

'A bad man, a beautiful woman, words
that are neither nice nor gracious'

PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT
AT A JORDANIAN UNIVERSITY

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I. Bergenfeld, C.J. Clark, S. Sandhu, K.M. Yount, A. Essaid, J. Sajdi, R. Abu Taleb, Z. Robbin, B. Batayeh, A. Zwoogar, R. Spencer

Research question

- ▶ What are the root causes of sexual harassment at a Jordanian university as perceived by students, faculty, and administrators?

Sexual harassment in university settings

- ▶ SH = unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature
- ▶ What acts constitute SH?
- ▶ How is SH related to other forms of SV and GBV?
- ▶ How is the university context unique?

The Jordanian context

- ▶ Tribes still hold informal legal & political authority
- ▶ Changes in the legal and social landscape
- ▶ Increasing awareness of SH as a problem in MENA
- ▶ Increasing numbers of women in higher education

Methods: Data collection

Focus groups

33 students
6 discussions
Scope / definitions
Norms
Prevalence
Risk factors
Bystander behavior

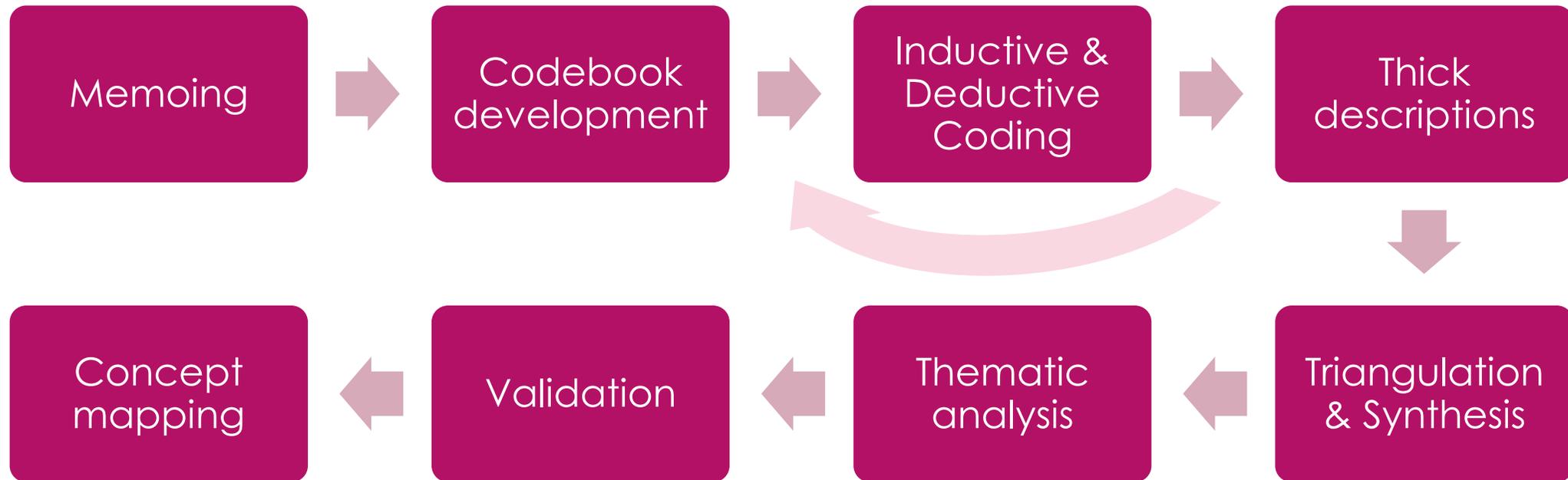
FADFED

- 317 students
- Public, participatory method
- Scope / definitions

Key informant interviews

- 5 faculty and administrators
- Policies / procedures
- Support / awareness
- Barriers

Methods: Analysis



Scope and definitions

- ▶ A common occurrence on campus
- ▶ Most commonly cited acts: public staring/leering and verbal comments
- ▶ Most common perpetrators: students
- ▶ Other acts:
 - ▶ sexual coercion, usually from faculty/staff
 - ▶ unwanted touching, often on public transport or in crowded public spaces
 - ▶ disparaging remarks about women as a class

Social-ecological model

Societal level

Gender
Norms

Organizational level

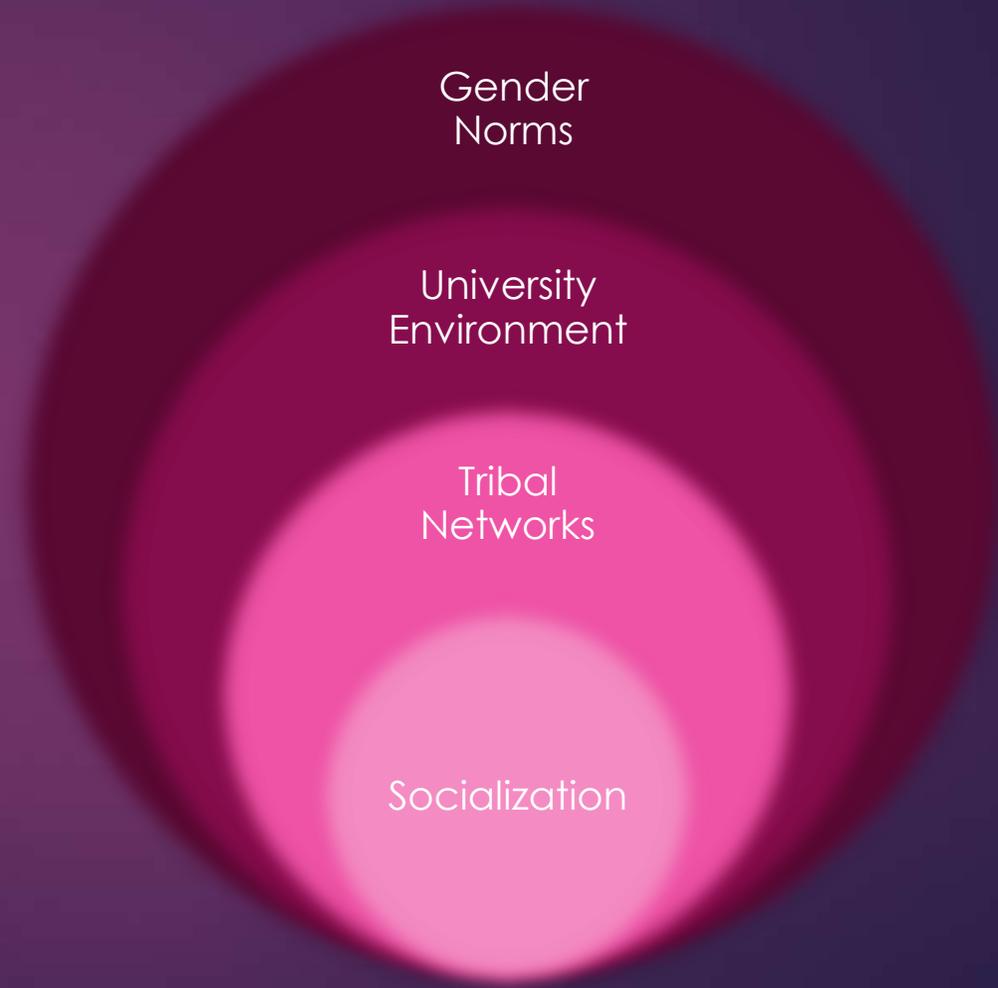
University
Environment

Interpersonal level

Tribal
Networks

Individual level

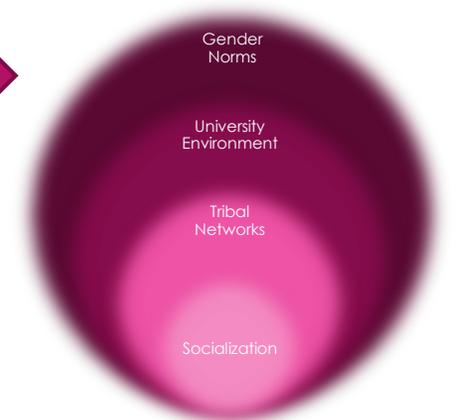
Socialization



A consequence of transgression of feminine norms

“If she was not veiled they would say, it’s because you are not veiled. If she was veiled, they would say it’s because you’re not wearing ‘jilbab’. If she is wearing jilbab, they would say, it’s because you go to university. There is always an excuse to blame the girl.”

▶ *female student*

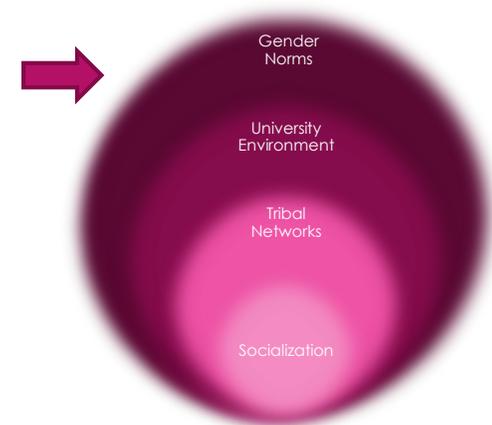


Men's desire is natural and innate

"The lust in us is normal. That's how God created us, we can't deny it."

"Man's instinct is visual, while a female's instinct is sensual, so if a man simply looks at a woman, that is enough to be aroused, scientifically speaking."

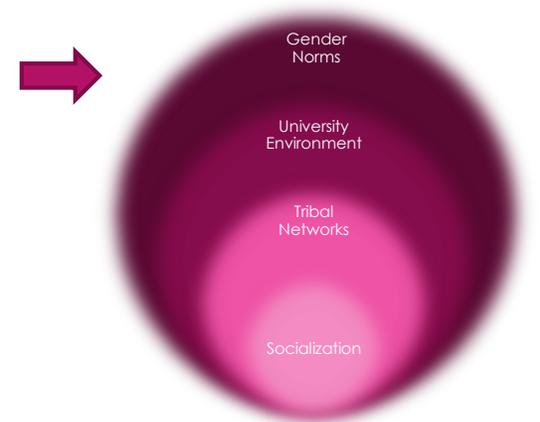
▶ male students



Decency reflects the family's reputation

“In our community in general, regardless of the university, girls fear to tell their families about the incident of harassment. Yes, she'll say I don't want to harm my family, nothing happened and all is good.”

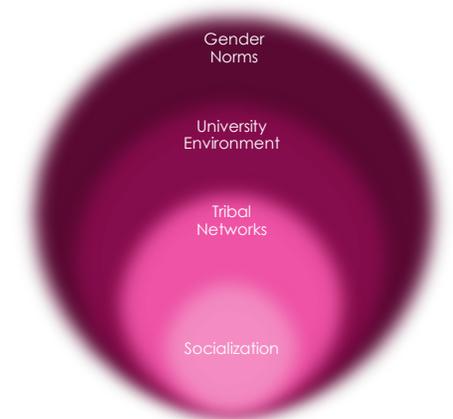
▶ *male student*



University reputation is a primary concern

“Confidentiality of the complaint protects the university from appearing to be a bastion of sexual harassment. In order to protect its reputation, the university does not have any awareness raising campaigns about the issue.”

▶ *faculty member*

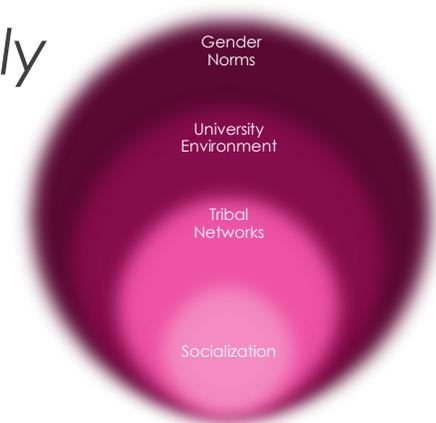


Reporting carries high risks

“If she confronts him, he will fail her, especially that he’s the only one who teaches this module. So she remains quiet.”

“Once a girl complained and we heard that the professor was suspended but then he came back after a while, so we don’t know who’s the victim and who’s the perpetrator. At the end, the only loser was her, the victim.”

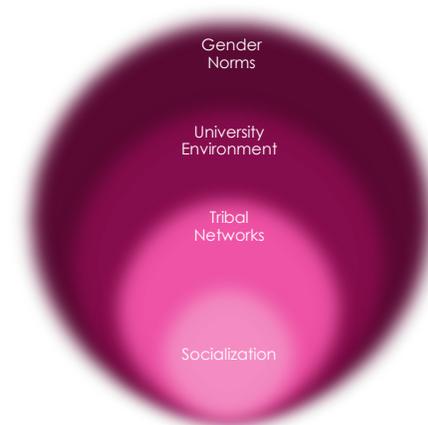
▶ female students



Well-connected perpetrators do not face sanctions

“... I am not worried about anything happening to me, because when I know I come from a certain tribe, nobody will talk to me, or maybe I know that official, or I know people in the business area, or the literature, or the security guard, or the majority of them, so no matter what I do, even if a girl goes and reports me to someone, I know that I will get away with it, given my background and the fact that I know the officials, so that makes it this common.”

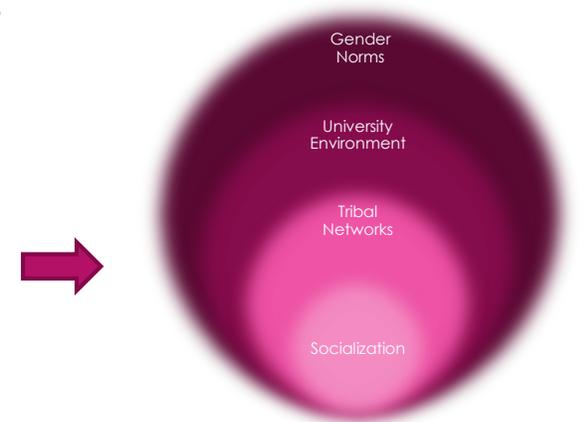
► male student



Bystander behavior carries risks

“If a female is harassed, even if she tells a friend, be it male or female, they don’t want to interfere, because maybe the perpetrator hails from a certain tribe or knows some security guard, so they think they will be harmed should they make an intervention.”

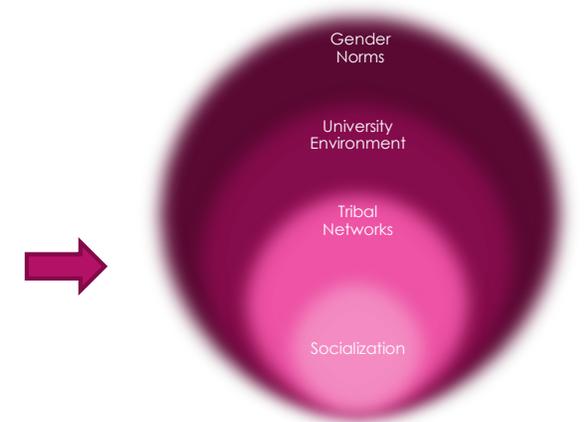
▶ male student



Tribal protection from harassment

“This factor plays a role in both cases- if a girl belongs to a certain tribe, nobody will come near her, or only guys from the same tribe, but if she doesn't, or she has no support base, they say anything.”

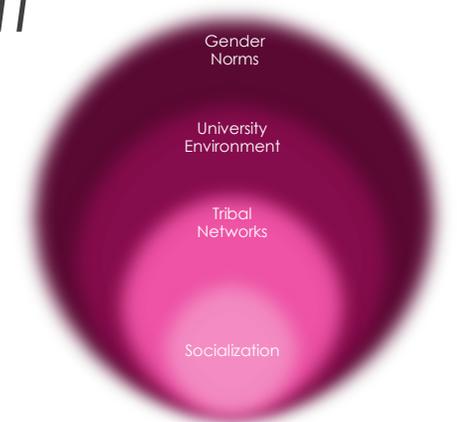
▶ *male student*



Disclosure leads to conflict

“If [SH] happens [in certain areas of campus], tribes will get involved and possibly reach to fights and shooting. Because of customs and traditions here, a girl who was subjected to sexual harassment won’t talk about it publicly, she will take into account what people will say.”

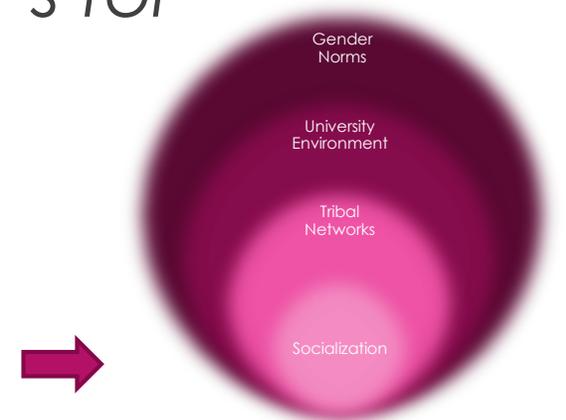
▶ *faculty member*



SH results from an unhealthy family life

“It starts from his upbringing in the community, how it developed his personality and shaped his future and his way of thinking... If he started his university life with violence and wrong thinking and had no principles in life to stop him, then these things will affect him... That’s for the violence, as for sexual harassment.”

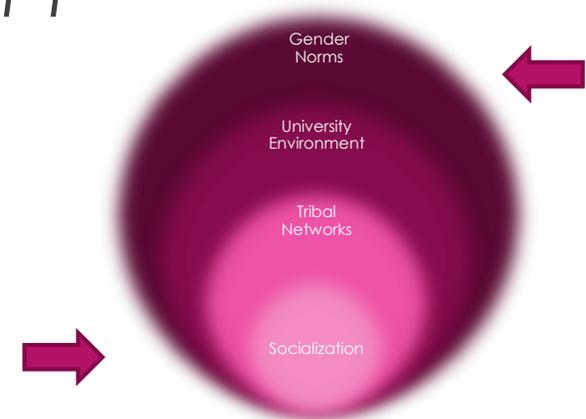
▶ *female student*



Rural men grow up with entrenched norms

“We often notice discrimination between males and females in our community by area....you can see discrimination between males and females happening a lot in remote areas. Until now, I think that some people might still tell you that girls can't go to the university, neither can they study.”

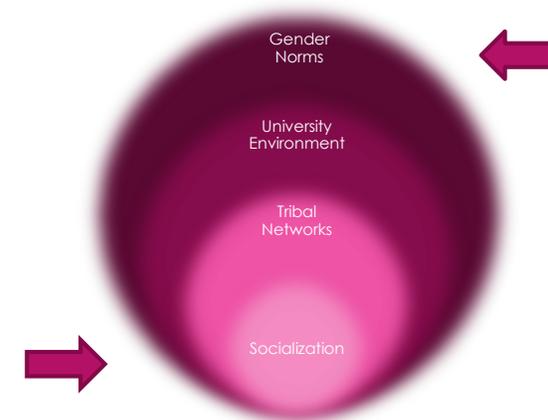
▶ *male student*



Mixed-gender experience is limited

“One of the problems may be the sexual frustration that the majority of people in our society suffer from, which explains why they don’t know how to deal with the other sex, all of their perceptions about the other sex are sexual.... Their awareness and their understanding of healthy ways of dealing with the other sex in a mixed setting are very limited.”

▶ male student



Limitations

- ▶ Language
 - ▶ Intensive team discussions to clarify data
- ▶ Recruitment

Key findings

- ▶ Broad social changes come up against entrenched social norms
- ▶ Institutional response is perceived to be inadequate
- ▶ Tribal networks supersede official policy

Implications

- ▶ University: clear policies, public disclosure, survivor support
- ▶ Bystander intervention: engage tribal leadership
- ▶ Social behavior change communication: in progress
- ▶ Stakeholder engagement

Acknowledgements

- ▶ Emory team
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Questions?