, and I'd think, "that's my dad's, and that one is his, and that one is his....". He used to take me with him to job sites on the weekends, and he'd show me around. I was so proud of him, because I would see the work he did and the finished products. He took a lot of

pride in his work. When I was around eleven or twelve, he received a prestigious award in the field of Engineering, and I remember thinking, “wow, he’s amazing.”

But the war hit shortly after that, and work slowed down a lot. My father was not at all into politics, and he did not support the war, or any of the political parties. So, if you were not involved in any of the political circles, you were not “in the game”, and he stopped getting work. It was so hard to see him in his prime, and not working. Everyone was affected by the war, so it wasn’t a reflection of his capabilities, but it was so hard to see him suffer, feeling that he should be contributing more. And all of his buildings were destroyed during the war...Everything that he did.

*(I asked Samia how she felt her mother viewed her own role.)* I think that my mother thrived because she was very proud of whom she was married to, where he came from, and his successful career. Those things were very important to her. But she was also proud of what she did and her contribution, in terms of their social life. My father did not care about those things; he would be fine if they didn’t go out for a year. But my mother was a “socialite”, and she took pride in the fact that they would be invited to all kinds of places, and they were considered prominent people in the social scene. She is that kind of person, very outgoing, fun, and social. She took pride in the fact that her children went to the right schools, hung out with the right people, and wore the right clothes. God forbid I should be caught wearing this *(pointing to her casual outfit)!*

But it is interesting, because even though she did not want me to go to medical school, she is the proudest mother on earth that she has a daughter that is a doctor. *(I ask Samia how she understands this contradiction.)* It’s like she’s caught between the old world and the new world. She wants to still have the old way, but she knows it doesn’t

exist anymore. And I think that if she had grown up during my time, she would have done what I did. During her time, the opportunities were different, and she did what she could.

*(I ask Samia what her mother's expectations were for her future.)* Her expectations were that I would finish high school, and then she would send me to college because it is nice to tell people who are coming to marry your child that she has a college education. A background in literature or sociology looks nice for a girl. And then somewhere during the middle of college, she would find me the right man, who comes from the right family, and I would get married and have children and a bunch of maids and a couple of drivers and not live too far from where she is...the "standard".

*(I asked Samia how she felt about this vision of her future as she was growing up.)* Oh, I was very rebellious. I mean, I was a good kid. Actually, I was as good as they get. I was not at all rebellious in the traditional sense of the word. I mean, I did not go out; I was not into that scene at all. I was a studious child. But I rebelled at the idea of being married off. That did not go over very well with me. So when my mother and some of her friends would have boys of the "appropriate" age and came from the "appropriate" family come over, I would catch on pretty quickly, and I wouldn't go for it. I was going to go college and do things my way.

*(I ask Samia if she had a Dream, a vision of herself in the future, when she was a child.)* Oh God, yes. Ever since I was a little girl, from as young as I can remember, maybe five or six, all I wanted to be was a doctor. I wanted to be a pediatrician because I love children, as you can tell (referring to her three children). I love children. I would

have a dozen if I had started earlier, and if I were in different circumstances with more family support near me.

*(I asked Samia if she had any female role models as a child.)* Nobody. I didn't have any female role model, let alone one who was a physician. Zero.

*(I asked Samia what influenced her, as a child, to develop this Dream of being a doctor.)* I always liked taking care of people. And I loved the thought of healing people, and I loved learning the science of it, the science of healing.

*(I asked Samia how her mother felt about the traditional Lebanese woman's role during her childhood.)* I think she strongly believed in the woman being home and taking care of the kids and the husband and the house. She didn't feel that women should be working. Although she was busy with her numerous activities, she did not get *paid* for them. That was the key. And she would say it, which was really interesting. She would say, "I'm not getting paid for this, I'm volunteering to do it." This distinction was important because it is not acceptable for her to be working and making money. That would imply that she *needed* the money, and God forbid people would think that.

*(I asked Samia how her father felt about the traditional Lebanese woman's role during her childhood.)* My father came from a very, very traditional family. I mean, his mother was about as traditional as they got. She was like the angel on earth. She had eight children and was always home taking care of them. She never traveled in her life, and was not educated. So that is what my father grew up seeing, and that is what he thought the woman's role was. However, he married my mother who had more of an education than the rest of the girls in his family (his mother and sisters) and was "a social butterfly". This was very different from what he was exposed to growing up, but he

never had a problem with it. Of the males in his family, he was the most progressive, in terms of his thoughts and beliefs about women's roles. In fact, when my grandfather died, almost all of his possessions were to go to his sons, as is the custom in Lebanon, and less than ten percent to his wife and daughters. But my father talked his brothers into re-dividing the assets so that everyone of the children gets an equal share.

So, growing up, I never felt that I was a "second class citizen" or handicapped in my progress because I am female. And I guess it's because in my household, my father treated all of us the same and pushed us all, my brother, my sister, and myself, to be well-educated. It's not like he had any favorites, although my brother and sister claim that I am his favorite (*smiling*). But that's another story.

Because we were privileged, I went to the best schools and received a very good education. I went to a religious all girl's school, the same one as my mother and my aunts, and the nuns really did not push us girls to go far because in their minds, we would finish high school and get married.

*(I asked Samia to discuss what role religion played in her family when she was a child.)* My father is not very religious. I mean, he firmly believes in Catholicism, but he does not go to church every week. My mother is actually more religious than he is. She is the one who would take us to church on Christmas Eve, through the whole 40 days of lent, and all of the other religious holidays. She didn't pray the rosary and read the Bible everyday, but she was always very fervent in her beliefs. Actually, in the last seven or eight years, she has become even more religious, and she has taken my father on several religious excursions to places like Portugal and Yugoslavia. I think the idea of her mortality is really starting to hit her.

Growing up, we received most of our religious education from school. We went to mass once a week and had religion lessons twice a week. So we got a lot of exposure. However, Lebanon in general is a religious country. Therefore, religion is part of what surrounds you. I did not, however, have much contact with Muslims. There was only one Muslim girl in my class- actually she was half Christian, half Muslim. That was it. So going to college at the American University of Beirut (AUB) was a rude awakening. I was in a dorm with girls who pray five times a day, and I was clueless.

*(I ask Samia what some of her interests and activities were as a young girl.)* I loved snow skiing. My cousins and I skied in the mountains in Faraya practically every week during the season. And we were pretty competitive! I was very athletic. I enjoyed running competitively, particularly long-distance events because I have a great deal of patience. I have always been skinny and tall, so I also did well in other Track events, like the high jump and long jump. I did fourteen years of Ballet, but that was my mother's thing. You know the girls had to do Ballet and the boys did Judo or Karate.

*(I asked Samia if she had a close relationship with any adults, other than her parents, as a child.)* I was very, very close to my maternal grandmother. She was this incredibly bright woman who spoke about five languages, but never went to school. She traveled the world and spoke splendidly, but never wrote it down. I wanted to get as many stories out of her as possible, and I remember sitting with her for hours and asking her to tell me about her trips and her adventures. She could have told stories forever. And she was a very funny woman. I mean, she was very proper in social situations. She was always dressed in style, never a hair out of place. But in private she had this streak

in her and she loved to tell jokes and they had to be dirty! She loved it, and I loved being around her and spending time with her.

### *Adolescence*

The war started when I was fourteen, in 1975, and those were very hard years. Our house was very close to the Green Line, where all the fighting started. So my family was displaced very early in the war. All of us, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, had to leave Beirut and hide in the Christian enclave, up in the mountains. We basically had no school for a year and a half. Our parents got together with some other parents in the area who had also left their homes, and hired some private tutors, creating a sort of make shift school.

But it was difficult because there was very little gas available, and there were no stores in the area where we were living. And with no gas, we could not cook in the stove and we couldn't drive, so we would have to walk to the nearest village, around 45 minute away, to buy food and supplies. And we would usually have to cook in the fireplace. They really were hard times.

The winter before he left, however, was a very traumatic time for us. As I mentioned earlier, throughout the war, my parents did not belong to any political party. Nevertheless, one of the parties involved in the war came to our house in the mountains, fully armed, and demanded that my father give them money. He refused because he did not believe in the war and he did not want to support that party. As a result, they raided and burned down one of the only houses in our family that was still standing in Beirut, which was the house I grew up in. Although we could not live in it because it was in a

danger zone, it was very hard on my family to see it destroyed. My father, mother and I actually witnessed the destruction as it was happening, and we literally had to run for our lives. Most of our belongings were still there; we lost so much. My parents had worked all their lives to build a house like that, and in one flash it was destroyed. The next day I went down to the house with my mother and father. I was the oldest, so they sort of took me wherever they went, and I was pretty helpful to them. My mother lost it- it was too much for her, and my father relied on me to keep a sane mind and try to help him out. I think I was in shock. *(Crying)* The sadness and severity of it didn't hit me until later, much later...I did not even think about it until many years afterwards. So many people lost so much in the war. Our losses were minor compared to what other people lost- their children, their parents...

My father left to Saudi Arabia in 1976 because he had a big job there, and we were by ourselves with my mother during this time. For that year, we intermittently went to school. We would go down to Beirut and stay at my grandmother's house so that we could go to school. But after two or three weeks, the bombs would start falling again, the schools would close, and we would go back up to the mountains. It was a very, very disruptive time.

The following summer we went to Saudi Arabia because my father's job was going well. However, we did not stay long because at the time, there were no schools for us to attend because they were all religious Muslim schools. So, we went to London and my siblings and I finally went back to school consistently for the first time in a year and a half. I was around fifteen.

In the summer of 1978, we went back to Lebanon because things *seemed* to have quieted down, and my father had decided to take a leap of faith. Well, we were wrong. It ended up being another year of on and off school, but I received my Baccalaureate nevertheless, and was on my way to University.

I worked so hard my first year at the American University of Beirut (AUB), because in reality I had hardly had any schooling for three years, and I had so much catching up to do. (*I asked Samia if she had thought of her future career during her disrupted teenage years.*) Oh yes, I was always thinking that when I finish high school, I was going to proceed with my original plan of going to college and then medical school. I never thought any differently, despite the war.

My father continued to be very supportive throughout my teenage years, and continued encouraging me to seek a higher education in whatever I wanted. These were tough times, because work was not steady and income was not always reliable. But I *never* felt like I could not pursue my dream. My father always said, "If you want to do medicine we will find a way. We'll sell a piece of land, we'll borrow, we'll do whatever it takes for you to go to medical school. It is not an issue." He was so supportive. My mother, however, wanted to marry me off, because as soon as we moved back to Beirut (from London), she had boys lined up. I remember distinctly, I was seventeen, in my last year of high school, and there was a guy that my mother adored. She and my father were friendly with his family. They had four boys and my mother decided which one fit me. Nobody asked me what I thought. My mother tried to set us up, but as usual I figured it out, and I wasn't going along with the plan. I had nothing against the guy, but I wasn't

ready to get married, I was going to get my education and become a doctor. No guy was going to stand in my way.

*(I asked Samia if she had any boyfriends during this time.)* No. I mean, I had lots of friends, and we would go out in big groups. My brother and I were very close, he is only eighteen months younger, and we hung out with the same people. We all grew up together, and at times people would become girlfriend and boyfriend, but it never lasted very long. It was never serious, and for me, I was not interested.

I think that my mother finally gave up on trying to get me married once I started AUB. I mean, she never stopped saying, “You work so hard, you study so hard, and you don’t go out...all of your friends are getting married and having kids and settling down. If you keep going like this, no one is going to want to marry you....”. And every time a girl in our circle would get married, or have a baby, she would start on me again. She would tell me how happy the girl’s parents were, as if to let me know how disappointed and sad she was. She tried to play the guilt trip game with me. She wanted to be the “mother of the bride” and show up in a beautiful dress at a big wedding, but her daughter wasn’t having it and she was disappointed. *(I asked Samia how her mother’s feelings affected her.)* I didn’t really care. It’s not what I wanted and she knew it. And my father was really wonderful. He was so supportive. He never, ever said anything. He let me know that my choice was O.K.

### *Early Adult Transition (Age 17-22)*

So I started at AUB when I was seventeen or eighteen. I chose this university because it ran under the American system of education (as opposed to the French

system), and I thought that I would get a better education and have a better chance of making it to the United States for my residency. I had always planned on eventually coming to the U.S. to do my residency, but I never thought I would be coming here for medical school. My plan was always to stay with my family and finish all my schooling in Lebanon, do my residency in the U.S., and return to Lebanon to practice. I never, never thought that I would stay in America.

My decision to go to AUB, as opposed to another university in Lebanon, was hard for my parents to accept initially, mainly because of where it was located. It was in West Beirut, which is the Muslim side of the city, and during the war it was very dangerous to cross from East to West Beirut. They knew that I would either have to cross the danger line every day to get to school, or I would have to live in the dorms. My living in the dorms was hard for them to think about because it was not very acceptable for a daughter to leave her parents' home until she gets married. However, after many discussions, my parents allowed me to live in the dorms. I felt I was in heaven on earth, because I had never imagined they would let me live outside our home!

My father is the one that took me to school and picked me up on the weekends. My mother never went to my dorm. I think that she was in denial. It's not that she wasn't supportive, but she never thought any of this would happen, even as it was happening. And I also think that she was afraid to cross to the Western side. She was afraid that something was going to happen to her, and that was fine with me. I had no problem with that. My father had friends on both sides of Beirut and since he did not belong to any political party, his name was not soiled. He was comfortable crossing sides. He got to know all the girls in my dorm, because he was the regular hangout. He

would bring me money, food, and clean laundry. It was hard because I had never been away from home. And then there were weeks, when the fighting was bad, that he couldn't come. At times I ran out of money, and he finally decided to open a bank account for me. I had never had an account in my name, and I was clueless.

Life in the dorm was a rude awakening for me. I came from a privileged family, and I had never spent much time with people from such different backgrounds, both religiously and financially. There were Muslim girls who prayed five times a day, and I'd never seen that. I'd never lived among people who were so fanatic. Although I am Christian, my family is not extremely religious. I had a hard time because I was not fanatic. I did not agree with anything in the war. I was very, very much against everything that was going on (*referring to the war that was taking place, largely between Muslims and Christians*). And that was hard. I mean, I felt weird because I didn't want to tread on anybody's feet. I didn't want to say something bad about the Christians, because I didn't want the Christians at school to be mad at me, and I didn't want to say anything bad about the Muslims, because I really didn't feel bad about anything. I just wanted to work! I felt like I had to walk a fine line. You always had to be very careful about what you said or did, and then finally, after six or seven months of being there, I felt I was accepted. In addition to the issue of religion, I had a sense that some people felt like, "Oh, she comes from a rich family, why does she have to live in the dorms?" I also think that because a lot of the kids had to get an education because they were forced to work to make a living, and I did not necessarily have to, they felt that I was taking up a spot in school that could have belonged to somebody else, who perhaps "needed" it more. I did not feel this way. I was not taking someone else's spot- it was mine. I was getting

an education because I really wanted it. I took it very seriously. After the first year, I felt that I was much more accepted. I felt that people finally thought, "O.K., she is for real. She is not here to show off to the other kids that she is doing medicine...." And I felt better, like "O.K., I can do this!" I made a lot of friends with people in my classes, and I was Pre-Med throughout college.

I then applied and was accepted to Medical School at AUB. It was not a given that I would be accepted because I went there for my undergraduate education, so I was very happy to get in. *(I asked Samia what her experience was like being a woman studying medicine at AUB.)* There were a lot of women at AUB during my undergraduate years. The ratio was probably 30:70 (women:men), but I did not feel like a rarity. And then once I entered medical school, I think it was probably around 20:80. But it was interesting because as the years went by, the number of girls dwindled because many dropped out after getting a boyfriend or getting married. For some, the family pressures were too much, and some realized medicine really was not their thing. Maybe they went into it thinking it was one thing, and realized it was a *real* job and it took a lot of work. So I don't know how many ended up graduating. Nevertheless, the professors treated us very well. They were very professional. I really had no problems. AUB is an amazing place, and it has great teachers.

*(I asked Samia if she talked to her friends during this time, about her future career.)* Yeah. We all talked, but at that point, most people had not decided what they wanted to do in terms of their specialties. A lot of us already knew whether we were going to stay in Lebanon to do our residency programs or whether we were going to go to the U.S. A lot of people, particularly the boys, had their eyes on leaving Lebanon. Very few

girls had thoughts of leaving because they wanted to stay with their families or their families were not going to allow them to go. It was not even a consideration.

I did my first two years of medical school at AUB, and then the political situation in Lebanon became very bad and it was becoming very dangerous. I was still living in the dorms, but I was going back and forth from my home a few times a week and on the weekends. However, the true danger finally hit me one day, during my second year, when my father was driving me from the dorm to our house. *(Samia provides a lengthy description of the terror she and her father experienced when they were caught in a crossfire.)* My father is extremely strong and brave, and I had never seen him so afraid. I said to myself, "I don't want to lose anyone in my family over me being in school. I need to find another solution." So I thought a lot about it, and I decided to apply to medical schools in the United States, without telling my family. I did some research, and found out that no one from AUB had ever been accepted to an American medical school as a transfer. There was no precedent, so I didn't think I would be able to do it. So I applied to some Masters programs (Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry), with the intention of transitioning into the medical school after proving my abilities. I was accepted to the two places I applied, and decided on the University of Clayview [name changed]. I was twenty-two years old at the time.

### *Entering the Adult World (Age 22 to 28)*

When I told my father that I felt that it was too dangerous for me to continue medical school in Lebanon, and that I had applied and was accepted to school in the United States, he was very sad that I was going so far away, but he was actually very

supportive. He was great. And I think my mother realized that it was too dangerous for me to stay in Lebanon, and that if I really wanted a better education, this was the way to go. I actually felt like she fussed very little. I think she thought, "She's already in medical school, what am I going to do about it now? She's already half way gone." And the fact that my brother had left Lebanon the year before to attend engineering school in America, helped my situation. My parents knew that I wasn't going to be completely by myself, and that my brother and I could visit one another regularly.

When I arrived to the U.S., I suffered an incredible culture shock. While my English was pretty good, it was still a struggle to understand the different accents. I couldn't recognize some of the foods. I had never seen green jello before! I arrived at the end of August, 1983, and I cried every night for at least two or three hours. And every night, I said to myself, "Tomorrow I am taking the first plane back home." This went on every night until Christmas, when I finally unpacked my suitcase and decided I was going to stay.

A lot of my difficulties had to do with the language barrier as well as my unfamiliarity with the education system, in general. For example, I was not accustomed to the exam format. I had to learn to study differently, to think differently, even to see things differently. At the beginning it was really hard because everything was new, and I had to re-learn things in a different way. I also had to meet people and assimilate into the culture. While at the beginning I kept telling myself that I was not going to stay, I knew in the back of my mind that I was tough, and I was not going to admit defeat. That was a big thing. I was not going back to Lebanon with my tail between my legs, so that my

mother could say, "I told you so." There was no way in hell that I was going to do that. So I decided to stick it out and see how things work.

After four or five months in the Masters program (Molecular Genetics), I was doing very well academically. So I went to the Dean of the medical school and said to him, "You don't know me. I am in the Graduate school, and I have completed two years of medical school in Lebanon. I want to enroll in medical school here. What do I have to do?" He told me that it would be difficult to transfer credits, and explained that I would most likely have to start over. However, I was not about to start from scratch, and asked him to tell me what the transfer requirements were. I completed everything successfully and was accepted into the third year medical school class the following year, after completing my Masters thesis. I was finally back on track...on my way again to becoming a pediatrician!

It was hard. All of the medical students knew one another already, since they had been in school together for two years, and I was a foreigner. There were no other foreigners in medical school. The students were all-American and had already formed their cliques. I decided that I was not going to let this stand in my way.

When it came time to choosing my rotations, I picked pediatrics first because I knew that was going to be my specialty. However, after completing the first rotation, I was so disappointed. I had worked so hard all of my life towards being a pediatrician- it was my dream- and I realized that I did not like it. I couldn't do it. I kept thinking, "I can't stand this. I can't stand seeing sick children all of the time." But I told myself to relax, that more is coming, and I'll figure it out.

My OB/GYN rotation was next, but I had not chosen to do it at the main hospital

because it was the last thing on my mind. I had never even considered it for a specialty because everybody in my family, including my parents, and all the Lebanese people I knew had said that OB/GYN was not for a woman. They said “the hours are horrible and you won’t have a life.” According to them, if you want to be a woman in medicine, you become an ophthalmologist, a dermatologist, or a pathologist. You’ll have nice hours, you’ll get out of work early, and you can have a family. Well, I began my OB/GYN rotation, and I loved it! I decided that this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, and I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.

However, I did not want to tell my family that I was planning to specialize in OB/GYN. After everything that had happened (the war, my going into medicine, and my leaving Lebanon) I didn’t want to disappoint them. I tried to enjoy the other rotations, such as ophthalmology and dermatology, but I didn’t. I have always known what I wanted, so I decided to stop torturing myself, and applied to residency programs in OB/GYN. That is how I ended up here, in this city, in 1987.

*(I asked Samia how her parents reacted to her decision to pursue OB/GYN.)* My parents were O.K. with it. By then, the war in Lebanon was raging. The Christians were fighting the Christians as well as the Muslims. The country was a mess. After leaving Lebanon in 1983, I did not return until 1989 because the situation there was so horrible. It was a long span. My parents came here for my brother’s graduation in 1986, but I had not seen them for the three years before that. And it had been difficult for me to call them during that time, because there were no direct lines, and I often could not get through to them. I remember crying for hours to the operator and begging her to keep trying to get through. There were weeks that I did not know if my parents were alive or

dead. I did not know where they were. It's like you know there is a war taking place, you know people are dying, and you can't reach your family. It was horrible. There were times that I couldn't function, but somehow I did very well academically. So that was the background of what was going on at home, and at that point, while my parents were not thrilled with my decision to go into OB/GYN, there were just happy that I was O.K.

Money also became an issue throughout my medical training. The value of the Lebanese pound had dramatically decreased. I knew that my father still had money, but I did not want him spending it all just because I wanted to pursue medicine in the United States. I got a loan and began tutoring. He had a difficult time accepting that I did not want him to send me money anymore, but I assured him that I had everything under control.

*(I asked Samia if she had any significant relationships during this time.)* I had a relationship with a Lebanese guy, who was an ophthalmologist. We had known each other from Lebanon, and he came to the U.S. a year after I arrived. We dated for a while, but he did not want children, so I ended it. Kids are my life. I wanted to have children and a family, so things with us were not going to work out.

I was also close to an American guy during graduate school, but he wasn't a boyfriend. He was the closest I have ever been to an American man. We continue to keep in touch, but we were never more than friends.

### *Age Thirty Transition (Age 28 to 33)*

During my third year of residency, the nurses were intent on finding me someone to date. I was working so hard and it was hard to meet people. I said, "Well, I want a Lebanese guy. I am not marrying an American." They laughed because they knew that would be difficult to find. However, one of the nurses did in fact know a Lebanese man, and arranged for us to go on a blind date. It was the first blind date that I had ever been on.

*(I asked Samia what her thoughts of marriage were during this time.)* I had wanted to get married and have a child before age 30, but it wasn't working out as planned. I had planned on getting married at 28 and having my first child before 30, because God forbid I turned 30 first; my kids would be abnormal looking! That's what my mother had drilled in my head. My original plan was to have four children. The guy was not necessarily as important. He was just to be an instrument to produce the kids. I would have my career and just do my thing. But things were not working out as planned, because I was too busy during my residency.

When I went on this blind date, I was two years behind schedule (age 30). It just so happened that my mother was visiting the United States during this time in order to see my brother's new baby, and she was staying with me. So when Joseph came to pick me up for our date, my mother met him, and initially disapproved of him because his hair was too long. Anyway, we had a great time and we were engaged three months later. We celebrated our official engagement in Lebanon a year later, and one month after that we were married here in the U.S. Only my mother, brother, and Joseph's mother were present for the ceremony. That was another disappointment for my mother. She had this

big dream of her oldest daughter getting married in Lebanon with the big, big wedding and the big white dress. And I was not into that. It was a bad time, with the war ongoing and my brother's recent separation from his wife. So it was the wrong time. I told my mother that neither Joseph nor I wanted a big celebration. We just wanted to get married and start having children! So we compromised by telling her that when we had children, we would take them to Lebanon for their baptisms, and have a huge party then. That made her feel better. *(I asked Samia what it was like not having her father at her wedding ceremony.)* It was O.K. because I had just seen him the month before, and we had had an engagement party with all of our friends and family. It almost felt like a little wedding celebration.

*Settling Down and Becoming One's Own Woman (Age 33 to 40)*

*(I asked Samia how Joseph handles her career.)* It is really very interesting because guys- not just Lebanese men- have a hard time with professional women who are hardworking, have careers, and make money. And I thought that Joseph, especially because he is Lebanese, was going to run away. But he is great. He is so fantastic. If he needs to pitch in, he'll do it. I'm not going to say that he does not have his Lebanese "thing" at times, when he will say, "It is not my job to take care of the kids and arrange their childcare and do the grocery shopping." But usually, like ninety-nine percent of the time, he is so wonderfully supportive. He is unique, not just for a Lebanese man. Even here, in the U.S., a lot of guys don't want to deal with this. I have partners who have to cut down their hours because their husbands won't help and pitch in, and they can't

manage it all by themselves. If my husband was not helping on the other end, I could never do my work full time. Never. It's like a team effort.

It's pretty interesting, Joseph and my father have the same name and they are both civil engineers. My father was always worried about who I was going to marry; who was going to be the man to take his little girl away. But he realized very quickly that no matter whom I married, it was not going to change our relationship. He really likes my husband and is happy because I am happy. He sees that I have a man that I love, children that I adore, a house, and a wonderful career. For him, that is what is important.

*(I ask Samia what advice she would give young Lebanese girls today.)* Follow your dream. Think about what you like, what makes you happy, and set a goal for yourself. Follow that goal and work hard because it doesn't come without working hard.

*(I ask Samia what is next for her, what she sees in her future.)* I would love to stay in good health for a few more years so that I can keep up with the hours I currently work, in order to see my kids through school and get them into college. My dream now is for my children to be successful, not in the financial sense. Success for me is for them to be healthy, have a good education, and be happy with what they are doing.

In terms of my career, I want to continue working. I am currently the Chief of the unit I work in, and my boss is pushing me to expand my administrative role, but I don't think that I want that. I want to continue my direct contact with patients. I did not go to medical school to become an administrator. I love my patients. That's what I do. I am a people kind of person. I want to touch people. I want to heal people.

*(I ask Samia if she feels that she has achieved her Dream.)* Yes. But the only thing that is missing is my family. They are too far away. But that's the way life goes.

### **Layla Zaytoun**

*Layla is a 36-year old Lebanese woman who is the Director of Marketing at a large U.S. company. Layla has a Masters degree in Business Administration and a Masters degree in Electrical Engineering. She is single, has no children, and lives in a major U.S. city.*

My life right now revolves around friendships and my work. My family is always a very important part of my life, but they are so far away right now (in Lebanon). So it is a big trade off, a challenge. I have made a decision that if I want to have a career, I must be in a different country than where my family is, and that is always a drawback. But that's just how it is.

I came to the United States thinking that I would go back to Lebanon after finishing my studies. I always thought that I was here for the short term, but I have stayed for a number of reasons. The first is the poor economic and political situation in Lebanon. And secondly, once you have established your life somewhere, it is not easy to just take off and say "I'm going to put everything behind me and start over." I have become known here, and made relationships here. So, while it is unlikely that I would return to Lebanon to work, I go back regularly to see my family.

I have an energetic personality and I am very driven, so I take on a lot of different things at once. The concept of coming home and lying down doesn't exist for me, even on the weekends. I work late most evenings, but I try to make a point of exercising regularly and engaging in social activities frequently.

At work I am the type of person who gets involved with many projects, sometimes to a fault. I tend to get involved in too many things at once, and at times I get overwhelmed. But I am not married, so it's not like I have other important obligations. So, in that sense I have more freedom in making choices, unlike my sister who has a Ph.D. in Engineering, and is raising two children. She has this constant struggle between work and her family. I don't have that conflict. I don't have many obligations, which means I'm extremely independent.

*(I ask Layla to talk about the balance between her personal and professional life.)*

I try to balance my life, and I think I am doing O.K. Like I said before, I try to make a point of planning social activities. But there are times when things are not balanced. When I was in business school, for instance, I was in a very intense program, but I tried to keep my personal life in check. However, I did not always succeed. There were friends that I lost touch with, and it could happen with this job as well. But I try to keep everything in perspective as much as possible.

*(I ask Layla if there is anything she would change about her life now.)* Yes, I would actually like to get involved in more things, explore things other than work. The reason I have not done that yet is because I am in a new job. I am trying to get myself established, and I am considering living somewhere else. So I have a lot of things that I am trying to sort out. I would eventually like to get involved in volunteer work, but I want to make sure that I can dedicate time to it, not just take something on without doing it justice.

## *Childhood*

I was serious as a child. Actually, even now people might consider me fairly serious, but I was more so when I was younger. I took things seriously. I used to read a lot, so I was good in school. And since I was more the studious type, I had one or two friends, but I really kept things quiet. Later, as a teenager, I changed a bit and went out more and had more friends. But as a child I used to love to just be in my room by myself and just read and do stuff like that, which is probably unusual.

*(I ask Layla to talk about her relationship with her mother as a child.)* Well, it was a good relationship. My mother is a perfectionist and an idealist. So to her, everything had to be perfect. For instance, if you got the best grade in school, that was just normal. It was not like, "Wow, that's something special." It was just the way things were. And if you didn't get the best grade, she was-- she never yelled at me or anything-- but you could see that she was disappointed. So, she is very idealistic and very caring, but to the extreme. Our relationship is great, but if I had to say something that is distinctive about my mother, it is her expectation that everybody had to be perfect; us and everybody else. And because she was so idealistic and still is, we were not really exposed to the non-ideal aspect of work, like the fact that people are not always discerning and good. We didn't have that perspective because she thought that everybody had to be doing things right.

My mother is so selfless. I mean, all mothers are to an extent, but I think that she goes beyond the norm. For instance, when I came to this country, I was not even twenty years old. My father had told me to finish college in Lebanon, and then pursue my graduate training in the United States, and that was always the expectation. However,

things became really bad in Lebanon, in terms of the war, so my mother suggested that I leave to the U.S. sooner (after two years of college), and that was a major sacrifice for her. It was unlike her to be so bold. It was an extremely painful decision, but the fact that she suggested and encouraged it was surprising. I don't think that if it were up to my father alone that I would have made the move as soon as I did. It was a hard move on all of us, but I would say that my mother influenced the decision a great deal, which is unusual for mothers.

*(I ask Layla to talk about her relationship with her father as a child.)* My father is much more pragmatic, the opposite from my mother in terms of being idealistic. He got involved very little when I was young, like in first and second grades. He was more the one who would brag to his friends about his children if we accomplished something. Whereas my mother was like, "Yeah, *of course* they did such and such." To my father, if we did a good thing, he reacted as though it was *not* just the norm.

My father was involved as much as he needed to be, but not overly so. I mean he is a very close father, but I think he influenced my education more than anything. I mean, the fact that he was not formally trained as an engineer and was working in the engineering field had an impact on me as well as my siblings. There are three woman engineers in my family, and that is quite a lot! *(Layla's two younger sisters are also engineers. Her younger brother specialized in economics.)* So my career choices had a lot to do with my father, although he and my mother, as well as everybody else, thought that I should be going into medicine. In Lebanon there is a pecking order. If you are bright, you go into medicine, and if you are slightly less bright, you go into engineering. It is a stupid mentality. *(I ask Layla if this applies to both men and women.)* In general,

this applies to both. However, in reality, engineering is viewed as not being a good choice for women. It is a male field. When I was at AUB (American University of Beirut), guys used to come up to me and say, “Why are you doing this? You can’t do engineering. Do something else.” It was amazing. My parents and my professors encouraged me to go into medicine instead. My father’s thinking was that in medicine I could have my own clinic and be self-employed, and he had a point. As an engineer I would most likely be employed by someone else. My father was always self-employed, except when he was young, and he did not like to work for other people. So he had a point. But I did not want to go into medicine. I loved mathematics, and engineering was what I enjoyed.

*(I ask Layla to talk more about her father’s career.)* He is an engineer, in the area of air conditioning, but in reality, he was more of a businessman. He did different things as a businessman, but for most of the years when we were growing up, he had a refrigeration and air conditioning business. *(I ask Layla about her father’s education.)* My father is not college educated, and neither is my mother. My paternal grandfather was a lawyer, and the reason that my father did not go to college is because he became involved in the war during the time of the Ottoman occupation. Anyway, to make a long story short, my father is more of a “self-made” man.

He and I were close, but if I had to say which parent I was closer to, it would be my mom. I mean my father and I were close. He was always involved. However, growing up, as girls, we were closer to my mom. Maybe he was more involved with my brother than us. *(I ask Layla what the most positive aspect of her relationship with her father as a child was.)* He was very encouraging, and he gave us a great example of very

high ethics, how to treat and respect people. I think because my father is a businessman, he knows a lot of people, and he recognizes both the good and bad in people. This is in contrast to my mother who was more idealistic. I think that he gave us a sense for what is right, what is important and what is not. I mean, he has such strong values and that has been a great influence on me. I also think the fact that although he made some suggestions about my career, he did not force me to do anything and he was very encouraging in whatever I chose. And both of my parents gave us a lot of freedom. For example, they sent me to this country by myself. How many Lebanese parents send a woman by herself? Very, very few. And when we were young, fourteen or fifteen, they sent us away to a summer school/camp in England. My sister and I went by ourselves. Somehow they knew that we would take good care of ourselves and be responsible. The fact that they did that is very unusual. They encouraged us to be independent, and they trusted us to make the right decisions. These were key aspects of how our parents raised us, and they have greatly impacted the person I am today.

*(I ask Layla whether her parents treated her brother differently than her sisters and her.)* Yes and no. I mean, my brother is the only boy. But actually, ultimately, they did not treat him differently. Their expectations of the girls versus my brother were no different. Actually, the three of us (girls) are more educated than he is, and that was not because of my parents. That was the result of our personal choices. Of course my parents encouraged my brother to complete more of his education, but he made other choices which was fine. He was very successful and very smart, but he chose a different path than my sisters and me. So I would not say that my parents treated us differently.

There were the minor things that you pick up on as children, but I honestly can't even think of an example. They were not things that mattered.

*(I ask Layla what she learned about work from her parents.)* I learned the notion that you have to work hard to get what you want. There are no shortcuts. During the war, my father had a lot of opportunities for shortcuts, and he could have made tons of money if he took those shortcuts. And in fact, he *lost* a great deal of money because he refused to engage in the "easy way out". But he is an honorable man, and everyone respects him. And my mother is supportive of this, one hundred percent. So, if I had to tell you one descriptive factor about my father it would be the respect that he receives from others.

I learned from my parents to have a strong work ethic, to treat people well, and to appreciate people and family. Although they are in Lebanon and I am here in the U.S., we are still very close. It is very painful, but we are as close as possible. So, I have also learned from them the importance of family, and the importance of making an effort to be part of a family, which takes work at times.

*(I ask Layla how she viewed her father's profession as a child.)* I always saw my father as being very successful. I mean, I kind of took it for granted, and I really didn't know what he did. But I remember viewing him as this big businessman who would fly to New York and all of these other far away places, and he would return with toys and gifts. I knew he was successful...I was proud of what he did, not knowing much about it, but I was proud of him. *(I ask Layla how her father felt about his choice of profession.)* I think that he felt good about his profession, but I think it was more about how he was providing for his family than about the nature of the work itself. He did many different

things, so I don't think it was about his passion for the actual work as much as it was about his passion for his family.

*(I ask Layla how she viewed her mother's role as a child.)* I always thought that my mother was perfect, because she is a perfectionist. She did so much for us, and everything was done perfectly, whether it was cooking or taking care of us. I would come home from school and she would have squeezed us some red orange juice by hand. Everything that she did was done right. She is very dedicated, but also very sensitive. My father likes to joke a lot and is very sociable. He is always the life of the party. Whereas my mother is the opposite, in the sense that she is much more quiet and reserved. I think that I have taken a little bit of both. *(I ask Layla how she thought that her mother viewed her role.)* I think that in the back of her mind she always wanted to work, but my father always said, "No, you don't need to." However, her desire was not about economics, but more about having something of her own. I think that in her mind she had the idea that she wanted to work, but I am not sure that she would have liked it if she had done it, because, remember, to her everything is idealistic. And if she actually worked and viewed reality, she would have hated it because it is not perfect. *(I ask Layla how her mother viewed the "traditional" Lebanese woman's role.)* I don't think that she viewed the traditional role very positively. Her nagging desire to work signified her desire for some degree of independence, although having four children and a husband makes independence virtually impossible. But the way that she encouraged me to do what I did tells me that she was not at all in sync with the traditional role of the Lebanese woman. She was completely not into that, although she did not state it directly. *(I ask Layla to describe her mother's encouragement of her.)* I don't think that we ever talked

about it explicitly. But it was more of the sense that I got from her actions. For instance, her encouragement of me coming to the United States by myself before finishing college, was certainly non-traditional, and she comes from a very traditional family, so it was not part of her upbringing at all. Her father was as traditional and extreme as you can imagine.

Also, a very important aspect of the “traditional” Lebanese culture is the socializing among women, and my mother was not at all into that. She had friends, but was more focused on her children and hated the women’s circles. So, while she was not a “working woman” she was also not a “traditional Lebanese woman”.

*(I ask Layla how her father viewed the traditional Lebanese woman's role, while she was growing up.)* I think the fact that my mother was a stay-at-home mom, and that she was very dedicated to my father was extremely important to him. He appreciated this and would have hated it if she were any other way. He would not have liked her to work. His expectation was that she would be the one to tie the family together, which is what she was and still is.

But he very much encouraged us, his children, to work. He always told me that we were all equal in his mind, his daughters and his son. We were absolutely equal. So, earlier you asked me whether he treated my brother differently, and like I said, only little things that you joke about, but there was nothing to it.

*(I ask Layla how she understands the reason that all three girls in her family pursued professional degrees.)* Our father encouraged our education. It was very important to him. However, despite his encouragement for us to pursue our education, he expects our first role to be towards our family, once we have one. In other words, having

children and taking care of them, as opposed to having children, going to work, and having someone else care for them.

*(I ask Layla what she felt her parents' aspirations for her future were while she was growing up.)* They wanted me to become a doctor and then to get married. I thought that I would get married after finishing graduate school. I thought that I would finish school, begin working, and get married. When I was very young, I knew that I wanted to do something special and different in the future, and education was very important. I don't think that I had a particular career in mind. At that point, I did not tie it all together; I did not envision how my life would fit together. But I did know that I loved freedom and independence. As I got older, I began to think of a career. And the fact that I came to the United States by myself at such an early age influenced me a great deal. It allowed me to become very independent. So, I don't think that it was just having a career in and of itself that drove me, but it was also the freedom that I always loved and the independence that I began to enjoy as a result of being away. I don't think that my path was totally a conscious choice, necessarily, and I don't know if it was the right choice. Maybe if I had met somebody that I really liked, I would have gotten married. Maybe I will. I don't know. However, what I did envision for my future when I was young was that I would be successful and independent, but I don't remember qualifying it. I did not have a particular career in mind.

*(I ask Layla to describe her interests and activities as a young girl.)* I loved to read, and I played sports for fun sometimes. But I never enjoyed competitive sports. I participated in them when I had to at school, but I did not seek them out. Competition

was not something that I enjoyed. *(I asked her if she played mostly with girls or boys.)* I played with both, but I enjoyed playing sports with guys.

*(I ask Layla if she had a role model as a child.)* No, I don't remember anyone in particular.

*(I ask Layla what role religion played in her family during her childhood.)*

Religion was important, but not overwhelming. My father believes in living as a Christian, but he does not practice. My mother does practice, however, and we followed her growing up. My father was completely O.K. with that. So, religion was important in my household, but it was not something that we talked about everyday. It was implicitly important. And the values that my parents instilled in me are Christian values.

### *Adolescence*

I was fairly shy and not very outgoing at the beginning of my teenage years. I continued to be the one who would sit and read. I was more in a world of my own. I read a huge amount. I cared about school and had some friends, but it was not like I was the most popular kid in school. I was not a difficult teenager, but I think that my parents had to develop a bit more patience when dealing with me. I wasn't a problem, but I used to always question things. Despite this, I basically did what was expected of me. None of my siblings were difficult teenagers. We were courteous kids. Anyway, I was not a very outgoing teenager; I tended to keep more to myself. I still do.

During high school, I had a great interest in math, and my father and I would discuss this. He began to expose me to people that he knew in fields consistent with my interests. He wasn't telling me to do anything in particular, but he just surrounded me

with educated people. (*I ask Layla what her father's expectation of her future was at this point.*) I don't think that my father viewed me as a major career woman, necessarily. He was just encouraging me to pursue my education and he would support whatever I decided to do after that. He wanted me to go to college and then graduate school. Those two things were always expected. The fact that, as the oldest, I chose *not* to get a Ph.D., which I was supposed to do after being accepted into Clayborn University [name changed], was very strange to my parents, especially my mother. My father was O.K. with my decision, but my mother was very surprised. In retrospect, it was a good decision for me. However, after my younger sister got her Ph.D., my parents began saying, "Your sister got her Doctorate, why didn't you?", and that was difficult to tolerate. Anyway, in my family it was a foregone conclusion that you would *at least* get a Masters degree, and a Ph.D. was preferable.

However, at the same time, my parents continued to encourage me to come back home in order to begin working and start a family. I don't think any of us really thought about how it was all supposed to fit together. (*I ask Layla how she felt about these expectations.*) It was the norm in my mind. It wasn't something I questioned, and it was O.K. with me.

During my teenage years the issue of dating began to arise. My father did not get involved in that at all, but my mother did. When I was living at home, it was not that big of an issue, because they were aware of everything that was going on and I didn't have a boyfriend. But once I left to college and I had a boyfriend, it was weird for her. She began to ask a lot of questions, but I guess that is normal.

### *Early Adult Transition (Age 17-22)*

My first two years in college were at the American University of Beirut (AUB). I applied to colleges in the United States, France, Switzerland, and Lebanon, but I really wanted to stay in Lebanon. My father told me to complete college in Lebanon and then perhaps pursue my Masters degree in the United States. He thought that it would be better for me to stay home, and he was right. I lived in the dorms because the town we lived in was too far away to commute everyday, especially because the war was ongoing, and driving into Beirut was difficult and dangerous. It was hard for my parents having me live outside of our house, but they knew there was no other choice if I was to get the best education possible. I made a lot of friends and really enjoyed myself. It was great to be near my family and have my freedom at the same time.

However, after my second year it became too dangerous for me to stay at AUB because the war was escalating. That is when my mother suggested I leave to the U.S. earlier than planned. It was an extremely difficult decision. I had to leave my family, my boyfriend, and my friends. I would say that it was the hardest decision that I have ever had to make in my life. When I think about it now, I realize how “gutsy” I was. It is not something that I decided overnight, and I think the fact that my mother encouraged me so much helped a great deal. My father voiced his opinion, which was that I should not leave Lebanon until I finished college, but he was very supportive of my ultimate decision. Basically it came down to whether or not I was serious about my education, but it was not a fun choice at all.

When I first arrived to the U.S. I cried everyday. I knew one other person who also came here from Lebanon at the same time, so that helped a bit. He and I ended up

dating for several years and it was rather serious, and I thought that we might get married. But it ended a few years ago.

*(I ask Layla what impact, if any, the war had on her ultimate career choice.)* I don't think that the war impacted my career choice, in terms of what I wanted to do. However, I don't know if I would have stayed in the U.S. after graduate school if the war had not taken place. I think that what you do in life is partially what you are born with and partially dependent on your surroundings. So, the war definitely affected what I have become, and the fact that I had to leave home so early because of it, made me become a tougher person than I would have been. You know, more self-sustaining and self-reliant. But I don't think that I would have picked a different career path. I would not have become a doctor or a lawyer or anything like that.

#### *Entering the Adult World (Age 22-28)*

So after college, I went on to pursue my Masters in Engineering with the intention of proceeding further and obtaining my Ph.D. However, as I explained earlier, I changed my mind. I realized this was not the direction that I wanted to go in. I had always wanted to be a businesswoman, and I realized a Ph.D. in Engineering was not where I wanted to put my energy. So I worked in the business world for a couple of years. When I stopped enjoying this work, I decided that it was time to go back to school and get my MBA.

My two graduate school experiences, first for engineering and then for business, were very different. Engineering was an incredibly stressful experience. The program that I was in condensed the Masters degree into one year, and it was extremely intense

and competitive. Because of this, I did not make friendships. The weather was also very cold, dark, and depressing. I don't think of that as a happy time at all. It was actually a very miserable time.

However, my MBA experience was very different. First of all, I had more maturity in terms of knowing what I wanted to gain from my graduate education. I was more focused and knowledgeable since I had worked in the business world for several years. I also spent a great deal of time building relationships with people. And the city I was in was a great deal of fun.

*(Layla continues)* My life during my twenties was very unsettling. After college, I worked for a few different companies, each one for a short time. I did not have my Green Card, so I missed out on a number of great job opportunities, and had to settle for these small companies that were not very good. I was miserable. I had a boyfriend who was always somewhere else because we lived in different cities. It was just stressful all around. I did not know where I wanted to live, and I wasn't sure that I would be able to stay in this country if I did not find the right job. The whole thing was a mess. Not really a mess, but incredibly stressful and unsettling. This continued until I began working at Avex (name changed), and then things just started working out great because it was the right company for me. The people were great- they were the right people for me to work with. They really helped me and were good mentors. It was a great experience.

### *Age Thirty Transition (Age 28-33)*

So that experience changed a lot of things for me. But my personal life was still kind of unsettled. I think it wasn't until I was between twenty-nine and thirty, that I

suddenly became more comfortable with myself. *(I ask Layla what she thinks changed.)* I think it is part of growing up. I became more established, personally. For so many years I was in a long distance relationship, which was very stressful. He was always in a different state or on a different continent! We were trying to figure out whether to get married or not, so the stress was not always focused on issues directly related to my career. So when I resolved all of that, and my job became steadier, I began to know what I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. Up until then, I was always struggling with the question of where I was going to live, if I was going to move...It's like I never made a decision to actually stay, so I constantly felt unsettled. And at that point, I became much more comfortable with myself and my life.

#### *Settling Down and Becoming One's Own Woman (Ages 33 to 40)*

So at age thirty-four, I went back to graduate school to pursue my MBA. It was a major decision to stop working and go back to school, and now that I am finished, I looking forward to seeing the payoff in the next few years. It is too early to tell at this point, but because of the way I am, I think about it everyday. *(I ask Layla what she would like to change in her life.)* I would say there are some things that I would like to attain that I haven't attained yet. I want more success, more responsibility. A lot of what we do is not necessarily by design. I mean, some of it is, and some of it is not. So I look back sometimes and say, "Did I make the right decision?" Even recently, coming out of my MBA program, I thought about whether I had made the right decision to go back to school. And I am not sure. I think that I'll know with time.

*(I ask Layla what advice she would give to young Lebanese women today.)* Do what you want to do, not what people tell you to do. I think that the problem we have in Lebanon is that women are so restricted in the career choices they make...So, listen to yourself, do what you like, work hard, and believe in your abilities. You won't believe how many people along the way discouraged me from doing what I wanted to do.

## **Descriptions of Other Subjects**

### ***Salwa- Age 40***

**I feel very fulfilled, lucky, and blessed. I appreciate what is around me and I have tremendous support from my husband, kids, and the rest of my family. My children (ages five and one) are my priority, but I enjoy my work and have been in my current job for thirteen years.**

**I am an electrical engineer, and I am currently working as a program manager in a governmental research department. It is very gratifying to work in a field that affects and benefits the safety of people. And because I am the manager, I have control over the budget, so I can often direct the focus of our work.**

**Balancing work and a family is tough- it is not easy. If you want to really do both, it is a challenge. I don't believe in just dropping my kids off somewhere, and picking them up at the end of the day. I work full time, but I am fortunate to have a job that provides some flexibility, in terms of being able to work from home from time to time. I also have a live-in housekeeper four times a week, and my mother is available to help whenever I need her. My husband travels a lot for work, but when he is around, he helps me with pick-ups and drop offs.**

**I often feel that I am shortchanging my two roles, as a mother and a businesswoman. But that feeling comes and goes in spurts. I do the best that I can. I just don't sleep very much.**

*Maya- Age 39*

I currently work within the Office of the Executive Directors of an international finance company (finance fund). It was very interesting when I first started, but now that I have been doing the same thing for the past five years, I am at the point where I would welcome a change. I like where I work, so I am exploring internal opportunities. I am also in the process of completing a Doctoral degree in Economics. So my professional life is more or less moving in a direction that I like. I know what I need to do in order to fulfill my goals, and I am in the process of achieving that.

There is not much going on in my personal life at the moment. It is pretty calm- I am not in an intimate relationship right now. In terms of family, everyone is in Lebanon except for my two younger brothers, who live in New Jersey with their wives. I visit them every now and then. My younger sister and my parents are in Beirut, and I see them whenever possible. You get used to the distance, and after a while it becomes so much a part of you that you welcome being by yourself.

When I first arrived to the U.S., I was very involved in an Arabic church- it played a central and important role in my life, and I would have felt lost without it. I was also active in church as a teenager and young adult in Lebanon. But two and half or three years ago, I became very disenchanted and disappointed with the mentality of the church I belonged to, and stopped going. Recently, I have started to think about finding an American church to go to, but have not begun looking yet. I have friends here, but I would like to meet more people. Because of my age, most of my friends are married, and I can't continue hanging around with them so much. I must begin focusing on my personal life, and that is something that I have not done yet.

*Amal- Age 45*

I am a free spirit, independent, and happy. My life is currently focused on being the best person that I can possibly be in order to be good to myself, the community, my work and my family. I am really focusing on working on myself, internally, in terms of my spirituality, and *(she adds, with a smile and a chuckle)* externally, in terms of my body!

I am currently the CEO of a community television station. My professional life is exciting, challenging, and very rewarding. I have had the opportunity to make significant changes, and have really turned this place around. My job is quite demanding, as it requires a great deal of crisis management, but I can control, to a certain degree, my level of involvement in additional projects. I have always been interested in community issues and am active in a number of community organizations. It connects me to my childhood- to the small village in Lebanon where I grew up, where simple people were beautiful people with a lot of love and compassion.

My husband of twenty-seven years is the most important person in my life right now. Both of my children are away at school. My son is in his third year of college and my daughter is in medical school. So right now, my focus is on my relationship with my husband. He teaches me a lot, and I think that I learn my biggest lessons when I go home to him at night. He exemplifies all of the qualities that I want to possess, which is to be accepting, tolerant, peaceful, loving, wise, and happy.

I have always worked to maintain a balance between my personal and professional life, and it has not been that difficult for me. I believe that to be successful,

you can't be two different people. You can't be something at home and then come to work and say, "O.K. I am going to change gears now." Of course you have to be more professional and you must leave your domestic hang-ups behind, but you should bring the same basic qualities whether it is home or the office. I have always striven to maintain this integration, and I think I have been rather successful, largely because of the support I have from my husband and children.

Right now I am beginning to focus beyond my home and my work. My energy is devoted to improving my quality of life, in general.

*Nadia- Age 38*

I have worked for my entire adult life, since I was eighteen. I don't know anything else. I was helped by a few people along the way, but what I accomplished, I did largely on my own. I think that is why I became bitter later on in my life. I am a very giving person, and I feel very much alone because of this. I think my giving became sort of a handicap because I don't know how to receive. But I have been working on that lately.

I am currently the Vice President of a large division within a movie production company. I am very happy with who I am and what I have achieved professionally. I am very confident and sure of myself, and I have no problem walking into a room full of CEO's and telling them what I want.

I haven't always been like this, and I have struggled the entire way. When I first moved to the U.S. from Lebanon at age eighteen, I knew nobody. When I think about that time of my life, I become very sad. But I managed to come across people who were

willing to help me in terms of living arrangements, and I was somehow able to follow my lifelong dream of becoming involved in film production.

I am not married and I have no children. I am disappointed in the fact that I have made so many mistakes in my personal life, and I am having a hard time getting over it. At this point, I feel that all of my professional success is nothing to me if I don't find my soulmate. I will be the happiest person in this world when I am married and I am carrying my first child.

*Christiane- Age 31*

My family is a very central aspect of my life. I am married, and have a long distance marriage. My husband and I met eight years ago, and we have been married for two and a half years. He was here in medical school when we met, but moved out of state for his residency in 1997. I stayed here because of my career. We were married the following year, but we have never lived together. So this has made starting a family rather difficult, but I know our separation is temporary.

I am very close to my immediate family- my parents, two brothers, and sister and their children, and that is very important to me. Everyone, except for one of my brothers, lives here, in D.C. and the surrounding areas. For the past year, everything has revolved around my mother, who passed away three weeks ago from Cancer. I basically spent all of my time taking care of her and trying to keep up with work.

I work at the International Bank (name changed), and have been there for eight years now. I began working there as a temp during the summer between undergraduate and graduate school, and literally worked my way up the organization. After I completed

my Masters degree in International Development Studies, I was eligible to begin doing sector work, and I currently work as a consultant within the Health Sector. We provide training around the world, so I do a lot of traveling. I interact with people from so many different cultures, and that is one of my favorite aspects of this job. My work is very demanding, but I truly enjoy it. I am always seeking new challenges, and each year, new responsibilities and opportunities come my way.

I am really satisfied with my professional life, but I am not as content with my personal life. I want to start having children as soon as possible, and I actually regret not having started earlier, but circumstances made that difficult. I want to have four children, and I am still at zero! My husband is moving back in a few weeks, so hopefully that will remedy the problem!

*Marie- Age 35*

I am a very loving and caring person, and I am very loyal and sincere. I am happy with the things that I have accomplished in my life, thus far. I feel that I have persevered, and when I think about all of the things that I have done on my own, I have a sense of comfort and wholeness. I am certainly not complete, but I like who I am. I like the person that I have become.

My two older sisters are the most important people in my life right now. I currently live with them. I love my parents too (they live in Lebanon) and I think that they are unique and different from most other Lebanese parents. When I had the opportunity to come to the U.S. on my own at the age of 24, they encouraged me to do it.

When I was growing up, it was not very common for a woman to come here on her own, but my parents always supported me in everything I have wanted to do.

I am currently an Elementary school teacher and I am in the process of completing my Doctorate in Education. I should be finished within the year. I already completed a Masters degree in Christian Education in Lebanon and a Masters in Education here, in the U.S. Part of what I want to do is teach at a university and inspire young people. I would like to be a public figure. I would like that a lot.

I am very outspoken and independent, and I am O.K. with the fact that I am not married. I have never met someone that triggered the feeling of, "Oh, yeah, it's time", so I am not rushing things. I don't see myself in a traditional marriage. I go more after my dreams and I use my intuition. I want my career and I want to be someone. I want to be independent and I want to travel. I don't really care whether or not I have children one day.

*Yasmine- age 48*

I have a Ph.D. in Biochemistry, but I left my career in Biomedical research about six years ago and I have returned to my first love, which is teaching. I am currently the Chair of the Math and Science Department at a gifted high school.

I am very energetic, very optimistic and open-minded. I am a believer in possibilities and I still have a lot of things to accomplish. My first priority in my life right now is my family. I am always trying to support my children (a teenage son and daughter) in every way that I can to help them do their best. And my husband, who is also my best friend, is always a focus in my life. We do a lot of work together. He is

helping me with my current book, and he has always been a source of support in my career. And after my family, come my students. I have a good relationship with my students, and I think most of them feel that. They express their appreciation in many ways. And my third priority is to finish the textbook that I am in the process of completing, and to expand the curriculum that I have designed to schools across the state and eventually take it nationwide (I hope!).

The balance between my personal and professional life is very challenging. It is really challenging. Sometimes, due to deadlines, I put some pressure on myself and that often conflicts with my family life. But my husband and my children are very tolerant and very understanding. I try to balance everything as much as I can, but sometimes I have difficulty disconnecting my work life from my family life...But in a way I feel like they are integrated because what I do is a part of me. It does not feel like a job. (*I ask if she is satisfied with this balance*) No, I am not. I would give it an eight. I would like to reach a ten, but I will never do that. I know that I won't because even if you are approaching satisfaction, you create something else. That's actually the challenge of life. You should not be satisfied.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE- THE ORIGINS OF THE DREAM**

**This chapter provides an in depth exploration of the origin and pre-adult development of the Dream in the lives of the nine Lebanese professional women that comprise the present sample. There were many similarities and many differences in the experiences of these women and the circumstances that led to their earliest professional choices.**

### **Childhood**

**In order to gain a thorough understanding of the earliest influences on the development of the Dream, a significant portion of the interview was focused on exploring the childhood experiences of the women in this sample. Each woman was asked to provide in depth descriptions of her childhood, including relationships with various family members and other significant individuals, activities, and school experiences.**

**The majority of the women were raised in middle or upper middle class families, with both parents living in the home. The subjects had diverse religious backgrounds. Five were Catholic, two were Protestant, one was Muslim and one was Druses (a combination of Christianity and Islam). All women were born in Lebanon, however they differed in the regions from which they came. Specifically, some were raised in small villages, whereas others grew up in the urban setting of Beirut. Three of the women were oldest children, three were youngest children, and three were somewhere in between.**

### *Descriptions of Childhood*

The majority of the women described growing up in a loving and nurturing environment. While some recalled very happy and positive memories, others remembered childhood as a “pleasant” time. Only one woman, Nadia, described strongly negative feelings when recalling her childhood. In all of the women’s families, education was cherished and actively encouraged and emphasized. All of the women reported being very good students throughout this period. While religion was recognized as a source of life values and a moral guide, six out of nine of the women stated that they did not regularly engage in religious rituals outside of formal holidays.

#### Salwa

*I had a very loving childhood...My dad used to say that basically all he wants from us (the kids) is our health and our education. I received a lot of love and nurturing. We did not feel restricted in terms of our activities. We grew up around a lot of family- cousins, aunts, and uncles...Education was a very integral part of my upbringing. It was cherished, not pushed.*

#### Amal

*When I think of my childhood, I think of great freedom, great happiness, great confidence. My parents trusted me a lot, so I had a lot of independence...I think by the time my parents had me, they were tired. So, they gave me a lot of freedom, and they trusted me. As long as I had straight A's in school, I could do anything.*

#### Layla

*I was a bit on the serious side. Actually, maybe people even now consider me sort of serious, but I was more so when I was younger. I took things seriously...I used to read a lot, so I was a good kid in school...When I was a teenager I changed some and had friends, but when I was very young, I had only one or two friends...I kept things very quiet...I loved to be in my*

*room by myself and read and do stuff like that ... This is probably unusual for a child...*

### Nadia

*I remember there being kind of like a war inside my house growing up...I used to see my mom and dad always tired, especially my mom. There were too many kids (six) and too many things to do...I remember a lot of fighting between my mom and dad because they had a great deal of stress because of our large family.*

*I was the kid who always wanted attention because my younger sister was born four years after me, and my mom gave her all the attention that I never got, and I still don't have an answer from my mom and dad as to why that was...I think my mom suffered from post-partum depression after I was born...I think...My dad sort of mentions it, and then won't talk about it, and I don't want to get into it with them because it is a sensitive issue.*

Seven out of nine of the women were children when the Lebanese War began, and all of them described their childhood as being significantly disrupted by this occurrence.

### Christiane

*When I think about my childhood, I think about a mixture of happy memories and more difficult ones. The happy memories are of being together as a family, and extended family, and yet there are images of the war that immediately come to mind. I think about what we had to do to escape the bombings, and where we had to hide and things like that...The memories are a combination of having fun and of being scared...*

### Salwa

*The period of the war was so traumatic that you tend to shut out memories of what happened before it...I really have to think and dig in my mind to remember images of my childhood before the war.*

### Maya

*My childhood was rather calm until the war broke out.*

### *Relationship with Mother*

The mothers of the women in this sample were diverse in terms of their social and economic backgrounds, but they shared some commonalities with regards to level of education and work history. Most of the mothers were not educated beyond the high school level (only one mother had a college degree) and all but one were homemakers (Christiane's mother owned her own business and worked full time). However, among the mothers who were "housewives", a few of them were heavily involved in volunteer work, and one occasionally helped her husband in his medical practice. Dr. Samia Naaman's mother, for instance, was an active member of a large healthcare charity organization, and she helped open facilities for mentally handicapped individuals. Her involvement was almost at the level of a full-time job, but there was no financial gain. It was socially acceptable for the women to be involved in volunteer work, despite the fact that it was often quite time consuming, because there was no monetary compensation.

A few of the mothers worked before they met their husbands, but they all left their jobs once they were married. They did this not only because of the insistence of their husbands, but also because of their own socially-influenced belief that married women should not work. A theme that emerged among these mothers was the belief that it was "acceptable" for a woman to work for monetary compensation only out of economic necessity, such as when her husband cannot financially support the family or if a woman becomes a widow. None of the mothers of the women in this study were in such circumstances.

Many of the women described their mothers as "outgoing", "strong", and "nonconformist". These descriptions revealed a sense of admiration of their mothers and

a respect for their ability to “enjoy life”. Many of the women described their mothers as “not submissive” and as “non-traditional” in their mentality. Despite the fact that these mothers ostensibly occupied the traditional role of “wife and mother”, their daughters stated that they were not traditional in terms of the little emphasis they placed on social involvement. All of the women described the “traditional Lebanese woman” as not only dedicated to her home and family, but also very involved with her social life and socializing with other women. With the exception of Dr. Samia Naaman, all of the women stated that their mothers were not preoccupied with societal concerns and “image”. While many of them enjoyed socializing and entertaining with their husbands, as part of their volunteer activities and for entertainment, they were not focused on their status in society or interested in “societal gossip”.

Many of the women were aware of their mothers’ unfulfilled desires to have achieved more in their lives, but most did not describe feeling a great sense of regret and unhappiness from their mothers in terms of their current life situations. For instance, Salwa (whose mother was well-educated and had significant career opportunities before meeting her husband) explained that her mother elected to stop working when she got married and that she never voiced feelings of regret about her decision. However, Salwa believes that her mother’s constant and active support and encouragement of her, throughout her life, to pursue education and ultimately a career, was her mother’s indirect communication to her daughter not to limit herself to the domestic sphere. An exception to this was Nadia, who was very aware, from childhood, of her mother’s unhappiness and dissatisfaction with her life. Her mother had dreams of becoming an actress that were forbidden by her own father and rendered impossible once she was married.

A prominent theme that arose with regards to the women's relationships with their mothers was the expression of respect and admiration towards them for dedicating so much of their lives to their families in such genuine and willing ways, while simultaneously encouraging their daughters, either directly or indirectly, to pursue more than they did and to achieve some degree of independence. Many of the women deeply identified with their mothers, some more consciously than others. As a result, their childhood visions of themselves assuming occupational roles in the future seemed to be significantly influenced by their desires to surpass the gender role limitations that they were aware, even at a very young age, their mothers were not able to surpass.

### Amal

*My mother was very positive and giving...I never remember looking at her face without her smiling...she was very, very positive. We weren't allowed to be depressed around her because she did not believe in that. She was a very jovial person and she liked bright colors...The people in the village really liked her because she was a giver- anonymously. She was constantly making things happen, not only in her home, but also in the neighborhood and the community. I think that's where I get part of my sense of hard work because even when she was home, she was managing a lot and doing a lot.*

*My mother and I did not have an intellectual relationship during my childhood; I had that more with my father when I was younger. When I started becoming a woman, and had children, it was the reverse. I was more connected to my mother, and less so to my father.*

*She gave me the feeling that there was nothing that I could not do in life, and that life is full of optimism...No matter what happens, you have yourself, and you have life itself...I think of her smile...She had a vastness in her life, the way she conducted herself and her life...*

*My mother was proud of everything she did and she felt a great sense of importance about what she did. She really cared a lot. That's how I saw her...She was very involved in the YWCA (Young Women's Community Association) and headed a part of it. But she would have loved to be more educated; she always said that she would have loved that.*

*(Negative aspect of relationship?) When I was young, I used to think she was superficial, but as I grew older, I realized this was her clever way of being involved in life...Even though she respected people, she seemed to*

*change her style, depending on who was there, and I thought that was superficial...Later, I realized it was a good communication skill.*

*Another negative thing in my relationship with my mother was that I used to think she did not spend enough time with me...I was the youngest of six kids, so she had a lot to do. She was always focused on the cooking or the community events, and she didn't take the time to just sit and talk with me one on one. But my dad and I, on the other hand, spent a lot of time, one on one.*

*My mother was the strong manager of the house. She was not a submissive woman. She was the strong manager of everything that happened and was the one who really...She was the one who cared a lot and she was the one who worried a lot. My dad really focused on his work.*

### Yasmine

*My mother did not have the opportunity to go to college but she had an extreme love of learning. She would do anything to let us (kids) just focus on our work. She never asked us to help her with anything. We were all successful in school, and she wanted us to continue being that way. We were expected to perform well academically.*

*I don't remember my mother ever gossiping or going to many social events. She did not like that and she did not encourage that in us. She always wanted to do things that lead to something, not just to spend time. I think that affected me. It is not that I did not have fun, but I always chose things that were meaningful and that improved me in some way.*

*My mom had a great love of learning. She had an amazing memory, and she would recite poetry from memory...She also had a proverb or anecdote for every occasion...She always had something to say in Classical Arabic. She really provided us with a cultural atmosphere.*

*All my life I had the best relationship with my mother. I was the closest to her. She passed away three years ago, but we were extremely close. I always had open discussions with her, much the way I do now with my daughter...She was very strong, completely strong. She would hide her emotions a lot to make things easy for us...When my father was away for work she had no extra help because we were not rich. We were barely making it, with a large family and my father's salary (educators didn't make good salaries). However, my mother supported us and helped us go through life. But she never showed her emotions to us.*

### Marie

*Lebanese mothers are always pressing their daughters to find a man and get married, and my mother never did that. She always wanted me to focus on what made me happy.*

*I loved my mother and my mother loved me...I am very much like her, in terms of my character. My mother was always very patient, very nice, very*

*sweet when I was a child. I think I got a lot of her. She persevered a lot. Whatever hardships she faced, she always persevered...She is very low key. She is a strong woman because my father was away most of the time. He was in the Army, so she took care of us when we were growing up. She managed the budget at home and raised three girls. She took care of our schooling, buying our clothes, managing the house, and everything else.*

*I wish I could have spoken more openly with my mother while I was growing up. In Lebanon, you don't feel like you can go to your parents and talk to them about everything. We were not raised to talk openly about relationships, sex and stuff like that, you know, experiences in life.*

*I wish that my mother had been more outgoing, but I don't think that she wished she could have done something different. She's very wise, a very nice person. I think that I am lucky to have her as a mother, but at the same time, I wish she had been more progressive when I was growing up...*

### Salwa

*My mother was just amazing when I was a child...very nurturing, and she still is. She is just incredible. I put her name on my Master's thesis and I acknowledged her in a technical paper that I just wrote for her continuous support of me throughout my life. She is very loving and nourishing and she is a very well-read and educated woman. You learn by example.*

*My mother got a scholarship to college and was offered a scholarship to pursue post-graduate studies in France, but her parents would not allow her to go. She worked at a Mental Hospital and started a school for mentally handicapped children before she was married. But when she met my father she stopped working because my father had the traditional mentality of "I don't need any wife of mine to work"...So, for a long time, to be honest, I held it against my mother that she was not working because she had so much to offer...I harbored negative feelings about that, even when I was a child because she had so much to offer and she was just a "stay-at-home mom".*

*(I asked how her mother felt about her role) My mother was amazing. She seemed to very much come to terms with her role as a mother and a wife, despite the fact that she gave up her career...It took me a while to come to terms with her decision when I was growing up. But I never felt a sense of regret from her. So I guess that was a positive thing to learn- she had made a choice and she made peace with that. Even to this day, I don't feel from her a regret of, "I should have been or I should have done...". There was none of that at all.*

*But it is interesting that when I had children, my mother was so supportive, so encouraging of me going back to work as soon as I wanted to or needed to. So that proved to me that she believes my career is important.*

*My mother never fit into the role of the "traditional Lebanese woman", even though she was a homemaker. She was not into fitting into the image of "society", which is so important in Lebanon. She was so genuine and loved by so many people for that. People would always come to her for*

*advice...She was not working, but her demeanor, her lifestyle, and her mentality were nonconformist...She was a professional woman who had a shortened career...*

### Christiane

*My mother traveled and she was very independent...she was a strong woman. This was unique in Lebanon during that time. She was both a professional woman and a housewife. And she was a great housewife...She was able to manage this, to have a very good balance between the two because she was a successful businesswoman. She had three stores at one point in Lebanon, and she had four children...I guess, in a way, my mother had to have been "avant-garde" or a modern woman for her to have been able to open her stores in Lebanon at that time. She excelled at whatever she was doing and she was never ashamed of anything she had ever done in her entire life, which I think is a virtue. That shows that she did not want to be just a housewife- that she wanted to do other things, and that is why she had a career...*

*In Lebanon, entertaining people in your home is very important- it is part of the culture, and you always have to have your house open for people to come over. So, between work and her four children, my mother always had people over...I guess...I think she handled both lives very well.*

*My mother was more critical than my father was. She was very critical of everything. She wanted to make sure that I had proper manners and protocol. She was really very attuned to good behavior and how you relate to people, in terms of seniority and things like that. She was always critical because she knows how hard life is. So, with her, she wasn't my confidante or anything. I mean, I always saw her as the eye that would criticize everything I would do. Whether it was ironing, setting the table, whatever...We had clashes, but nothing very serious...Like any mother-daughter relationship, but I never had anything like that with my father...With my father, I could tell with a glance, if he was happy or not, whereas with my mom, she had to verbalize it...So, sometimes her words could be harder than a look.*

### *Relationship with Father*

Like the mothers, the fathers of the women in this sample were diverse in terms of their social and economic backgrounds. They also differed in their level of education and work history. Two of the fathers were physicians, one was a teacher, one was a

superintendent of a few small schools, one was a Clergyman in the Druses religion, one was in the Army, and three were “self-made” businessmen.

One theme that emerged among these fathers was the description, by their daughters, of their “open-mindedness” when it came to the role of women. Most of the participants stated that their fathers encouraged them, from a young age, to pursue a high level of education and to seek independence. The women described their fathers as supportive and encouraging, while not forcing them in any particular direction, which served to validate their abilities and potential. All but one of the women with brothers (eight out of nine women had at least one brother) reported that their fathers did not treat them differently than their male siblings when it came to education and career aspirations.

#### Yasmine

*My father never treated my brother differently than he treated [his daughters]...Never. My brother was the oldest child and the only son and he was never given power over us. He didn't feel it and he didn't want it...We were all treated the same and my father had the same aspirations and expectations for us...You would expect, particularly in a Muslim family, that the males would be treated differently, but it wasn't so...even though my father had an important position within the Muslim religion.*

#### Samia

*Growing up, I never felt like a “second class citizen” or handicapped in my progress because I am a female. [My father] pushed us all, my brother, my sister and myself, to be well-educated...*

#### Layla

*My father was very encouraging...Although he made some suggestions about my career, he didn't force me to do anything, and he was very supportive in whatever I did...he was extremely encouraging. My parents gave us a lot of freedom.*

However, it is important to note that while the fathers were relatively open and encouraging of their daughters to surpass social and cultural gender role definitions, when it came to their wives the expectations were different. It was understood and expected that their wives would assume the traditional domestic role and would not engage in paid employment outside of the home. The issue was rarely discussed, as both husband and wife did not question the long-standing gender role definitions as they pertained to their marriage. However in the few instances when the issue did arise, the husband discouraged or forbade the wife from seeking employment. The exception to this was Christiane's father who did not object to his wife's owning of her own business. But even in that case, it was expected that if his wife were to have a career, she would maintain all of her domestic responsibilities first and foremost.

#### Christiane

*[My father] allowed my mother to work and then he let her have her own business, and he didn't have anything to do with it. He didn't try to control it or anything like that...But at the same time, the fact that when I was growing up, my mother always had to have such a balanced family life- always cooking for us, always receiving people in our home and having dinner parties- is also a reflection of what my father expected. So it was always a juggle.*

#### Layla

*The fact that my mother was a stay-at-home mom, who was very, very giving was a major thing that [my father] appreciated a great deal, and he would have hated if she was any other way...He would not have liked her to work...He had the expectation that she was the one who would tie the family together, which is what she was and still is...But my father always encouraged us to work. He always told me that we were all equal in his mind- boys and girls- absolutely equal...and that was true.*

*I think [my mother] always thought, in the back of her mind that she wanted to work. But my father was like, "No, you don't need to, you don't need to, you don't need to." I don't think she had anything specific in her*

*mind that she wanted to do, but she wanted to work...She wanted some independence...*

### Marie

*(I ask how her mother felt about her role.) I don't think women in Lebanon think about their role. It is just what you do. That is the role everybody plays. It is rarely questioned...I don't think [my mother] wished that she did something different.*

Another theme that was prevalent throughout the narratives was the women's recollection of feelings of "pride" and "admiration" towards their fathers' careers when they were children. All of the participants described being interested in their fathers' work and "looking up to" his position, as well as learning a great deal about the importance of work and a strong work ethic from his example.

### Layla

*I always saw my father as being very successful. I kind of took it for granted, and I didn't really know what he did. But I remember viewing him as this big businessman who would fly to New York and all these far away places, and he would return with toys and gifts. I knew he was successful...I was proud of what he did, not knowing much about it, but I was proud of him...*

*He gave me a strong example of high ethics, in terms of how to treat people and how to respect people...He has values that are very, very strong, and to me, that is a very important thing that I have acquired from my father.*

### Samia

*I looked up to my dad. I thought he was amazing because he worked so hard...He used to take me with him to some of his job sites and I was so proud of him and what he accomplished...He took a lot of pride in his work and that really influenced me throughout my life...*

### Amal

*My dad was the one who inspired me intellectually. He was very bright. He used to read all the time and we had great conversations. We*

*used to take walks together everyday, and we would have great conversations along the way.*

*He was very funny, but very serious at the same time. He was very committed to his work. He was sincere and genuine, and we weren't allowed to gossip in the house when he was there. He was really a pure soul. His genuineness and sincerity made me believe in good qualities in people, and that is something that I acquired from him.*

*His medical clinic was downstairs from our house, so I saw how he worked. I used to go with him on a horse to the villages nearby to help him with his medical care, and I would play nurse. To me, it was very exciting. We were very social because a lot of people who came to the clinic would come upstairs and knock on our door to say "Hi", sometimes at five o'clock in the morning! My dad's work was our life. They were very connected*

*(I ask about the most negative aspect of her relationship with her father.) I used to perceive him as being anxious. He was so serious at times. If things didn't go his way, you knew it...But at the same time, it kind of pushed you...you really knew you were in trouble!*

### Salwa

*My father is an excellent physician, and I always admired him as a child. I learned from him, at a very young age, that doing your work well for the good of whomever you are doing it for is very important. Your work is part of who you are. It gives you a sense of who you are, and your sense of self is tied to that. My father is a perfectionist and I think I acquired that sort of work ethic from him. That, and his sense of doing what is right.*

Fathers were portrayed in a largely positive light and were seen as very encouraging, supportive and open-minded. The women described gaining a great deal of strength and drive from their fathers' support, and this seemed to be an extremely significant and critical factor in the earliest development of the precursors to their Dreams. However, while providing this critical influence, the women's relationships with their fathers were generally portrayed as less complex and less intense than the relationships with their mothers were.

### *Interests and Activities*

The women in this sample described enjoying a variety of activities as children. Their interests ranged from reading, to writing poetry, to engaging in organized sports, to outdoor activities such as hiking. Seven out of nine of the women identified reading as an activity that they regularly engaged in and thoroughly enjoyed throughout their childhood and beyond. Many of the women reported enjoying competition in the form of athletics or academic pursuits, and three participants described themselves as being “tomboyish” and adamantly disliking “girlish” activities.

#### Nadia

*I wasn't into dolls or anything "girlish". With my friends that were girls, we used to love to play a game called "war" and we played cards. I loved swimming. When I was a child, the greatest thing to me was to spend the day at the beach with my cousin. I loved the ocean and everything that had to do with nature. I also loved all physical activities. I used to climb trees and run. I hated being home, being in the kitchen, learning to cook, or anything girlish like that.*

#### Christiane

*I was a tomboy when I was a little girl. I used to hang out with the boys and all my best friends were boys. I was very athletic and I was involved in a lot of sports. My mother made me do Ballet, but it was O.K. because I loved to dance...I also loved movies and reading literature.*

*(I asked if she enjoyed competitive activities) Oh, yes. I was on the basketball team and I loved competition. In school sports, I was always on the boys' team for sports like soccer, boxing, and even wrestling! I was too strong for the girls!*

*My playmates were boys. No girls. I hated girls because all they cared about was how they were going to get dressed up and who their new boyfriend was. I was like, "Who cares?" It was not my thing. So, I did hang out with boys more than girls.*

#### Maya

*As a little girl, I loved books. I thought books were the wonder of the world. My parents would give us an allowance and I would immediately go*

*and buy little books and magazines. I used to read a lot. I also used to play outside with everybody, but we did not have the opportunity to really have regular sports activities because there were not many sports at my school.*

*In school, they used to make us (the girls) do embroidery and stuff like that, which I hated with a passion, but I had to do it. I used to envy the boys because they had to do woodwork...They worked with tools and we worked with needles and thread! I was not a very delicate person, and I hated it! But I had to do it...I had to learn how to do it.*

### Salwa

*I was an avid reader...I read the Junior Encyclopedia on my own free will. I was also very athletic, and I played on the swim team and basketball team at school.*

### Samia

*I loved snow skiing...We were pretty competitive...I was very athletic. I enjoyed running competitively, particularly long distance events because I have a great deal of patience...I did fourteen years of Ballet, but that was my mother's thing. You know, the girls had to do Ballet and the boys did Judo or Karate.*

## *Relationship with Siblings*

All of the women in this sample had at least two siblings and eight out of nine had at least one brother. While not much emphasis was placed during this inquiry on examining the precise nature of sibling relationships, some important information was gathered. Only one woman (Nadia) described having significant conflicts with her siblings, which were centered primarily around competition for her mother's attention and acceptance. The other participants described their relationships with their brothers and sisters as "good" and "close".

Seven out of nine of the women in this sample had siblings who also pursued professional degrees. Some of these women described this as being a source of

comparison and motivation and some reported that their older siblings served as examples to follow.

**Christiane (youngest child)**

*My siblings and I have a good relationship. With my oldest brother, I have always been the favorite. He is the oldest and I am the baby of the family, so he always took care of me. As long as I behaved O.K., we got along. I mean, we had our moments, but...*

*Overall, I have a good relationship with my sister and my brothers. I mean we are very close. The four of us will always be there for one another, and we never have a problem telling each other how we see things or if we have a problem with something. We have a very open relationship, and I think that is due to the way our mother and father brought us up, in the sense that they made sure we were close.*

**Amal (youngest child)**

*I was perceived as the wisest by my siblings. They called me "The Philosopher"...I was the one who was more objective and less angry. I wasn't pretty, so they could really depend on me for advice, and a lot of things happened where I was able to really help, even though I am the youngest...It is still like that today.*

**Salwa (middle child)**

*Each one of us was so independent...I don't think my mother ever said, "Do this with your brothers"...Each one of us had our own thing, but we were always very close and still are...There wasn't much sibling rivalry, per se...My mother let each of us be who we were and who we needed to be.*

**Yasmine (fifth of six children)**

*We were all very close. All of my sisters and my brother have influenced me in some way throughout my life. My oldest sister opened the door for the rest of us, and the others gave me guidance throughout my education. All of us, including my brother, pursued professional degrees, so we all fed off of one another.*

**Nadia (fifth of six children)**

*I would not say that I had a very good relationship with my siblings when I was growing up. I was closest to my older sister, Dalal, because she loved me and paid attention to me. She spoiled me more than my mother did.*

*I was very jealous of my younger sister, in terms of all the attention that she got from my mother. My other older sister, Maya, never paid attention to me. She loved my little sister because she was not good in school and I was really good in school. She hated that. And my brothers just gave me a hard time. I hung out with my brothers a bit more when I was a teenager.*

### *Dream*

Furst (1983) found that there are significant childhood precursors to the Dream. Through these “early imaginings” (Roberts & Newton, 1987, pg.157), the child begins to imagine a life for herself in the future. Most of the women in this sample recall having had a specific career aspiration during their Childhood, although only one woman ultimately pursued her earliest professional choice (Samia). The significance of this earliest career aspiration lies not in the particular career choice, but in the fact that these women recalled having a vision of themselves in a working role at such a young age, as well as the important meaning that this vision had for each child. These “early imaginings” appeared to provide, in part, a guiding purpose and direction for the subjects, as well as contributing to the shaping of their personalities. Most described their “initial Dream” as being accompanied by feelings related to wanting to be “big”, wanting to be “different”, or desiring independence in their future.

### Yasmine

*Ever since I was a child, I always wanted independence...I might have said I wanted to be a doctor during this time, but it wasn't a clear picture in my mind...I did know, however, that I wanted to succeed in whatever I was going to do, and I wanted to do something...*

### Samia

*Oh God, yes I had a Dream as a child. Ever since I was a little girl, from as young as I can remember, maybe five or six, all I wanted to be was a*

*doctor. I wanted to be a pediatrician because I love children...I love children...*

**Amal**

*I wanted to be a doctor like my father. That's why I used to study so hard as a child...*

**Marie**

*When I was a child, I always felt that I wanted to do something in my life and not just follow the norm. I always felt that...When I was growing up, I was a good public speaker and I loved to stand up and speak in front of the group. So, when I was a little girl, I wanted to become a public figure...*

While all of the women in this sample began to more clearly articulate their future aspirations during late adolescence into early adulthood (Levinson's Early Adult Transition), the Dream's initial form was significantly influenced by experiences in Childhood. This finding is consistent with that reported in Furst's (1983) study. It was clear from the narratives of the women in this sample that their family environments throughout Childhood played the most significant role in the initial formation and development of the Dream. As described earlier, a common theme that arose from the data was the high premium that was placed on education within each woman's family. This seemed to set the tone early on, for the importance of striving for and achieving success. Furthermore, all the women in the sample reported excelling academically, thus strengthening their feelings of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and serving as a source of pride for their parents. By following a course consistent with the gradual achievement of the Dream, they received encouragement, reinforcement and support by either one or both parents.

Yasmine

*[My father] gave us a sense of freedom in thinking and he always pushed us to learn. The picture that I have in my mind is of him always coming home with lots of books and sitting with us and reading. All of us were able to read before we started school... He always taught us to seek education, no matter how far we would have to go to find it... Both my mother and father admired us for succeeding and expected us to succeed academically. That was a big influence on me from both my mother and father.*

Amal

*I grew up in a village in Lebanon that was known to be very academic. So education was always stressed and cherished in my house... I was always making straight A's and my parents saw me as very bright and smart. I think that gave me a lot of comfort and confidence.*

Nadia

*My dad put into us the love of reading. He paid a lot of attention to our education, especially in the summer when he would give us a sort of summer school. He would always tell us, "You must read and you must learn"... He was proud of the fact that I was always so successful in school.*

In addition to the influence of each woman's own talents and unique proclivities, aspects of the women's early Dream precursors also seemed to develop from a dynamic interplay between their identification with their mothers as well as from unfulfilled parts of their mothers' own Dreams. As described earlier, most of the women stated that their mothers did not express great feelings of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their lives, but they did communicate to their daughters from a very early age to pursue their education in order to have career options in the future. Some mothers were more direct in their communication to their daughters to pursue a professional career and to not limit themselves to the traditional role of wife and mother. They were open in their encouragement of their daughters' abilities and potential and directly supported their

aspirations by alleviating their domestic “chores” and other gender role expectations. For instance, in describing her relationship with her mother, Yasmine stated the following:

*To tell you the truth, even though my mother was traditional, in that she did not have a career, I feel that I got my strength and feeling of freedom as a woman from her. She is the one who gave [my sisters and me] the O.K. She did not pull us from our studies to help her with the housework or other domestic things...I truly believe much of my ambition comes indirectly from my mother because she wanted us to do our best and shine. I think she encouraged us so much because she always wanted to have learned more...If my mother had gone to college, she would have been a brilliant woman.*

Other mothers, however, more overtly expressed their ambivalence about their daughters’ future role possibilities. They tended to more explicitly encourage traditionally “feminine interests” and the importance of the traditional role of wife and mother, while indirectly or more unconsciously, communicating to their daughters to live out the Dreams they left behind. For example, Samia recalls that her mother was always encouraging her to participate in feminine activities such as ballet and verbally discouraging her very early aspirations to become a doctor “because it would take too long” and it would interfere with her ability to get married. However, Samia credits her mother’s fierce dedication to healthcare volunteering as influencing her career choice. She states the following:

*I did learn from my mother to care for people, the selflessness of giving and the love of healthcare...It is interesting, because even though she did not want me to go to medical school, she is the proudest mother on earth because she has a daughter who is a doctor...It is like she is caught between the old world and the new world. She wants to have the old way, but she knows it doesn’t exist anymore. And I think if she had grown up during my time, she would have done what I did...*

Nadia was the only woman in the sample who was aware, from a very young age, of her mother's unhappiness and dissatisfaction with her life. She felt stifled by her role as mother and wife, and longed to fulfill her Dream of becoming an actress. Nadia had a very conflictual relationship with her mother and described feeling "abandoned and ignored" by her throughout her childhood. However, she deeply identified with her mother and longed for a connection with her, and the development of the precursor to her Dream was very much affected by this.

### Nadia

*My mother was very charming and always was the center of attention. She was very intelligent and talkative...She was ahead of her time and I used to sit and worship that about her when I was a child. I am very much like her. That is what is so weird.*

*My mom realized, when I was very young, that I was a smart and intelligent girl and she didn't have to pay much attention to me because I was good on my own. I was very cute and beautiful as a child...I looked very much like my mother.*

*What I learned as a little girl is to be better than what you are...that you must strive to be better because that is what my mother wanted all the time. She wasn't happy with her current situation. She wanted to work towards getting something better all of the time. That's what I learned about work.*

*I was always searching for answers as a child. I was very visual and creative, and every time I watched a film or a good show, I was captivated. I was always trying to get my mother's approval and sort of make her Dream come true...She wanted to become famous and become an actress...*

## **Adolescence**

While the present study is primarily focused on the childhood influences on the development of Lebanese professional women's Dreams, the participants were asked to provide a description of their adolescence in order to gain a more complete understanding of the earliest Dream precursors. "The developmental task of late adolescence is the consolidation of personality to facilitate stability in handling work, love relationships, and one's personal value system...[Adolescents] learn to accept their own limitations and the limit imposed by finite time. Further, they need to give up some deeply held goals and learn to live with uncertainty, ambiguity, and only partially attainable goals" (Mishne, 1986, pg. 19-20).

### *Descriptions of Adolescence (age 13-17)*

Eight out of nine women in this sample went through their adolescence in the midst of the Lebanese Civil War. Most described this period in their lives as "tumultuous" and consisting of "many disruptions". Periodically, there were breaks in school attendance because of an increase in the intensity of the war, forcing schools to close temporarily. However, all of the women managed to continue to focus on their academic pursuits despite the stressful circumstances. Some of the women were displaced from their homes in Beirut because of the fighting, and fled to the safer mountain villages. A few women left the country (to Saudi Arabia or France) with their families for a period of a few months to a year, for financial reasons (i.e. father looking

for work) and to attend schools during the most intense periods of war. Christiane is the only woman who stayed out of Lebanon for an extended period of time.

Despite the disruption caused by the war, all of the women seemed to be able to carry on with the normal tasks of adolescence. The period of adolescence is, by its very nature, a disruption of peaceful growth. It is a time of identity formation, which according to Erik Erikson (1950) is as critical for human personality development as are the identifications and role modelings accomplished in early childhood.

Most of the women reported that they did not have any boyfriends during their teenage years. Some described hanging out with “groups of friends”, while others stated that they were “shy”, “quiet” and tended to keep to themselves. Many identified cultural restrictions on sex as being a significant factor in their lack of intimate relationships during this time, while others described simply “not having an interest” in dating. Most of the women reported having their first boyfriends when they began college. The exception to this was Nadia, who describes being “very rebellious” during her teenage years and stated that she had her “first sexual encounter” at age fourteen or fifteen.

All of the women, with the exception of Amal, continued living at home with their families during this time. Amal attended boarding school in Beirut “in order to get the best education possible”.

### Salwa

*As a general statement, I think our teenage years were taken away from us because of the war. We had to grow up very quickly...and sort of carry a burden, a big burden because a lot of atrocities were happening around us, and if you are aware, and I was, it was really tough...*

*But despite all of the pain and suffering that was going on around us, we still managed to have crushes and to get together with friends and go to the beach, and hang out and play the guitar...My friends were not really*

*party animals and not nerds either. Because our parents were conservative, the girls did not go out and party much. We were all involved in a lot of serious stuff...I think the war environment necessitated or brought that out...We were focused and serious...My teenage years were serious.*

*Adolescence is a time when you have a lot of strong emotions naturally, and mine were all centered around the war. I was very much involved, and I was always trying to do something to make a difference...I worked with the refugee kids through our Social Service Club at school, and I helped start a small school for them. I don't know how we did it, but we managed to help them.*

*Schools were closed on and off during the war and at times I was doing my homework by candlelight, but I continued to be motivated to learn. It's amazing that we did so well. Not just me, but a lot of Lebanese kids eventually went to the U.S. for graduate school and did very well, despite the many disruptions in their education.*

### Layla

*I was fairly shy and not outgoing at the beginning of my teenage years. I was more of the person who could sit and read. I was more in a world of my own. I read a huge amount. I cared about school and I had some friends, but it was not like I was the most popular kid in school...I was into some sports and family activities, the usual revelry...I was not a particularly difficult teenager. I was definitely not very outgoing, I was more inclined to keep things to myself. I still do...*

### Amal

*I was in boarding schools in Beirut during my teenage years because they provided better education than the schools in my village. The Evangelical School that I was in was very rigid and I was very focused on getting straight A's... I played sports during that time. But I think I really flourished when I attended the IC School because it was not as rigid and was more liberal. It was coed and the focus was more on the whole person instead of just the grades.*

*I was always a free spirit and I was never attached to anything- boys or anything else. I was open and social with everybody, and I did not have any hang-ups. I always liked my friends who were very rebellious or "different". At the time we called these people "hip". So I always gravitated to those people. However, studying was always very important to me.*

*I really enjoyed the independence of boarding school. I was very much an individual, so I was not very much into family. I knew that I had their love and they knew that they had my love, but most of my life I was more like a man...in terms of my need for space...*

Nadia

*I didn't like the school that I went to during my teenage years. It was in the new village that we moved to because of the war, and I felt that I was much more superior to any of the people there. For me, they were not classy, intelligent, etc., so that affected me in the beginning of my adolescence. I was so much more open to a lot of things like music, theater, and books. I was quite intellectual when I was a teenager. I studied Marx! I was interested in philosophy and psychology and I was very good in school...*

*I rebelled against the war in Lebanon and I hated what we were doing...I thought it was so stupid. I was very rebellious as a teenager... I loved boys, and in the summer I would try and hang out with the boys as much as I could. I was very boyish in the way I looked and acted, and I loved to be outside and at the beach. I would spend time with my (older) brothers and their friends...I didn't spend much time with kids my age, especially girls my age...Girls in school used to bore me to death, so I used to hang out with the boys instead. I would play soccer with them, and I was the only girl doing this...*

*During my adolescence, I was constantly anticipating my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, at which time I was planning to get out of Lebanon...I wanted to get out of the suffocation that I felt there...It was too limiting...In Lebanon they make you feel limited because you are a girl, a woman. You have to get married and why should you bother pursuing anything else...And that wasn't me. I wanted to be a person before anything else, and I wanted to come to terms with being a woman, which is something that I struggled with a great deal throughout my life because my mother did not want me to be a girl...She never told me that, but the way she treated me was all the communication I needed.*

Marie

*I would describe my adolescence as being very naïve. You know, that is how everyone was supposed to be...There were so many things that we didn't even know about...I couldn't talk to my mother about sex. I was even too embarrassed to tell her when I got my period. It was a conservative environment.*

*Being a teenager in Lebanon is different from being a teenager in the United States. We were not allowed to date. God forbid! I hate to say it, but you were forced to be very secretive because these things were not accepted. I was not allowed to go out on a date with a guy.*

*I continued to focus a lot on my education and I studied a lot. I also babysat for an American woman living in my neighborhood. It felt good to make a little extra money in high school...*

*I continued to be active in our Protestant Church during this time. Church was the only refuge when the fighting was bad. In the midst of everything going on around us, we would get together and sing and dance.*

### Christiane

*I spent my teenage years going back and forth from Lebanon to France because of the war. My parents remained in Lebanon because both of them had business there, so I spent a lot of time living alone with my older siblings.*

*I always spoke my mind as a teenager...I hung out with boys a lot, and I really did not go out partying very much. And it was not only because I was usually not allowed to, I just had no interest in that scene. I was much more into quiet stuff, like going to theaters or going to a restaurant to have a nice meal. You know, taking it easy. I didn't smoke and I didn't drink coffee, which most of the kids in Lebanon did. All my friends did, but I didn't. Everyone in my family smoked, except my mother. And I guess part of why I didn't was that I thought if my father found out, he would kill me. And anyway, it really wasn't something I wanted to do.*

*As a teenager, I was really into politics, reading a lot and following the world news. I was very interested in the Soviet Union, Russia, what was going on there, and communism, and Apartheid in South Africa...I was gearing myself up to be a social activist, and I was always thinking about it. But I did not know what type of career would allow me to contribute or be a part of that...I have always wanted to help the underdog...I guess a part of that came from my time in France, where I did not feel like I belonged, and my country was in the midst of a war. I felt like I had no home, like a gypsy.*

### Yasmine

*We moved to Beirut from Sidon when I was around 14 years old. This was a time of a great deal of change for me. I felt very insecure. Sidon was a small community and Beirut was a large city. I didn't like the girls my age because I was very traditional and they were more liberal. That was a rough time for me because I did not want to do anything wrong. I did not want to fail at anything. I was very hard on myself.*

*I was extremely, extremely sensitive as a teenager. I always wanted to do the right thing, to do anything not to be criticized. I avoided that tremendously...I was so sensitive that my family used to call me "the rain". My siblings would joke, "You want to see Yasmine cry, just count to three" ...But I was also very stubborn about things that went against what I believed in...*

**Maya**

*My teenage years were pretty turbulent...The fact that the war was taking place played a major role...Life was very restricted, and we were not able to go out much.*

*Let me try to remember this time apart from the war...It was a lonely period for me because I found myself away from my childhood friends (we moved when I was around 12 or 13), and it took me a while to make friends in the new area we lived in...I can't remember having any teenage soulmates. I didn't have anyone that I really connected with...I made one good friend, but I was a year older than her and I felt so much more mature and advanced than her in so many respects...*

*I skipped two grades in school, so I was the youngest in my class, which made me feel even more lonely and left out. People in my class weren't very friendly with me. I felt very isolated during these years- isolated because of the war, isolated because I was the youngest in my class, and isolated because I ended up changing schools a lot...*

*I graduated high school at age 15, and I taught English classes for one year. I then entered college at age 17, and I continued to teach and tutor during that time so that I could pay part of my tuition. There were no problems in my family in terms of me working because my father had to pay for four tuitions, and we needed the money.*

***Relationship with Parents***

The majority of the women reported that their parents continued to support and encourage their educational pursuits and career aspirations during this time. However, a theme that began to emerge from the narratives of about half of the women in this sample, was the voicing of some contradictory expectations by fathers, in particular, perhaps revealing their ambivalence regarding their daughters' departure from the traditional role of wife and mother.

**Layla**

*In my family, getting a Masters degree was a foregone conclusion and getting a Ph.D. was almost an expectation. I remember that was the expectation since I was old enough that it mattered...But then I would also*

*hear, 'Come back home. Start working, and then you will have a family.' But how all that was to fit together, we never talked about.*

### Salwa

*The big thing with my dad was getting me married. He kept saying that and my mom would say, "Ignore that, ignore that". But my dad was really more talk than action. Again, he said these things, but never really acted on them. For example, one time I wanted to go do something related to schoolwork, and he said, 'Just relax and play music'. But then another time he said out of the blue, 'You should be a pediatrician', and he was always encouraging me academically. I think he was just struggling with what would be best for me. He came from a very conservative environment and I was his only daughter...*

### Amal

*I think that when I was growing up, [my parents] were hoping that I would become someone dedicated academically, so they always encouraged that. But they also wanted to make sure that I was secured. They started introducing me to guys, and when I met my husband, they were pleased.*

Most of the women stated that around age sixteen or seventeen, either their parents or people in the community began attempting to arrange "suitors" to meet them. All of the women stated that they had no interest in marriage or children during this time. Some actively objected to these "set-ups", while others simply avoided or disregarded them.

### *Dream*

"If adolescence is one of the most tumultuous moments in an individual's history, it is so because the inner and outer world is so salient and so vivid to the individual at this time. Further, the individual is intensely aware of and responsive to what previous moments in his history may have engendered" (Goethals & Klos, 1986, pg. 7). During this period of identity development, the precursors to the Dream that the women in this

study initially developed in childhood, were gradually more articulated and defined as the women began to develop a greater awareness of their strengths and talents. The content of these precursors to the Dream clearly focused on educational and career pursuits, giving marriage and children little consideration or thought during this time. When asked about this directly during the interviews, most stated they knew during their teenage years that they wanted to have a family in the future. However, eight out of nine of the women planned to complete their graduate education and establish their careers before concentrating on starting a family of their own. The one exception to this was Christiane, who stated that while she planned to pursue a college education and attend graduate school, her most important priority was to get married and have children. The fact that Christiane is the only woman in this study whose mother had a career, further highlights the complex impact mother-daughter relationships have on women's professional development.

#### Samia

*Despite all of the tragedy and disruption of my life and education caused by the war, my Dream of becoming a doctor persisted. I was going to proceed with my original plan. I never thought any differently...I wasn't going with my mother's plan (to introduce me to guys). I wasn't ready to get married; I wanted to get my education. I was still planning to go to college and then medical school. That was my goal.*

#### Yasmine

*My Dream was still to have independence. I remember one time when I was around 14 or 15 years old, I was cleaning the floor in the kitchen because I had spilled something, and one of my cousins walked in and he said, "This is what you should be doing more often instead of reading and studying like you are usually doing". Although he was joking, I got so mad that I kicked him out of the house!*

*In terms of a career, I wanted to be a teacher at that point. I wanted to go to college to become a teacher. That is why later in life, after I got my*

*Ph.D. and worked for a while, I eventually went back to my first love of teaching...I think this was influenced, to some degree, by my parents because my father was an educator and my mother wanted to become one. All of my sisters taught at one time or another as well.*

*(Asked if she had any thoughts on marriage and children at this time)*

*Oh, that was far away...Marriage and children were not even in the picture. My education and career were the most important things on my mind.*

### Salwa

*Well, the war really affected me...so it is hard to tell you about my Dream during this time. Because of the war, I basically wanted to save the world any way I could. Before the war, I thought I was going to be an astronaut or something like that. I wasn't very sure of the specifics, but I felt that my options were open. I knew that I wanted to be more- something big. But then the war hit and I decided that I needed to learn economics because I believed that is what controlled the world, and I needed to be able to do that. I was a teenager when I started to think that way.*

*So the war affected my aspirations for the future as a young teenager. All of my energy was focused on doing something to help the situation, and I wasn't thinking about becoming a famous doctor or something. It was about survival. Basic survival.*

*I was not really big on wanting to get married. So many girls were focused on getting married, and I almost didn't want it at all...But the war really had a lot to do with that. I was so angry about what was going on. I didn't want to bring kids into this world. It was too harsh. I was really focused on developing a career that would allow me to make a difference somehow. I wanted independence, and I was really good in math and science, so I began to consider engineering, which is the career path that I ultimately chose.*

### Nadia

*My Dream began to materialize when I was 13 or 14 and I met my brother's friend who was an actor. He saw how creative and sensitive I was and told me to put it into effect. I had no idea how to do this or what it meant, but he told me to learn about movies and the film industry. I asked my dad to get me books about it, and my mother had always wanted to become an actress, so that influenced me. I grew up in a very creative family. My mom loved art and music. Not just any music, she had an ear for what was good. I inherited this sensitivity, and I used to watch a film or a show on T.V. and I could sense what was good and not good...So, I had the sensibility, but I didn't know how to put it into effect and how to verbalize it.*

*In high school, I did very well in Physics and my teacher used to tell me that I would be a good engineer. However, I always said, "No, I am going to be a filmmaker." He would tell me that I was out of my mind, and*

*that I could never have a career in film. And I would explain to him that I was fascinated by the physics of optics and sound that he was teaching me- the way the light reflects into images on a screen...I was going to work with that in the future as a filmmaker...*

*My parents encouraged me to pursue a professional career, but they did not support my dream of becoming a filmmaker. My dad used to tell people that my aspiration to become a filmmaker was just that, a dream, and that I was going to be an engineer...However, he was wrong. All the years of my misery during childhood when I felt that nobody was paying attention to me were over. I decided that I no longer cared whether I received the attention from anyone, and I was going to do what I wanted with my life...And what truly influenced me to be this way was watching my mother. Watching her really not being satisfied with who and what she is and what was imposed on her, even though she brought it on herself...I didn't want to be that.*

*Although my parents were not happy about my career choice, I know that they liked that I knew what I wanted and that I would try to get it any way I could. They liked that, although they didn't tell me...They liked that I had an opinion.*

*(Thoughts on marriage and children?) None whatsoever. They were nonexistent.*

### Christiane

*I was planning on going to college and graduate school, but I did want to get married and have kids. I think that was always my goal, even when I was a child. I mean, I also wanted to have a career, and I had a great interest in social activism and politics, but my priority was to have a family. Who I am now, in terms of my career, is a development- it was always a priority for me to get married.*

### *Role Model*

In order to develop a complete understanding of all of the individuals that most significantly impacted the formation of the earliest components of the participants' Dreams they were asked whether or not they had any role models or significant teachers during their childhood and adolescence. Only Marie and Amal identified specific individuals outside of their parents as having had a significant influence on their future

aspirations. A few other women stated that they had one or two teachers who showed interest in their endeavors, but they did not name anyone in particular.

Marie

*There were a few women in my church that were "Elders" (the equivalent of a Deacon in the Catholic Church). They were great in my eyes because it was not common for women to hold leadership positions in the church and to go to conferences. They were very well established and educated women. I always admired them and I always wanted to be like them. They were not professional women- they did not have careers, but they were married to prominent men and they had prominent roles in the church. That was the only exposure that I had, anywhere, when I was growing up of women in leadership positions, so they were sort of examples or role models to me.*

Amal

*My paternal grandmother was sort of a role model for me when I was a child. She was a missionary and she and my grandfather spent some time in America. When I was seven years old, she returned to Lebanon for a while, and she stayed in my room with me. She told me stories of the missionary work she had done and she had a great influence on me. I learned patience and love from her. I think that is why I focus on community work so much. My grandmother instilled in me the love of helping people.*

Samia

*I didn't have any female role models when I was growing up, let alone one who was a physician. Zero.*

## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION**

The primary objective of this study was to elicit data that would help to illuminate the earliest influences on Lebanese professional women's Dreams. A focus was placed on achieving a deeper understanding of the Dream's origins in childhood. How does it initially develop and who influenced its nature? What do the earliest precursors to the Dream look like? In what ways did Lebanese cultural and societal values impact the development of the earliest precursors to the Dream? In this section, I will review the most salient findings and themes.

### **The "Young Dream"**

The findings of this study strongly support Furst's (1983) conclusion that there are significant childhood precursors to the Dream (Levinson, 1978,1996). For the purposes of this analysis, these childhood precursors to the Dream will be referred to as the "Young Dream". The Young Dream is operationally defined as an individual's "earliest imaginings" (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p. 157) of her future adult self, beginning in childhood and continuing through adolescence.

The narratives of the women in this sample gave evidence suggesting that the "earliest imaginings" of their future selves originated from childhood experiences. While certainly influenced by innate talents and abilities, the women's family environments and the nature of their relationship with each parent, seemed to have the most significant impact on the development of the Young Dream. Children receive important messages

from their families about career choice, the role of work, and sex role expectations that potentially have a profound impact on their future aspirations. From a very young age, all of the women in this study imagined themselves occupying a professional role. While the precise nature of this role was vague and undefined for many of the participants, others pictured themselves in specific careers. The significance of this finding rests not in the particular career imagined, but in the fact that the women envisioned themselves in an occupational role at such a young age.

It is the general consensus across most psychological orientations, including Psychodynamic, Behavioral and Family Systems theories, that it is within the family context that a child's initial sense of self develops and basic identities, motivations, values and beliefs are formed. The data revealed some important findings in terms of the characteristics of the familial environments these women grew up in. First, all the women were raised in homes where education was highly valued, cherished, and encouraged from a very young age, regardless of the parents' own educational background. The participants all excelled academically from childhood throughout their lives, which was highly praised and cherished by their parents, serving to stimulate feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy. This positive reinforcement also increased their ambition and motivation to continue focusing on their academic pursuits and achievements.

One of the most common themes that arose from the data was the existence of support and nurturance of the Young Dream within the family of origin, and from parents in particular. All of the women received a great deal of support from at least one and in most cases, both of their parents. This support came in the form of specific educational

and career guidance and suggestions or simply encouragement and acceptance of their stated aspirations. For example, Maya, Yasmine, and Nadia described their fathers bringing them books to read on subjects they had expressed interest in. Amal recalls her father allowing her to help in his medical practice, thus influencing and reinforcing her aspirations at a young age to become a doctor. There is some documentation in the literature on the importance of this childhood parental support on career development. Altman (1997) writes, "Sometimes direct assistance and specific suggestions are needed in late adolescence as well, but these do not substitute for the early family experience that provides support for later career planning" (p. 230). The parents of the women in this study helped their daughters set goals for the future and supported and encouraged them to achieve those goals. Their interest and encouragement allowed the young girls to recognize their value and their ability to succeed, thereby facilitating the internalization of a sense of self as important and capable. This experience of a self that is capable encouraged further development of the Young Dream, which was made up not only of future goals, but also of the excitement and drive that underlies those goals.

The social environment surrounding these women provided a scarcity of images and role models that might have guided their quest for their occupational Dream. Only Marie and Amal identified specific individuals outside of their parents as having had a significant influence on their future aspirations. With so few examples of professional women to admire and identify with, the importance of a supportive and nurturing familial environment is further highlighted.

## **Relationship with Parents and the Origins of the Dream**

The stories of the women in this study demonstrate the very important role that parents play in their children's developing career identities. One of the focuses of this inquiry was to examine the particular influence that each parent had on their daughter's Young Dream formation. In many other studies examining the origins of the professional choices of women, the focus has been on whether the women wanted to be like their mothers or fathers. For the women in this study, however, it was not an either-or question. Their relationships with both their fathers and mothers had unique and important effects on the development of their earliest images of themselves in the future.

### *Fathers*

It was anticipated at the outset of this study that, given the highly patriarchal nature of Lebanese culture, direct and explicit support from fathers during childhood would be a critical factor in the initial development of Lebanese professional women's occupational aspirations. This was confirmed in the present sample. All of the women reported feeling close to their fathers and described them as relatively "open-minded" in terms of their views of women's roles. The overwhelming majority of the women with brothers reported that their fathers did not treat them differently than he did their male siblings when it came to education and career aspirations, further strengthening their confidence and sense of agency.

While many of the fathers of the women in this sample had the expectation that their wives would not work outside of the home, they encouraged their daughters from a

very young age to pursue education, with the goal of establishing a career in the future. This seemingly contradictory message may illustrate a father's underlying conflict regarding female role definitions. On the one hand, he recognizes the limitations of the traditional female role and wants his daughter to surpass it and take advantage of all opportunities that are available to her, while on the other hand, he has internalized the traditional role definitions as they pertain to his own marriage. The women in this study did not identify this contradiction as a source of confusion, but it seemed to serve as further communication to them to pursue a course beyond that which their mothers' pursued. As much as they admired their mothers, they were aware, from a very young age, that their fathers held the power in the family.

Further evidence of fathers' ambivalence regarding gender role definitions emerged in about half of the women's descriptions of their adolescence. Up until this time, fathers had provided consistent and direct support and encouragement for their daughters' educational pursuits and professional aspirations. However, these fathers began to verbalize, during their daughters' teenage years, some contradictory messages regarding role expectations. The mixed messages were not frequent and fathers continued to strongly support their daughters' educational and career pursuits, but they seemed to be struggling with some conflicting feelings. These feelings may have been related to their concerns regarding the costs that such a departure from tradition would entail; costs such as lack of financial and emotional stability that marriage traditionally provides, as well as potential criticism from the larger community. Or perhaps they were struggling with their own feelings regarding their daughters' growing desires for separation and

independence that emerged throughout the teenage years. However, a more thorough exploration of this pattern is needed in order to draw conclusions about its meaning.

Tessman (1982) uses the term “endeavor excitement” to describe the ways in which fathers can help their daughters achieve a sense of competency and mastery in the world. This can occur, she believes, “only if the father can both acknowledge his daughter’s wish to bestow her love freely and seriously on him and also integrate her growing competencies into his view of femininity” (Tessman, 1982, p. 89). Fathers have traditionally “represented links to the outside world, and an important piece of their relationships with their daughters is to help them master tasks and help them feel competent and effective” (Stiver, 1991, p. 117). The support and encouragement the women in this sample received as young girls from their fathers, allowed them to develop a sense of themselves as capable and competent, thus strengthening their ability to withstand larger cultural and societal pressures that threatened to limit them to traditional female role definitions. This support seemed to facilitate the development of a stronger sense of their own capacities and a greater ability to put their views into effect. The sense of themselves as “active agents” (Miller, 1991, p. 20) further contributed to the development of their Young Dreams.

### *Mothers*

This study confirms previous findings revealing the existence of powerful, complex, and conflicted emotions between professional women and their mothers (Harris, 1995; Farmer, 1997; Levinson, 1996; Brewster, 1998). Furst (1983) argues that the mother-daughter relationship has a particularly significant influence on “a young

woman's ability to first develop an initial purpose and then satisfactorily live it out" (p. 322). Although the women in this sample wanted to live lives different in some ways than those their mothers had lived, as women, they deeply admired and identified with them in many respects. Aspects of the women's Young Dreams seemed to develop from a dynamic interplay between their identification with their mothers as well as from unfulfilled parts of their mother's own Dreams.

According to Stiver (1991), the natural developmental process for girls is a push-pull struggle in which they seek to become individuals in their own right, different from their mothers, yet emotionally close to them. In some ways, all of the women in this sample identified with their mothers, yet they all believed that their mothers had missed out in some respects. From what they saw of their mothers' lives, constrained by the sex role stereotypes in the Lebanese culture, these daughters resolved to do things differently. Their Young Dreams consisted of future images of themselves in occupational roles, not simply because they did not want to live the sorts of lives their mothers did, but because they wanted *more* than their mothers had. Therein lies a subtle difference. Most of the women did not perceive their mothers as unhappy with their lives, but they felt that they had not been afforded the opportunities to fulfill their potentials. While their mothers seemed to have enjoyed their nurturing roles, they gave their daughters, either directly or indirectly, a second message: to have a career as they had not. The majority of the participants described their mothers as intelligent, talented, and impressive women, who given the opportunity, could have had successful careers.

Nadia was the only woman in the sample who explicitly described her mother as being unhappy with her life as a result of feeling stifled by marriage and children. Nadia

felt her mother's unhappiness from a very young age, and spent a great portion of her pre-adult life trying to overcome the rejection and abandonment that she felt from her mother by identifying with her. As a result, Nadia's Young Dream seems to have developed out of a deep longing to achieve a connection to her mother by living out her unrealized Dream, as well as out of a desperate attempt to avoid the unhappiness her mother endured throughout her adult life.

For Christiane, the only woman in the sample whose mother did have a full time career, her experience was not entirely different from that of the rest of the women. She was also engaged in a struggle to remain close to her mother while simultaneously trying to achieve some degree of separation from her. While her mother had achieved success professionally and appeared to maintain an adequate balance between her personal and professional lives, she seemed to communicate to her daughter, on some level, her ambivalence about juggling two roles in a society where there is little support for such an endeavor. While Christiane recalls having developed career aspirations during her childhood, as she grew into adolescence, she began to downplay those professional goals and described her Young Dream as giving increasing priority to marriage and children. The minimization of her career aspirations during that time, seemed to be a way of attempting to correct what was "difficult" in her mother's life, as well as a way of achieving some degree of separation from her (i.e. by not following in her footsteps and giving priority to a career).

All of the women in this sample, with the exception of one, described their mothers as "non-traditional", in the sense that they were not particularly concerned with societal image. The significance of this important and unanticipated finding rests in the

fact that it seemed to represent a quality that the women admired in their mothers and highly identified with. The fact that the mothers did not concern themselves with social criticisms and “image concerns” may have played a significant role in their daughters’ strength to overcome societal and cultural gender role boundaries, as well as the potential criticisms that may have been directed towards women pursuing this “nontraditional” path. The mothers modeled a level of disregard for certain societal pressures that, more often than not, compel women to conform to the norm.

### **War and the Young Dream**

The majority of the women in this study lived a portion of their childhood and/or adolescence during the war that began in Lebanon in 1975. While the war had a different effect on each woman, all were impacted in some way. Some described having their childhood or adolescence “stolen” from them because of the stress of the war, forcing them to “grow up faster”, others recall growing up with a “constant underlying feeling of fear”, and all describe some degree of “getting used to” living life with the backdrop of war.

The experience of the war was described by these women as causing nothing but disruption in their lives, particularly during their pre-adult years. However the war also brought on some societal changes that influenced the environment these women were surrounded by in potentially beneficial ways. Some of the literature on the War of 1975 and its effects on “the status of women” in Lebanon describes an increase in women’s educational opportunities and a rise in their involvement in the labor force out of

“economic necessity” (Shehadeh, 1999). Along with these changes came a corresponding shift in Lebanese attitudes towards female education and employment. For the women in this study, this “loosening” of gender role restrictions, in addition to the important characteristics of their family environments previously described, likely impacted the formation of their Young Dreams in some way. For Salwa, the war forced her to be more “serious” during her teenage years, giving her even stronger resolve to focus on her education in order to “make a difference in the world”. This was her way of attempting to achieve some sort of control over the “madness” of the war that was taking place around her. Maya describes her aspirations at that time to pursue a Ph.D. in Microbiology temporarily shifting to a desire to become a physician in order to “save people being injured by the war”. And Samia asserts that the war only strengthened her lifelong Dream of becoming a doctor. While the more concrete effects of the war on these women’s professional aspirations are more evident during their early adult years, during which they attended college and graduate school, an examination of these influences was beyond the focus of this study.

### **Areas for Further Research**

The findings of this exploratory, qualitative study stimulated more questions than answers, as was intended by such a research design. Thus, many areas of potential future research were highlighted. For instance, the findings of this study point to a need for further investigation into the development of the “Young Dream”. Some of the factors influencing its initial inception and subsequent development were illustrated in the

present sample of Lebanese professional women, however the extent to which such a concept exists in other groups of women is unknown and needs to be explored.

The present study focused only on the development of the origins of these women's Dreams during childhood and adolescence. Further research needs to be done to explore the impact of the "Young Dream" on the Dream's development throughout adulthood in Lebanese professional women. How did the challenges unique to each developmental stage of adulthood impact their Dreams? How did they continue to negotiate cultural and societal pressures regarding gender role definitions? Who supported and nurtured their professional development during this time?

Seven out of nine of the women in this sample had siblings who succeeded professionally or at least pursued professional degrees. This is an interesting finding that further highlights the emphasis and value that the families of these women placed on education and the development of career aspirations. However, this study did not focus on examining the particular influence that siblings had on the development of the women's Young Dreams. The literature shows that "family experiences with siblings can begin to influence one's career choice process very early on" (Altman, 1997, p.234). Very often, siblings provide challenge and competition for one another, as well as a context for identity development. Altman (1997) writes, "Just as one's environment and relationships play a role in the shaping and development of personality traits, sibling and other relationships contribute to one's career identity. Young people learn about who they are as well as who they are not, in the context of their relationships with their family members and others" (p. 236). While some of the women in this study described their siblings as serving as "examples to follow" as well as providing sources of "comparison

and motivation”, no further inquiry into these influences was undertaken. It would be very interesting to study more closely the impact of sibling relationships on Lebanese women’s professional aspirations. What are the differences between relationships with brothers and sisters? Do the women have more of a desire to emulate or compete with their brothers? What particular influences do older vs. younger siblings have on the development of the Young Dream? These are only a few of many interesting questions to be explored.

In depth interviews with the family members, particularly the parents, of these women would be an interesting follow-up to the present study. This would allow for a more complete examination of the development of these Lebanese women’s “Young Dreams” by providing some insight into the roots of their parents’ attitudes. As described previously, the data demonstrate the importance of the women’s parents to the development of their “Young Dreams”, and interviews with these parents would provide a unique perspective into the nature of this influence. Such interviews would also allow for an interesting exploration of the similarities and differences between the perceptions of each parent and his or her daughter, in terms of the development of her “Young Dream”.

### **Limitations of This Study**

The biographical method used in this study has inherent limitations, especially in its reliance on the participants’ “memory and reconstruction” (Levinson, 1996, p. 9). The women in this sample were asked to recall and describe events that occurred during their childhood and adolescence, thus subjecting their narratives to the confines of human

memory. Furthermore, because of the emotionally rich nature of the material elicited, it is likely that “the personality and defensive style of the subject, as well as the level of comfort and trust developed between the interviewer and the subject, were important variables in the construction of the narrative” (Brewster, 1998, p. 218). For instance, some of the women interviewed had visible difficulties when discussing certain aspects of their pasts, but were open to exploring these issues. Others, however, simply omitted difficult areas or asked to stop discussing certain topics. These variations in defensive style and personality were seen as significant data and aided in the understanding of each woman’s unique story.

It is also important to take into account the limitations created by the process of constructing a history from a narrative account of past experience. Although procedures were followed during the analysis of the data to minimize investigator bias, one can do only one’s best to remain as true as possible to each subject’s account and apply one’s clinical skills to “minimize personalized distortions” (Furst, 1983, p. 332) on the part of both participants.

Due to the small sample size, the ideas generated in this study cannot be used to make broad conclusions or to generalize to a larger population. Additionally, most of the women in this sample came from middle to upper class families, therefore privileges related to social class may have played a role in the findings. However, the results of this study provide a great deal of very useful and rich information from which to begin to understand the professional development of Lebanese women.

### **Clinical Implications**

**Developing an understanding of the earliest circumstances contributing to Lebanese professional women's career aspirations is important to clinical work with this population. The data generated in the present study suggest that during childhood, a Lebanese professional woman develops integral aspects of her identity and personality as she creates her Young Dream. An analysis of this Young Dream and the various influences on its development reveals significant information about the woman's relationship with her parents, the nature of her childhood identifications, as well as important cultural and familial values. Furthermore, this information provides the clinician with greater insight into and understanding of how and why she made her earliest life choices.**

**It is important for clinicians working with any population to have an understanding of the earliest influences on their development, namely those in childhood. The meanings of psychological conflicts and stressors are enriched by an awareness of current developmental tasks as well as unresolved childhood conflicts. For Lebanese professional women, in particular, the cultural and societal pressures that must be navigated and negotiated on the road to their career development are often significant and impact their personalities in important ways that must be taken into account in any treatment context. In working with this population, the clinician should be particularly sensitive to issues related to ambivalence regarding their professional roles. While the women in this study grew up in supportive familial environments, they were also faced with contradictory messages regarding gender role expectations coming from the larger**

social and cultural environments. Furthermore, even within their supportive family environments, some ambivalence on the part of the parents, regarding gender roles was often present, most likely leading to some ambivalence within the women themselves. These issues may be particularly salient during transitional periods, such as marriage and the birth of children.

Given the importance of an individual's culture to his/her basic sense of self, it is imperative that in the analytic situation, these factors are integrated into the therapeutic work. Culture is an intrinsic aspect of the analytic dyad and "any attempt to understand how the interpersonal world looks to a patient or how meaning is created within a dyad must take account of the cultural meaning-making systems brought to the interaction by each participant" (Altman, 1995, p. 113). Therefore, an understanding of the Lebanese woman's childhood experiences and the circumstances impacting the development of her earliest visions of herself in the future, will provide valuable information about the cultural context from which she comes as well as a deeper appreciation of the woman she is today.

**APPENDIX A: Description of Subjects**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Age at Interview</b>	<b>Professional Degree</b>	<b>Current Job</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>
Samia	1961	40	M.D.	OB/GYN Physician	Married	three
Amal	1955	45	Ph.D. in Education Leadership M.B.A.	CEO of Local Television Station	Married	two
Salwa	1961	40	M.A. in Electrical Engineering	Research Engineer in Government Agency	Married	two
Nadia	1963	38	M.B.A.	Vice President of Post Production at major film studio	Single	none
Yasmine	1952	48	Ph.D. Biochemistry	Chair of Math & Science Dept. at Gifted High School	Married	two
Maya	1962	39	M.A. in Economics Ph.D. in Economics, in progress	Associate in an International Finance Company	Single	none
Marie	1964	37	M.A. in Christian Education M.A. in Education Ed.D., in progress	Elementary School Teacher	Single	none
Layla	1964	36	M.B.A. M.A. in Electrical Engineering	Director of Marketing at large U.S. company	Single	none
Christiane	1969	31	M.A. International Development Studies	Consultant at an International Bank	Married	none

**APPENDIX B: Cover Letter and Demographic Questionnaire Sent to Subjects**

Dear Volunteer:

First of all, let me thank you for taking the time to help me with my research project. The purpose of this study is to explore the early life experiences of Lebanese professional women and allow them to share the ways in which they made their earliest life choices and the transformation these choices have undergone. I am particularly interested in the ways in which Lebanese cultural and societal values impact the development of their professional aspirations throughout childhood and adolescence. This research is being conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology at The City College of the City University of New York.

Your participation will enhance our collective understanding of several important and timely issues regarding Lebanese professional women and work, as well as provide you with an opportunity to review your life history. I plan to meet with you for two to three tape recorded interviews, each lasting approximately two to three hours, at a location and time of your convenience. Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time. All responses are confidential.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could please fill out the preliminary questionnaire enclosed. When you have completed the questionnaire, please put it in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided and mail it to me at your earliest convenience. After I receive your completed questionnaire, I will contact you to schedule the first interview. Should you have any questions regarding the study or your participation in it, please call me at (305) 577-1077.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Chartouni

***Demographic Questionnaire*****Name:****Address:****Telephone # (home and business):****Date and Place of Birth:****Marital Status (Single, Married, Separated/Divorced):****Number and Ages of Children, if any:****Level of Education (B.A., B.S., M.A., M.B.A., M.D., Ph.D., Ed.D):****Did all education take place in Lebanon? (please fill in where schooling took place):**

**Elementary**  
**Middle School**  
**High School**  
**Graduate School**

**Current Place of Employment:****Current Job Title at Place of Employment:****Family Composition:**

**Number of siblings and birth order**  
**Age of family members**  
**Level of education of family members**  
**Profession of family members**

## **APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form**

### ***To the Participant:***

The purpose of this study is to explore the early life experiences of Lebanese professional women, and to allow them to share the ways in which they made their earliest life choices and the transformation these choices have undergone. I am particularly interested in the ways in which Lebanese cultural and societal values impact the development of their professional aspirations throughout childhood and adolescence. This research is being conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctorate of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology at The City College of the City University of New York.

Lebanese professional women between the ages of 30 and 48 are being asked to participate in this study. I plan to meet with you for two to three tape-recorded interviews, each lasting approximately two hours. The interviews will occur at a location and time of your convenience.

I appreciate and respect your willingness to participate in this research project. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this research at any time. At any time, during the interviews or afterwards, I will be available to meet with you to discuss any concerns or questions that you may have about the interviews or your participation in this study.

All research data will be confidential. You have a right to review all or any portion of the interview audio tapes. In the presentation of the data and/or publication, all identifying information will be changed and pseudonyms will be used to preserve anonymity.

If you have any questions or complaints about your rights as a participant, you may call Ethel Breheny, Institutional Review Board Administrator, at (212) 650-7903 during office hours. If you have any further questions about the study, you may call me at (305) 577-1077, or Dr. Anderson J. Franklin, Professor of Psychology at the City College of the City University of New York at (212) 650-5666. Please sign below indicating your understanding of the above and your willingness to participate in this study of Lebanese professional women. Thank you.

Vanessa A. Chartouni  
Doctoral Candidate  
Clinical Psychology  
The City College of the City University of New York

***To be completed by the participant:***

I have read the above statement and understand both the purpose and procedures to be used in this study. I have been given a copy of this form to keep. I agree to participate in this study as described.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address and phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D: Semi-Structured Interview Of Lebanese Professional Women**

***Note: Although very detailed questions are listed in this interview, these questions will serve as a guideline for the interviewer- a reminder of the important areas of information to be gathered.***

### ***Demographic Information (Will be collected in written form before interview)***

- Name:
- Address:
- Phone Number:
- Age:
- Date of Birth:
- Religion:
- Marital Status:
- Number of Children:
- Level of Education:
- Level of Education Completed in Lebanon:
- Year Left Lebanon:
- Current Place of Work and Position
- Family Composition:
  - Number of siblings and birth order
  - Age of family members
  - Level of education of family members
  - Professions of family members
- Religious Background

### ***Current Time***

- How would you describe yourself? (When you think about yourself, as a person, what comes to mind?)
- Tell me about your life now. (What are the most central and most important aspects of your life?)
  - Probe A:* Where do you live? With whom?
  - Probe B:* Who are the most important people in your life at this time?
- Describe your professional life.
- Describe your family or personal life.
- Describe the balance in your professional and personal lives.
- How satisfied are you with this balance? [1 (not at all) to 5 (completely satisfied)]
- Is there anything you would like to change?

### ***Early Developmental and Family History***

- When you think about your childhood, what comes to mind? (or Tell me about your childhood.)
  - Obtain information on: *Family composition*- description of family, including birth order of siblings, ages of family members, level of education of family members and their professions; *Family history*- religious background, living situation, immigration history, deaths, separations or divorces, SES)
- Tell me about your relationship with your mother.
  - Probe information about work history.
  - What is most positive aspect of this relationship? Most negative?
- Tell me about your relationship with your father.
  - Probe information about his work history.
  - What is most positive aspect of this relationship? Most negative?
- Tell me about your relationship with your sibling(s) (*if applicable*)
  - Probe information about their careers.
  - What is most positive aspect of this relationship? Most negative?
- What did you learn about work from your parents?
- How did you view your parents' professions or occupations as a young girl?
- How did your father feel about his choice of profession or work?
  - Probe about degree of satisfaction.
- How did your mother feel about her choice of profession or work? (*if applicable*)
- How do you think your mother felt about traditional Lebanese women's roles?
- How do you think your father felt about traditional Lebanese women's roles?
- Did your parents have Dreams that were realized or frustrated?
- Did your parents have Dreams or ambitions for you as a young girl?
  - *Probe*: What did your parents expect of you while you were growing up?
- Did you have a Dream or vision of what your life would be like as a woman?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- Tell me about your interests or activities as a young girl.
  - *Probe A*: Did you engage in competitive activities? Of what sort?
  - *Probe B*: Who were your playmates? Did you play with girls? Did you play with boys?
- How did you feel about being a girl?

- Describe any other adults in your life with whom you had a significant relationship as a young girl.
- Did you have a special role model as a young girl?
- When did you first get the idea that you wanted to work in (*current profession*)?
  - *Probe A*: How did you develop it?
  - *Probe B*: Did you tell anyone about this idea? What was their response?
  - *Probe C*: Did you know anyone who in this profession?
- What made your parents proud of you as a young girl?
- What role did religion play in your family as a young girl?

***\*\*Probe throughout for the existence of childhood support systems and influences on the precursors to the Dream.***

### ***Adolescence***

- Describe your adolescence.
- Describe your relationship with your father.
- How did your father envision your life as an adult woman?
  - Probe A*: Did he encourage you to have a profession or a career?
  - Probe B*: Did he see you in the domestic sphere of family and home?
  - Probe C*: How did you feel about your father's vision of your future?
- Describe your relationship with your mother.
- How did your mother envision your life as an adult woman?
  - Probe A*: Did she encourage you to have a profession or a career?
  - Probe B*: Did she see you in the domestic sphere of family and home?
  - Probe C*: How did you feel about your mother's vision of your future?
- Describe your parents' relationship.
- Describe your relationships with your siblings. (*if applicable*)
- Describe your interests or favorite activities during adolescence.
- Who were your friends?
  - Probe A*: Did you ever talk about your future careers with them?
  - Probe B*: If so, what were their reactions to your ideas about your future occupation?
- Did you have an important teacher or mentor?
- At what point do you remember being interested in boys? How was this handled in your family?
- Did you think seriously about an adult occupation or career? Did you talk to anyone about it? What was their response?
- What meaning did the notion of career have in your family?
- What were your thoughts on marriage and children?

### ***Early Adult Transition (age 17 to 22-23)***

- How did you make the decision about which college to attend?
- If you left home for college, what was that like for you?
- Describe your experience in college.
  - Probe A:* Best experience?
  - Probe B:* Worst experience?
- Describe the important relationships that you developed in college.
  - Probe A:* Were all these relationships new?
  - Probe B:* Did you date?
- How did you choose a major? Did you feel that your gender influenced your choice of a major?
- Did you have a Dream in college?
  - Probe:* How is it different or similar from the Dream you had as a child?
- What kind of career did you think about having? Did you talk to anyone about your career aspirations? What was their response?
- Did you feel that your gender influenced your choice of careers?
- What were your thoughts about marriage and children?
- Were you concerned about balancing home and work commitments?
- Did you have a mentor or important professor in your life?
- How did you make the decision to go to graduate school? Who did you talk to about it?
- What was graduate school like for you? How did our male/female classmates respond to you?
- What made your parents proud of you during adolescence?

### ***Entry Life Structure (age 22-23 to 28-29)***

- Describe your life during your twenties.
- How did you get your first job? What was it like in your job at this particular time?
- How do you think your gender influenced your job(s) during this time?
  - Probe A:* Did you ever feel discriminated against on the basis of gender?
  - Probe B:* Did you ever feel that being a woman was advantageous in any way?
- Describe your level of satisfaction in your position?
- Describe your experiences in graduate school.
  - Probe A:* How did you make the decision to attend graduate school?
  - Probe B:* How did your family respond?
  - Probe C:* What was your best experience in graduate school? Worst experience?

- Did you have a Dream during your twenties? How was it the same or different from the one you had during your childhood and adolescence?
- Was your profession helping you to attain your Dream?
- Did you have a mentor? If so, describe your relationship with your mentor?
- How did you feel about balancing your work and personal commitments?
- Describe your relationship with your family of origin during this time. Did it change? How so?
- How did your family of origin feel about your choice of careers?
- Did you feel supported by others as you began your career?
- What sort of difficulties did you face as you began your career?
- If married, what was your relationship with your spouse like at this time?
  - Probe A:* How did your spouse feel about your career?
  - Probe B:* How did you feel about balancing your relationship with work?
- If not married, did you think about married? Did you have a significant relationship?
- How did you make the decision to start a family? If deferred, how did you feel about the decision?
- If had children, how did you balance career and family life?
  - Probe A:* How was this time for you?
  - Probe B:* How did you manage it?
  - Probe C:* Were there any people that supported you during this time?

### ***Age Thirty Transition (age 28-29 to 33-34)***

- Describe any changes that occurred in your career and personal life during your late 20's and early 30's.
- Describe your Dream during your late 20's and early 30's. How is/was it different from your Dream during your early and mid 20's?
- How do you think your gender influenced your job at this time?
- How did you feel about working as (*position*) at this time?
  - Probe:* Describe your level of satisfaction in this role.
- Describe any mentor relationships you had at this time.
- If married, what was your marriage like at this time?
- If not married, were you in a relationship? If so, tell me about it.
- If you had children, how did you balance career and family life? Describe what it was like to be a working mother.
- How did you feel about not having children at this time?
- What was your family of origin's role in your life at this time?
  - Probe:* How did they feel about your career and personal life?

### ***Culminating Life Structure (ages 33-36 to 40-41)***

- What was your career like at this point in time?
- How do you think your gender influenced your job at this time?
- How did you feel working as (*position*) at this time?
- As you became more successful in terms of position and compensation, how did other people (husband/boyfriend, parents, siblings, children and friends) respond to your achievements?
- What became of your mentoring relationship during this time?
- Did you become a mentor for someone else?
- How did you feel about the balance between of your work and personal life at this time?
  - *Probe:* If married, what was your marriage and family life like at this time?
- Describe the obstacles, if any, to your career advancement at this point. How did you manage them?

### ***Midlife Transition (ages 40-41 to 45-46) and Entry Life Structure to Middle Adulthood (ages 45-50)***

- What is your career like at this point?
- How do you think your gender influences your job at this time?
- How do you feel working as (*position*) during this time?
- How do you think that your role as (*position/title*) has affected your growth as a person? Describe how it has allowed you to grow?
- What is your marriage, family, or personal life like at this time?
- How do other people (husband/boyfriend, parents, siblings, friends and co-workers) view your success?
- What, if any, are the obstacles to your career advancement at this point? How do you manage them?
- Describe your support systems during this time.
- To what do you attribute your career success?
- Have you been a mentor to others?
- Do you entertain ideas of doing something else in your career?
- How are you balancing your career and family or personal life at this time?

### ***Concluding Questions***

- What advice would you give young Lebanese women today about your careers?
- What's next for you in life and work? (Where do you see yourself in 10 years from now, personally and professionally?)
- Do you feel as though you have achieved your Dream?

- Looking back now on your professional development, is there anything that you would change?  
*Probe: Have there been moments during which you have doubted your choices? If so, describe them.*
- What are your aspirations for your daughters (*if applicable*)? *OR* What would they be, if you had a daughter?

***Throughout interview, keep in mind the following areas:***

- ***Personal values: Religion? Politics? Sex? How different is she from the cultural norms in Lebanon? How different was she from her parents while growing up, and how did they feel about her aspirations?***
- ***Social Awareness and Involvement: How aware and involved was she in the social and political situation in Lebanon and around the war?***
- ***War: What was her involvement in the war? How did the war affect her professional development? How did the war affect her personal development?***
- ***Career Development: Who most influenced her earliest career aspirations and its development?***

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