

Religious and Cultural Clashes in the Modern World: Understanding Latent Issues of Middle Eastern Wives

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The goal of this paper is to shed light on contemporary development issues regarding gender inequality in the Middle East (ME) and bring the religious and cultural factors causing friction in the global security context to the forefront of not only academia and scholarly discussion but also public awareness. This thesis will present a qualitative case study of the wives of (ME) Ph.D. students at Texas A&M University (A&M), illuminating the challenges they face as a result of the overwhelming shift from their war torn home countries to a democratic society in the U.S.

These challenges will be investigated to demonstrate common trends and address problem areas that merit more attention. The contemporary development issues in gender inequality identified in this case study will serve as the foundation for a practical application course designed by a joint effort between the Bush School of Government and Public Service and the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC) for graduate students interested in development careers. In the course, students will assess the challenges facing ME wives of Ph.D. students at A&M and propose solutions to remedy these challenges by empowering these women with respect to the limitations set by their cultural and religious contexts. This examination is of great significance because ME wives are an invisible group that is capable of tremendous influence during their time in the U.S. and upon returning to their home countries. The prospect of empowering the wives of ME Ph.D. students may have numerous implications for future economic, food, environmental, and world security.

Purpose of the Course

The course will fulfill the need for connecting development theory to real world implementation by allowing students to gain practical experience for future development professions. The need for this course is evident due to the fact that there are few capstone courses in development work available at the Bush School and ALEC. Many students are interested and apply to the capstone at the Bush School but enrollment is limited.

This thesis is meant to offer a point of intersection by providing students with a starting point for the course. The importance and emphasis of the course will be on identifying local issues with international scope, where students will gain experience in understanding and addressing cultural challenges, so that they are better prepared for a career in development, especially in regards to gender inequality.

Students will engage in a local hands-on project where their work will benefit the ME wives. Students will gain skill sets in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity by gaining insights about the challenges ME wives face at A&M and in College, Station, Texas. It is the author's intent that this thesis paper will have utility within the academic community in order

to better prepare students interested in development careers; producing successful evidence-based programs for a more peaceful and prosperous world.