Diversity of Algerian family models: A critical discourse analysis of Middle School Second Generation Textbooks

تنوع نماذج الأسرة الجزائرية: التحليل النقدي لمحتوى كتب الجيل الثاني للتعليم المتوسط

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Abstract

The present paper aims first at exploring the important aspects of the family models Algerian second generation textbooks, officially approved by the Ministry of Education and compulsory for middle school students, are encouraging. Then, it examines, though surely not resolve, the question of whether their designers adopt a gender model family. Opting for a multidisciplinary critical discourse analysis, this study analyses the discourses along with the related illustrations embedded in the chosen textbooks. The findings reveal that Algerian second generation textbooks currently used in middle schools give little space for growing diversity of family models. They show no great eagerness to present more than the extended family model (El Dar El kabirah) to be the norm for living together as well as no clear evidence for adopting gender model family.

Keywords: School textbooks, social change, Algerian family, family diversity, gender model family.

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة أولاً إلى استكشاف الجوانب المهمة للنماذج الأسرية المعروضة في كتب الجيل الثاني، المعتمدة رسمياً من قبل وزارة التربية والتعليم والإلزامية لطلاب التعليم المتوسط في الجزائر. هذه الدراسة تسعى أيضاً لاكتشاف مسألة ما إذا كان مصممو هذه الكتب يبنون نموذج المساواة في العائلة. باختيار تحليل الخطاب النقدي، تحلل هذه الدراسة الخطابات مع الرسوم التوضيحية الموجودة في الكتب المدرسية المختارة. تكشف النتائج أن الكتب المدرسية الجزائرية للجيل الثاني المستخدمة حالياً في المدارس المتوسطة تعطي مساحة صغيرة لتنوع النماذج العائلية الجزائرية كما أنها لا تظهر رغبة كبيرة في تقديم أكثر من نموذج الأسرة الممتدة (الدار الكبيرة).

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**Introduction**

“…We need to leave behind the assumption that one size fits all, that one family structure is good for all… We are too diverse, our needs and lifestyles too different to be able to fit into one single family model†…” Pauline Irit Erera (2001:217)

A quick peep at what is said in this quote shows the contrasts between reality and the ideal. It shows also that there is no longer such thing as one single typical family model; we live in a family that fits our choices and needs. Viewing a family life through the lens of one family structure reinforces the lack of acceptance of the other existing models and renders them deviant and in need of repair (Staples & Mirande 1980). Families that are diverse are sometimes unwilling and unable to adhere to the traditional nuclear family model which requires the man (husband) to be the breadwinner and the family’s link to the larger society, while the woman (wife) remains in the home and maintains the role of nurturer and caregiver (Baca Zinn, 2010). Now, if there is no question that having one ideal norm for living together is neither valid nor possible, we have much to learn about diverse families.

There is an increased interest in growing diversity of family forms and structures arguing that the traditional nuclear family model has become a thing of the past (Almudena Moreno-Mínguez, Marta Ortega-Gaspar, and Carlos Gamero-Burón, 2018). This argument is based on various factors that determine attitudes toward the preferences for diverse families. But of course family diversity goes deeper than prior studies has suggested. Diverse families give us cause to reexamine our views about defining families, families’ structures, couple relations, parenting roles, responsibilities, care giving and more importantly each family own unique experiences. This is to say that there is no single fixed definition of what a family is, rather there are multiple definitions related to the perspectives and values of those who provide them and this is the focal point for the present study.

In our quest to shed new light on a number of important typical societal representations; conventional norms and values regarding the Algerian family and the societal integration of men and women in learning/teaching materials, this paper analyses the discourses about family along with the related illustrations the Algerian second generation textbooks provide for middle school pupils. The rest of this paper then is organized as follows. To establish the theoretical framework for this

† In Pfau-Effinger’s words, the concept of “model” indicates typical societal ideal representations, norms and values regarding the family and the societal integration of women and men (cited in Almudena Moreno-Mínguez et al. 2019:22-23)
study, we review the literature on growing diversity of family models and schools textbooks as agents of social change. Then, we present the study aims, questions and the methods employed. After that, we end with the interpretations of the data collected and concluding discussions.

1. Growing diversity of family models

Whilst one speaks convincingly of the need of the plural word ‘family models’, what is of essence hitherto is the question: ‘what is a family?’

‘Definitions abound, but consensus does not’. This anonymous expression suggests that defining family is often hotly debated, yet there is not even the beginning of an agreement concerning what exactly ‘family’ is. Definitions of family often rest on social beliefs of what is acceptable and thus by implication what is deviant and socially sanctioned. When the family form fails to adhere to what is normal, difficulties of definition arise. Thus, policymakers in particular have to take a pause before answering this thorny question; simply because the answer does really have significant consequences on people’s lives. Following this overarching convincing assumption, it must be emphasised that defining family is not an exact science but a matter of judgment.

Basically, definitions of families can be categorized into: (1) structural definitions and (2) functional definitions. First, structural definitions describe clearly who is in the family and who is out. Family membership is defined according to certain features such as sharing a place of residence, blood ties/kinship or legal contracts. According to Wambldt & Reiss, (1989), whose definition is compatible with these basic properties, family structure definitions surround the family of procreation (partners and children), relatives by blood, or individuals that have established biological or legal legitimacy. More noticeably, these definitions do provide clear criteria for membership but let us not dismiss the idea that they exclude some relationships that commonly regarded as integral parts of families such as: a parent who does not reside in the household, a child in a divorced family who spends half of the week with one parent and the other half week with the other parent, a non custodial parent and so on. Structural definition also argue that family structure should be nuclear (a husband, wife and children) while other structures are deviant.

Second, functional definitions focus on certain functions family members perform. They move away from membership and put emphasis on tasks performance. For most functional definitions, the essential perspective is that a family is a social unit in which the following functions exist: sharing of resources and economic property, caring and supportive relationship, commitment to or identification with other family members, child rearing and socialization to become adult member of the society. At first glance, it seems that functional definitions are intended to be more inclusive than structural ones but in fact they exclude family types which do not perform these tasks. What if a biological parent fails to fulfill one of these functions, for example care and
support, this parent would be excluded from this definition and not probably deemed as a member of a family.

It may now be seen that these are narrow definitions. Vanier Institute (2013) suggests a very broader definition. Vanier (2013) sees family as any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth and or adoption or placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of: physical maintenance and care of group members, addition of new members through procreation or adoption, socialization of children, social control of members, production, consumption, distribution of goods and services and effective nurturance and love.

Terms like ‘consent, the plural word responsibilities and variant combinations’ make the definition appears comprehensive, eclectic and egalitarian. It combines structure, function, roles and psychological level of the family institution. This might be reasonable working definition but it has something in common with the restrictive definitions. It eliminates the families in which the members could take only one responsibility (Atharva Shukla, 2015).

For now it may be useful to come to a full stop. Perhaps not surprisingly, as it is already mentioned, the definitions of family have always met with skepticism. Definitions of family are diverse as families’ unique experiences themselves. The word family itself may mean something quite different to an Algerian, a British, an American, an African American, an Asian, a Muslim; a Christian, a Jewish, an intellectual, a refugee, etc. Especially worthy of notice here is the idea of intersection. Family is the intersection of many criteria like membership and belonging, consent, structure, type and size of the family, tasks orientations and functions, responsibilities, goals and roles, communication, positive relationship between the family members and many other contexts and dimensions such as history, ethnicity, race, culture, religion, education, age, social class and location.

In Algeria for example, the concept of ‘Aylah’ in Arabic language means a small family which includes the couple and their children (nuclear family), whereas ‘Osrah’ means the extended family which includes three to four generations. The Algerian extended family is called ‘the large house’ (Al-Dar Al-Kabirah) in rural areas and ‘large tent’ (Al- khiama Al- Kabirah) among the Bedouins tribes. It is based on blood ties and its structure is patrilineal, that is establishing family membership by considering only male relations. Furthermore, the Algerian family can also be described as patriarchal. The father or the grandfather is the leader of the family. Traditionally, males carry on the responsibility of representing the values and the social status of the family. Females are responsible for their chastity and their families’ honour however (Boutafnoushat, 1984).
The roles and functions of the traditional Algerian extended family are based on religious (Islamic) and traditional principles. Married women (wives) are supposed to be obedient to parents and husbands and to care for socializing the children. Fathers are expected to be the breadwinners. Grandfathers have the authority over all family issues especially regarding financial matters. They also mediate in conflicts. Uncles, particularly father's brother(s) have a significant role when fathers are absent or dead (Mustafa M. Achoui, 2018).

What is interesting here is that we cannot escape the reality of family diversity. Though it may be considered an ideal, this traditional extended family is only one model that does not fit all. Many factors such as labor force transitions and gender equity have fostered the emergence of new family models. So, rather than defining new diverse families as ‘non-traditional and problematic, Pauline Erera (2001) views them from a strengths perspective.

In the words of Erera (2001), besides to vulnerabilities, each family style has unique advantages, achievements and contributions. Erera in her book (Family diversity: continuity and change in the contemporary family, 2001) devotes an entire chapter for diverse family models including: adoptive, foster, single-parent, stepparent, two earner and grandmother-headed families. These families enjoy some unique strength which stem from their being different. Not very dissimilar, Laird (1993) asserts, diverse families are, in a sense, multicultural because they live both a traditional world and in a world of difference. In other words, Laird (1994) continues saying, though accorded an inferior status and considered as outsiders, members of diverse families in their position of the ‘Other’ are able to reflect and examine critically social norms and expectations.

Diverse families challenge existing family theories about blood ties and kinship. According to these theories people related by blood are bound together in ways that others can never be. This glorification of blood ties denigrates the families that include non birth children. On reflection, this implies that parenting is biological and natural phenomenon whereas non birth parenting is artificial and unnatural. We may have families that raise non birth children and their experience demonstrates that we do not necessarily need biology or blood ties to create strong, loving, permanent relationships among adults and children (Biddle, Kaplen & Silverstein 1998, Hayden 1995 as cited in Erera 2001). Additionally, to appreciate the unique strengths of diverse families, we must consider the myth of motherhood and gendered division of domestic labor (Demo & Allen, 1996). Some existing definitions of family are supported by the common belief that women are better suited to care giving role than men. But this claim has been proven wrong, parenting roles are interchangeable in new family models. Among what is also observed is that most of the successful diverse families

‡ A strengths perspective encourages people to discover enabling niches for themselves and recognises the importance of “the creation of a culture that is supportive of the proactive steps taken by individuals” (Sullivan & Rapp, 1994)
Erera discusses are headed by women. This success should be seen as a testimony to a unique strength of women headed families and not a threat to the patriarchal family mode. This is inferred from Coontz’ expressions (1997: 109): “…Couples believe that their stresses come from how much gender roles have already changed, they do not realize how much more they still need to change”. Family caretaking has been overly privatized and it should be made a collective responsibility. Gender model family scheme promotes equity between husbands and wives. They are considered as ‘change agents’ and their task is to become models for gender equality recognizing that they foster harmony and unity in their family. The stereotypes of domesticating mothers and upholding a gendered division of labor within family establish a false dichotomy between what is normal and what is not. Inevitably, we have reached a point of return to Erera’s words, “to enthrone one family as the ideal is a denial of human diversity” (2001, 217)

2. Textbooks, social change and family diversity

It is repeatedly put that education at school is accepted as one major agent of social change. Carl Lieberman (1977) introduces a specific meaning of the term social change. It refers to alteration in the behaviours of, or relationships between, individuals, groups, or institutions in a given society. Our understanding of social change is as Jenson (cited in Jadhav, 2012) put it in its broadest sense, a modification in the ways of doing and thinking of people. Viewed this way, social change means change in material and non-material aspects of the society. It may be gradual, swift, peaceful or violent. It is introduced somewhat different in each society and the observation of it depends on longitudinal studies, and its adaptation varies from one society to another. Social change can evolve from a number of different sources, including changes in the ecosystem, war, foreign intervention, population growth, the industrial revolution, changing economic condition or technological advances. It can be also spurred by new modes of ideological or political thought (the abolition of slavery, feminist movements…) Social change has a direct impact on the basic structure and function of social institutions including families.

Many aspects of family structure and relationships have been modified throughout the world due to social change. But especially worthy of notice here is that, Arland Thornton and Thomas E. Fricke (1987) state, changes within the family cannot be understood without considering cultural definitions of family boundaries, the roles of family members, and the position of the family within the wider society. It seems pointless, for Frank, F. Furtsenberg (1999), to determine whether these changes resulted from economic events, social transformations or cultural shifts. Large institutions changes rarely occur unless a confluence of conditions take place. Prior studies (Chris Harris, Nickie Charles and Charlotte Davies, 2006) reveal that family change is set in the context of changes in the housing and labour markets and the demographic, industrial and occupational changes of the past 40 years. These changes are associated with a multiplicity of kinship, increases in women’s economic activity
rates and a decrease in their degree of domesticity, increased training of children in non familial institutions and the development of living arrangements outside the family household. As is already stated, these changes have been truly remarkable; they have provoked considerable commentary and controversy.

Education, social change and family are interrelated topics. But in relevance to the world today how do educational institutions respond to the major changes that occurred in the structure and function of family? How do they respond to the privatization of family care taking? How do they consider the slogan of collective responsibility that has created stress between husbands and wives? Do they explain that family arrangements and models of parenthood are changing? Or in one sense, do they see the need for growing diversity of family? We may not reach conclusions about these issues here; but we think that educational institutions can respond in several ways.

For Carl Lieberman (1977), two conflicting views are often articulated concerning the relationship between education and social change: (1) education as an instrument for changing society, and (2) education as an ideological state apparatus, a conservator of existing social values and largely incapable of influencing major social change. Tanu Strivastava (2016) argues that education and social change takes a dual form relationship: education can be either an instrument (a creator of social change) or a product (a creation of it). This can be illustrated as follows: (1) education as a necessary condition of social change which means that education helps people, for example the illiterate who remain satisfied with their existing conditions and feel that they are destined to be what they are, to be rational in their thinking, (2) education as an outcome of social change that is education is influenced by social change, education system changes according to the needs of society, and (3) education as an instrument of social change that is to say a means to help people bring changes in their society so that to transmit them to the next generations.

Educational institutions, social change and family can be a full length topic because these three concepts are so closely connected. A school textbook for example can be an agent of social change; it is one of the most useful tools in the education process. Most commonly, a textbook is defined as a collection of knowledge, concepts and principles of a selected topic or course. It contains ready-made texts and tasks that enable students to be acquainted with the subject matter, and offer some sort of security and confidence about what to teach for novice teachers in particular (Ur Penny, 1996). Generally, textbooks are succinctly written, tightly organized and greatly condensed by well qualified and experienced eminent authors (D. Gallahan, 1996). Most textbooks are accompanied by guides, which provide the teacher with supplemental teaching materials, ideas and activities to use throughout the academic year.

On reflection, ready-made school textbook is thought to be only a provider of input into classroom lessons in the form of texts, activities, explanations and so on. Besides, its role seems to absolve teachers of responsibility. Hutchinson and Torres
(1994) expand on, instead of participating in the decisions that have to be made about what to teach and how to do so, teachers feel confident and secure in their belief that the wise and virtuous people who produced the textbook knew what meet their students’ needs, abilities and interests. But, unfortunately, this is rarely the case.

A textbook has a vital positive role and its importance becomes greater in the periods of change (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994). Role and content of school textbooks therefore are to be updated conveniently; they must be designed to fulfill the needs of the society and propagates such ideas which promote peaceful positive social changes in its all fields.

3. Research Methodology

Change has always been at the core of education, in other words, there is always a necessity for educational reform. In Algeria for example, the educational system has been subject to many reforms mainly at middle school level. The Algerian Ministry of National Education launched a new educational program in 2016 known as the Second Generation Program. Based on this statement “les réformes de 2ème génération apportent des améliorations aux programmes actuels”, Farid Benramdane, a pedagogical advisor to the Ministry of National Education, pointed out that the programs of the Second Generation aim at bringing improvements upon the First Generation Program which were launched in 2003 (The Algerian Press Services). Second generation textbooks are based on making a link between education at school and real life of the learner.

Our point of departure here is that there is a need to consider the role of Algerian second generation textbooks as instruments of social change. In this paper, three selected second generation textbooks are examined: English, Arabic and Civic education textbooks that have been fully implemented since 2016 and are currently used for teaching middle school pupils. These textbooks are selected on the basis of their common theme ‘family’. The reason behind analyzing these textbooks is to answer these questions:

1. Which family models are the second generation English textbooks currently used in middle schools encouraging?
2. Do the English second generation school textbooks designers adopt a gender model family?

Opting for critical discourse analysis (CDA, henceforth) as an interdisciplinary field, this study has analysed the discourses embedded in the chosen textbooks. We understand discourse here as, Fairclough’s (1989) describes it, having three dimensions: (1) as text that is spoken, written or visual; (2) an interaction between the people involved in the processes of production and interpretation of the text (discursive practice); and (3) a part of a social world (social practice).

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation
The present study targets different second generation middle school textbooks, officially approved by the Ministry of Education, to report the Algerian family models they provide for pupils. It worth remembering that our analysis rest on the belief that family is the intersection of many criteria: membership, structure, function, relationship… and other family dimensions (see page 4).

4.1. Middle school English textbook of 1st grade and 2nd grade

First year English textbook named ‘My book of English’ consists of five sequences. The second sequence ‘Me and my family’ from page 49 to page 70 is of concern to us. At the end of this sequence, pupils will be able to talk about family members and draw a family tree. Second year English textbook entitled also ‘My book of English’ has four sequences. The present study focuses on the first sequence ‘Me, my friends and my family’ from page 10 to page 44’. One of the main communicative objectives of this sequence is the ability to describe family relationships.

![Picture 1](image1.png)

**Picture 1**: Middle school 2nd generation English textbook (1st grade: p.49)

![Picture 2](image2.png)

**Picture 2**: Middle school 2nd generation English textbook (2nd grade: p.37)

The Algerian family type shown in the captured pictures (1 and 2) is an extended one. This ‘Osrah’, or what is called ‘the large house’ (Al-Dar Al-Kabirah, to use Boutafnoushat’s words, 1984) consists of three generations: the grandparents, parents and unmarried children who share the same place of residence (picture 2: *I live with my grandparents*…).
Both captured pictures (3 and 4) share the view that the typical Algerian family model is still dominantly the extended one. They also describe clearly who is in the family and who is out. In few words, Algerian family structure and membership are based on marriage and blood ties/kinship: relatives by blood, or individuals that have established biological legitimacy.

This picture (5) presents another structure of Algerian family models; it is the nuclear family and the two breadwinner model. This family size is not too large; only a married couple with unmarried sons living under one roof.
It is noteworthy to mention that the first grade English textbook introduces another family form in which there is only one couple, a mother single parent (single parenthood), but for a western family (please refer to picture 6).

**Picture 6**: Middle school 2nd generation English textbook (1st grade: p.59)

It is evident from these two captured pictures (7 and 8) that the Algerian family is a social unit in which the following values exist: respect, love, and obedience for grandparents as well as supportive and mutual cooperation relationship between brothers and sisters. A very remarkable value implicitly displayed in picture 1 is related to the adjective ‘hishma’ (cited in Anne Laaredj-Campbell, 2016: 153), the place the mother takes when being photographed is not near the father (her husband). This is mainly grounded on religious (Islamic) and traditional values.

It should be mentioned briefly that contrary to functions, family structure is given more significance in these two selected textbooks.

**Picture 7**: Middle school 2nd generation English textbook (1st grade: p.53)

**Picture 8**: Middle school 2nd generation English textbook (2nd grade: p.17)

4.2. Arabic school textbook for 2nd grade

Second year Arabic school textbook consists of eight sequences. The present study examines the first sequence entitled ‘family life’ /elhajat ʕailija/ from page 9 to
At the end of this sequence, pupils will work in small groups to draw a family tree and identify the relatives who have the priority to be visited (page: 28). This sequence offers several texts that focus on the role of family in providing security and happiness for its members as well as the valuation of individual and collectives attitudes that seek strengthening family ties.

It appears at first glance that this sequence, to a large extent, gives extreme importance to the intersection of these dimensions in Algerian family: structure, membership, role, function and responsibility.

**Picture 1:** Middle school 2nd generation Arabic textbook (2nd grade: p.11)

This captured picture is about one parent-family headed by a female (no husband present); a widow woman called ‘Aini’ /ʕajni/. As living alone with her children, this mother faces severe economic handicaps.

**Picture 2:** Middle school 2nd generation Arabic textbook (2nd grade: p.11)

In this connection, it is acknowledged that the mother is the backbone of Algerian family; she is the source of love and affection. Whatever the conditions of life are, the mother maintains and strengthens her family cohesion and solidarity. Even though, the picture embedded in the captured picture 2, symbolizing warmth in family is not for a female headed family (a single parent family). It stands for a wife-husband family.

We can note here that where no other structures of female headed family (divorced, single mother) or those headed by male (no wife present) do exist in this textbook, a widow headed family with children finds a place but still viewed as not strong, desirable and successful as a wife–husband family. That is no testimony for its feasibility.
The family model represented in the captured picture (3) is again the extended one. It includes three generations sharing a common residence. Grandparents are highly respected and therefore are very satisfied; and a father is deemed as the leader. This form of family provides security, safety and happiness.

As the verses of this poem imply, it is not possible to experience love and form a family without a married couple (husband-wife), without children, without grandparents, without a shared home and without a husband as a leader.

These two captured passages (4 and 5) do not show the traditional division of parenting roles as interchangeable. The father is expected to be the breadwinner while the mother remains in the home and maintains the role of nurturer and caregiver (the myth of motherhood).

4.3. Civic Education school textbook for 1st grade
Civic education school textbook currently used for teaching first year middle school pupils contains three learning units. The only captured picture found below is taken from the first unit entitled ‘the collective life’.

**Picture 1:** Middle school 2nd generation Civic education textbook (1st grade: p.24)

The gendered division of domestic labour in this nuclear family is imbued with the social and cultural (patriarchal) meanings of appropriate masculine and feminine roles. The contribution of the father to this nuclear family is narrowly defined as providing financial support while the mother is better suited for care giving and nurturing roles.

5. **Concluding Discussions and Implications for further research**

One of the main contributions of this study is the careful consideration given to each Algerian family structure included in the target school textbooks. This is necessary because of, as Pauline Irit Erera (2001) effectively demonstrates, the unique strengths each family type has.

Based on the analysis of the selected textbooks, the definitions of the concept family do not vary. Algerian family is presented as adults of both sexes characterized by marriage, reproduction (one or more children) and common residence. This grouping is related through blood ties, that is to say biologically given. These results are in line with the structural definitions of family and, as it is already stated, these definitions provide clear criteria for membership, who is in and who is out of the family. Let us not dismiss the finding that these textbooks do not exclude some duties, interaction, responsibilities and roles that are expected from family members; but family structure remains one of the factors that determine whether the functions of the family are performed.

The Algerian second generation textbooks currently used in middle schools give little space for growing diversity of family models. Even though they include
some family types as: extended family, nuclear family, dual earner family and female (a widow) headed family, they show no great eagerness to present more than the extended family model (El Dar Elkabirah) to be the norm for living together. Extended families are families with more than two generations who are related through blood ties (constituting more than one nuclear family).

This study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between attitudes toward gender roles within the family and the typical family model. It enables us to confirm that the conceptualization of the Algerian typical family model and gendered division labour within the family are determined to a significant extent by cultural values and patriarchal norms.

A number of social and economic developments have contributed to a dramatic increase in family structures, is it fair to deny them? In the light of the data gathered, it is questionable whether Algerian second generation school textbooks as agents of social change capture well the reality of Algerian family diversity. This still begs this question: what criteria are most appropriate for (re)defining the concept family?

**The references**

**Books and Book chapters**


**Articles**


