

CultureTalk Iraqi Arabic Video Transcripts: <http://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu>
Secondary School and Future Opportunities

English Translation:

My memories in high school were very beautiful. Although I attended high school during the years of embargo in the nineties or mid nineties...but the memories are really wonderful.

Generally for high school, girls are separated from boys. I mean, there are high schools for girls that are completely separated from those for boys. We don't have a coeducational system in Iraq. When a person reaches a middle or secondary school, genders are separated. Coeducation exists only in the elementary and college years. When someone reaches college stage, there are women's and men's colleges, but the number is definitely very small. The high school was very special because we were so happy. It was also a motivation for us to exert efforts to go to college because it was the big prize as we say.

High school years were difficult for me a little bit because the Iraqi educational system is very hard. In high school, we have a general fourth grade¹, fifth grade, either scientific or literary, and sixth grade, either scientific or literary. The general fourth grade was the hardest one because it has scientific and literary classes combined in it.

After an Iraqi student finishes the fourth grade, he has the right to choose between scientific or literary branches. The fifth and sixth years, the last stages of high school, a student chooses to study either scientific classes which include physics, chemistry, math and so on, i.e. focusing on the scientific side. Sometimes a student chooses to go to the literary branch if he has the capability to memorize because all of it is history, and geography, and economy, and politics, etc.

The final stage of high school is sixth grade, and it is the one that decides which college a student goes to. There is the final exam, the baccalaureate, and based on the degrees obtained in the sixth grade, his choices are determined. It also depends on the averages required by colleges. In other words, in a given year, the College of Pharmacy requires an average of ninety, for example. In the following year, it might require an average of eighty-eight. It also depends on the hardship of questions in the sixth year. I mean if the questions are difficult, and then high averages are somewhat scarce. As a result, colleges have to reduce the averages they require in order to reach their usual numbers of students.

In fact, there is also favoritism between males and females; I mean if a male student scores eighty and wishes to go the College of Engineering, the same college may ask females to score eighty-five. In addition, it [accepting students] depends on the type of major. There are majors where women are not favored in the first place. For instance, Architectural Engineering or Civil Engineering require [supervising] projects, and being

¹ Fourth grade: equivalent to a freshman in high school.

in the streets all the time; an engineer is required to be outside, and he has projects and workers. In similar majors, women are not favored for studying.

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