Uses of Free Time by Young Adults in Arab Mediterranean Countries: Exposing and Addressing Boundary Issues in Leisure Studies

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Abstract: Evidence on uses of free time in non-Western societies exposes and forces us to address several boundary problems in leisure studies. A combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence from nationally representative samples of 15-29 year olds in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia finds some familiar divisions in the age group's use of free time – by social class and gender. However, the evidence also reveals some region-specific features: namely that for many young people free time is less clearly separated from the rest of life than in Western societies, work and play are frequently fused, and religious and political participation are sometimes pivotal in young people's bundles of free time activities (youth sub-cultures).

Keywords: Arab, free time, leisure, leisure studies, youth.

INTRODUCTION

Debatable Boundaries

Anyone practising the sociology of leisure, or any other branch of the leisure sciences or studies, implicitly accepts that leisure can be distinguished from other parts of life with sufficient clarity and precision to make the project viable. This is one boundary that leisure scholars must be willing to debate and defend if challenged. Another set of debatable boundaries bundles leisure times, activities and/or experiences into different categories. Overarching everything, we must decide whether all these boundaries can be applied to all, or just a bounded set of societies.

The majority practice among leisure scholars, most of whom have been based in North America, has been to treat leisure as a cultural universal, present throughout history in all places, albeit in different quantities and used in different ways (for example, Cheek and Burch, 1976; Cordes, 2013; Ning Wang, 2006; Purrington and Hickerson, 2013; Shivers, 1981; Spracklen, 2011). European historians, based in societies with longer histories, have been sceptical about claims that leisure is a universally applicable concept. They have noted that the word 'leisure' became a common part of everyday language only during the 19th century (Borsay, 2006), that previously leisure was regarded as a privilege of the wealthy (Cunningham, 1980), and that use of the term 'leisure' became prominent in debates about social problems and policies in Britain only between the 1880s and 1930s (Snape, 2018; Snape and Pussard, 2013). Chick (1998), an American, has found that only around 10 percent of world languages have words that can be faithfully translated into leisure as understood throughout present-day Euro-America. It is easier to find correspondences with free time, pastimes, games, amusements and sports.

As the study of leisure has been globalised within and beyond sociology, there has been some resistance to the imposition of a Western leisure concept onto other cultures (see, for example, Iwasaki *et al.,* 2007). In response Western scholars are being forced to recognise that their leisure terminology has been developed specifically to make sense of their own countries' versions of modernity (see Fox and Klaiber, 2006). Roberts (2006) claims that modern Western leisure is a product of:

i. The modernisation of work, specifically its separation from other parts of life by places and social relationships, and its rationalisation, that is, a willingness to discard traditions and discount affective considerations in the interests of maximising output or profits.

ii. The creation of options for the use of non-working time and spending on non-essentials. Choices must be made as a result of the alternative offers by commercial businesses, voluntary associations and public authorities.

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iii. Expansion of actors' scope for (relatively) free choice in uses of non-working time as a result of a weakening of traditional family, neighbourhood and religious controls; the pre-condition for individualisation (Beck, 1992).

The following passages present evidence on uses of 'leisure' by young adults in five Arab-Mediterranean countries. We will show that all the components of modern Western leisure are present - free time, sports, arts and crafts, and so forth – but only exceptionally in the package that was formed and normalised as Western countries industrialised and their ways of life were modernised. We find that our young adults' lives often blurred the boundary between free time, associated activities and experiences, and the rest of life, and that the different ways in which the young adults' free time was used are best understood using categories purpose built from their own accounts of their lives.

Evidence

Our evidence is from surveys in 2015-2016 of nationally representative samples of approximately 2000 15-29 year olds in each of five South and East Mediterranean countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon), all the littoral Arab majority states except Libya and Syria where conditions at the time made survey work impossible. The surveys were overseen by local social science partners who contracted the fieldwork to survey organisations that had experience of, and existing tried and tested methods (which varied from country-to-country), of surveying nationally representative samples. Respondents were members of the target age group who were resident in representative samples of households. All respondents were interviewed at home, by same sex interviewers, using a standardised and fully structured questionnaire (all questions were closed), which was available in English, French and Arabic. This instrument was pilot tested in each country, following which the local research partners ensured that the questions and answer categories could be applied with the same meanings in each country. In Lebanon, refugees from the war in neighbouring Syria, who were mostly living in camps, estimated at around 1.25 million, approximately a fifth of the country's population, were not included in the survey. The interviews included questions about each respondent's family background (parents' education and occupations), and the respondents' own education and labour market careers if they had completed their education. Whether respondents were married, 'in a relationship' or single, and whether they were living with their parents or elsewhere, were also recorded. Employers, the self-employed, employees, apprentices and family workers were asked about their monthly incomes. Individuals without earned incomes were asked about their sources of money for personal spending. There were additional questions on housing and household composition, and a battery of questions on uses of free time including hours and minutes per day spent watching television and online, whether respondents had travelled abroad, and access to leisure-facilitating household assets. There were also questions on religious and political proclivities and participation.

The quantitative surveys were accompanied by qualitative fieldwork, organised by the local research partners, in three contrasting regions in each of the five countries. There were individual depth interviews in which fieldworkers gathered life stories and narratives which described respondents' everyday lives and views on selected topics, and also focus groups and focused ethnographies. Here we draw mainly from the 29 individual interviews that were conducted, plus ethnographies of rappers in Tunisia and 'Hittistes' (explained below) in Algeria, and focus groups and individual interviews with participants on an programme for aspirant young entrepreneurs in Morocco, and political activists in Tunisia. Unlike in the quantitative surveys, the subjects in the qualitative fieldwork cannot be treated as representative of any wider populations. In order to become involved in the focus groups and ethnographies, young people had to be involved in some out-of-home activity. Married individuals were under-represented, and higher education students and graduates were over-represented. However, our quantitative evidence enables us to set the individual stories of all respondents in their national, regional and socio-demographic contexts, and to illustrate the young lives that are more crudely and, as we shall see, often misleadingly portrayed in the quantitative evidence.

The term 'free time' (not leisure) was used throughout the quantitative and qualitative fieldwork. 'Free time' can be translated into French and Arabic and was always understood and used by our respondents.

Contexts

All the countries in this research have histories as colonies. All except Morocco were part of the Ottoman

Empire. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia became French colonies during the 19th century. The territory that became Lebanon was administered to independence by France, and Egypt was administered to independence by Britain, after the Turkish Empire collapsed during the First World War. France's North Africa colonies became independent between 1956 and 1962.

Since the 1950s the populations of all the countries have doubled then doubled again. This reflects improvements in living conditions and health services. Rates of infant and child mortality have tumbled. Despite the growth in numbers, the proportions of children and young people completing all levels of education have risen and gender equality has been achieved. Illiteracy has been virtually eradicated among present-day young people. Within our combined five country samples, 28 percent of 25-29 year old males and 30 percent of females were higher education graduates. There has been a steady drift of population from rural to urban areas. Employment in agriculture has declined as family farms have been replaced by commercial agri-businesses (see Farsoun, 2006), but around a third of the countries' populations remain rural.

Alongside these changes, the occupational profiles in the countries have remained pre-modern. Most young women do not enter the labour market. Roughly a third of employed 15-29 year old males in our surveys were self-employed (with or without employees) or worked in family businesses. Only around a sixth of all employees had written contracts. Most employment and self-employment was informal. Modal incomes of employees were between €400 and €700 a month except in Lebanon where rates of pay were much higher. Youth unemployment rates, measured according to the International Labour Office protocol, were not particularly high: 11 percent and 14 percent respectively among 20-24 and 25-29 year old males, and 9 percent and 10 percent among females in these age groups. NEET rates were considerably higher: 23 percent among 25-29 year old males and 65 percent among females. Even so, job quality, rather than an absolute shortage of jobs, was young job-seekers' main problem (see Kovacheva *et al.,* 2018).

Most employment in the Arab Mediterranean region has not been modernised, but the countries' cities offer the full range of modern commercial leisure opportunities (for those who can pay). The countries have vigorous civil societies which include sport and cultural associations. However, young women in particular remain subject to tight family restrictions on their behaviour.

FINDINGS

Respondents in the quantitative surveys were asked about their frequency of participation in the list of activities in Table **1**. Answers were recorded on a six-point scale with a range from never to every day. The listed activities were not copied from a schedule used in Western leisure research but were suggested by the local research partners as common uses of free time by the countries' 15-29 year olds. Table **1** uses 'at least once a week' as the standardised threshold for counting a respondent as a regular participant.

Most males in all the countries were going out with friends at least once a week. The proportions visiting cafes or tearooms ranged from 31 percent to 70 percent in the different countries. The range for playing sport was lower – 13 percent to 46 percent. The young men typically spent between two and three hours each day watching television and three hours online. The samples were also asked about items of household equipment relevant to uses of free time. Air conditioning and passenger vehicles were normal household assets only in Algeria and Lebanon. Very few of the young men, between one percent and seven percent in the different countries, had ever been abroad. Needless to say, anyone who had left to live and work in another country could not be in the samples.

Females consistently recorded lower participation rates in the listed uses of free time. The gender gap was narrowest, but still present, in minority free time activities. The young women were watching television for approximately an hour more per day compared with males, but were spending similar amounts of time online. There were no gender differences in household assets and very few young men or women had ever travelled outside their own countries.

At this stage it would be misguided to conjecture explanations of the findings in Table **1**. These national statistics are aggregates of various sub-populations. Country differences combine genuine country-effects with composition-effects, that is, inter-country differences in the proportions of young people with different levels of education, living in urban and rural areas, and so on. However, simply dividing the national samples by each separate standard socio-demographic

Table 1: Uses of Free Time by Countries (in Percentages)

a. Males

	Algeria	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Tunisia
413. Take part at least once a week					
Go out with friends	88	58	68	56	83
Excursion	13	3	16	27	4
Cinema	3	1	7	17	1
Theatre	2	1	3	14	1
Library	15	4	16	18	5
Concert/festival	7	1	12	15	2
Street performance	7	2	7	13	1
Nightclub/bar	3	2	17	10	5
Café/tea room	62	37	47	31	70
Museum	2	<1	1	11	1
Art exhibition	2	<1	3	11	1
Attend sports event	26	7	24	19	9
Play sport	46	13	36	30	24
Mean number of activities	2.8	1.3	2.6	2.7	2.1
Average minutes per day watching television	143	157	128	201	130
Average hours per day using internet	3.0	2.7	3.8		3.6
Ever been abroad	1	3	5	1	7
Household assets					
116. Air conditioning	65	8	70	29	41
119. Passenger vehicle	51	8	85	35	25
N =	1064	979	1005	1207	998

b. Females

	Algeria	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Tunisia
413. Take part at least once a week					
Go out with friends	34	11	44	40	32
Excursion	5	1	11	22	1
Cinema	1	1	4	13	1
Theatre	1	<1	1	11	<1
Library	18	5	15	13	9
Concert/festival	6	<1	8	11	2
Street performance	3	<1	5	10	2
Nightclub/bar	1	<1	11	6	1
Café/tea room	10	1	29	14	14
Museum	1	1	1	8	1
Art exhibition	2	<1	3	8	<1
Attend sports event	3	<1	3	9	1
Play sport	13	1	15	13	11
Mean number of activities	1.0	0.2	1.5	1.8	0.8
Average minutes per day watching television	186	230	168	245	177
Average hours per day using internet	3.2	2.9	3.5		4.1
Ever been abroad	1	1	4	<1	3
Household assets					
116. Air conditioning	67	9	71	29	38
119. Passenger vehicle	51	7	84	35	24
N =	949	991	995	647	1001

indicator has limited explanatory value. Apart from gender, the discrete socio-demographics turn out to be weak predictors. The better educated tended to do more of most things (except watching television). There were surprisingly few differences according to whether respondents were living in rural or urban areas, and depending on their positions in or outside the countries' labour forces. We need to turn to the qualitative fieldwork to identify profiles of free time use that were being constructed agentically by groups of young people amid specific combinations of constraints and opportunities. We then find that in setting (or in some cases obliterating) the boundaries that separate free time activities from the rest of life, and in identifying typical bundles of free time uses, the activities listed in Table **1** need to be augmented with specific patterns of political and religious participation, and various kinds of 'dark leisure'.

All the distinctive bundles of free time activities identified below were formed and sustained against a common backcloth of faith in Islam, the availability of old and new media as aids in all kinds of activities, and to fill what would otherwise have been literally spare time. Some bundles are identified by a single free time activity. This does not imply that the individuals concerned did nothing else in their free time. It is rather a matter of the named activities being those highlighted by respondents in describing how they spent their days, and very likely becoming part of their social and personal identities. The activities were central in the young adults' overall uses of free time, which were typically part of broader lifestyles in so far as each bundle tended to be found within a particular socio-demographic group defined by a combination of gender, place of residence (urban or rural) and social class trajectory. The latter are divided (by ourselves) into middle and lower class. Respondents on middle class trajectories ideal-typically had fathers with at least some secondary education and salaried jobs, and the young adults had completed at least upper secondary education then sought (but up to the time of our surveys had not usually obtained) official, salaried employment. Other trajectories are described as lower class.

Middle Class Uses of Free Time

Western-Type Consumer Leisure

Some interviewees were experiencing what Westerners would regard as normal leisure. This was possible, but not necessary, if a young person had an official job with regular guaranteed hours of work and a good salary by local standards. Maria was one such person. She was a 30 year old graduate office worker from Ain El Remmaneh, a district in eastern Greater Beirut. She was engaged and hoped to be married in the coming summer. 'I work every weekday so I don't have a lot of spare time, but during the weekend I like to go to the cinema and to the malls. I meet with my fiancé. Sometimes we go to a concert or an exhibition. Every two months we (Maria and her fiancé) get out and relax together. We visit different sorts of places where there might be a particular church. Most are in regions that are quite far from here. One doesn't want to stay stuck in the same sort of place or the same pace of life. We go and eat out, we make picnics for ourselves and hang out.'

Maria's life was a successful sequel to a typical middle class childhood and youth. These life courses typically started in family homes where fathers and mothers had a full secondary schooling, and exceptionally higher education, followed by salaried employment or successful careers in business. The early life stages were quite common among respondents in our quantitative and qualitative research, but there were too few jobs similar to that of Maria to make her outcome, and the leisure that she could access, common. However, while at secondary school and university many young people, at that stage on middle class life courses, had become involved in organised free time activities of some description. These activities had often been continued, and had become the central commitments in their free time and sometimes in their whole lives, once they had completed education.

Sport and Cultural Associations

Farida-Lynda, a 16 year old high school student from Akbou (a village in Morocco), explained that, 'I belong to the Etoile Culturelle Association of Akbou, and I also take part in the Nature Club which deals with environmental issues through thematic workshops, training, awareness campaigns and reforestation.'

Sports could be played casually, or in organised teams and clubs. Exceptionally, enthusiasm and participation in organised sport could be turned into a paid occupation. Monique had turned what was originally a leisure interest into her occupation which was an official job with all the advantages that this entailed. When interviewed Monique was a 28 year old physical education teacher, the subject she had studied

at university. She still lived with her family in Djelfa (an inland town in Algeria). 'Middle school was the most beautiful stage because I began physical activity. I started with lacrosse and organised school lacrosse competitions. I was among the best in these competitions. I participated in several national school championships. I visited a lot of towns. I participated in the Southern States Championships. After having achieved success in school sports with lacrosse, I moved into sport outside school. I joined a civilian team and I started training in stadiums outside the school. At this stage I joined a handball team for three years. I participated with my team mates in regional and national school championships. In the past I went as a member of the team and now I go as team coach. After I got my baccalaureate I joined the National Institute of Higher Training of Youth and Sports Executives in Ouargla for three years. I specialised in athletics.'

Community Politics

Politics (broadly defined) was another common source of organised free time activities. However, the young people's political allegiances were very rarely to national political parties and their leaders. Those who had joined these parties at some point, or had voted enthusiastically, had invariably been disappointed. Sami was a 21 year old male student in Gafsa, the main city in Tunisia's mining region. In 2014 he had joined one of the largest political parties in the country (Nidaa Tounes) from which came only disappointment. He had joined this party to change things, but soon, 'I had the feeling that we were back in 1993, everything was slow motion, people did not really want to change things, and they were disconnected from the real world'.

An alternative, in which the young adults were likely to feel that their efforts could make a real difference, was local community politics. Between 13 percent and 37 percent of the survey respondents in the different countries belonged to a community association of some description. Syrine, a 19 year old female, lived with her family in El-May, a town on Djerba Island, off Tunisia's south-east coast. She was active in the Palestinian Association, and had participated in charity events for children and women refugees. She had travelled with the Young Guides Training Academy and participated in the International Social Forum (which was held in Tunis in 2015).

Mohamed was an ambitious 22 year old man in his early working years. Mohamed currently lived in Giza, specifically in the area of 6th of October which was a relatively new settlement to the north of Cairo. Mohamed had pursued education up to university level, and currently held an MBA. We asked Mohamed if he had worked in any social organisations. He reeled off several - *Fard, Resala*, *Masr El Kheer*. Mohamed explained that he played a very important role in *Fard*. 'The past two years have been dense. The institution has been very busy and is especially concerned with the migrants coming from Syria.'

Protest Politicians

Our research was planned in the aftermath of the events of 2011 that became known as the Arab Spring, and in the three research countries where such events of 2011 had occurred (Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia) respondents in the quantitative surveys were asked whether they had been involved in any from a list of actions that were part of these events (Roberts *et al.,* 2017). Respondents in all five countries were asked whether they had been involved in such protests during the previous 12 months. Answers to these questions are in Table **2**.

The protests became international news in 2011 but had been occurring throughout the preceding decade, and they have continued subsequently. Our findings show that some young people had become protesters then desisted while others had developed long-term careers in protest politics. A focus group in Tunis was composed of young people whose political engagement was triggered in 2011 and who had remained active ever since. If they belonged to a political party, this was usually a party that received a derisory percentage of votes in national elections. All the long-term protestors aligned with 'the left'. They wanted revolution, with an outcome that typically remained unclear. All were on middle class life courses. Some held excellent jobs which they regarded

Table 2: Participation in Protest Activities (in Percentages)

	Algeria	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Tunisia
'Events of 2011'		15		20	8
2015-16	27	11	33	36	7

as aids to their political work, and the jobs had typically been crucial in involving the protestors in international networks of the like-minded.

Aymen, age 26, had become a project manager at the BBC office in Tunis. He was born in Sidi Bouzid, the small town in Tunisia where the 'events of 2011' had started. In 2011 Aymen had joined a Red Crescent team to assist refugees in the Chucha camp on the Libya-Tunisia border. During his stay at this camp he became part of a group of foreign journalists who streamed the beginnings of the Libyan revolution. This was Aymen's true initiation into political activity. 'As I could speak English I was in contact with journalists from all over the world. I did the translations for them from Arabic into English, and in the end I found myself making interviews because I was good at Arabic.' Aymen had been politically active since 2009, contributing to a blog alongside young people from many countries (USA, France, Egypt and more). 'I was becoming a blogosphere activist, then in the period preceding the revolution I shared videos on *Facebook*, information that I received from my friends at Sidi Bouzid. The masses of people are manipulated by political parties. There was no popular revolution in 2011 but a revolution subordinated to political parties' agendas. In June 2011, just following the revolution, I participated in a traineeship in Washington DC (USA) at the university. The traineeship lasted one month and a half, and I learned interesting things about American history, the constitution, and political life. I learned a lot, far away from the mobilisation that overwhelmed the streets here without any plans or organisation.' In January 2014 Aymen applied for a job with the BBC. 'There was a vacant post so I applied and I was selected; I am working on a regional project from Morocco to Lebanon.'

Protest politicians were hyper-active politically. They followed national and international political news daily, voted in elections, discussed politics constantly, usually belonged to at least one local community association and became involved in every local street protest. From our quantitative surveys we estimate that between one percent and four percent in the different countries were politically hyper-active. They were among the larger numbers, ranging from 13 percent to 37 percent, who were involved in some kind of community politics.

Aspirant Entrepreneurs

One of the focus groups held in Rabat (Morocco) comprised young people, typically students in upper secondary or higher education, who were using their free time to prepare for careers as entrepreneurs. North Africa and the Middle East have plenty of initiatives of this type, usually funded by foreign governments or NGOs. The participants in Rabat sincerely believed that they could develop businesses successfully, and were sometimes allowing this commitment to take-over all their otherwise spare time. Kaoutar, a 22 year old female student in Rabat who was taking a degree in engineering was also, with help from the NGO that assisted local young would-be entrepreneurs, developing technology to purify water supplies in villages. 'From Monday to Friday I wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning, prepare myself, then I'm ready to go. My days of the week are divided into three phases. The first is from 5.00 am to 8.00 am, and after prayers I open my laptop, check emails, knowing that something happened during the night. I answer emails and then work for the business by preparing presentations and organising daily tasks. During these three productive hours, I stay connected to the news. It's very important to be connected in order to innovate and ensure business sustainability. From 8.00 am to 6.00 pm it is school time, there is no possibility to work on my own projects or to communicate with my co-workers unless I decide to skip classes. The time-slot 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm is dedicated to working on the project whether at a strategic level or an operational one, or both. So it's time to fix appointments, to elaborate action plans, to make phone calls and write emails, sometimes from school, sometimes from home. From 9.00 pm to 11.00 pm it's time to relax a bit. I generally read in this time slot, but it depends on my mood. If I don't read, I revise for courses and that can last all night long sometimes.'

In our quantitative surveys class differences were apparent in a general tendency for the better educated to 'do more'. Our qualitative fieldwork adds that the 'more' was usually more organised than the free time of lower class contemporaries. Those on middle class life courses were typically introduced to organised free time activities during upper secondary and higher education, then continued afterwards. We can also add that politics has to be included in their uses of free time. It was not the case that all young adults on middle class life courses were joining voluntary free time associations or doing politics, but apart from the small minority who could access Western-type consumer leisure, these were the ways in which this class's uses of free time were distinctive.

Lower Class Free Time

Ideal-typical lower class lives started in families where the parents had no more than primary schooling, and often less. The fathers were typically farmers, jobbing tradesmen or manual workers. The young people from such families had not continued their own education beyond age 16. Any free time was unlikely to be spent with a formal association of any description. It was more informal, and less likely to have any political connection. Uses of free time were more gendered than among middle class youth because it was acceptable for females to participate in associations. Lower class families were less willing to allow their daughters to 'hang about' on the streets. There were severe limitations on uses of free time even for males. These could be due to lack of money, or to the absence of leisure facilities in the places where they lived, because of the extent to which work, paid and unpaid, spread throughout their lives. or due to restrictions imposed by their families. Pleasures and opportunities to relax had to be found in crevices.

Pleasure in Crevices

Soumia, age 28, lived with her family in Haniet Kaabache, a village in Djelfa province, inland in the north-central area of Algeria. 'My family suffered the negative effects of parental divorce. My mother married at age 18; my father was then 46. He had divorced a woman with whom he had fathered five children. After fathering another four children (I am the eldest) he left my mother to marry a third woman. I left school when aged 11 to lend my mother a hand at home. Now I do the bulk of the housework while my mother takes care of the farm work. I wake up at 7.00 am or 8.00 am and go with my mother to milk the cows. Then I come home and do the dishes, cleaning and so on. When I complete my tasks I meet my friends, I may go to the literacy centre or visit my father and talk to his wife. When I have nothing else to do I watch the television or read a book. I feel that my life is stuffed with prohibitions. "Do not go out." "Do not do that." It is my mother and older brother who constantly tell me. This is to avoid criticism from people who object to a girl walking alone or talking to a boy. However, this situation is normal and I accept it. I'm living a normal life. It is not luxurious but it is not catastrophic either.'

Omar, a 23 year old male also lived in Haniet Kaabache. His parents had divorced when Omar was six months old. His mother and Omar then returned to the mother's parents' home. After many changes of home within the wider family, Omar was currently living with his father and working on the father's farm. Omar now ran the farm. 'I get up in the morning, I drink my coffee then I go to the fields. I work until the afternoon. I take care of a cow and a goat. I might walk around the village to see if there is anything new. Then I go home and spend time on my computer. If I meet friends, we chat until the late evening. It is always the same thing. There is no cultural infrastructure, no places where young people can meet each other outside of work hours.' Lack of money reduced free time opportunities for Omar including use of the internet because he had to pay for internet connection sessions in Messaad.'I go from time to time to Messaad, once a month or every 20 days. I go on the internet for an hour or two. I watch the news, I download some films, I watch them on my computer at home. I do not go out much. I prefer to stay at home. There is not even a hairdresser in our village. We must go to Messaad.'

Going out to Work and Play

Hittiste is a name given in Algeria to young people (nearly always young men) who do not have jobs, and who spend most of their time 'leaning against a wall'. One such group was studied in Bachjareh, a suburb of Algiers. One young man described how, 'You wake up around mid-day. Some days I do not go out of the house. There is nothing to go out for.' When they went out to hang about this was either because they had money to spend or to make money by 'navigating'. This could mean selling (and using) drugs. It was most likely to mean buying and selling something – mobile phones, computers, a TV, a memory card or anything that someone else wanted to dispose of. Sometimes the young men might take an informal job but invariably left before long because they found the work tiring and the pay, in their view, amounted to exploitation. Navigating could yield an income equal to what could be earned in a full-time, regular job. This is just one example of how work and leisure, earning and spending money, could be combined in an urban way of life that young lower class men have pioneered.

Apart from Monique, the sports teacher and coach, the young interviewees who were trying to turn a leisure activity into a source of income were musicians – and only one felt that he was succeeding. Saddem, a Tunisian, was otherwise unemployed and knew that recording a song cost a lot of money. 'Currently it is a money earner for me. I sang in Gafsa in front of 10,000 spectators and earned €300. The guest star earned €3,000. When I sing at a concert I claim money

because the producer makes a lot of money. I am not naïve. I need money to register my songs. You can get nowhere without money. I know that in the long term rap has nothing to offer.' Saddem was the most successful (commercially) young musician who we interviewed. We asked a group of Tunisian rappers, the subjects of one of the ethnographies, whether it was a passion, a leisure activity or a way to earn a living. Ameni had decided to keep her music as a passion. She explained that, 'A restaurant manager suggested that I should sing karaoke and he would give me €30 a day. I refused his offer because to me singing is a passion. It is not a job. When it becomes a job it becomes boring, and I refuse this.' Boutheina argued that, 'Rap cannot be a money earner, but it may be the way to earn enough money to make oneself an image. In Tunisia there is YouTube, and honestly I spend a lot of money to make clips, but I would not like to distribute them on YouTube. My album is on a smaller filter site where you can listen free, but if you want to download you have to pay. One song costs €1 because I want to give a value to my songs. I send songs to the media but they never broadcast them.'

Religion

Previous studies of leisure in the Middle East and North Africa have emphasised the influence of Islam (Ibrahim, 1982; Martin and Mason, 2003, 2004). Our findings are only partly supportive. Islam affects everyday life throughout the region just as the influence of its main religion still lingers throughout former Christendom. In Moslem majority countries alcohol is less freely available than in Europe, and the sexes do not intermingle as freely. However, a major difference is that Islam and minority religions remain ascribed identities throughout North Africa and the Middle East. People are born into a nationality, a faith (usually Islam) and ethnicity (usually Arab). Faith become an indelible part of each person's identity, as applied with Christianity in pre-Reformation Europe.

Respondents in our quantitative surveys were asked to rate the importance of religion in 16 life domains such as choices of food, drink, employment and clothing. Answers to these questions indicated generally high levels of personal religiosity. At the same time, everyone who was interviewed in our qualitative fieldwork felt able to place their own interpretations on the requirements of their faith. This was mentioned most frequently by young women in relation to headgear. All who mentioned this issue felt that whether or not to cover their heads was a personal choice, and was as likely to depend on habit, custom or preferred appearance as on religion. Whether and how often to pray and attend mosque were also considered matters for each individual.

In the quantitative surveys between 48 percent of respondents in Morocco and 88 percent in Tunisia said that they rarely or never attended mosque. At the other extreme, between seven percent in Tunisia and Lebanon, and 32 percent in both Morocco and Algeria, were attending a place of worship at least three times a week. The frequent attenders were overwhelmingly male: 36 percent of all males across the five countries against just six percent of females. Neither our measurements of personal or public religiosity (which were only weakly related) predicted other uses of free time. Both measurements were unrelated to educational levels and other socio-demographic predictors. It was impossible to identify a minority whose free time and overall lifestyles were distinctively religious. That said, for a (mainly male) minority the mosque was a frequent destination whenever they went out.

Salim, a 21 year old male, had left after the fourth year in secondary school, then left his home in the south of Morocco, and currently worked as a computer and cell phone sales assistant in a bazaar in Rabat. Salim was interviewed not on account of his public religiosity (he visited a mosque several times every week), but as part of an ethnographic study of the bazaar. Salim looked rather like any stylish urban youngster: a globalised young man. Like many of his age, he was a keen amateur footballer who often played in his neighbourhood, and considered himself a good defender. He expressed pride in keeping updated, connected to the lifestyle of his time. 'With some new mates I am currently learning how to take photos and how to use Photoshop. This is my new passion. I like to learn new things from people who have more experience. It's exactly the same with rappers. They live in Salé. They speak French and mix languages. I like this. I'm fascinated by music. I first got to know these guys because of their style.' Salim wanted to become a member of their band and was learning the music in order to be integrated. All Salim's free time activities were combined with his work, buying and selling cell phones and computers. Within this busy life, Salim was by far the most frequent mosque attender among all our interviewees. 'I pray and go to the mosque regularly.' Salim explained that, 'The concept of *jamaa* refers to the mosque as a building and as a place of gathering. It is a concept that people

from the southern regions of Morocco are very much attached to. In my case it has to do with a long tradition in the family which is quite pious, but now also stems from a social habit. *Al aada* refers to both meanings, tradition and habit.' The mosque was above all a place to meet men like oneself. Attendees would pray. They might listen to a preacher. Above all, it was a place to socialise, an alternative to the street and coffee shop.

CONCLUSIONS

The Arab Mediterranean region is different not just in the ways in which young people's free time is used, but more fundamentally because most paid work is at best only partly modernised, and also, for young women in particular, all areas of their lives are more tightly regulated by their families than is now normal among young Euro-Americans. An implication is that Western leisure scholars should qualify truth claims by acknowledging that much of their knowledge may be valid only within a bounded group of Western and Westernised countries. Likewise the bundles of free time uses identified in the research reported above cannot be safely generalised beyond young adults in the Arab Mediterranean region. Checklists of common free time activities (as in Table I) will understate the variety and ingenuity in the lives of any world region's young adults. In the Arab Mediterranean region, and maybe elsewhere, political and religious participation must definitely be added. The pleasures found had to be found in crevices by many of our respondents, and the combinations of work and play accomplished when young adults 'hang about', are difficult to capture using participation survey methods.

Within the Arab Mediterranean region there is a strong case, which can also be made in Western countries (see, for example, Jones *et al.,* 2012; Newmahr, 2011; and Rojek, 2000), for including 'dark' (criminal or morally suspect) activities within the leisure domain. In the Arab Mediterranean region the dark side of leisure is most evident in the free time of young lower class males. There is a powerful case for including political activities among the free time options of Arab Mediterranean youth given the prevalence of community politics among those on middle class life courses, and the role of protest politics in the region. Pickard (2017) has made a case for recognising politically engaged leisure as a super-serious kind of leisure among Western youth, while originally the contributors to *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1975), and more recently Dimou and Ilan (2018), have identified forms of proto-politics in numerous Western youth sub-cultures. How young people engage in politics is different, but arguably more important politically in the Arab Mediterranean region where young adults are larger proportions of the total populations, and where voting is less likely to change government policies in ways that affect the lives of people such as themselves than in relatively mature Western democracies. Young people in the Arab Mediterranean region know that community politics and mass street protests can make a difference. Religious participation also needs to be treated as part of leisure in the Arab Mediterranean region, not on account of the pervasive influence of religious beliefs, but rather because of the importance of mosques as meeting places, mainly for males, from specific ethno-religious communities.

The key boundaries among different leisure activities in the Arab Mediterranean region that are suggested by our evidence, are between the commercially marketed opportunities that are accessible only by individuals on successful middle class life courses, associational leisure which is accessed ideal-typically and distinctively by young adults on successful and stalled middle class life tracks, and informal ways of spending out-of-home spare time which account for much of the free time of many young males on lower class life courses. These bundles cannot be easily mapped onto leisure categories that are found useful in research in Western countries such as the division between omnivores and univores (see, for example, Bennett *et al.,* 2009). The bundles that we have identified cannot be plotted along a serious-casual leisure continuum (Stebbins, 2007). All our bundles except Western-type consumer leisure, and seeking pleasures in crevices, can be practised seriously or casually.

Globalisation today means massive inter-connectedness and limited homogenisation. The main global constant in uses of free time is the prominence of the media. Everywhere the media account for huge chunks of free time in all socio-demographic groups, but the media are rarely pivotal. Rather, they are aids to other leisure activities and fill time that would otherwise be vacant. We find additional inter-world regional matches if our evidence from Arab Mediterranean countries in 2015-16 is compared with Britain (and other Western countries) in the mid- and early-20th century. Rural youth and those living in small towns (see Leigh, 1971), were and continue to be disadvantaged in access to free time opportunities (Hendry *et al.,* 20021, 2002b) though less so today

than in the past due to the scale and variety of the present-day media offer, and the spread of private motor transport. In mid-20th century Britain there was a stark contrast between the uses of free time of lower class young people and those on middle class life courses who remained in education until at least age 16, and increasingly until age 18 and beyond. While in education middle class youth were introduced to organised sports and cultural activities which they were able to continue in clubs after their education was completed. Working class youth left school at age 15, 14 or (illegally) even earlier. Males spent much of the free time 'on the streets'. Respectable families tried to protect their daughters by keeping them at home. Aspiring working class families encouraged male and female children to join clubs (Jephcott, 1954, 1967, Wilkins, 1955). Youth and leisure services were then being developed to extend typical middle class patterns of free time use into the working class (Goldman, 1969, Snape, 2018). This experience may be relevant, but the practices are likely to be less effective in present-day modernising countries due to fiercer competition from media and commercial options than existed in mid-20th century Europe and North America.

The word 'leisure' cannot be translated faithfully into classical Arabic. Its incorporation is possible but not really necessary to understand Arabs' lives today. Their uses of free time may be the equivalents of Western leisure, but they are not basically the same. The leisure concept works best in societies where dominant patterns of time organisation are set by the modernisation of paid work, where free time has been released from traditional controls, and where all except 'excluded groups' must make choices over how their own free time is used. None of this applies yet in Arab Mediterranean countries.

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