

### Social Sciences and Humanities Pillar

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/qfarf.2013.SSHO-06>

## **Culture embodied: An anthropological investigation of pregnancy (and loss) in Qatar**

**Susie Kilshaw, Kristina Sole, Halima Al Tamimi, Faten El Taher**

University College London, London, UNITED KINGDOM

Email: [s.kilshaw@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:s.kilshaw@ucl.ac.uk)\*

This paper explores the emergent themes from the first stage of our cross cultural research (UK and Qatar) into pregnancy and pregnancy loss. This paper presents a culturally grounded representation of pregnancy and the experience of pregnant women in Qatar. In order to understand the experience of miscarriage in Qatar, it is necessary to first develop an ethnotheory of pregnancy. This research uses the approach and methods of medical anthropology. However, this project is particularly exciting because of its commitment to interdisciplinary research: the research is informed and led by our collaboration between anthropologists and medical doctors. Ethnographic methods provide an in-depth understanding of the experience of pregnancy and pregnancy loss. Our main method is semi structured interviews, but true to our anthropological foundation, we are combining this with other forms of data collection. We are observing clinical encounters (doctors appointments, sonography sessions) and conducting participant observation, such as accompanying women when they shop in preparation for the arrival of their baby. , The research is longitudinal and incorporates 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Qatar. Part of this is following 20 pregnant women throughout their pregnancy to better understand their developing pregnancy, their experience of pregnancy, the medical management of the pregnant body, and the development of fetal personhood. Women are interviewed on several occasions but we are also in contact for more informal knowledge sharing. 40 women who have recently miscarried (40 in Qatar and 40 in the UK) will also be interviewed. However, this paper will focus on our first cohort: pregnant Qatari women. After 6 months of fieldwork in Qatar, we have discovered a number of emergent themes which help us to better understand the social construction of pregnancy in Qatar. This will then allow us to better understand what happens when a pregnancy is unsuccessful. Here we develop a culturally specific representation of pregnancy in Qatar including: the importance of fetal environment on the developing fetus and cultural theories of risk (evil eye, food avoidance). Issues around risk and blame are explored, as these will likely be activated when a pregnancy is unsuccessful. We also look at the experience of pregnancy and how this is impacted upon by past experiences of pregnancy loss (both stillbirth and miscarriage). The importance of motherhood in Qatar is considered, as it is a central concern for our participants. By exploring these themes we are developing a better understanding of the experience of pregnancy in Qatar, which will enable us to shed light on the impact of pregnancy loss on the mother and those around her.



# ARC' 13

QATAR FOUNDATION ANNUAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

QATAR'S  
CROSS-CUTTING  
RESEARCH GRAND  
CHALLENGES

