

ADOLESCENT-FAMILY CONNECTEDNESS AMONG ARABS A Second Cross-Regional Research Study

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The Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale was administered to 2,893 Arab adolescents in eight Arab societies. Results show that adolescent-family connectedness differs significantly across the Arab societies. Arabs scored higher in emotional, financial, functional, and total connectedness than Americans. Female adolescents were more connected than male adolescents in all three kinds of connectedness. A low but significant effect of urbanization was found on emotional and financial connectedness. First-born adolescents scored higher in financial connectedness. Further studies that employ additional tools such as interviews, observations, and parents' self-report are needed.

Keywords: connectedness; autonomy; individuation; authoritarian; Arab; Muslims; culture

This second study in this series examines the parents'-adolescents' connectedness in Arab societies. As mentioned earlier in the introduction (pp. **PLS. INSERT**), the ideological underpinnings of Western theories view the person as an individual and self-contained unit (Sampson, 1988). Many theories of psychological development describe a normal process of individuation that culminates in the person's having an independent self or identity (Blos, 1967; Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1935/1960, 1949; Mahler, Bergman, & Pine, 1975). These theories represent the Western culture and are far from being universal. Individuation as well as child-parents connectedness is a major area in which collective cultures differ from individualistic cultures. Adolescents in Western societies are expected to be individuated from their families, having their own attitudes and values, emotional detachment, and self-reliance (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Markus and Kitayama (1998) found that most Western theories of personality consider the individual to be autonomous. Personality determines and causes behavior; explains behavioral individual differences, expressed in consistent behavior in terms of situation and time; and allows us to understand, predict, and control behavior. Conversely, adolescents in more collectivistic and authoritarian cultures in Asia, Africa, and South America, where the sociocultural system is still collective and authoritarian, are not encouraged to develop separately from their

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families and are not, therefore, expected to pass through the same process of individuation toward a differentiated self and identity. In these societies, individuals continue to be enmeshed in their families, and the concept of self is collectivistic and not different from the familial self and identity (Dwairy, 2004a **OR b?**; Triandis, 1990, 1996). Markus and Kitayama (1998) claim that the self in collective societies is not autonomous but is connected to an in-group. It directs its energy toward achieving group rather than personal goals. The behavior of the individual is more situational and contextual than dispositional and controlled by external factors that emphasize roles and norms. Priority is given to interpersonal responsibilities rather than to justice and individual rights. Members of such societies experience more other-focused emotions (e.g., sympathy and shame) rather than ego-focused ones.

As noted in the first study, Kagitcibasi (1996, 2005) suggests that autonomy and relatedness should be looked at as being compatible. She thinks that societies vary in the extent to which they try to meet these two basic human needs, and she proposed the term "autonomous-related self" to understand people in changing collectivistic societies. According to her model, people in different cultures are not either autonomous or related but rather may be spread in a two-dimensional space: autonomy-heteronomy and separation-relatedness. To characterize and describe the changing family in the world, she described three prototypes of family systems: "Emotional and material interdependence" that is common among traditional families, "emotional and material independence" that is common in individualistic societies, and "material independence but psychological interdependence" between generations. The third family prototype is common among societies that are passing through a process of modernization where parents and children are no longer materially interdependent although they continue to be psychologically dependent. Parents in these families instill both relatedness and autonomy.

James Georgas and his colleagues (2001) have studied the psychological and functional closeness between students and their nuclear and extended families in 16 Western and non-Western countries. They found a significant effect of culture on closeness between individual and mother, father, siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and cousins. Nevertheless, they found a picture of universality in the patterns of closeness across the different relatives. It seems that patterns of closeness do not differ systematically across cultures.

As compared to the West, the Arab societies, in general, tend to be collective and authoritarian (Gregg, 2005). In Kagitcibasi's terms, most Arabs tend to fit the heteronomous-related-self typology and live in emotional and material interdependence. Socialization of children is relatively authoritarian, disobedience to the parents' wishes not being allowed (Dwairy, 1997, 1998, in press). As a result, Arab adolescents continue to be psychologically undifferentiated from their family. Timimi (1995) postulated that Arab youth do not achieve individual autonomy because loyalty is to the family. Racy (1970) noted that the roles and opportunities of adolescents are defined from birth and that the range of individual identity is limited. Arab parents do not expect their adolescents to act out, become self-centered, or engage in nonconformist behavior (Racy, 1970). Within this general trend of collectivism, variations in the individual autonomy of Arab youth can be observed in the 22 Arab countries.

A few empirical research studies have been conducted to examine the Arab adolescent's individuation, bonding, or connectedness with his or her parents. Daeem (1993) found that female Arab adolescents in Israel were less individuated than their Jewish counterparts and expected the family to react against their autonomy and be more antagonistic to their choices. In a study of Arab youth in Lebanon, the majority reported that they follow their parents' directions in all areas of life, such as social behavior, interpersonal relationships,

marriage, occupational preference, and political attitudes. It is interesting that they reported they do not suffer from this interdependent relationship and are even satisfied with this way of life (Hatab & Makki, 1978). The authoritarian intervention of Arab parents seems to be accepted peacefully by adolescents. According to the *Arab Woman Developmental Report* (2003), 87% of Arab adolescent girls in Lebanon and Bahrain described their relationship with their parents as good to excellent (pp 138-175). A research study conducted among university students in Saudi Arabia reported that the students' parents had a significant impact on their children's decision making. The researchers mentioned, for example, that 100% of the sample consulted their parents before making a decision regarding their marriage, 70% consulted their parents before making a decision to travel, and 12% consulted their parents before choosing their majors in the university (Kritem, Abu Rakhbah, & Al-Aissawi, 1981, cited in Achoui, 2004). The majority of Saudi students reported that their families have a great impact on their study and motivation (Achoui, 2004). Among Egyptian college students, 64.4% of women and 33.1% of men favored "absolute submission" to parents. As for differentiation from parents, 57.7% of female and 25.7% of male students favored children having the same character and morals as their parents (Al-Khawaja, 1999).

Dwairy (2002) claimed that the identity of most Arab youth tends to be collective rather than individualistic. When the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status was used to examine the ego identity of Arab youth (17-18 years old) in Israel, results showed that their identities tend to be *foreclosed* and contextual as compared to American youth. These results indicate that Arab youth adopt commitments from others (usually the family) and accept them as their own without shaping, modifying, or testing them for personal fit and without passing through a *moratorium* phase as American youth do (Dwairy, 2004a).

When the influence of urbanization and sex factors on adolescent-family connectedness was examined among Arab adolescents in Israel, the results revealed that urban adolescents were more financially connected than nonurban and that adolescent girls displayed a higher level of connectedness to their families than boys did (Dwairy, 2003, 2004b). The gender differences found in this study concur with those observed in the study of Gavazzi and Sabatelli (1990), who found that American male adolescents are less financially dependent than female adolescents.

Parents treat first-born children in a special way. Axelson (1999) claimed that first-born children "tend to receive more attention, are likely to carry the family's ambitions, and are assigned a dominant role with respect to later children" (p. 285). This description fits Arab first-born children, too, who carry the parents' aspirations, on one hand, and enjoy more parental attention, care, and indulgence, on the other. Some research results have indicated that the first-born Arab child is treated more gently than the other children in the family (Achoui, 2003 **OR** 2004?; Al-Teer, 1997). These differences between first-born and other children are expected to influence the process of individuation and the parent-child connectedness.

Despite the cultural diversity in Arab countries (Al-Kathem, 1999; Bu-Makhloof, 1999; Hallaq, 2001; United Nations Development Program, 2002), to our knowledge no cross-regional research has so far been conducted in the Arab countries concerning the adolescent-parents relationship. This study intends to examine the adolescent-parents connectedness in eight Arab countries (societies) and tests the effect of country, sex, birth order, urbanization, and parents' education on adolescent-family connectedness. It was hypothesized that connectedness varies across Arab countries (societies). Based on former findings among Palestinians in Israel, it was hypothesized that girls are more connected than boys; adolescents from urban areas tend to be more connected than those from rural areas, and first-born children are more connected than other children.

METHOD

INSTRUMENT

Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale (MIS): This scale is intended to measure the connectedness between the individual and the family. Based on the belief that the personal level of individuation may be inferred from the quality and degree of connectedness between self and family members, the MIS may reflect the respondents' personal level of individuation (Lopez & Gover, 1993).

The MIS was developed by Gavazzi and Sabatelli (1987), and consists of three subscales intended to assess emotional, financial, and functional connectedness between adolescent and family (see Table 1). An identical analysis using a different sample subsequently confirmed this three-factor solution (Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1988). The Emotional (psychological) Connectedness subscale consists of 15 items that address the respondent's degree of emotional dependence on family members and the need for family approval. The Financial Connectedness subscale (8 items) reflects the respondent's monetary reliance on family members, and the Functional Connectedness subscale (8 items) refers to the sharing of daily routines with family.

The alpha coefficients of the emotional, functional, and financial subscales were .84, .82, and .86, respectively. As for the construct validity of the scale, Gavazzi and Sabatelli reported that older individuals, individuals living on their own, and individuals whose parents were divorced scored lower on the MIS. Individuals involved in an exclusive dating relationship reported lower connectedness in the functional subscale. Emotional and financial connectedness scores correlated negatively with a measure of "psychological maturity," and the emotional subscale was a significant predictor of psychosocial maturity. Males scored consistently lower than females. Older males or males who live apart from their parents reported the least connectedness in MIS (Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1987, 1988, 1990).

An Arabic version of the MIS was translated and back translated and validated among 518 male and female Arab adolescents in Grades 10 and 12 in Israel (Dwairy, 2003). Principal factor analysis with a priori three-factors solution and varimax rotation showed good convergence of the items into three subscales. Cronbach alpha coefficients for the Emotional, Financial, and Functional Connectedness subscales were .68, .83, and .71, respectively.

PARTICIPANTS

The MIS, in addition to other scales, was administered to 2,893 Arab adolescents in eight Arab societies (for more details, see the introduction).

VALIDATION OF MIS AMONG ARABS

The wide cultural diversity in Arab societies necessitated validation of the MIS before its implementation as a measure of connectedness. Thus, the internal structural validity of the MIS was tested by an item-total subscale, principal factor analysis, and Cronbach's alpha. The item-total scale score correlation of 30 items (excluding Item 23) of the MIS was significant ($p < .001$) and ranged between .18. and .57, with an average item-total correlation of .43. Item-total correlation of Item 23 was $-.29$. Principal components factor analysis yielded seven factors with eigenvalues above 1.00, together accounting for 51.13% of the variance. After a varimax rotation, all the items of the Emotional Connectedness subscale

TABLE 1
Items and Loadings on Three Subscales of the
Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale (*n* = 2,471)

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor</i>		
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Emotional Connectedness	1	I feel upset when family members do not approve of people I am intimate with.		.30
	2	I feel guilty about continuing a relationship with someone family members do not like.		.55
	3	When . . . family member disapproves something I have done, I feel obliged to change57
	4	I rely on family members' approval to let me know I am doing things right.	.22	.47
	5	I feel obliged to spend time with family.	.32	.41
	6	If I did not follow advice that a family member offered, I would feel guilty.	.21	.56
	7	I feel guilty when I do not take the side of a family member in a disagreement with others.		.45
	8	When family members ask me to do certain things, I feel guilty when I have to say no.		.62
	9	I become upset when family members criticize my behavior.		.34
	10	I ask whether or not family members approve of people I am intimate with.		.39
	11	I feel obliged to stop associating with friends my family members do not like.		.53
	12	When I am told I have done something which hurt other family members I feel guilty.		.67
	13	I become upset at the thought of telling a family member they are interfering in my life.		.41
	14	There are certain things I do for members of my family because I have a obligation to.		.49
	15	I choose friends that family members will like and feel comfortable with.	.34	.42
Financial Connectedness	16	Family members help me pay for large transportation costs.	.53	
	17	I pay for my own clothing.	.54	
	18	Family members help me pay for major life expenses.	.72	
	19	Family members give me money to spend on pleasurable things for myself.	.66	.21
	20	Family members help me pay for necessary purchases.	.77	
	21	Family members buy me things I need but have not yet brought myself.	.69	
	22	I pay for my own transportation expenses.	.53	
	23	I am able to borrow money from family members when I am short of cash (excluded because of the negative item-scale correlation).		
Functional Connectedness	24	Family members watch T.V. and go to the movies with me.	.34	.48
	25	I am involved in hobbies with family members.		.74
	26	Family members spend leisure time with me doing nothing in particular.		.72

(Continued)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Subscale	Item	Factor		
		1	2	3
	27		.31	.27
	28		.40	.31
	29		.70	
	30	.28	.51	
	31		.53	

Note: Loadings less than .20 are omitted. **PLS. EXPLAIN BOLDFACE NUMBERS.**

(Items 1 to 15) loaded high (ranging from .36 to .69) exclusively on the second, fourth, and sixth factors. Seven out of the eight items of the Financial Connectedness subscale (Items 16 to 22) loaded high (ranging from .66 to .79) exclusively on the first and fifth factors. All the items of the Functional Connectedness subscale (Items 24 to 31) loaded high (ranging from .43 to .78) exclusively on the third and the seventh factors. Based on the theoretical structure of the MIS, which suggests three factors, and on the spread of the loadings on the seven factors, a three-factor solution was adopted. Another factor analysis with three a priori factors, a varimax rotation solution, and a .20 loading criterion was conducted on 30 items (excluding Item 23 because of the negative item-scale correlation) and provided the most meaningful clustering of items, accounting together for 34.65% of the total variance (see Table 1). Factor analysis conducted for each country separately revealed similar results. The explained variance of the three factors varied between 29.69% in Egypt and 38.37% in Israel. In each country, only one or two items did not load appropriately on the expected factor. These items were not the same ones in the various country factor analyses.

The recommended criterion for measures of this type of internal consistency is a coefficient greater than .70 (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 1982). After excluding Item 23, the Cronbach coefficient alpha for the 30-item scale was .84. The coefficients for Emotional, Financial, and Functional Connectedness were .78, .77, and .75, respectively. Based on the results of the factor analysis and the Cronbach alpha, the MIS seems to have internal construct validity among a large sample of Arab adolescents from a variety of societies and countries. Further analyses were conducted on MIS when Item 23 was excluded.

RESULTS

CONNECTEDNESS ACROSS ARAB SOCIETIES

One-way ANOVA was conducted to test the differences in adolescent-family connectedness between Arab societies. The three scores of connectedness were summed in one score of connectedness. Connectedness was significantly different across the Arab societies, $F(6) = 3.86$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Out of 21 pair comparisons, the differences in the total connectedness were significant among 8 pairs. The Saudis and the Palestinians in

TABLE 2
Significance of Differences Between Countries in Emotional,
Financial, and Functional Connectedness

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Emotional						
1 Egypt						
2 Algeria	.000					
3 Lebanon	<i>ns</i>	.001				
4 Jordan	<i>ns</i>	.000	<i>ns</i>			
5 Palestinian	.043	.000	.050	<i>ns</i>		
6 Saudi Arabia	.001	<i>ns</i>	.003	.000	.000	
7 Palestinians in Israel	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.011	.000	.035
Financial						
1 Egypt						
2 Algeria	<i>ns</i>					
3 Lebanon	.008	.000				
4 Jordan	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.014			
5 Palestinian	.000	.000	<i>ns</i>	.001		
6 Saudi Arabia	<i>ns</i>	.004	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
7 Palestinians in Israel	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.006	<i>ns</i>	.000	<i>ns</i>
Functional						
1 Egypt						
2 Algeria	<i>ns</i>					
3 Lebanon	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>				
4 Jordan	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>			
5 Palestinian	.043	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.015		
6 Saudi Arabia	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
7 Palestinians in Israel	.000	.000	.001	.000	.001	.000
Total connectedness						
1 Egypt						
2 Algeria	<i>ns</i>					
3 Lebanon	.050	<i>ns</i>				
4 Jordan	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.027			
5 Palestinian	.050	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.023		
6 Saudi Arabia	.005	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.002	<i>ns</i>	
7 Palestinians in Israel	.001	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	.000	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Israel scored the highest, whereas Egyptians and Jordanians scored the lowest in adolescent-family connectedness. When each kind of connectedness was examined separately, all three kinds of connectedness, emotional, financial, and functional, were different across Arab societies, $F(6) = 8.51, p < .0001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .021$; $F(6) = 5.68, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .014$; and $F(6) = 8.71, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .021$, respectively. LSD post hoc analysis revealed that about half of the differences between the countries were significant: Out of 21 pair comparisons, the differences in the emotional, financial, and functional connectedness were significant among 13, 9, and 8 pairs, respectively (see Table 2). Algeria and Saudi Arabia scored the highest in Emotional Connectedness, Lebanon and Palestinians in the occupied territories scored highest in Financial Connectedness, and the Palestinians in Israel as well as in the occupied territories scored highest in Functional Connectedness (see Figure 1).

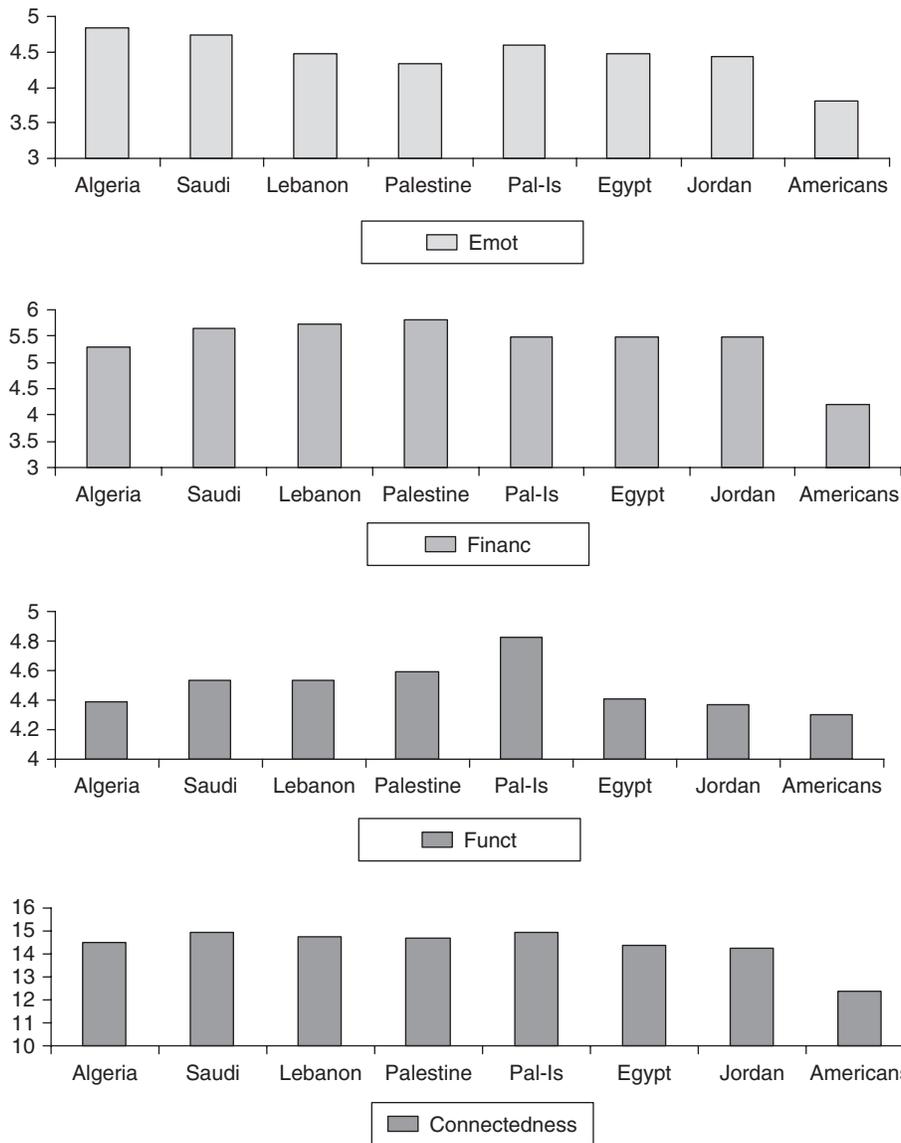


Figure 1: Emotional, Financial, Functional, and Total Adolescent-Parents Connectedness Among Arab Societies and Americans

NOTE: Pal-Is = Palestinians in Israel.

ARABS VERSUS AMERICANS

To compare the connectedness scores of Arabs and Americans, we compared the MIS scores of our cross-regional Arab sample ($n = 2,893$) with the MIS scores of a convenient sample of American adolescents ($n = 335$) as reported by Gavazzi and Sabatelli (1988). A two-sample t test was conducted and revealed significant differences between Arab and

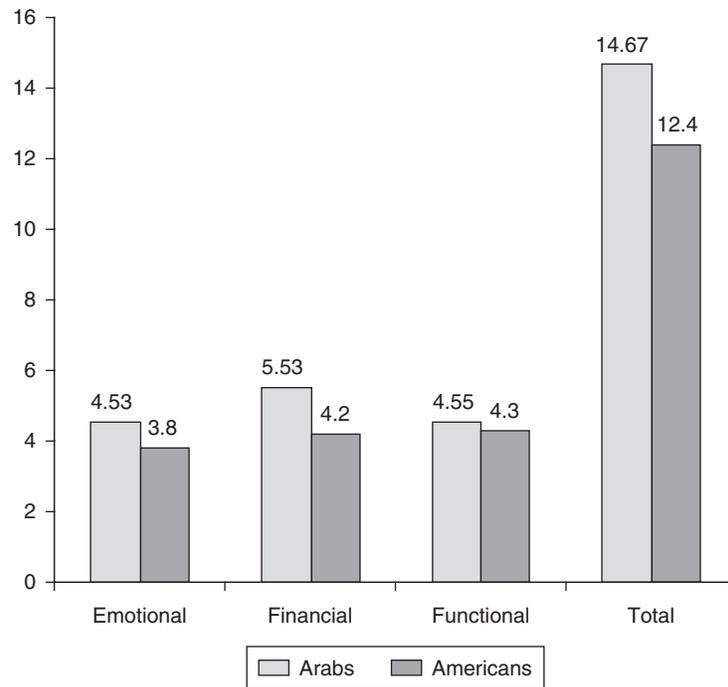


Figure 2: Means of Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale Scores Among Arab and American Adolescents

NOTE: American results are based on Gavazzi & Sabatelli (1988).

American adolescents. Arabs scored higher in emotional, financial, functional, and total connectedness, $t(2804) = 14.60$, $p < .0001$; $t(2864) = 23.01$, $p < .0001$; $t(2,854) = 3.35$, $p < .001$; and $t(2734) = 15.23$, $p < .0001$ (see Figure 2). When each Arab society was compared separately to the Americans, except for Jordanians in functional connectedness, all Arabs societies scored significantly higher than Americans in all measures of connectedness—emotional, financial, functional, and total connectedness.

EFFECT OF SEX AND URBANIZATION ON CONNECTEDNESS

Because it was assumed that socialization of females is different from the socialization of males in Arab society, the sex factor was expected to influence the effects of urbanization, birth order, and parents' education on connectedness, and therefore each variable was tested together with sex. To test the effect of sex and urbanization on the three kinds of connectedness, a 2×2 multivariate ANOVA was conducted. A significant main effect of sex was found on emotional, financial, and functional connectedness, $F(1, 2866) = 12.72$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .005$; $F(1, 2866) = 103.44$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .042$; $F(1, 2866) = 57.06$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .024$, respectively. Female adolescents were more connected in all three kinds of connectedness (emotional = 4.6, financial = 5.6, and functional = 4.8) than male adolescents (4.4, 5.1, and 4.3, respectively). A low but significant effect of urbanization was found on emotional and

financial connectedness, $F(1, 2866) = 4.71, p < .030$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$; $F(1, 2866) = 4.30, p < .038$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$, respectively, but not on functional connectedness. Urban adolescents were more emotionally and financially connected than their rural counterparts. No significant interaction between sex and urbanization was found.

EFFECT OF SEX AND BIRTH ORDER ON CONNECTEDNESS

The respondents were divided into two categories of children, first born and later born. The effect of birth order and sex on three kinds of connectedness was tested by a 2×2 multivariate ANOVA. In addition to the significant main effect of sex that was found, a significant main effect of being a first-born adolescent on financial connectedness was found, $F(1,2866) = 8.45, p < .004, \eta^2 = .004$. First-born adolescents scored higher in financial connectedness ($M = 5.63, SE = .046$) than later born ($M = 5.47, SE = .031$). No significant effect of birth order was found on emotional and functional connectedness, and no significant interaction between sex and birth order was found.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS' EDUCATION AND CONNECTEDNESS

As mentioned before, the parents' level of education was rated in five categories that ranged from 1 to 5. The average of the mothers' and the fathers' education was computed to indicate the parents' level of education. To test the relationship between the parents' level of education and connectedness, Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficients were calculated. The only coefficient found to be significant was between the parents' education and the financial connectedness ($r = .10, p < .000$). The higher the level of the parents' education, the more financial connectedness reported.

DISCUSSION

Half of the differences revealed by the comparison of adolescent-family connectedness in different Arab societies were significant. When the connectedness of adolescents in Arab societies was compared to the connectedness of American adolescents, Arab adolescents in all Arab societies scored higher than the American adolescents in almost all three kinds of connectedness. Despite the two samples not being exactly matched, this finding suggests that adolescents in all Arab societies are more connected to their families than are American adolescents. These findings give support to the notion that despite the increase in urbanization and industrialization in collective cultures, the closely knit interaction patterns continue (Kagitcibasi, 1996). Hence, all Arab societies, regardless of the level of modernization and urbanization, continue to foster connectedness and to discourage the individuation and independence of adolescents as compared to Americans.

Female adolescents were more connected than male adolescents in all three kinds of connectedness. Urban adolescents were more emotionally and financially connected than rural adolescents. These results are consistent with results of earlier studies of connectedness among Arabs in Israel (Dwairy, 2003, 2004b). The differences between urban and rural adolescents are related to differences in the lifestyles of the two groups. In the cities, adolescents are exposed to more challenges, and this causes them to feel a need for their parents' approval of their conduct and social relationships. This need may explain the increase in the emotional connectedness in the cities. In addition, adolescents in the cities

need an amount of money every day for transportation, meals, entertainment, cellular phones, gifts, and other social expenses, whereas adolescents who live in the villages do not feel any urgency for daily spending money, most of their needs being met within the family. This may explain the higher scores in financial connectedness among urban adolescents. These results do not, however, indicate an actual lower level of financial connectedness in the rural areas. Rural adolescents are almost totally financially dependent on their families, but within the collective lifestyle this dependency is invisible and less salient. The lack of difference in functional connectedness indicates that urban life does not influence the amount of time Arab adolescents and their families spend together. They continue to do things together as Arab adolescents in the villages do. This may indicate that urbanization in the Arab world has not weakened the family bonds. This explanation fits the results of other researchers who claim that Arabs who migrated to the cities in fact took their traditional culture with them and that the culture of urbanized adults does not therefore substantially differ from that of rural ones (Barakat, 1993, 2000). Many urban Arab families continue to maintain an extended family structure where three generations or more live together as one unit (Zayed & Lotfi, 1993).

First-born adolescents scored higher in financial connectedness than later born. These results fit the reports that older children are more indulged. It is interesting that this trend was observed equally whether the first-born child was male or female. This finding may indicate that sex differences in connectedness are minimized when it comes to first-born children. As for emotional and functional connectedness, first-born and other children experience a similar level of connectedness. Regardless of birth order, all Arab children are emotionally and functionally connected to their parents equally.

It was assumed that the greater exposure to Western culture of educated parents would result in their allowing their children to be more individuated. However, the results indicate that only minor differences in adolescent-family connectedness exist. Adolescent children of more educated parents were more connected with their parents only financially, whereas they were as emotionally and functionally connected as adolescents of less educated parents.

Taking the whole picture together, one can see from the comparative study that the effect of the independent variables (country, urbanization, sex, birth order, parents' education) on the three kinds of connectedness is smaller than the influence of culture (Arab vs. American). In fact, no subgroup within our sample had an equal or lower mean score than that of the Americans. The mean score of Arab male adolescents in functional connectedness ($M = 4.36$) was the only mean that was almost identical to that of Americans ($M = 4.3$). Arab male adolescents in emotional and financial connectedness as well as Arab females in all kinds of connectedness scored higher than their American counterparts. These differences have been observed regardless of the country, urbanization, birth order, and parents' education. Therefore, one can reach a conclusion that despite the intra-Arab variations, as a group Arab adolescents are more connected to their families than Americans are. These cross-cultural differences should not lead us to deny the similarity between American and Arab societies. In the last analysis, the differences are much smaller than the similarities. This picture of cross-cultural similarity and diversity fits Georgas et al.'s (2001) findings that both cross-cultural differences in closeness means and universality in the closeness patterns exist; it also fits Kagitcibasi's (1996, 2005) model, which claimed that people in most cultures need to be autonomous and related, and **PLS. COMPLETE SENTENCE.**

The cross-regional and large sample in our research is considered a major strength that gives our findings validity and credibility and enables them to be generalized to all

Arab countries. The main shortcoming of our research is that it is based on one self-report questionnaire. This was done in order to facilitate conducting the first cross-regional research in the Arab world. More cross-regional research is needed to validate the results through other tools (interviews, observations, and other questionnaires) that target the parents and the adolescents as well.

The implications of our results are widespread: They influence the understanding of psychological development of Arabs, the interpretation of many measures of maturity and independence when applied to Arab adolescents, and the process of counseling Arab adolescents. Psychological intervention among Arabs should take into consideration the strong interconnectedness between Arab adolescents and their families (Dwairy, in press).

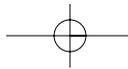
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