

**Ambivalence and Acquiescence: Gender and the  
Cosmopolitan Class in Cairo**

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## DECLARATION

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Mariam Nagi

## ABSTRACT

Socioeconomic and demographic transformations have led to the decreased occurrence of marriage, chipped at the link between sexuality and marriage, and increased the liminal period of 'waithood' in Egypt. However, there is a dearth of studies examining women and men's experiences in and around these phenomena. My research fills this empirical gap by adding to existing knowledge on masculinities and femininities in Egypt, especially in and around premarital relationships an area that is difficult to study due to its sensitive and socially taboo nature. The aim of the dissertation is to examine what tensions are produced by the clash between class preservation strategies grounded in specific gender dynamics and greater desire for autonomy and expectations for equality held by women and men of the cosmopolitan class, and how these tensions are managed.

Previous research has largely focused on low-income communities and women's gender strategies. This dissertation adds to the body of literature by gaining a better understanding of women *and* men's changing gender construction and roles, particularly in premarital and marital relationships in upper class communities, specifically the cosmopolitan elite in Cairo. Moreover, my findings contribute to understanding the intersection of class and gender and the role appearances and consumption have in reproducing existing gender hierarchies.

My theoretical framework consists of a synthesis of Bourdieu's theory of practice with feminist discussions on agency, reflexivity, and social change to gain a better understanding of men and women's experiences of the intersection of class and gender and the impact on gender roles in premarital and marital relationships in this segment of the Egyptian population. I utilize a case study research design to move beyond the essentialized and ahistorical notions of "Arab women" and "the Arab family" based on general theories presented in development reports and to conduct an in-depth study that offers insight into the diversity and complexity of social life. In order to capture women and men's experiences I conducted 40 semi-structured interviews among

educated Cairene men and women between the ages of 20 and 35. To elucidate the contradictions between what was articulated during the interviews and actual behavior and feelings, I conducted participant observation of weddings, engagements, dinner parties, social outings, and family gatherings. Interview transcriptions and ethnographic notes were then analyzed using a grounded theory approach.

My results illuminate the different ways in which class interacts with these ideological terrains through concrete day-to-day behavior within relationships before and after marriage. Global economic and cultural flows and women's increased education and labor force participation has resulted in increased autonomy and questioning of traditional gender expectations prior to marriage, however after marriage a preoccupation with status leads to a reinforcement of the traditional gender regime. Women's increasing bargaining power and men's decreasing financial power has led to a proliferation of symbolic processes that trivialize and misrecognize women's financial contributions.

While circulating images of masculinities and femininities are associated with assumptions about progress, modernity, and development; I posit the struggle for authenticity in which gender roles and beliefs play a large role is not simply a struggle between modernity often interpreted as anything associated with "the West" and a sense of Arab-ness and/or Egyptian-ness. While internal dilemmas may exist regarding issues of identity and selfhood, I found men and women in the study community continuously negotiated different masculinities and femininities depending on the context; different gender strategies were utilized in different contexts to ensure their place in Cairo's socialscape in terms of class hierarchies. In practice, these men and women did not fully reject gender strategies indexical of contexts outside of Egypt but rather carefully mediated or "brokered" gender practices to ensure seamless local translation. The interviews suggest that this "brokering" was commonly conducted with the aim of ensuring positions in local class hierarchies, indicative of a preoccupation with status and distinction rather than one with religion or nationality.

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The system of transliteration used in this volume is a modified version of that recommended by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. The modifications are due to my desire to be faithful to colloquial Egyptian pronunciations as this dissertation draws primarily from oral texts in the Cairene dialect. Furthermore, I have not forced colloquial words into modern standard Arabic to preserve accompanying connotations and to remain as close as possible to the interviews.

All transliterated words are in italics throughout the dissertation, except for those that are now part of the English vocabulary. Arabic names of persons and places are also not in italics. Diacritical marks have been omitted except for the letter *ayn* and the glottal stop, the *hamza*, when it appears in the middle of the word.

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## **1. Introduction: Elite Identities, Socioeconomic Change, and Gender**

Studies have noted socio-economic and demographic transformations in Egypt such as prolonged waithood, the decoupling of sex and marriage, and alternative forms of marriage (Dialmy, 2005; Megahed, 2010; Roudi-Fahimi & Moghadam, 2003; Singerman, 2007). However, there is a dearth of studies examining women and men's experiences in and around these phenomena. My research fills this empirical gap by adding to existing knowledge on masculinities and femininities in Egypt, especially in and around premarital relationships an area that is difficult to study due to its sensitive and socially taboo nature. In addition, previous research has largely focused on low-income communities and women's gender strategies. This dissertation adds to the body of literature by gaining a better understanding of women *and* men's changing gender construction and roles, particularly in premarital and marital relationships in upper class communities, specifically the cosmopolitan elite in Cairo. Moreover, my findings contribute to understanding the intersection of class and gender and the role appearances and consumption have in reproducing existing gender hierarchies.

My theoretical framework consists of a synthesis of Bourdieu's theory of practice with feminist discussions on agency, reflexivity, and social change; this framework allows me to gain a better understanding of men and women's experiences of the intersection of class and gender and the impact on gender roles in premarital and marital relationships in this segment of the Egyptian population. The following research questions guide this study:

1. How do urban educated 'cosmopolitan' Cairene men and women experience competing gender expectations around gender roles and masculinities and femininities in premarital and marital relationships?
2. What role does class play in mediating these gender expectations?
3. How are these competing gender ideologies experienced, negotiated and resolved or not resolved daily, and articulated in words and actions?
4. What are their consequences for the gender regime in this segment of the Egyptian population?
5. How does this empirical knowledge contribute to our theorization of gender roles and relationships

and their relationship to the 'gender paradox' in  
Egypt?

I utilize a case study research design to move beyond the essentialized and ahistorical notions of "Arab women" and "the Arab family" based on general theories presented in development reports and to conduct an in-depth study that offers insight into the diversity and complexity of social life. This method ties into my aim of contributing rich material for the development and refinement of theories related to gender, class, and social change in the Arab world. Instead of casting Arab women's choices as problems of family, religion, and culture, I have grounded my analyses in everyday behavior along with accounts of men and women's experiences. In order to capture women and men's experiences I conducted 40 semi-structured interviews among educated Cairene men and women between the ages of 20 and 35. To elucidate the contradictions between what was articulated during the interviews and actual behavior and feelings, I conducted participant observation of weddings, engagements, dinner parties, social outings, and family gatherings. Interview transcriptions and ethnographic notes were then analyzed using a grounded theory approach. This qualitative approach allows me to capture the dynamics behind the statistics and trends and to access the subjectivity of the men and women affected by transformations in class and gender regimes in a globalized world.

My finding that gender and more specifically women's issues are a terrain on which ideological battles are commonly fought is not new; there is no shortage of literature examining the myriad of ways in which women and women's issues are utilized as markers of modernity, progress, and authenticity (Badran, 1993, 1995; Moghadam, 1994). However, my results illuminate the different ways in which class interacts with these ideological terrains through concrete day-to-day behavior within relationships before and after marriage. Global economic and cultural flows and women's increased education and labor force participation has resulted in increased autonomy and questioning of traditional gender expectations prior to marriage, however after marriage a preoccupation with status leads to a reinforcement of the traditional gender regime. Women's increasing bargaining power and men's decreasing financial power has led to a proliferation of symbolic processes that trivialize and misrecognize women's financial contributions.

While circulating images of masculinities and femininities are associated with assumptions about progress, modernity, and development; I posit the struggle for authenticity in which gender roles and beliefs play a large role is not simply a struggle between modernity often interpreted as anything associated with "the West" and a sense of Arab-ness and/or Egyptian-ness (Adely, 2012; Ghannam, 2002; Peterson, 2011). While internal dilemmas may exist regarding issues of identity and selfhood, I

found men and women in the study community continuously negotiated different masculinities and femininities depending on the context; different gender strategies were utilized in different contexts to ensure their place in Cairo's socialscape in terms of class hierarchies. In practice, these men and women did not fully reject gender strategies indexical of contexts outside of Egypt but rather carefully mediated or "brokered" gender practices to ensure seamless local translation. The interviews suggest that this "brokering" was commonly conducted with the aim of ensuring positions in local class hierarchies, indicative of a preoccupation with status and distinction rather than one with religion or nationality.

In this chapter I present an overview of the paradox of gender as it applies to Egypt and the assumed benefits of education inherent in the human development framework. This discussion stresses the need for more nuanced interpretations of Arab women's choices and an exploration of the ways in which class struggles are merged with gender order to produce and reproduce existing gender regimes. Then I examine three trends that have led to deviations in ideal types of masculinities and femininities: prolonged waithood, decoupling of sex and marriage, and alternative forms of marriage. Most of these deviations are seen before marriage without a corresponding shift in gender dynamics in marital relationships. Lastly, I show how the effects of three macro-level changes – migration,

economic liberalization, and the rise of Islamist discourses – have not only had an effect on changing constructions of masculinities and femininities but also on class structures and composition. Traditional gender and class structures are being challenged leading women and men to reconcile the changing material basis of social status with deviations from ideal types of masculinities and femininities.

### **1.1 The Paradox of Gender in Egypt**

Egypt has recently seen increasing rates of women's education and labor force participation however development agencies have described the lack of expected gains in women's economic participation given progress in gender parity in education as the "paradox of gender" (World Bank, 2008). According to the *Arab Human Development Report 2016*, young women's participation in the labor force in the Arab region is half of the global rate: 18 percent compared to 39 percent (UNDP, 2016, p. 25). Young women's unemployment rate is 47 percent – almost twice as high as young men's unemployment rate at 24 percent. This paradox has also been found in countries such as Jordan and Kuwait, and in countries outside of the Middle East such as India. Reports such as the *Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World* fail to account for factors such as class and

associated ideas about status and gender roles that shape decisions about education, waged labor, marriage, and family and continue to rely on linear relationships between women's education, labor force participation, and empowerment (Adely, 2009; UNDP, 2006). This pattern continues in the most recent *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality* (UNDP, 2016).

Few would disagree that the region struggles with gender issues that need to be addressed however as Adely points out:

. . . the status of education for girls in most of the region could have provided an opportunity to highlight progress or success or to examine the economic constraints that make certain educational goals still unattainable. . . Such an approach could have opened the door to more serious discussion of class issues, of rural underdevelopment, and of other forms of persistent exclusion that shape the life chances of young people in the region today. (Adely, 2009, p. 118)

This study aims to enrich the discussions on Arab women's choices by illuminating the material and symbolic processes grounded in everyday practices that lead Egyptian women to not follow "proper" trajectories. In many of the discussions on Arab women's choices – especially those occurring in development reports – gender inequality is attributed to "the culture, the society and the laws [that] do not entirely embrace the concept of equality" (UNDP, 2016, p. 30). Rather than blaming women's choices on essentialized and ahistorical notions of "Islam",

“culture”, and the “Arab family”, I focus on how Cairene men and women reconcile the gap between women’s desire for greater autonomy and independence and the expectations associated with the maintenance and protection of social status; the maintenance of the existing gender order is intertwined with a preoccupation with status.

Gross enrollment rates (GER) in tertiary education have continued to rise in Egypt since the 1990’s – with a GER in tertiary education of 14% in 1990, 29% in 2005, and 35% in 2015 (UNDP, 2017). Egypt has also made considerable progress in achieving gender parity in tertiary education; in 1950 only 7% of the students at Cairo University were women and nearly 60 years later 57% of those who complete university are women (Sieverding, 2009; UNDP, 2010). According to the most recent *Egypt Human Development Report* (2010), 26% of Egyptian women are attending or have attended university; women also comprised 47% of those enrolled in higher education in the academic year of 2006/2007 (Megahed, 2010). Although women account for nearly half of the students enrolled in tertiary education, the persistence of gender inequality in higher education is evident when examining enrollment rates disaggregated by economic background, geographical region, and field of specialization (Megahed, 2010; UNDP, 2010). Household wealth is a major determinant of higher education with almost half of the students pursuing HE from the richest



20% of the population and only 4% from the poorest 20% (UNDP, 2010). In 2005, 71.2% of Egyptian women aged 19 to 22 in the top wealth quintile had been enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 39.5% in the second quintile, and 6.6% in the bottom quintile (as cited in Sieverding, 2009).

According to the Egypt Human Development Report (2010), the gap in enrollment rates between poor and nonpoor is wider among Egyptian female youth than among male youth; nonetheless the poverty gap is wider than the gender gap. The poor and those who live in rural areas have less access to education at all levels than the nonpoor and those who live in urban areas (Megahed, 2010; World Bank, 2008). Nonurban and economically disadvantaged regions that are considered to be more socially and culturally conservative towards women have lower overall enrollment rates in higher education and lower female participation rates. In 2006/2007, the overall HE enrollment rate in Upper Egypt was 16% and the lowest female participation rate occurred in the governorate of Assiut, 35% (as cited in Megahed, 2010). Regional differences in women's enrollment in higher education can be partly explained by the "unequal distribution of higher education institutes across governorates" (Megahed, 2010, p. 16).

In contrast to gains towards gender parity in education, statistics on women's labor force participation still indicate a gender gap (UNDP, 2016; World Bank, 2010a). Scholarship on

women in the Middle East has highlighted the complex and often ambivalent relationship women have with labor force participation: women struggle with competing expectations that education has created, shifting realities associated with sociopolitical and economic transformation, and conflicting pressures surrounding work outside of the home (Adely, 2012; Adely, 2009; Sieverding, 2009). Egypt's unemployment is about 5% below the regional average – the MENA region is higher than every other region in the world except Sub-Saharan Africa with an average unemployment rate of 14% - a gender gap in unemployment can be found with less than 1/5 of young women transitioning into employment (World Bank, 2008). In 2016, the female unemployment rate was close to 24% - about 15% higher than the male unemployment rate (World Bank, 2016). Among young women ages 15-29 the unemployment rate was 41%, four times as high as young men (World Bank, 2010b). It is interesting to note that until age 19 unemployment rates are similar for males and females but by 21 the female unemployment rate doubles (UNDP, 2010). This can be partly explained by marriage, which has been found to raise labor force exit rates by 6% in the public sector and 28% in the private sector; however, this cannot be simply attributed to marriage since a significant number of girls marry after the age of 21 (UNDP, 2010; World Bank, 2010b).

Female workforce participation rates have been stagnating since the late 1990's with rates hovering around 30% since 1995 (World Bank, 2008). This relative stability "masks shifts in the sectoral and educational composition of the female Egyptian labor force" (Sieverding, 2009, p.4). From 1998 to 2006, the percentage of urban females employed in the government decreased 9% while the percentage of urban females employed in both the formal and informal private sector (regular wage) increased 2.6% and 2.7% respectively (World Bank, 2010a). In the rural female population, government employment decreased 16.3% and the formal/informal private sector (regular wage) remained stable around 1.8% and 5.6%; female participation in the informal sector increased with the percentage of women employed as household enterprise workers growing 20.4%.

In addition to these shifts in the sectoral composition of the female workforce, shifts in the educational composition can also be found. Paradoxically, education does not significantly contribute to Egyptian women's earning prospects with unemployment highest among those with secondary and university degrees (Akkari, 2004; UNDP, 2010; World Bank, 2010a, 2016). In 2016, 14.7% of females with advanced education were unemployed, yet only 8.6% of females with basic education were unemployed (World Bank, 2016). This trend was not reflected in my sample: 18 of the 22 women interviewed

had full-time jobs, of the remaining 3 – one was still in university, 2 were currently unemployed and searching for a job, and the last one was a stay-at-home mother.

These statistics indicate urban and nonpoor women are more likely to have achieved a tertiary level of education yet are more vulnerable to unemployment. By focusing on women from the top wealth quintile living in Cairo, I am able to study a segment of the population that is more likely to have achieved a tertiary level of education and less likely to participate in the labor force. While my sample was not reflective of this unemployment vulnerability, it did reflect the correlation between wealth quintile and education. In fact, all but 1 of the 22 women interviewed had at least completed a bachelor's degree and the remaining woman was currently attending university. Adely's (2012) ethnography on schooling and gender in Jordan posits that education produces new struggles by generating new expectations and presenting new possibilities; therefore by targeting a socio-demographic group with high rates of tertiary education I am able to examine the challenges that arise when women are faced with images of desirable and successful womanhood, images that many times are contradictory to family and societal expectations.

## **1.2 Assumptions and Women's Choices: The Need for More Nuanced Explanations**

In the human capabilities perspective developed in the 1980's to usher in a new era in the conceptualization of development, education is a key capability and the denial of education is seen as a major deprivation (Adely, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011). While increased levels of women's education has been correlated with decreased child mortality, decreased fertility, and increased life expectancy; for the purpose of this dissertation I focus on the presumed link between education and labor force participation (Adely, 2009). It is commonly assumed that educated women are more likely to join the formal labor force and that waged labor in and of itself is empowering for women, mostly because of the associated financial independence. With this frame of reference, it is understandable why countries such as Egypt are viewed as an anomaly – Egyptian women have not followed the predictable patterns considered a natural outcome in educating women (Adely, 2009). As Adely (2009) argues there is a tension, which can be seen in the *Arab Human Development Report 2005* for example, between the claim that education is essential in the expansion of choices and the assumptions regarding which choices are acceptable and/or desirable. This tension is indicative of the persistence of values stemming from mandates of global capital,

in the new language of neoliberal choice, and emphasizes that this new approach may not present a significant change from earlier conceptualizations of development.

More relevant to this study, is the fact that an emphasis on individual capabilities and “choices” underestimates the role of larger structural barriers and power dynamics that may constrain opportunities and result in this “paradox of gender” (Adely, 2009). Instead of focusing only on the empowering nature of education and labor force participation, studies need to focus on what is going on behind these statistics and the ambivalence and ambiguities associated with education and work. While scholarship on women in low-income neighborhoods in Cairo has explored the power dynamics of gender relations by looking at daily interactions and concrete social arrangements in both the family and the workplace, these findings are not commonly reflected in development reports (El-Kholy, 2002; Hoodfar, 1997; Singerman, 1995). Most of these studies have focused on the political economy of the household, I add to this body of literature by positing class struggles are merged with gender order to produce and reproduce existing gender regimes.

Instead of casting Arab women’s choices as problem of family, religion, and culture, I have grounded my analyses in everyday behavior along with accounts of men and women’s experiences. In doing so I uncover the role structural

impediments and social norms surrounding ideal types of masculinity and femininity play in women's choices. My findings highlight the limits of the neoliberal and rational actor framework in capturing the complexities associated with gender and social change and the resulting gender strategies and symbolic processes. This framework is also unable to capture the ways cultural notions of masculinity and femininity are employed to protect men from changing economic realities that have resulted in women's financial independence.

Adely (2009, p. 106) draws from her research in Jordan to question such assumptions, to illuminate the "ambiguities built onto the education project". In an effort to tease out the nuances and range of factors that shape and influence decisions about field of study and future career and family trajectories, she explores conflicting pressures from economic factors that force women to work to women's own perceptions of what is valuable and/or powerful. Adely's (2009) ethnographic research at an all-girls school in northern Jordan as well as among families of the adolescent girls illuminates the diversity and complexity of circumstances that might shape desires and dilemmas tied to pursuing an education and the range of expectations connected to these desires. She found that although there was a link between education and a girl's future economic and marital security, many Jordanians remain ambivalent about women's work outside the home. Similarly, my respondents commonly

expressed feelings of ambivalence especially when discussing topics such as the domestic division of labor and financial responsibilities – 2 arenas integral to the construction of idealized femininity and idealized masculinity.

### **1.3 Sociopolitical and Economic Transformations in Egypt**

Problematizing Egyptian women's choices only perpetuates ahistorical and essentialized notions of "Arab culture", "Arab men" and Islam. My empirical contribution is to show the lived reality of young men and women's relationships before and after marriage, among the cosmopolitan elite in Cairo. The goal of this section is to provide an overview of three macro-level factors that have contributed and continue to contribute to cultural notions of masculinity and femininity; this context is integral in understanding the renegotiation of gender roles this study examines. I have privileged two macro-level influences because of their impact on local standards and articulations of both gender *and* class: regional migration and "open door" state policies. I also discuss the rise of Islamist discourses as well as the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, only briefly however, since my data did not indicate these played a role in respondents' negotiation of gender. These socioeconomic changes have not only led to the development of trends such as prolonged waithood, decoupling of sex and marriage, and



alternative forms of marriage, which I explore later in the chapter, but have also led to class transformations and struggles.

### **1.3.1 Migration and the Egyptian Household**

Over the past couple of decades, Egypt has had widespread migration, which has had a direct influence on the economy and on consumption trends (El-Kholy, 2002). Part of this migration has been internal from rural to urban areas: Egypt has had one of the fastest rates of urbanization in the world with the urban population doubling in ten years. According to CAPMAS, as of January of 2018 Cairo had a population of 9,655,000 (CAPMAS, 2018). Furthermore, since the early 1970's there has been an unprecedented level of regional migration in the form of successive waves of out-migration mostly to the oil-rich Arab countries of the Gulf. These waves were triggered by a variety of factors including high levels of population growth, a deterioration of living conditions in rural areas, the adoption of liberal economic policies, and the 1973 Arab war with Israel and the associated rise of a regional petrodollar economy.

In the earlier waves of migration, Egypt exported a labor force of professionals and administrators however by the 1970's the government sponsored labor migration was surpassed in size by a largely unregulated wave of labor at various skill levels

(El-Kholy, 2002). By the 1980's professionals no longer constituted the majority of migrants, with the majority comprised of skilled and unskilled laborers in the construction sector. According to estimates, only 10 percent of migrants between 1975 and 1985 were women – this trend has resulted in much of the research on regional migration and gender in Egypt focusing on the impact of men's absence on female autonomy and decision making within the household. Although there is a general agreement that male out-migration has increased women's workloads in rural areas and enabled them to assume roles previously reserved for men, there is disagreement over the impact this has had on gender relations and power dynamics within the household. Some studies suggest that male migration has led to women gaining more control over resources and authority with the expectation that this will continue even after husbands have returned. Others scholars express skepticism, arguing these changes are marginal in nature and do not fundamentally alter or challenge existing power dynamics or gender norms and expectations between men and women in the family.

### **1.3.2 Economic Liberalization, Structural Adjustment, and Class Transformations**

A second significant change in Egypt that has impacted both gender and class structures is the shift from a centralized socialist economy which marked President Nasser's regime in the 1950's and 1960's to the increasingly liberalized economy found today (El-Kholy, 2002; Peterson, 2011; Singerman & Hoodfar, 1996). This shift had profound effects for women's labor force participation as well as for class composition. Under Nasser's rule, the government introduced a form of limited socialism in which the state gained considerable control over the economy with the aim of dissolving class distinctions and bringing about a more equitable society (Hoodfar, 1997). In an effort to provide conditions conducive to social mobility, the regime introduced free, universal education, a public health care system, subsidies for basic needs, an elaborate rent control system, and a liberal labor law that gave equal opportunity to women. More importantly, radical land reforms were implemented in which land was redistributed to address the landlessness of Egyptian peasants and to create a more equitable distribution of wealth. This land redistribution played a large role in altering class structures and composition: many of the traditional elites were landowners who lost considerable property and wealth during these land reforms.

With the goal of expanding its own constituency, the Nasser regime began to employ qualified candidates from the poorer and less powerful social strata, the strata who made up

the strongest bloc of government supporters (Hoodfar, 1997).

Most of these supporters would not have been from the traditional (previously) landowning elite but rather from the ranks of the military and both lower and middle classes.

Nasser's implementation of free and universal education led to increases in the standard of living and for the first time in Egypt's history, sons of peasants and urban lower-income groups had access to higher education and could move to positions of power. On the other hand, many of the upper-class Egyptians lost much of their economic capital due to the land redistribution reforms. These policies succeeded in creating a new form of social stratification with a new ruling class that did not necessarily rise from the ranks of the traditional landowning elites. New bureaucratic and party elites emerged as the regime expanded its power base.

With President Sadat's succession to power in 1970, Egypt entered a new era one marked by "open door" policies, *el infitah*, which resulted in a deeper integration of the country into the global political economy and a retreat from economic regulation and welfare policies (El-Kholy, 2002). Open door policies along with the decline of the agricultural sector, the effects of the land reforms, and regional migration further changed the composition of the elite class by introducing former peasants who made fortunes in the Gulf during the oil boom of the 1970's and in Cairo into the socialscape. Often times, these

people did not return to their villages but rather stayed in Cairo forming a class of nouveaux riches with strong links to the regime. Many of these had already risen to power during Nasser's time in office; as their links to the regime strengthened so did their ability to accumulate economic capital. Some of the traditional landowning elites were able to gain power during this time period as well, especially if they had military ties or business ties to the regime. However, the majority of the traditional elites began to stagnate socially, arguably drifting into the upper-middle class.

Along with this economic liberalization, Egypt started experiencing a decline in what has been labeled "state feminism" or the active social policies of the Nasser period which had resulted in women's gains in both education and employment (El-Kholy, 2002; Hatem, 1993). Between 1961 and 1969, women's labor force participation increased by 31.1 percent, however increasing liberalization and privatization coincided with a significant rise in women's unemployment in the formal labor force: from a rate of 4.1 percent in 1966 to 29.8 percent ten years later. During the 1970's and 1980's university graduates were guaranteed government jobs in which workforce regulations mandated job security guarantees, social security programs, high wages with generous nonwage benefits, sharp restrictions on firing, and other job stabilizing policies – benefits that were particularly attractive to women (World

Bank, 2008). The rise of public sector employment was accompanied by a rise in women's labor force participation, especially those with a post-secondary or university degree; however, the once upward trend of female labor force participation has stalled with the decline of the public sector (Assaad, 2003; Sieverding, 2009; UNDP, 2010).

The transition to neoliberal economics (arguably incomplete) in Egypt has not only had a negative impact on Egyptian women's labor force participation but also drastically altered the composition of the elite class. Before Nasser's land reforms, the elite class was largely comprised of landowners; after the reforms and Sadat's "open door" policies a socially mobile middle class joined this elite class, many with business and military ties to the regime, some rich from their own roles in transnational trades, and others from petrodollars earned in the Gulf (Peterson, 2011). Galal (2000, 2004) links the increase in consumerism demonstrated by a rise in demand for largely imported consumer durable goods and changing tastes in furniture and home décor since the 1980's to a change in class structures. He suggests that these new class structures have brought on new ways of displaying status and distinction. These struggles for distinction can also be seen throughout the marriage process: extravagant "Western" style weddings and marriage trousseaus of exorbitant costs have become a norm in

the last couple of decades (El-Kholy, 2002; Galal, 2000, 2004; Singerman, 2007).

While studies have argued that delayed marriage among young men and women in Egypt has been largely caused by the rising cost of marriage, these conclusions have been based on research on lower and middle socioeconomic statuses (Singerman, 2007). My analysis adds to existing knowledge on delayed marriage by looking at individuals from higher socioeconomic statuses. While several of my respondents objected to the costs associated with marriage, this was not the main reason young men and women felt ambivalent towards marriage and delayed it at times, especially since these costs were covered by their parents. My analysis indicates that cosmopolitan elites delay marriage for personal reasons including a career, a desire for autonomy, and a need for independence and individualization (away from the influence and expectations of the extended family) due to their exposure to cultural and economic global flows.

I posit that these macro-level changes have altered class composition by changing the foundation on which social status is built. Previously elite status depended largely on the ownership of land, after land redistribution and neoliberal economic reforms conspicuous consumption became the primary means of displaying status. More recently in the era of technology, social media, and ease of travel, a new form of

cultural capital has emerged as a marker of distinction – cosmopolitanism (Peterson, 2011). Peterson (2011) describes this new upper class - comprised of old-money families, nouveaux riches, and many subdivisions and cross-categorizations of these categories – as the “cosmopolitan class” and points out that all these people share a particular relationship to modernity seen as inherently rooted in a global, nonlocal realm. Estimates suggest these cosmopolitan elites make up 3-6 percent of the population, about 2-4 million people (Peterson, 2011, p. 2).

In addition to utilizing Peterson’s description of this emerging group of elites, I define elites as those who occupy” a position that provides them with access and control or as possessing resources that advantage them” (Khan, 2012; Peterson, 2011). More importantly, I define elites as those who have resources of *transferable* value or the ability to convert resources into other forms of capital. The men and women in the study community transferred economic capital to cultural capital and vice versa; for example, transnational popular culture was an important form of cultural capital through which they constructed themselves as transnational elites “whose unequal control over Egypt’s economic and political resources is justified by their modernity” (Peterson, 2011, p. 7). Through particular types of family structure, consumption of particular media, interactions with specific peer groups, attendance at a



defined set of schools, acquisition of particular languages, consumption of particular goods, and familiarity with particular types of spaces, these individuals acquire a general character that distinguishes them from the middle and lower classes.

Cosmopolitan elites are at the nexus of transnational material and cultural changes and provide a unique opportunity to explore changing constructions of masculinities and femininities. Most sociological studies on gender in Egypt have been concerned with “studying down” or studying those with less power and resources; few studies “study up” partly due to the barrier of access (Nader, 1972). Studying the powerful strata of urban society, the culture of power and affluence leads us to ask ‘common sense questions’ in reverse; as Nader argues studying the conservatism of major institutions has wider implications for theories of social change. As a Cairene that has attended the American University in Cairo (where most of my sample attended), my position allows me to explore the experiences of this segment of the population as an insider, participating in rituals and social occasions such as dinners, weddings, and engagements. At the same time, my sociological training has provided me with the reflexivity necessary to “bracket” my own experiences and to be aware of the complex relationship between my respondents and me. This study adds to existing ethnographies on gender in Egypt by focusing on a newly emerging group of elites and the role of global flows in

adding to circulating images of masculinities and femininities. I posit that the preservation of status is linked with the reproduction of existing gender hierarchies.

### **1.3.3 The Rise of Islamist Discourses**

Over the past couple of decades, an increasingly militant and conservative Islamist movement has been growing in Egypt; some argue this movement has grown in reaction to state failure to provide for basic living needs (El-Kholy, 2002). It is part of the broader Islamization discourse that has been gaining force as an oppositional movement in the Arab world since the 1970's, after Arab forces were defeated by Israel in 1967. It is important to keep in mind that there is a multiplicity of voices and practices within Islamist discourses however they share features that justify describing them as oppositional movements that call upon Islam as the source of legislation and moral capital. One common feature of Islamist movements and religious movements in general is that they place women, gender relations, and the family at the center of their discussions (El-Kholy, 2002; Mernissi, 1987). Islamist discourses add gender expectations to those already circulating as a result of global flows and socioeconomic change; Islamist ideology dictates that a women's rightful place is the home and her obligation is to her husband and the socialization of Muslim children. Women are

allowed to work outside the home only after fulfilling these obligations.

Since many of these ideologies cater to Egyptians whose basic living needs are not being met by the state, Islamist ideologies are not particularly widespread among upper-class; undoubtedly there is an influence however my analysis did not yield any findings to suggest Islamist ideologies play a large role in the negotiation of gender roles. I did not explicitly ask respondents about the role of Islam in their gender ideologies and only one or two research participants utilized Islam as a justification for certain gender beliefs; this may be partly due to the combination of theoretical and snowball sampling employed. Sadat's neoliberal economic policies resulted in a dramatic increase in the cost of housing, unmatched by a parallel rise in incomes (El-Kholy, 2002; Singerman, 1995). Many studies have linked the current strength and popularity of Islamist discourses as an "alternative" for the failure of the state to adequately provide for its people (Auybi, 1995; Kepel, 1992).

#### **1.3.4 Women, Youth, and the 2011 Revolution**

As mentioned earlier, Sadat instituted a policy of *infatih* (or openness) that started Egypt's neoliberal transformation and tied its economy to international capital (Maher, 2011). This process was continued by Sadat's successor Mubarak through

IMF imposed structural adjustment programs that forced the government to decrease spending on social services, cut subsidies, deregulate and privatize industries, and liberalize capital flows. These transformations have had wide ranging implications including growing inequality, poverty, and social insecurity for millions of Egyptians; between 2004 and 2010 there was an unprecedented wave of labor strikes. In 2007, food prices jumped 24 percent triggering massive food riots. State imposed neoliberal policies not only exacerbated class conflicts but also created a crisis where wages fell below subsistence levels. At the same time, increasingly empowered workers disrupted production processes through strikes and demonstrations. These policies did not only affect lower classes, the young educated urban middle class was also affected. Along with rise of new technologies that connected the marginalized and exploited masses, these factors contributed to the revolutionary social transformation.

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 tens of thousands protested in Cairo's Tahrir Square, soon growing into a semi-permanent mass gathering (Ali & Macharia, 2013; Maher, 2011). On January 26, the Mubarak regime shut down most of Egypt's internet and cellular communications in an attempt to suspend the use of Twitter, Youtube, and Facebook. The regime then pulled the police off the street to prove the "inadequacy of the revolutionary model to maintain social harmony in the absence

of authoritarian state institutions” (Maher, 2011, p. 39). When these efforts proved unsuccessful, the state unleashed a wave of violence on the demonstrators both from *baltagiya* (civilian thugs paid by the regime) and paramilitary sniper units linked to the Ministry of Interior. These protests were supported by disruptions in production that brought the Egyptian economy to a halt and on February 11 – after nearly 900 people were killed and 6,400 people injured – Mubarak stepped down as president.

In an anthropologic account of women and their role in the revolution, Winegar (2012, p.68) points out that women’s experiences varied from “sitting inside scared, excited, and frustrated while taking care of children” to being present in Tahrir Square. However, the media has tended to focus on the female activities and protesters in Tahrir Square - although arguably sitting at home was the more common experience. She emphasizes that women’s experiences in the Revolution was mediated by gender, class, age, and space, just as everyday life in Cairo is negotiated. Winegar questions the iconic image of the revolutionary and posits that one either had to be poor or privileged in certain ways to fulfill the image. Among my respondents, only 1 female and 1 male had joined the protests in Tahrir Square, most had immediate and extended family members that had spent a significant amount of time at the protests. Although a minority of my respondents were “actively” involved in the revolution, as females and as youth most have

experienced forms of structural violence engineered by the state or state apparatus such as the military, the neoliberal economic system, and the patriarchal system (Ali & Macharia, 2013).

These experiences are varied and are mediated by factors such as gender, class, and age. An examination of the revolution and its effect on the cosmopolitan class was beyond the scope of this dissertation; the revolution was only mentioned by 1 male respondent as a contributing factor to his personal growth and development.

#### **1.4 New Terrain of Gender: Changing Constructions of Masculinities and Femininities**

I argue that migration and economic liberalization in Egypt have not only altered the terrain of class and led to new ways of distinction but have also altered the terrain of gender by leading to the emergence of masculinities and femininities that clash with ideal notions. In the following sections, I highlight three main trends that are indicative of changing construction of gender: delayed marriage and increased “waithood”; the decoupling of sex and marriage as evidenced by rising rates of premarital sex, hymen reconstruction surgeries, and abortions; and alternative forms of marriage or a marriage “black market” (Dialmy, 2005; Megahed, 2010; Roudi-Fahimi & Moghadam, 2003; Singerman, 2007). Much of our understanding of these

trends relies on estimates; it is difficult to find more precise numbers due to the taboo nature of some of these subjects such as premarital sex and abortions. This study contributes to our understanding of young men and women's experiences of this changing terrain of gender and the ways they navigate the gap between emerging masculinities and femininities and ideal types expected post marriage (Weber, 1949). I found that this mismatch is characterized by feelings of ambivalence as cosmopolitan Cairenes strive to maintain a gendered class image.

#### **1.4.1 Prolonged Waithood**

Policy interventions and normative shifts in the Arab world along with an increase in life spans, a decrease in fertility, and improvements in maternal and child health care have ushered in a youth bulge (Fernea, 2003; Singerman, 2007). Unemployment levels are high throughout the region, yet at the same time a larger number of people have graduated from secondary schools and universities than ever before (Fernea, 2003). The improvement in the standards and duration of education among girls, the increase in women's labor force participation, the increase in contraception use, the spread of the ideology of sexual consumerism, and the crisis of housing shortages and unemployment have resulted in delayed marriage (Dialmy, 2005; Singerman, 2007). In 1976, 22 percent of

Egyptian women ages 15 to 19 were married; this dropped to 10 percent in 2003 (Rashad, Osman, Roudi-Fahimi, 2005). This is also obvious when looking at generational differences: while 43 percent of women aged 40-44 were married by age 18, among 20-24 year olds this has dropped to just under 20 percent.

During this prolonged “waithood” young people are expected to live with their parents, sometimes to remain financially dependent on their families, and to abide by the rules of the household (Singerman, 2007). I argue this liminal phase exacerbates the discord women experience between expectations around being ‘a daughter’ and those around being ‘a wife’. Although marriage costs are commonly cited in literature explaining the delay in first marriage in Egypt, I found that while many of the male respondents objected to the costs of marriage, few had difficulties procuring the money necessary, especially since it was the parents who were financially responsible for more of the process. I posit cosmopolitan elites are purposefully delaying marriage in order to prolong this “waithood”, a phase that was characterized by relative freedom in terms of responsibilities and obligations associated with ideal types of masculinity and femininity. Much of our understanding of delayed marriage is based on statistics that are rough estimates and that do not account for differences in socioeconomic status; my study adds to this body of literature



by providing empirical accounts of cosmopolitan elites experiences with delayed marriage.

#### **1.4.2 Decoupling of Sex and Marriage**

Prolonged waitness has resulted in a growing discrepancy between conventional expectations that sexual activity be postponed until marriage and the realities of the youth; increasing evidence suggests that young people are indeed transgressing norms that limit sexuality to marriage (Bahgat & Afifi, 2004; Dialmy, 2002; Obermeyer, 2000; Singerman, 2007). As sex and marriage are decoupling, countries such as Egypt are witnessing a new geography of sex with new discourses and debates about sexuality and morality, the appearance of alternative forms of marriage, and non-commercial premarital and nonmarital sex. Many sources point to the rising rate of premarital sex in Egypt and in other Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Morocco, and Tunisia however it is difficult to determine the prevalence of premarital sexual relations as many reports and studies often conflict one another or are based on anecdotal evidence (Bahgat & Afifi, 2004; Dialmy, 2002; Holzner & Oetomo, 2004; Utomo and McDonald, 2008). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, I did not explicitly ask about premarital sexual relations however in the event that respondents offered the information willingly (in

two of the interviews with women, none with the men) I did ask them to elaborate with follow-up questions.

In a study of marriage and family formation in Egypt conducted in 2004, researchers asked young men and women if they knew someone who had been involved in a sexual relationship (El Tawila and Khadr, 2004). About 13 percent of single young males responded affirmatively compared to only 3.4 percent of single females. When the question was posed to engaged young males, the number increased to 22 percent and remained the same for engaged females. When they were asked about their own experiences, numbers decreased considerably, probably due to the sensitive nature of the topic: only 1.4 percent of males reported any sexual experiences compared to less than one percent of females. Although the accuracy of such surveys may be difficult to determine due to the taboo nature of the subject, sporadic evidence does suggest a rise in premarital sexual behavior. Statistics for other indicators reflecting the existence of premarital sexual behavior such as hymen reconstruction surgery and back-street abortions are also difficult to obtain. Interviews with gynecologists in Cairo indicate that two or three young women visit clinics each month requesting hymen reconstruction surgery (Bahgat and Afifi, 2004). Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that the demand for hymen repair is not limited to urban centers but also exists in rural governorates as well. Gynecologists also see

women in their clinics suffering complications from backstreet abortions, which are generally attributed to out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Such evidence highlights the growing tensions between Egyptian norms and practices, and youth's desires and behavior; these tensions were also evident throughout my interviews. My observations indicate there is an increasing permissiveness with respect to premarital sex among the study community but it is not openly accepted; there is a continuing accommodation to tradition, especially among women (Obermeyer, 2000).

Consequences of premarital sexual activity are harsher for females than males and therefore young women especially feel the tensions associated with the gap between the norm of premarital chastity and lived reality. This partly explains the discrepancy between male and female reporting about sexual activity in the study mentioned earlier. Non-sexual dating relationships on the other hand are much more common; although these relationships are frowned upon by society, they do not hold the same social stigma as premarital sex (Bahgat and Afifi, 2004). I focus on this emerging field of dating and premarital relationships and the emerging masculinities and femininities. My empirical contributions add to this newly emerging field by tracing the lived realities of cosmopolitan elites.

### 1.4.3 Alternative Forms of Marriage

In addition to the decoupling of sex and marriage, prolonged waitness has also transformed marital institutions and intimate relations by contributing to the rise of “new” forms of marriage and a “marriage black market” where marriage substitutes can be found in an environment of weak regulation (Singerman, 2007, p. 29). Whether these marriage substitutes are a result of financial burdens, a preference to remain single, or new forms of desire, it is clear that young people are navigating the evolving domain of gender and sexuality and creating new approaches to intimate and gender relations. However, my findings indicate that these new approaches to gender relations lead to struggles post marriage when family and societal expectations reinforce traditional gender hierarchies in the household and family.

Delayed marriage has resulted in an explosion of “unofficial” forms of marriage in Egypt, reflecting the need for individuals to go to considerable lengths to bring their sexual relationship into Islamic alignment (El Feki, 2013). *Zawaj mut’a* (pleasure marriage) is the most straightforward of these unions, in which a couple agrees to a time-limited union with physical intimacy. Once the agreed-upon time has passed the couple separates and no divorce is necessary. *Mut’a* marriage is allowed in Shi’a Islam but not Sunni Islam; therefore more common in

countries such as Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon, less so in Egypt. The more common informal marriage in Egypt is *zawaj 'urfi* or customary unions, which are not recorded by the state. *'Urfi* marriages are supposedly extremely common among university students however exact prevalence is a matter of speculation. In 2000 the Minister of Social Affairs claimed that the incidence of *'urfi* marriage among university students was 17 percent; other studies estimate that *'urfi* marriages are prevalent among four percent of the total population of youth ages 18-30 and increasing to six percent among university students (Singerman, 2007). This type of marriage reduces or eliminates the financial burden associated with traditional marriage and also removes the need for familial approval in the choice of the partner.

For some young people, de facto marriages provide a marital framework in which sexual urges can be fulfilled and therefore legitimizing or justifying sexual relations. Again, these figures should be read with caution, as socioeconomic differences have not been studied in the prevalence of alternative forms of marriage. Unofficial marriages subvert social convention, circumvent family control, and challenge patriarchal authority, which is troubling to both the family and the state. At the same time, these unions can be seen as an innovative middle ground between the perceived laxity of the West and more traditional Islamic codes. Although these marriage substitutes have always existed, their proliferation and

expansion beyond the margins of society point to the changing terrain of gender and intimate relations.

#### **1.4.4 Transformations in Intimate Relations: Late Modernity, Gender, and Social Change**

The trends discussed in the previous sections hint at a transformation in intimate relations among young people in Egypt and the surrounding Arab region – transformations that are inextricably linked with the changing terrain of gender. Although, my findings suggest that there is a reversion to less egalitarian gender norms and expectations in the transition from pre- to post-marital relationships, they also support this theory of transformation and elucidate the ways in which young men and women struggle to transform the traditional model of the Egyptian family into one based more on companionship, a degree of egalitarianism between the genders, and respect for personal autonomy. Based on respondents' accounts of their own relationships and their descriptions of their parents', I found four main transformations in the arena of intimate relations, family and marriage: (1) an emerging period of waithood, which many times encompasses pre-marital relationships; (2) an increase in the marital relationships that are "chosen" and not arranged; (3) a growing insistence on limiting the extended family's involvement in family life; and (4)

a pursuit for relationships that satisfy the need for intimacy, companionship, and love.

The significance of changes in intimate relations such as prolonged waithood, the decoupling of sex and marriage, and alternative forms of marriage and the relation between intimate relations and social change are central to social theory. Theories of late modernity largely built on a number of sociological texts by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck – Giddens's *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), and Beck's *Risk Society* (1986) – provide explanations for how intimate relations are changing and how gender, family, and community relationships have been transformed in the last couple of decades. These theories have “captured the European sociological imagination” and are extensively used within the field of family studies (Mulinari & Sandell, 2009, p. 494). This section focuses on the location of women and gender in theories of late modernity and proposes an expansion of the framework within which contemporary transformations in the realm of intimacy may be analyzed. There is a need for more specific and historically situated explorations of changes in intimacy, family, and gender. Sweeping statements that describe women's position as changing, families undergoing radical transformations, and patriarchal relations as weakening perpetuate ahistorical analyses and essentialized notions of “Arab women” and “Arab families”. Theories of late modernity

rely on a narrow definition of gender and a perception that the decomposition of norms, traditions, and expectations associated with “modernity” as a “simple freedom or release from gender” (Adkins, 2004, p.9; Mulinari & Sandell, 2009). Adkins (2004) stresses that while gender may be characterized by reflexivity, this reflexivity is not a complete freedom from gender but is a reworking of the social categories of gender.

According to Beck and Giddens, late modernity is an account of the world in which society enters a new phase, one of risk or high/late modernity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991, 1992). Two central processes characterize this new phase: individualization and reflexivity. Both Beck and Giddens argue that increased individualization and reflexivity create changes in family and gender relations, since women are (at last) individualized; the individualization of women in late modernity means that previous conceptions of the family are no longer possible/existing (Mulinari & Sandell, 2009). These changes are conceptualized as a crisis in family and gender relations. The solution to this crisis is the emergence of heterosexual relations as the primary form of relationship, however they focus on different aspects of this relationship. Giddens focuses on the link between love and sexuality in the heterosexual relationship and labels the relationship being formed the *pure relationship* (Giddens, 1992). This relationship is a combination of confluent love (a love that is mutual and unconditional) and plastic



sexuality (an open sexuality disengaged from reproduction). Beck claims that the labor market is at odds with the family, which he equates with reproduction (Beck, 1986). He believes that the state should resolve the conflict between the family and paid work by introducing family friendly policies such as providing childcare.

As Mulinari and Sandell (2009) point out in their critical reappraisal of the location of gender in the late modernity narrative, gender relations and the associated spheres of love, sexuality, and reproduction are located *in the family* while the public seems to be individual/equal/neutral. This conceptualization of gender goes against the main theoretical and analytical findings in the feminist field – that gender is dispersed and is deeply structuring of the general social field (Adkins, 2004; McRobbie, 2004; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2004). Social theory that locates gender (and women) as existing only within the ‘private’ sphere linked to the household is harmful for women and obscures the variability of relationships, households, and families. It has also led to a neglect of the study of the family in the Arab world (Kandiyoti, 1996; Tucker, 1993). Tucker (1993) posits that the reluctance to focus on women within the family stems from the habit of standard histories and orientalist ethnographies assigning women to the world of the household. The family is perceived as the instrument of women’s oppression and the mediator of values that perpetuate

an unequal distribution of power between genders. Feminist scholars have directed their effort towards correcting this pervasive neglect of women and establishing the roles of women as important economic producers and political actors and in doing so have focused on women in arenas other than the household.

Furthermore, the gendered division of household labor and reproductive work is largely absent in Beck's and Giddens' works (Beck, 1986; Giddens, 1991, 1992). While Giddens does discuss reproduction especially in his exploration of the pure relationship, which is free of children, this discussion is abstract and dissociated from everyday life and tasks that are part of reproductive work (Giddens, 1991). In Beck's analyses, reproductive work is discussed yet the question of who is going to do this work if women are individualized is never addressed (Beck, 1986; Mulinari & Sandell, 2009). It is implied that women who have children take on this work of their own volition and therefore cannot blame anyone but themselves for the subsequent loss of autonomy. The complete absence of any discussion about reproductive and care work leads to an incomplete picture of gender inequality especially in light of the fact that although women's place in society may have changed there is very little to indicate that shifts have occurred within the household division of labor. In their examination of households in low income communities in Cairo, Singerman and

Hoodfar (1996) found that while new economic developments have brought about cash-earning opportunities for women, a lack of marketable skills coupled with gendered roles and responsibilities has placed a different set of constraints on them compared to their male counterparts. Giddens' and Beck's conceptualization of the relationship between women and paid work in late modernity assumes the role paid work has for women's autonomy and well-being (Beck, 1986; Giddens, 1992). These notions do not account for the loss of power and status working women experience when their noncash contributions to the household decline; the very contributions that formed the basis of women's power and status within the family and community. Therefore, instead of gaining power and status by joining the workforce, women are seen as lacking when compared to cultural notions of femininity and are still expected to shoulder the bulk of the domestic division of labor.

The location of gender and women within the theory of late modernity also obscures state power and the ways in which it is patriarchal and racialized (Mulinari & Sandell, 2009). In his analysis of gender, power, and the family, Sharabi (1988) examines the ways in which patriarchal structures in the Arab world have been reproduced in new hybrid forms: "neopatriarchy". He argues that the surface manifestation of social change and "modernization" that has occurred in the Middle East is only material and serves to remodel and

reorganize patriarchal structures and relations such as the state and family. This is linked to the idea that neopatriarchy is a concrete historical formation, a development of a dependent capitalism – he argues the only capitalism possible in the wake of European capitalism and in a Western dominated world market. Consequently, instead of the introduction of capitalism providing conditions for the development of autonomous capitalism, it produced a distorted and dependent “peripheral” capitalism (Sharabi, 1988, p. 5). Neopatriarchy encompasses both the micro-structures of the community and family and the macro-structures of the economy and polity.

Feminist scholars studying gender in the Middle East are grappling with how to theoretically and analytically incorporate findings that both social change and stability are gendered and racialized, formed by class and sexuality, to varying degrees. In contrast, theories of late modernity argue that divisions of gender and class are becoming obsolete in the processes of individualization and reflexivity. Late modern theorists construct accounts of social change that universalize a specific historical experience; accounts that write away “patriarchy through reinscribing a specific (idealized) form of heterosexual relationship as the model for democracy and equality” (Mulinari & Sandell, 2009, p. 504). It is also important to recognize that the same changes central to decreasing inequalities between some women and men, are those responsible for increasing

inequalities between other women and men and between different groups of women (Adkins, 2004; Mulinari & Sandell, 2009). In order to gain a better understanding of the ways in which social change and stability are gendered, we must adopt an intersectional perspective of doing gender and present challenges to current tendencies within social and cultural theorizing that result in idealized readings of the processes of social change in the contemporary world.

### **1.5 Aims, Objectives, and Structure of Study**

This chapter provided a brief sketch of the various macro-level forces in Egypt that have altered women and men's experiences and lived realities. It is important to historically situate women and men's choices by looking at factors such as migration and economic liberalization and the way these changes create transformations in both the fields of gender and class. The trends of prolonged waithood, decoupling of sex and marriage, and alternative forms of marriage are indicative of the changing construction of gender and evolving masculinities and femininities. This study is designed to answer the following main question: *How do young men and women of the cosmopolitan class experience gender expectations in and around relationships (sexual and romantic), both before and after marriage?* This research contributes both empirically and

theoretically by examining the day-to-day experiences of gender among a relatively understudied segment of the population and by studying the merging of class reproduction with traditional gender hierarchies.

Forty semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with both males and females in Cairo and allowed me to focus on women's and men's narratives and experiences. However as Scott (1992) points out this carries the risk of "naturalizing" the concept of experience and assuming a one-to-one correspondence between words and behavior; thus I realized the importance of also carefully observing women and men's concrete daily practices and social arrangements. I also conducted 10 months of observational fieldwork in Cairo between August 2014 and September 2015, in addition to the interviews. My methodology aims to add to the dearth of knowledge on gender relations in the Egyptian family, especially elites families in urban populations. As a Cairene who attended the American University in Cairo, I have access to this population; my insider position also facilitates interviews, as interviewees do not view me as an outsider. My insider status introduces elements of an analytic autoethnography, which refers to ethnographic work in which the researcher is a full member of the research group or setting, visible as an insider in the published texts, and committed to an analytics research

agenda with the aim of contributing to theoretical underpinnings of wider social phenomena (Anderson, 2006).

The objectives of this study are threefold. As previously mentioned, the first is to expand our empirical understanding of the diversity of gender relations in the Egyptian family. Little is known about urban, upper class families although this population holds a considerable amount of power in Egypt's political, economic, and cultural socialscape. This demographic is also experiencing pressures of change, which offer the possibility of greater personal autonomy yet this possibility is struggling to manifest in changed norms around gender roles within relationships, both before and after marriage. The second is to contribute to theoretical debates related to changing constructions of gender and their interaction with class in the Middle East. Specifically, I hope to inform debates in both sociological and broader feminist literature concerning the mediating role class plays in negotiating gender based power relations. Lastly, the third objective is to generate policy-relevant data, which may be used to challenge assumptions about gender relations, and development that currently inform policy and programmatic interventions. More comprehensive studies are needed in order to create policies that are sensitive to the changing needs of young men and women.

Following this Introduction, the second chapter will locate this study within debates and discussions in feminist

scholarship in the Middle East and then present the theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation. I trace the development of three bodies of literature on gender in the Middle East: the household and family; masculinities and femininities; and agency, reflexivity, and change. I argue that a theoretical framework drawn from these debates and discussions allows for a nuanced and historically grounded analysis of gender, class, and social change. Chapter three will discuss the research design and methodology adopted as well as ethical concerns and my positionality as an Egyptian female of the cosmopolitan class.

The following three chapters present the results of the grounded theory analysis of the fieldwork and interviews. Chapter four introduces the cosmopolitan class in more detail and explores the ways in which global cultural and economic flows complicate the negotiation of gender expectations and associated dilemmas of authenticity. The importance of projecting a specific image of the household and family, as a means of maintaining and solidifying social status is further explored in this chapter. Chapter five focuses on generational differences and the emergence of femininities and masculinities in the younger generation that clash with ideal types, resulting in tensions and feelings of ambivalence. Finally, chapter six explores the interplay between globalization, class, and changing economic conditions by looking at tensions surrounding masculinity; these tensions partly stem from a



relative decline in men's ability to be the sole breadwinner and largely from an increased desire for and knowledge of personal autonomy (especially for women). I argue women are taking on a "third shift" of care and emotional work with the goal of protecting idealized notions of masculinity and preserving idealized notions of femininity. Women's increasing financial independence has resulted in a proliferation of symbolic processes that serve to reinforce traditional gender hierarchies, in spite of changing economic conditions.

The chapters of this dissertation provide insight into the ways in which cosmopolitan class Cairenes reconcile conflicting gender beliefs amid pressure to maintain certain classed notions of the household and family. It adds to our empirical understanding of the negotiations that occur around gendered roles before and after marriage among the cosmopolitan elite in Cairo. It also contributes theoretically by enriching theoretical debates regarding how gender inequalities are produced, reproduced, and transformed; this study adds to theoretical knowledge of how class interacts with gender to negate the possibilities of transformations for gendered roles.

## **2. Towards a Theoretical Framework: A Feminist Engagement with Bourdieu's Theory of Practice**

This dissertation addresses the question of why cosmopolitan women are not entering the workforce as expected, by exploring through interviews and ethnography the dynamics in the gendered roles of men and women in relationships before and after marriage. I utilize a qualitative approach, which allows me to capture the dynamics behind the statistics and trends and to access the subjectivity of the men and women affected by transformations in class and gender regimes in a globalized world. I argue that certain gender roles and expectations are tied with pressures to maintain social status; these pressures of class maintenance clash with increasing desire for autonomy and egalitarian relationships, especially for women. Tensions are produced that reflect the gap between women's increasing financial independence and desire for autonomy and class expectations that reinforce traditional gender hierarchies. My findings also emphasize the large role family plays in emphasizing traditional gender expectations and in policing young women and men's behavior.

Men's declining ability to be the sole breadwinner coupled with women's increasing financial independence has led new ways of reproducing the gender regime; mainly in the symbolic arena. Moreover, these changing socioeconomic conditions have culminated in women taking on a "third shift" in

which they cushion men's declining economic power by engaging in care and emotional work with the goal of maintaining an image of idealized masculinity and femininity. This study expands our empirical understanding of gender relations among a specific segment of the population and of the newly emerging field of premarital relationships. My focus on the cosmopolitan class addresses a gap in existing literature on masculinities and femininities in Egypt, as most discussions build on examinations of low-income communities. It also contributes theoretically by enriching theoretical debates regarding how gender inequalities are produced, reproduced, and transformed by focusing on the ways in which cosmopolitan class Cairenes reconcile conflicting gender beliefs amid pressure to maintain certain classed notions of the household and family.

To understand how gender relations and changing constructions of masculinities and femininities are negotiated at a micro-level in the daily practices of cosmopolitan elites required that I synthesize Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic violence with feminist discussions of agency, reflexivity, and change. In this chapter, I utilize this feminist engagement with Bourdieu's conceptual tools to explore my theoretical and empirical research questions regarding gender expectations, class, and social change in and around relationships, the household, and family. This framework allows me to simultaneously examine the class-specific construction of

masculinities and femininities grounded in everyday practice and the corresponding symbolic processes that reinforce traditional gender hierarchies in new ways. First, I explore feminist engagements with Bourdieu's theory of practice, followed by an examination of studies that have challenged essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity by focusing on specific and historically situated forms of gender construction. I argue there is a need for studies that examine the intersection of class and gender in idealized notions of masculinities and femininities. Lastly, I posit that the arena of relationships and its overlap with the household and family is an integral site where gender is negotiated and reproduced; it is also an arena where class struggles and strategies of distinction are employed, making it a suitable field to explore gender, class, and social change.

## **2.1 Habitus, Field, and Gender**

Although Bourdieu's book "Masculine Domination" evoked strong criticism from feminist sociologists who argued that it presented an ahistorical analysis of gender that reproduced standard binaries of masculine domination and female subordination, I believe many of his theoretical constructs are useful for the integration of class with analyses of gender in the household (Bourdieu, 1998a; Thorpe, 2009, p.

492). Many scholars have recognized the potential in his social theory and its relevance for gender and have critically engaged and developed concepts within his theory of practice in an attempt to address key problematics in contemporary feminist theory (Adkins, 2004; McNay, 1999; McRobbie, 2004; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2004; Thorpe, 2009). Bourdieu's basic premise was that behavior was based on a combination of personal and contextual conditions and therefore a better way of thinking about human action was in terms of a strategy, not a social rule (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2012). He argued that rather than an explicit respect and conscious application, which was implied in the notion of rules, individual action "emerged from an unconscious calculation of profit – albeit symbolic – and a strategic positioning with a social space to maximize individual holdings with respect to their availability" (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2012, p. 46). This is similar to Hochschild's definition of a "gender strategy", which I utilize to analyze Cairene men and women's gender practices and corresponding beliefs (Hochschild & Machung, 1989).

With this in mind, Bourdieu developed two main thinking tools: habitus the subjective element of practice, and field the objective network of configurations of relations found in any social space or context (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2012). These two main concepts account for the "ontological complicity" that he saw between objective structures and internalized structures.

It is important to note that Bourdieu's theory of practice is essentially bidirectional and cyclical; it is a theory of structure as both structured (and open to objectification) and structuring (and generative of thought and action). The concepts of habitus and field are inseparable, mutually constituted, and always interpenetrating to produce the ontologically complicit relation mentioned above.

Focusing on both the subjective and objective elements of gender allows for an analysis that is simultaneously grounded in everyday experiences and behavior and corresponding symbolic processes. Moreover, this generative system of dispositions is both durable in that it lasts over time and transposable in functioning within a wide variety of social spaces. Practice is not a direct result of habitus but rather a result of "an obscure and double relation" between habitus and field; practice results from a relation between an individual's habitus and an individual's position in a field (Bourdieu, 1977; Maton, 2012, p. 53).

According to Maton (2012, p. 59):

*Habitus* . . . captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others. This is an ongoing and active process – we are engaged in a continuous process of making history, but not under conditions entirely of our own making. . . . This range of choices depends on our current context (the position we occupy in a particular social field), but at the same time which of these choices are visible to us and which we do not see as possible is

the result of our past journey, for our experiences have helped shape our vision.

Thus, habitus combines both objective social structure and subjective personal experience or as Bourdieu claims “the dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality” (Bourdieu, 1977). It is also integral as a source of improvisation and adjustment (Calhoun, 1993). In my analysis, this ‘complicity’ between objective and internalized structures was seen when women’s participation in processes of symbolic violence, which trivialized their financial contributions, led to financial decisions that perpetuated the objective structure of financial independence (i.e. women spent money on handbags rather than on real estate or investments).

## **2.2 The Dispersed and Relational Nature of Gender**

Most of Bourdieu’s writings do not extensively engage with the topic of gender except for his work “Masculine Domination” in which he draws upon ethnographic research conducted in North Africa to show how “masculine domination assumes a natural, self-evident status through its inscription in the objective structures of the social world” and how it is embodied and reproduced in the habitus of individuals (Bourdieu, 1998a; Thorpe, 2009, p. 492). This research elicited many criticisms from feminist scholars who claimed that

Bourdieu presented structures of masculine domination and female subordination as if they were unchanged and unitary and seemed “somewhat oblivious to the diverse range of important feminist work that has historicized gender division” (Thorpe, 2009, p. 492). Many feminist scholars have set out to rethink and critically develop Bourdieu’s conceptual schema; this reworking has taken place along a number of axes (Adkins, 2004; McRobbie, 2004; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2004; Thorpe, 2009).

Adkins (2004) argues that what characterizes many of the feminist engagements with Bourdieu’s social theory is a refusal to simply place the historical objects of feminism within a Bourdieusian framework. Instead of asking whether gender constitutes a field, or whether gender has its own habitus, or whether masculinity/femininity can be conceptualized as capital, scholars have argued that gender is better conceptualized as part of Bourdieu’s general social field or field of power rather than a specific autonomous field (Adkins, 2004; McRobbie, 2004; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2004). Since gender and gender hierarchies of domination are dispersed and occur at every level of the general social field, Lovell (2004) argues that we should not speak of ‘the dominated gender of the dominant class’. Moi (as cited in Adkins, 2004, p. 6) stresses against thinking of gender as an autonomous field since gender is extremely relational “shifting in importance, value and effects from context to context or from field to field” and suggests that



similar to Bourdieu's description of class as structuring social fields gender should also be understood in the same manner – as dispersed across social fields and deeply structuring of the general social field.

In this dissertation, I incorporate this feminist conceptualization of gender as dispersed rather than an autonomous field by focusing on how gender hierarchies of domination occur at all levels (objective and subjective) in the field of relationships. I am also aware that fields are interlinked and interdependent therefore my exploration traces the way gender structures the interdependent fields of marriage, household, and family as well. I also engage the relational nature of gender by focusing on the construction of femininities and masculinities in specific contexts such as the household and how this is deeply structuring of the general social field. The following sections examine culturally specific forms of masculinities and femininities and their enactments; most of the scholarship on masculinities is from studies on low-income communities however the overall theme of economic conditions resulting in clashes between ideal types of femininity and masculinity and those emerging from lived reality is relevant to my discussion of the cosmopolitan elites (Weber, 1949).

### **2.2.1 Masculinities**

The study of masculinities is a relatively new field within scholarship on gender in the Middle East (Adibi, 2006; Ghoussoub & Sinclair-Webb, 2000). Up until recently, gender research has focused more on the rights and roles of women in the Arab world – rendering masculinities and the relational nature of gender invisible. Only by exploring the multiplicities of gender through an emphasis on masculinities and femininities and their historical and fluid character can we better understand gender hierarchies (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The majority of the studies on masculinities in the Arab world focus on the institutions and practices associated with masculinities in specific historical contexts with the goal of shifting away from static functionalist models (Ghoussoub & Sinclair-Webb, 2000; Rizzo, 2015). A handful examine discourses of masculinity and the ways in which racialized Middle Eastern maleness operates as a tool for analyzing political change and social conflict in the region. As Amar (2011) points out, these are the perceptions of Arab maleness that have shaped geopolitics and generated support for war, occupation, and repression in the region for decades. In a different vein, Inhorn (2002, 2015) traces transformations in Middle Eastern men's lives through an examination of infertility and reproductive technology, claiming that men are enacting masculinities in ways that defy both patriarchy and Western-generated stereotypes. The following two sections further

expand these trends and highlight the need for studies that incorporate men in an effort to better comprehend the power structures between not only men and women but also different types of masculinities and femininities.

**The “making” of masculinities.** Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb’s (2000) edited volume *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East* takes a look at the areas where masculinities are explicitly and in most cases publicly constructed. Some of the studies look at classic sites such as circumcision, *bar mitzvahs*, and marriage and their role in the social production of gendered adults. These contributions are interested in exploring the institutions and practices associated with masculinities in specific historical contexts in an effort to shift from static functionalist models such as that of the honor/shame thesis. My study contributes to this scholarship by exploring how masculinities are enacted and “made” in and around relationships and how these enactments are classed.

An additional aim of Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb’s (2000) volume is to understand what constitutes a desired version of masculinity, which can only be asserted in relation to less desired versions of masculinity and in relation to presumed characteristics of femininity. Therefore, assumptions about the “nature” of women as well as homosexual masculinity are often used as “foils” against which to establish real heterosexual

masculinity (Ghoussoub & Sinclair-Webb, 2000, p. 13). One such example is that of Ghoussoub's exploration of recent rumors about chewing gum in Egypt that according to a newspaper is "a brand of chewing gum. . . from Israel [which] lies behind the uncontrollable sexual excitement of Egyptian girls" (Ghoussoub & Sinclair, 2000, p. 228). She investigates the driving force behind these rumors, arguing they are signs of threatened masculinity and of the re-negotiation of gender relations and sexual attitudes in Egypt. While women's status in Arab societies has changed drastically, men's views on sexual performance and women's desires have not adjusted accordingly and are often still derived from notions "deeply imprinted on their inherited memory" (Ghoussoub & Sinclair, 2000, p. 229). This rumor functions as a myth where women's lack of sexual satisfaction can be blamed on Israel as a way of deflecting the discussion from Egyptian men's shortcomings. As a method of exploring the re-negotiation (or lack thereof) of gender relations, I focus on what constitutes a desired version of masculinity in this specific segment of Egyptian society and the ways this version of masculinity is asserted in relation to other masculinities and femininities.

**Social change and emerging masculinities.** Inhorn's examination of manhood through the lens of infertility and assisted reproductive technologies in Egypt is an example of an

approach that provides a more nuanced understanding of masculinities grounded within specific material and socio-historical conditions (Inhorn, 2002, 2015). Inhorn (2015) demonstrates how these reproductive technologies have led to new social and cultural transformations including the emergence of Islamic bioethical discourses on how these technologies should be used. Focusing on this theme of emergence, she describes what she has labeled “emergent masculinities” to capture all that is new and transformative in Middle Eastern men’s lives (Inhorn, 2015, p.2). Cognizant of the discourses around Middle Eastern men as “terrorists, religious zealots, and brutal oppressors of women”, Inhorn emphasizes the enactment of emergent masculinities or new forms of masculine practice such as: men’s desire to “date” partners before marriage; men’s acceptance of condoms and vasectomies; men’s desires to live in nuclear family residences with their wives and children; and men’s encouragement of daughters’ education. Unfortunately, neither scholars nor media experts are aware nor willing to highlight these practices that present Middle Eastern masculinities in a more nuanced light.

Utilizing an emergent masculinities approach allows for an exploration of the ongoing, relational, and embodied process of change in the way men enact masculinity (Inhorn, 2015). Furthermore, Inhorn (2015) proposes this approach as a counterpoint to Connell’s concept of “hegemonic masculinity”,

which she argues has promoted sterile reifications and reinforced harmful caricatures of patriarchy and oppression in the form of a trait list of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). Men are reconceptualizing their own lives, contrasting them to their fathers' generation, and striving for different notions of masculinity. They are appropriating and localizing diverse styles of masculinity, drawing from both indigenous and global forms. Inhorn's (2015) argument that men are striving for different notions of masculinity contrasts with my findings. Class may mediate enactment of emergent masculinities, as she did not study cosmopolitan Cairenes. I postulate that while aspects of emergent masculinities are seen pre-marriage, men are enacting more traditional masculinities once they are married.

### **2.2.2 Femininities**

In an analysis of the political economy of households in a low-income neighborhood in Cairo, Hoodfar captures women's ambivalence towards processes of development and modernization and the resulting hesitance in devaluing traditions and embracing "modernity" (Hoodfar, 1997). Departing from the old structure of traditional patriarchy, women are no longer benefitting from the traditional status and respect associated with the role of housewife and mother, a role that offered possibilities of building political alliances and social

and economic connections to benefit themselves and their families. Macleod also explores this idea that socio-economic changes have resulted in women losing traditional sources of power and influence; she suggests that one of the ways in which Cairene women reconcile tensions between the economic need to join the formal workforce and the gender ideology of Islamic societies that emphasizes men's financial obligations towards the household is to adopt an Islamic mode of dress (Macleod, 1992). In doing so, these women are able to join the formal labor force and also publicly identify as pious and committed to Islamic moral codes. Tensions between the economic need to join the formal workforce and the gender ideology of Islamic societies were not found in my analysis on cosmopolitan Cairenes. My data did however emphasize the ambivalence that arises as a result of the tensions between women's personal desire to join the labor force and class specific gender ideologies that associate notions of privilege and status to women's lack of labor force participation.

One of the few studies examining changing gender relations and the family among upper-middle class Egyptians is El Refaey's investigation of generational differences in attitudes towards divorce (El Refaey, 2010). She suggests that skyrocketing rates of divorce in Cairo are largely due to changing gender expectations in marriage, women's increased educational attainment and labor force participation, sexual

dissatisfaction, double standards, and incorrect criteria for marriage. Her findings highlight the gendered nature of divorce and how divorced women are seen as “someone who has either not fulfilled her husband’s needs [or] was not wide enough to tolerate his reckless actions: i.e. infidelity, for example, or was a ‘bad’ woman herself i.e. promiscuous” (El Refaey, 2010, p. 55). Most of her participants expressed ambivalence regarding gender roles in the household, which she attributed to a discord between changing power dynamics and unyielding gender ideologies; I found this same discord in my analysis as well.

### **2.3 Habitus/Field Mismatch**

Idealized notions of masculinity and femininity are part of Cairenes dispositions; these dispositions are field specific, they vary based on context. I argue valued notions of masculinity and femininity are not only class-specific but that deviations from these ideals have emerged in the fields of premarital and marital relationships. Lack of family involvement and associated expectations and pressure means that premarital relationships are an arena where young cosmopolitan elites are more able to enact a wider range of masculinities and femininities; however, tensions arise when these masculinities and femininities are transferred to the field of marriage, household, and the family. While dispositions specific to the field of premarital



relationships include or are slowly evolving to include deviations from culturally and class valued notions of manhood and womanhood, this is not the case with dispositions of the cosmopolitan Cairenes and the field of marriage. As relations between habitus and field are dynamic, they do not always match perfectly for each has its own internal logic and history. As a result, the relationships between the structure of a field and the habituses of its members can be one of varying degrees of fit or mismatch. If one's habitus matches the logic of the field then one feels like a "fish in water" however that is not always the case.

This mismatch is exactly what my findings indicate is occurring in households in Cairo and is resulting in widespread feelings of ambivalence. I posit this is largely due to changes in the greater field of power (i.e. economic change) that have altered field structures and conditions, yet habituses have not adapted accordingly. Increased women's education and labor force participation has altered their dispositions and resulted in desires for autonomy, financial independence, and changes in gender ideologies. Economic change has also threatened the ability of men to be the sole breadwinners and to sustain the lifestyle of a Cairene elite. These changes have not resulted in corresponding changes in the habitus of Cairene men to reflect changing dynamics of the household, family, or marriage. For example, rather than recognition that women's financial

contributions were needed to sustain a desired lifestyle and social status, men (and women) trivialized these contributions. This mismatch has also resulted in processes of symbolic violence where valued notions of femininity and masculinity are reinforced and reproduced.

### **2.3.1 The Neglect of the Study of Family**

The historical between women's issues and nationalism in the Middle East has led to an enduring legacy of concerns around the effects of cultural imperialism and discouraged a systematic exploration of the different institutional arenas in which gender hierarches are produced and reproduced such as the family and the household. Paradigms within development, such as modernization theory and dependency theory variants, have reinforced this tendency by focusing on macro-level processes and broad indicators of development such as education and industrialization. This level of generality coupled with assumptions regarding certain trajectories and women's "empowerment" has rendered an engagement with local cultural specificities irrelevant. Little attention has been paid to the family and the household (whose centrality is integral in Middle Eastern societies) and its variability in the Arab world (Kandiyoti, 1996; Tucker, 1993b).

Tucker (1993a) attributes this neglect of the family as an object of serious study to two main sets of perceptions. First, is the assumption that the Arab family is one monolithic institution or the “Arab” family or the “Islamic” family. This “Arab” family is contrasted with that of its Western European counterpart, a family that has remained untouched by historical transformations or processes of “modernization”. This “otherness” of the family in the Middle East still permeates some discussions of family life. The other reason as to why there is reluctance to focus on women within the family stems from the habit of standard histories and orientalist ethnographies assigning women to the world of the household. The family is perceived as the instrument of women’s oppression and the mediator of values that perpetuate an unequal distribution of power between genders. Feminist scholars have directed their effort towards correcting this pervasive neglect of women and establishing the roles of women as important economic producers and political actors and in doing so have focused on women in arenas other than the household.

This study expands our understanding of cultural and class-specific notions of masculinities and femininities in and around relationships and the family and contributes to debates surrounding gender, class, and social change. It utilizes a “bottom-up” approach or what Gray and Mearns in their study of households in South Asia called the “inside-out” approach (Gray

& Mearns, 1989). This approach explores “the ways in which wider social structure is sustained, altered or generated by social actors operating through small groups such as the household” and highlights the role households play in macro social, political, and economic forces (Gray & Mearns, 1989, p. 11). Furthermore, this study adds to our empirical understanding of elite families in Cairo, a segment that has been largely ignored in the study of gender in the Arab world.

### **2.3.2 Family as a Field**

I postulate that the interdependent fields of relationships, family, and the household are sites where social change and new modes of gender and class differentiation can be examined. While Bourdieu’s attention to family has been dismissed as of little value by sociologists who study family, Atkinson (2014, p.223) argues that Bourdieu’s conceptualization of the family as a field is more than a “reduction of family to a mere carrier of class” and provides opportunities for research for those concerned with “the everyday experience, and intergenerational transmission of, or resistance to, orientations and practices related to class, gender. . .”. This conceptualization is present in Bourdieu’s earlier work on kinship and marriage yet under-emphasized. He later defines the family as “the field of relationships that are constantly re-used” and reinforced in

everyday practice (Atkinson, 2014; Bourdieu, 1998b). A field that is comprised of a “community of dispositions and interests”, a set of “self-representations”, efforts to maintain itself as a group, and a specific constructed past. As literature on households has also emphasized, the family is a field with internal power relations, conflicts of interests, and tensions/struggles over membership and boundaries.

Conceptualizing the family in this way provides the opportunity for analyses of the family as site of struggle and potential change. Atkinson (2014) describes struggles within the family as splinters in the doxa (the taken for granted) of the field into a conservative orthodoxy and subversive heterodoxy:

Agents united by a family-specific doxa are not all equal co-constructors of it, nor are their subjective experiences and perceptions within it unconstrained. Instead, insofar as they possess different levels of authority to set and enforce its elements (i.e. symbolic capital) and engage in struggle over them. . . Differences over what should be done and what is “right” – whether in terms of the future trajectories of offspring, the household division of labor. . . splinter the doxa into a conservative *orthodoxy* and subversive *heterodoxy* to greater and lesser degrees, generating alliances, factions and rifts. (Atkinson, 2014, p. 228)

He goes on to explain that in addition to gender, differences such as class also specify the structure and struggles of family fields. Both class and gender produce conflicting perceptions of what is possible, the “done” thing, and the desirable thing. Atkinson (2014) posits that tension and contention between conservative

and subversive orthodoxy results in ambivalence or even rejection of traditional trajectories.

My data emphasizes the ambivalence arising out of the clash between 'conservative' and 'subversive' orthodoxy relating to masculinities and femininities. Global flows and increasing women's education and labor force participation couples with changing economic conditions which have rendered decreased men's material basis of power within the family have created rifts and gaps between masculinities and femininities that have emerged in response to these lives realities and expected and valued notions of manhood and womanhood. It is through these gaps and rifts that "the greatest structural shifts are mediated, negotiated, and imbued with affective charge and given their specific form and consequence for concrete individuals" (Atkinson, 2014, p. 23).

### **2.3.3 Family as a Site of Struggle**

The increasing abandonment of grand narratives in the fields of sociology has made room for detailed examinations of the different institutional realms through which gender hierarchies are produced and reproduced. This approach recognizes that social institutions such as the family not only reflect patriarchal logic but also function as sites of power relations and political processes through which gender

hierarchies are both produced and contested. One concept that is extremely useful in analysis of gender relations, power, and the family is Sharabi's 'neopatriarchy' (Sharabi, 1988). Sharabi (1988) modifies a concept not directly based on Arab or Muslim socio-historical experiences by examining the new ways in which patriarchal structures in the Arab world have been reproduced in new hybrid forms: neopatriarchy. He argues that the surface manifestation of social change and "modernization" that has occurred in the Middle East is only material and serves to remodel and reorganize patriarchal structures and relations such as the state and family. This is linked to the idea that neopatriarchy is a concrete historical formation, a development of a dependent capitalism – he argues the only capitalism possible in the wake of European capitalism and in a Western dominated world market. Consequently, instead of the introduction of capitalism providing conditions for the development of autonomous capitalism, it produced a distorted and dependent "peripheral" capitalism (Sharabi, 1988, p. 5). Neopatriarchy encompasses both the micro-structures of the community and family and the macro-structures of the economy and polity.

More recently, there has been a rise in empirical studies examining the household and family in Egypt and the ways in which macroeconomic and political changes have had a profound impact on the foundations of the household, its norms,

and its gendered division of labor (Singerman & Hoodfar, 1996). All of these recent studies exploring gender and the household in Egypt have been ethnographies focusing on low-income communities in Cairo (El-Kholy, 2002; Hoodfar, 1997; Singerman, 1995; Singerman & Hoodfar, 1996). Few studies to the author's knowledge focus on higher-income communities in Egypt: Peterson's examination of the cosmopolitan class and their 'connectedness', El Refaey's study on upper-middle class Egyptians and divorce, and Aboul Ela's exploration of the decline of professional employment among female university graduates (Aboul Ela, 2012; El Refaey, 2010; Peterson, 2010, 2011). While conventional scholarship focuses on the causes of changes to the household, these ethnographies posit that the consequences of these changing conditions can be better understood through the lens of the household. Findings have emphasized the ways in which the household is a central and valuable institution for people in low-income communities who have fewer ties to other power structures in society, the household is only one of the sources of power for people in high-income communities. My findings indicate that cosmopolitan elites are preoccupied with presenting a specific image of the family and household, one that is tied to valued notions of masculinities and femininities. This preoccupation plays a large role in women and men's negotiation of their roles and positions according to changing conditions within and outside the household.



Literature on households in Egypt has pointed out households are not egalitarian institutions but rather ones often marked by inequalities and disparities (El-Kholy, 2002; Hoodfar, 1997; Singerman & Hoodfar, 1996). Households in Cairo are commonly described by “cooperative conflict”: in which members of households cooperate to decrease threats from external sources and to increase the collective interest of the household (Sen, 1990). It is important to note that this does not necessarily mean the pursuit of individual self-interest is nonexistent. As positions are being consistently negotiated and renegotiated within the household and community, an individual’s bargaining power reflects actual and potential contributions of labor and of material and nonmaterial resources in addition to other power structures such as an unequal gender ideology. Therefore, although an appearance of cohesion and cooperation may exist, this usually goes hand in hand with many legitimized inequalities. Moreover, this cooperation may contribute to the reproduction or in some cases exacerbation of these inequalities. As Sen (1990) points out a strategic choice that yields the highest return for all members of the household may be unfavorable to a particular member, usually one who lacks the power to prevail.

Economic changes such as the increasing marketization of Egypt’s economy have caused women to lose many of their domestic functions to the market and consequently decreased

women's bargaining power in the household and family (Singerman & Hoodfar, 1996). Although new economic developments have brought about cash-earning opportunities for women, a lack of marketable skills coupled with gendered roles and responsibilities has placed a different set of constraints on them compared to their male counterparts. Women of the cosmopolitan class are well positioned in the labor market and almost all of the women in my sample held jobs in multinational companies; in some cases in my study community, women's salaries were higher than their husbands. Mainstream neoclassical notions of work and employment do not account for the loss of power and status working women experience when their noncash contributions to the household decline; the very contributions that formed the basis of women's power and status within the family and community. I posit this is linked to valued notions of manhood and womanhood; although women are joining the workforce idealized notions of femininity still dictate that women's power and status is derived from noneconomic contributions to the household. Therefore, instead of gaining power and status by joining the workforce, women are seen as lacking when compared to cultural notions of femininity.

My finding contributes to theoretical discussion on the complex relationship between work and family. As mentioned in the first chapter, Egyptian women's participation in the labor

force or lack thereof does not necessarily adhere to assumptions about investments in education and the formal labor market. For example, El-Kholy (2002) found that many women in low-income communities participate in the labor force in order to gain more leverage and widen their options for future marriages, by accumulating a large *gihaz* or trousseau. She points out the relationship between the *gihaz* and *ayma* (marriage inventory), public defloration ceremonies, and women's waged work as a demonstration of how women's choices are affected by broader socioeconomic changes and how women attempt to manipulate conventional arrangements in order to expand their choices. Studies examining the implications of women's employment in the informal economy question the simple link between women's labor force participation and empowerment (El-Kholy, 2002; Singerman, 1995). Unfortunately, the informal sector in Egypt largely depends on a pool of cheap female labor with no prospects for mobility or job security. On the other hand, participation in the workforce does allow women to accumulate a large *gihaz*, which acts as leverage in future marriages; therefore in some ways wage work does enhance women's bargaining power in the household. El-Kholy (2002) points out that this venture into "public space" occurs at a cost: normative gender expectations are reinforced through public defloration ceremonies and the ideal of female chastity is perpetuated.

Women's motivations for pursuing work outside the home are class-specific; my analysis indicates that elite women's participation in the workforce is not motivated by the need to widen options for future marriages, since their parents are responsible for the financial aspects of the engagement and wedding process. In contrast to findings on women in low-income communities discussed in the previous paragraph, women in my study community expressed the desire to work based on a combination of personal preferences and financial reasons, indicating that work had become a part of their dispositions resulting in deviations from valued types of femininities. In some instances, the tensions that rose from their increase in financial independence led the cosmopolitan women in my sample to reject the financial aspect of work all together. Cosmopolitan women's venture into 'public space' did not result in the reinforcement of normative gender expectations through public acts such as defloration ceremonies but rather through a proliferation of symbolic processes and the resulting 'third shift' in which women took on the responsibility of maintaining a specific image of valued masculinities and femininities.

## **2.4 Symbolic Violence**

Much of development discourse focuses on economic indicators for women's progress, however this carries the danger of representing power rooted in economic relations as

somehow 'more real' than symbolic power. Although the Cairene women in my sample may be gaining economic power, symbolic violence was a barrier in changing the existing gender dynamics. I utilize Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence to explore the ways in which the symbolic arena reinforces traditional notions of masculinity and femininity and obscures women's ability to move to different positions within the field of relationships. This is integral in understanding how socioeconomic changes affect gender relations and hierarchies; changes such as women's increased labor force participation may have increased inequities in the symbolic economy in social space, While symbolic power and economic power are not placed face to face in his social fields - with holders of economic capital identified as 'the dominant fraction of the dominant class' and holders of cultural capital as 'the dominated fraction of the dominant class' - symbolic violence or the currency that circulates in the economy of symbolic goods structures relationships of domination (Bourdieu, 1984; Lovell, 2004).

Utilizing Bourdieu's conceptualization of symbolic power as a framework for the understanding of the social reproduction of classed divisions, McRobbie (2004) suggests that women's increased labor force participation, detachment from traditional family roles and subsequent individualization has triggered new forms of class distinction and classification. I use this framework to gain a better understanding of the social reproduction of

gender and class. Women's changing lived realities have resulted in femininities that clash with ideal types, especially when these ideal types are tied to notions of prestige and status, with which cosmopolitan elites maintain their social position. Women's increasing detachment from traditional family roles affects the construction of gender and also the reproduction of social divisions. A change in femininities that no longer encompasses notions of privilege associated with not needing to join the workforce means a key strategy of distinction has been eliminated. McRobbie (2004) asks how then are class differences re-invented to produce and reproduce social divisions? How is the map of social class redrafted in gender terms? I posit that the maintenance of gender order has merged with the reproduction of class differences to reinforce traditional gender hierarchies.

## **2.5 Reflexivity, Reproduction, and Change**

Feminist engagement with and development of many of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts has resulted in a framework that is suitable for a micro-level exploration of the intersection of class, gender, and social change. Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus is commonly reproached for its overwhelming focus on social reproduction; the more critical veins of feminist scholarship also focus on the conditions of social reproduction

but incorporate an element of change by exploring changes in the conditions of reproduction (Adkins, 2004; McRobbie, 2004). I add to this scholarship by examining how social divisions based on gender and class are reproduced in new ways. My findings indicate an awareness or reflexivity of the circulating expectations associated with valued notions of manhood and womanhood however this has not translated into the overturning of traditional gender structures but rather a reworking (mostly symbolic) of lived realities to continue to reproduce the existing gender regime.

Adkins (2004, p.9) problematizes accounts that perceive the decomposition of norms, traditions, and expectations associated with modernity as a “simple freedom or release from gender”. Briefly, this argument goes as follows: increasing labor force participation involves a clash of habitus and field, which leads to a critical reflexivity on the part of men and women and to a detraditionalization of gender norms. Adkins (2004) stresses that while gender may be characterized by reflexivity, this reflexivity is not a complete freedom from gender but is a reworking of the social categories of gender. She links this merging of reflexivity and freedom within the contemporary theoretical imaginary to Bourdieu’s writings on social change, which see a possibility for social change when a conscious mastery of the principles of habitus can be gained. It is important to work with and against Bourdieu’s social theory to

offer up challenges to current tendencies within social and cultural theorizing and to warn against idealized readings of the processes and dynamics in the contemporary world. My theoretical and empirical contributions add to the literature fusing feminist theory and Bourdieu, which place issues of social change, of social reproduction and the rethinking of classification systems as central to the concerns of contemporary feminism (Adkins, 2004; Lovell, 2004; McRobbie, 2004).

This chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding my research, discusses the central concepts informing it, and explores my theoretical and empirical research contributions regarding gender expectations, class, and social change in and around relationships, the household, and family. My theoretical framework consists of a synthesis of feminist theory and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic violence and allows me to examine the class-specific construction of masculinities and femininities grounded in everyday practice and the corresponding symbolic processes that reinforce traditional gender hierarchies in new ways. I focus on the interdependent fields of family, household, marriage, and relationships and the clashes or tensions that arise when women's habituses have changed due to global cultural and economic flows and increased labor force participation yet the logic of these fields still reflects normative gender expectations.



My choice of qualitative semi-structured interviews and ethnography allows me to capture the tensions that arise as a result of this mismatch and also the gender strategies employed to reconcile these strains. Before I examine my findings in more depth, in the next chapter I discuss the research methodology.

### 3. Research Methodology

This dissertation examines the tensions produced by the clash between class preservation strategies grounded in traditional gender dynamics and greater desire for autonomy and expectations for equality held by women and men of the cosmopolitan class, and how these tensions are managed. Studies have noted socioeconomic and demographic transformations such as a decrease in the occurrence of early and universal marriage, a decoupling of sex and marriage, and an increase in the liminal period of 'waithood' in Egypt; yet, there is a dearth of studies examining women and men's experiences in and around these phenomena (Dialmy, 2005; Megahed, 2010; Roudi-Fahimi & Moghadam, 2003; Singerman, 2007). In addition, previous research has largely focused on low-income communities and women's gender strategies. For Cairenes of the 'cosmopolitan' class participation in global economic and cultural flows has further complicated the changing terrain of gender by adding to circulating images of masculinities and femininities; yet this 'connectedness' plays a large role in reinforcing their place in local class and status hierarchies. This study adds to the body of literature by gaining a better understanding of women *and* men's changing gender construction and roles, particularly in premarital and marital relationships in upper class communities, specifically the

cosmopolitan elite in Cairo. Moreover, my findings contribute to understanding the intersection of class and gender and the role appearances and consumption have in reproducing existing gender hierarchies.

The previous chapter presented my theoretical framework synthesizing Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic violence with feminist discussions of agency, reflexivity, and change. This framework combined with the methodology presented in this chapter allows me to simultaneously examine the class-specific construction of masculinities and femininities grounded in everyday practice and the corresponding symbolic processes that reinforce traditional gender hierarchies in new ways. This chapter provides an account of my fieldwork, the methodological approaches informing it, and the limitations and pitfalls of my approach. I discuss the research design used to explore the ways urban educated Cairenes navigate the changing terrain in and around premarital and marital relationships and the day-to-day negotiations of competing notions of masculinities and femininities. The chapter is divided into four sections. First, I offer reflections on my own positioning as an upper-middle class Egyptian-American, feminist, woman and how this has influenced my specific research questions. I also discuss how I have grappled with complex issues of positionality and representation as an Arab-American woman studying gender in Egypt. The second section lays out my methodological

approach and main research questions and why I have chosen a combination of semi-structured interviews and ethnography as the most effective method for my research, especially in light of debates on representation and positionality. It also explains why I have chosen to research urban educated Cairenes from the cosmopolitan class, how I was able to gain access through snowball and theoretical sampling, and what aspects I have focused on in this heterogeneous group. In the third section, the methods and tools of inquiry are delineated. Finally, this chapter will explain the data analysis technique chosen for this dissertation - grounded theory - and how this iterative and data driven approach ties into my methodological approach and ethical concerns.

### **3.1 Insider/Outsider: Positioning and Representation**

Acknowledging positionality in research has constituted a significant development in qualitative studies and has gained impetus with the feminist movement. This move towards reflexivity has increased our awareness of the power relations between the researcher/participant and debunked the myth of the “neutral” researcher (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Mohanty, 1988). As Abu-Lughod argues: “The outside self never simply stands outside, he or she always stands in a definite relation with the ‘other’ of the study. . . he/she is always in a position within a

larger political and historical complex” (Abu-Lughod, 1993, p.41). This acknowledgment raises complex problems for feminist researchers as to how they can write about the “other” without essentializing or overlooking the implications of the position from which they speak (Ali-Ali, 2000; Moore, 1994). Specifically, feminists have problematized the relationship between knowledge and power, arguing the impossibility of separating epistemology from power relations (Caplan, 1998; Harding, 1987). Throughout the research process and especially in the writing up phase, I have struggled (and continue to struggle) with issues of representation and the implications of studying Egyptian women as an Egyptian woman myself. Similar to feelings Adely (2012) has expressed in her ethnography on girls schooling in rural Jordan about being a Jordanian-American researcher, writing about these Cairenes’ lives has increased my sense of uneasiness about the process of representing people and events and shaping them to fit certain categories, concepts, and chapters that are conducive to analysis and academic publishing.

As a researcher, I am aware that fieldwork connects a personal experience with a general field of knowledge – fieldwork is not the unmediated world of others but the “world between ourselves and the others” (Hastrup as cited in Al-Ali, 2000). I also believe that my personal and cultural biographies are a significant source of knowledge and have helped me to

produce distinctive and nuanced analyses (Altorki & El-Solh, 1988). I do believe that I have the “indisputable advantage of being able to attach meanings to patterns . . . much faster than the non-indigenous researcher who is unfamiliar with the culture” (Altorki & El-Solh, 1988, p. 7). On the other hand, my insider status does make it more difficult to maintain social or emotional distance during fieldwork, since there is potentially less divergence between my values and those of my research community.

As an Egyptian woman raised abroad for most of my life, I straddle the dividing lines of insider/outsider, citizen/diasporic, and West/East; this background intensifies my sense of accountability as I do not want my research to be consumed under the hegemonic construction of the “Arab woman”. While my insider/outsider status has its advantages, I am weary of the perception that my insider status as an Egyptian woman of this cosmopolitan class may lead to the assumption that my findings are to be taken in a less critical manner than those of someone with less of an insider status. Also, as long as I am writing for institutions in the West about ‘the other’, I am implicated in projects that continue Western authority and cultural difference” (Abu-Lughod, 2001, p. 105). This chapter presents my specific “angle of vision” and the ways in which it has influenced the research process from my choice of research questions to the presentation of the findings (Caplan, 1988,

p.10). The examination of self in this section serves to not only illuminate the mediation of data analysis by my own presence but also to look into “the cultural and social interests that . . . individuals carry with them, deliberately or in spite of themselves” (Dwyer, 1982, p.xvii).

Altorki and El-Solh (1988) focus on the increasing acceptance of the view that the production of knowledge is intertwined with the social position of its producer in the fields of anthropology and sociology. In their edited volume titled “*Arab Women in the Field*”, they examine the role of gender and indigenous status (insider) in the structuring of knowledge; specifically, Altorki and El-Solh (1988) focus on the experiences of Arab female researchers that have studied their own societies. They propose the construction of sociological knowledge can be divided into three stages: choice of topic, acquisition of data, and analysis and interpretation of data. The remainder of this section will be loosely organized around these three stages and the ways in which my gender and insider/outsider status influenced my “structuring” of reality, which has been objectified in this dissertation.

The motivation for my research stemmed from the four years I spent living in Cairo after my move back to Cairo to attend the American University of Cairo as an undergraduate student. Three of those years were spent as an undergraduate student studying psychology and the fourth as a kindergarten

teacher at one of the international schools in Greater Cairo. During this time, I became increasingly aware of the tensions and discrepancies in both premarital and marital relationships around me. These tensions reminded me of the struggles I had experienced as an Arab-American female growing up in the U.S in that women seemed to be trying to reconcile competing gender expectations, mainly stemming from a gap between familial expectations and personal beliefs that had been influenced by the changing terrain of gender. I began to personally experience these struggles when I began dating my husband, who although is similar in background to me – an Egyptian who grew up in Canada – had different beliefs regarding women and men’s roles in marriage and in the family at times. While I was sure about my beliefs regarding gender in the household, I was surprised to realize a disconnect between what I believed and how I felt. Although I believed housework should be divided, I felt more responsible for it, while he would walk by the overflowing sink multiple times without feeling a hint of responsibility. Similar to Altorki and El-Solh’s (1988) findings in their comparative analysis of Arab women’s experiences as researchers in their own societies, my choice of topic was influenced by “personal anguish over social and political conditions in the Arab world” (p. 10). These feelings were magnified by my insider status as an Egyptian and by my gender role.



I began to wonder if my mother and previous generations of women had felt these same discrepancies and to what extent changes such as globalization and increased women's education and labor force participation have contributed to these struggles. Moreover, spending three years at AUC after attending high school in rural Pennsylvania highlighted the importance of class, more specifically a cultivated image of class, which sparked my interest as to how gender beliefs are circumscribed by class positions. Most of the research on women in Egypt focuses on low-income communities; my research was thus fueled by a desire to develop a more situated understanding of gender relations from the perspectives of cosmopolitan Cairenes. My ultimate aim was to contribute to the formulation of more nuanced feminist analysis, practice, and policies and to move beyond the representation of Egyptian women as either empowered or oppressed. As a result, I am reluctant to portray my research participants as victims of traditional gender hierarchies and instead choose to focus on their feelings of ambivalence and the daily negotiations as a means of capturing women and men actively engaged in shaping their life trajectories.

Throughout this dissertation I refer to my study community as the "cosmopolitan class" or "cosmopolitan elites"; Peterson (2011) describes this new upper class - comprised of old-money families, nouveaux riches, and many subdivisions

and cross-categorizations of these categories – as the “cosmopolitan class” and points out that all these people share a particular relationship to modernity seen as inherently rooted in a global, nonlocal realm. Through particular types of family structure, consumption of particular media, interactions with specific peer groups, attendance at a defined set of schools, acquisition of particular languages, consumption of particular goods, and familiarity with particular types of spaces, these individuals acquire a general character that distinguishes them from the middle and lower classes. Knowledge of transnational popular culture functions as an important form of cultural capital through which they constructed themselves as transnational elites “whose unequal control over Egypt’s economic and political resources is justified by their modernity”. I refer to this segment of the population as elites because they occupy” a position that provides them with access and control or as possessing resources that advantage them” (Khan, 2012; Peterson, 2011). More importantly, I define elites as those who have resources of *transferable* value or the ability to convert resources into other forms of capital. Lastly, this group of people shares a variety of characteristics such as tertiary degrees, private sector employment, and high levels of income.

Altorki and El-Solh (1988) point out that researchers’ gender influences fieldwork in three main ways: through limitations on access to specific information; through the

selective perception of those studied; and through the possibility that the researcher may overlook important variations in gender roles in different situational contexts. Although Arab societies are commonly described as possessing a high degree of sex segregation, the “cosmopolitan class” studied in this thesis is characterized by a less stringent bifurcation of social life. Therefore, my gender did not impose limited access to the research community; my gender interacted with other factors such as educational background, marital status, and socioeconomic status to further minimize potentially constraining effects (Altorki & El-Solh, 1988).

I began my fieldwork with a keen awareness of my relationship with the study community: mostly an insider because of my educational background and class position yet slightly an outsider as a researcher and as someone who could be perceived as a “Westernized” Egyptian (mostly due to my American accented English). In her ethnography on gender in the household in a low-income community in Cairo, El-Kholy (2002) discusses how her different class background resulted in the perception of her being a resource, which affected her initial contacts and the information she was getting; she found that women were purposefully projecting themselves as struggling on their own to maximize the attention they might command. She emphasizes that the sense of difference and distance she experienced was partly due to her class location. Because the

research participants viewed me as someone with a similar class background, I did not encounter the problem of participants casting me in the role of a resource person or someone with a network of influential family and friends in Egypt that could be activated to mediate on their behalf.

While my interviewees did not view me as a potential resource, our similar class backgrounds meant that many of the participants assumed I agreed with their views and therefore did not elaborate on many topics until prompted several times. It felt as if I were asking them to state the obvious in some instances. This was common when I asked about the criteria expected of potential husband/wife; interviewees usually did not mention certain financial standards and class backgrounds that were a foundation of marriageability, since those were assumed to be basics. When they discussed the marriage process and how important it is to “keep up appearances”, I was repeatedly told “you know how it is” without much elaboration. This assumption that I was familiar with my respondents’ way of life meant that I had to define my researcher role in a way that did not jeopardize my standing in the community yet at the same time allowed me to “render the world problematic” (Altorki & El-Solh, 1988, p. 13).

On the other hand, there were times when I was considered an outsider. Although the interviews were conducted in Arabic, except for random English phrases as is common

among the cosmopolitan class, once some of the interviewees realized I spoke English natively they would try to incorporate more English into the interview, to make it easier for me to understand (also as a method of showcasing their English skills). Other research participants who knew more about my personal life would describe the conflict associated with setting up and furnishing an apartment then comment on how I had never maintained a household in Egypt and therefore it was different for me. More striking was the way that both men and women presented a more equal distribution of household chores when they were first asked. At the beginning of many of the interviews, this question was answered defensively and only later in the interview after they were asked to describe a day in their life/in their partners' life did they feel more comfortable in sharing a less cultivated answer. Reflecting on these encounters, I believe they assumed someone raised abroad and pursuing a doctoral degree in Ireland would judge their lack of egalitarian households. Although problematic to my commitment to feminist methodology, which stresses honesty and openness I made the decision to dissimulate many aspects of my identity and conceal some of my beliefs. At times, I did experience a reciprocal exchange of ideas and experiences however I did not want to alienate the research participants by highlighting differences in our beliefs; more importantly I did not want them to feel judged especially since their cosmopolitanism has made

them aware of the array of gender beliefs and structures elsewhere.

It is against this backdrop that the following chapters analyzing my findings must be read. I am aware that my findings represent perspectives found on gender relations and women and men's strategies in the study community: a perspective arrived through both who I am and was during the fieldwork and who my interviewees were in their interactions, discussions, and interviews with me. My findings are meant to highlight that masculinities and femininities are constantly in flux, situational, and always relational. My insider position introduces elements of an analytic autoethnography into my methodology; this refers to ethnographic work in which the researcher is a full member of the research group or setting, visible as an insider in the published texts, and committed to an analytics research agenda with the aim of contributing to theoretical underpinnings of wider social phenomena (Anderson, 2006). Most of the studies on gender in Egypt have involved "studying down", studying those with less, partly due to the barrier of access. My insider position allows me to "study up" and to explore the experiences of this segment of the population, which has rarely been studied.

### **3.2 Analytical Approach, Research Questions, and Study Design**

To examine the intersection of class and gender in Egypt, I used a national case study design with a focus on a particular socio-demographic group, cosmopolitan Cairenes. According to Yin (2012), case studies explore a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context; this method allows me to explore the “gender paradox” in the Arab world within a specific context and socio-demographic group. In case-oriented research, much of the effort is directed towards constituting “the cases” and concept formation, elaboration, and refinement in contrast to variable-oriented research where the primary concern is theory testing (Ragin, 1997). Development reports point to problems of culture, religion, and family as causes of the “gender paradox” or the lack of corresponding women’s labor force participation in light of women’s increased education; however there is a dearth of in-depth studies examining the role of other factors such as class and current trends. I utilize a case study research design to move beyond the essentialized and ahistorical notions of “Arab women” and “the Arab family” based on general theories presented in development reports and to conduct an in-depth study that offers insight into the diversity and complexity of social life. This method ties into my aim of contributing rich material for the development and refinement of theories related to gender, class, and social change in the Arab world.

The aim of my research was to explore the tensions produced by the clash between class preservation strategies

merged with traditional gender expectations and greater autonomy and expectations for equality held by men and women of the cosmopolitan class, and how these tensions were managed. Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate as my study focuses on women and men's experiences of gender; this method allows me to access their subjectivities. As Geertz (1973) said ethnography is about accessing the "imaginative universe" of the subjects of the study; ethnography allows me to access this universe while also providing a means to capture the discord between what is articulated in interviews and actual behavior and feelings. While I began my research with the intent of focusing on the household only, as my data emerged I realized it was oriented around both premarital and marital relationships; therefore I expanded my focus beyond the household and included experiences in and around relationships. Several questions guided my research:

- How do urban educated 'cosmopolitan' Cairene men and women experience competing gender expectations around gender roles and masculinities and femininities in premarital and marital relationships?
- What role does class play in mediating these gender expectations?



- How are these competing gender ideologies experienced, negotiated and resolved or not resolved, daily and articulated in words and actions?
- What are their consequences for the gender regime in this segment of the Egyptian population?

Gender ideologies and gender relations are complex, at times contradictory, composites of beliefs relating to many aspects of masculinities and femininities. In order to narrow in on specific and concrete manifestations of these gender ideologies, I focused on women and men's experiences, understandings, and meanings of three main arenas: marriage, breadwinner status, and women's paid work. These arenas allowed me to explore negotiation practices as manifested in premarital relationships, premarital standards, marriage negotiations, intrahousehold decision-making and resource allocations.

I decided to focus on these specific arenas based on suggestions from previous research on intrahousehold power relations both globally and regionally. Several studies have shown that power and conflict in households are commonly manifested in the areas of budgetary allocations and decisions, and domestic division of labor (El-Kholy, 2002; Gerson, 1993; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Hoodfar, 1997; Singerman, 1995). For example, in Gerson's examination of emerging challenges to men's power in America such as stagnating earnings and

women's increased workforce participation, she develops a typology of men's varied commitments to family and work based on economic contributions and participation in domestic work (Gerson, 1993). She bases her typology on these two arenas as they are integral in the meaning of idealized manhood and in the legitimization of male privilege. Moreover, existing research suggests these areas are two aspects of gender ideologies most directly linked to beliefs and expectations about masculinities and femininities. The close link between notions of idealized masculinity and provider status has also been noted in studies of Cairo (El-Kholy, 2002; Hoodfar, 1997; Singerman, 1995). While literature showed links between breadwinning and idealized masculinity and domestic labor and idealized femininity, less has focused on the mediating role of class on gender. I was particularly interested in exploring this intersection given my personal background and lack of existing studies, especially ones with a focus on masculinities.

In the beginning, as discussed previously, I had decided to focus on households as the units of analysis however as I began my fieldwork this expanded to include experiences in and around relationships outside of the household, and family as well. While I am aware of the distinctions between the concept of household and that of family, I use the two terms interchangeably throughout the dissertation. In this context, the notion of family is approximated to that of household since my

interest is in units of co-residence; the concept of household lends itself more easily to empirical observation. Several scholars have emphasized the value of using the household as a site for studying gender relations, especially in times of socioeconomic change (El-Kholy, 2002; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Hoodfar, 1997; Singerman, 1995; Singerman & Hoodfar, 1996). They are integral in both the internalization and formulation of gender ideologies and the expression of gendered roles and expectations. As Hochschild and Machung (1989) argue households and marriages are reflective of shifts (or lack of) in constraints and opportunities that arise as a result of socioeconomic and political change. This is also true of premarital relationships, which have not been the object of many studies on Egypt probably due to the relatively new status of the field and the sensitive nature of the topic, especially for Cairene females. My similar age and background to the respondents alleviated much of the sensitivity surrounding the topic and most interviewees felt comfortable relaying their experiences in the world of dating.

### **3.3 Tools and Methods**

During the Ph.D. I was living in Dublin, Ireland during the academic year and flying back to Cairo, Egypt during the summer and winter breaks for fieldwork. From June of 2014 to

September 2015, I spent a total of 9 months in Cairo conducting fieldwork and interviews, divided into 4 different waves. While I was in Cairo, I stayed at my mother's apartment in *Masr El Gedida* or Heliopolis, where many members of the cosmopolitan class and of my research participants lived and worked. When my mother was growing up in the early 1960's and 1970's, this neighborhood was considered an affluent suburb of Cairo and the Heliopolis stop on the metro was the last one on the line. Although it is still not considered downtown Cairo, which is about 20 minutes without traffic, many neighborhoods have been built around it and more families have moved out of Heliopolis into the gated compounds and newer construction in Greater Cairo.

My main data collection method was semi-structured qualitative interviews. Along with the interviews, I observed and participated in a variety of social events: one engagement party, 2 weddings, 3 dinner parties, and one occasion where I visited the house of a newlywed couple. My choice of methods stems directly from a variety of theoretical and methodological concerns. I was interested in describing and analyzing women and men's experiences from their perspectives and making sense of their place in the world in a way that "is not challenged or outright rejected by the very people whose lives it tries to explain" (Reinharz, 1992, p.33). In-depth interviews provide a space for individual reflections and for insights about people'

experiences of themselves, in their own worlds, in their own words (Zimmerman, McDermott & Gould, 2009). I also wanted to ground theory and interpretations in an understanding of daily material realities and lived practices; my use of observation and participation assisted in this endeavor and also served as a way of verifying and identifying the contradictions between beliefs articulated in narratives and in practice. In order to convey the complexity and contingency of particular lives I integrated my observations on women (and men's) everyday experiences within larger social and political contexts whenever possible (Harding, 1991; Smith, 1988).

Focusing on the actualities of their everyday experiences allows me to break away from the hegemony of the dominant positivist discourse in the social sciences and to develop a sociology capable of explaining for members of the society the social organization of their experienced world. It is important to note that this methodology does not universalize particular experiences but rather proposes a method that creates a space for an absent subject (Smith, 1988). The methodological assumptions of this mode of inquiry are that larger social organization and social relations are present in daily activities and that these are continually constructed and reconstructed. Applying this theoretical assumption to gender relations helps direct attention to the ways in which social stability or more precisely gender dynamics that seem stable are constructed and

reconstructed through everyday actions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). These everyday actions are continuously constructing a wide range of context-specific masculinities and femininities. The combination of semi-structured interviews and observation allows me to examine this continuous construction; this triangulation of methods also generates a wealth of information from which I can delineate gaps between articulated beliefs and lived realities and therefore extract notions of idealized masculinity and femininity and the emergence of competing masculinities and femininities.

I utilized Rubin and Rubin's model of responsive interviewing, which allowed me to begin the interviews with a specific topic and set of questions in mind that were modified throughout the interview to match the dynamic and interests of the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Responsive interviewing recognizes the dynamic and iterative process of qualitative interviewing, adapts to the varying relationships between researcher and "conversational partner", and stresses the important in learning what is important to those being studied (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p 15). The interview guide was designed to capture the roles and responsibilities of women and men in and around relationships; it included questions about relationships and day-to-day responsibilities of the research participants themselves and their parents (see interview guide in Appendix B). I loosely followed the interview guides however

I remained sensitive to instances where interviewees came up with intriguing generalizations about women and men that warranted exploration, suggested a more nuanced view of marriage and relationships than anticipated, or presented new words or phrases that addressed my research question and I had heard repeated in many interviews. I also tried to follow up on inconsistencies without making it seem as if I was pointing out the contradictions.

While interviewing is an invaluable technique and well suited for my underlying methodological and theoretical assumptions and concerns, I am aware that all types of interviews are not without their limitations since they involve two subjectivities that of the interviewer and that of the narrator/conversational partner. It is well recognized that oral narratives contain a self-serving component and are often shaped by the interviewees desire to present herself/himself in a certain way (see Reinharz 1992 for an extended bibliography). While interviews may not be a transparent representation of experience nor a reproduction of reality, they do offer glimpses of different positions in specific interactions with the interviewer. For the purpose of my research question, this desire to present certain images of femininity and/or masculinity is itself an important finding and conveys the struggle to reconcile different masculinities and femininities.

### 3.3.1 Study Community

My research was not confined to a specific neighborhood in Cairo; ninety percent of the interviews occurred in the three neighborhoods of Heliopolis, Nasr City, and the Fifth Settlement in Greater Cairo and the remaining 10 percent in Maadi, Mohandiseen, and Zamalek. These neighborhoods are generally considered as some of the more Westernized and more affluent quarters of the city, compared to other ones that are considered *shaa'bi* or popular and full of “rural urbanites” (Singerman, 1995). These typologies are to be used as broad descriptions and are unable to capture the subtler features of differentiation within neighborhoods, which definitely do exist. Cairo is a large metropolis with an estimated population of over fourteen million and too many neighborhoods to name however these 6 mentioned above are where members of the cosmopolitan class spent the majority of their time. Almost every single one of the respondents worked, lived, and went out to restaurants, clubs, and bars in these neighborhoods.

An explanatory note regarding my use of the term “sample” or “study community” in the rest of the dissertation is necessary. I use the terms study community and sample interchangeably throughout the chapters, when I do so I am referring to the all of the Cairenes I interviewed, irrespective of the neighborhood. The group of people interviewed are referred



to as a “community” because they are all linked through different networks and referred to as a “sample” because this particular group was purposefully arrived at through a snowball approach to encompass certain age groups and background characteristics. I also refer to these individuals as upper class, elite, and cosmopolitan throughout the chapters. My aim is not to homogenize this group as I am aware that there are variations – although slight, especially when compared to the other groups of Cairenes – in lifestyle, beliefs, and socioeconomic standing within this sample and community. However, there were many shared characteristics such as tertiary degrees, private sector employment, and high levels of income and more importantly for my research question a specific relationship with global economic and cultural flows.

In El-Kholy’s ethnography on low-income women in Cairo, she struggles with the difficulties inherent in the use of the term “low-income” which reduces social ranking to economic terms (El-Kholy, 2002, p. 56). She argues this classification does not allow for an understanding of the rankings people invoke, which is usually based on prestige and social status rather than on wealth and income alone. As the data chapters will demonstrate, the Cairenes interviewed rely on rankings based on prestige and status and dedicate significant time and effort in maintaining certain appearances associated with status. Therefore, I do not refer to this group of people as

high-income but rather employ terms that more accurately capture the mechanisms through which they maintain power and status in society.

I have chosen to study Cairene men and women between the ages of 20 and 35 from the cosmopolitan class for various reasons. First, statistics suggest a changing demographic of marriage and qualitative evidence suggests new forms of marriage and an increase in premarital relations for this cohort – with the most obvious changes seen among educated, urban women (Rashad, Osman, & Roudi-Fahimi, 2005; Singerman, 2007). In 1976, 22 percent of women ages 15 to 19 were married in Egypt; this dropped to 10 percent in 2003 (Rashad, Osman, & Roudi-Fahimi, 2005). According to Singerman (2007) the proportion of Egyptian women aged 20-24 who were married by age 20 in 1970 was 65 percent, this proportion dropping to 41 percent in 1995. Although different sources may indicate different increases in the age at marriage, it is clear that marital practices are changing with a trend towards later marriage. More specifically, there are marked differences in the age of first marriage among women according to both residence and educational attainment (El-Zanaty & Way, 2009). Early marriage is much more common in rural than in urban areas; the median age of first marriage among urban women was 22.2 years, around three years higher than the median age of first marriage among rural women (19.4 years). Large differences in

age are also seen when looking at educational level. The median age of first marriage among women with a secondary education or higher was 22.9 years, more than three years higher than the median age among women who have complete the primary but not the secondary level (19.3 years) and about five years higher than among women who never attended school (18.0 years).

Based on these statistics, the highest median age of first marriage is found among urban educated women. My sample was highly educated, everyone had either already obtained at least a bachelors degree or was in the process of obtaining one. Moreover, they all were living and had grown up in Cairo (except for a handful that had spent some childhood years abroad). This group of people was more likely to be experiencing changes in marriage and premarital relationships, which had repercussions for the greater field of gender. Although few statistics (if any) exist examining premarital/extra-marital relations or non-traditional forms of marriage making it difficult to determine the concrete reality of this changing field, what little does exist strongly suggests this delay in marriage and a decoupling of sex and marriage has led to transformations in the terrain of gender that are manifested day-to-day in households, families, and relationships.

Second, I focused on the particular age range of 20 to 35 as men and women in this age group are more likely to be experiencing a variety of transitions (i.e. university to work,

single to marriage) that further complicate negotiations of masculinities and femininities. Each phase has its own gender expectations and idealized notions of masculinity and femininity. Singerman (2007) describes the school-to-work-marriage transition as “waithood”, a liminal world where young people are neither children nor adults. During this phase, they must live by the rules and norms of their parents while they forge new rules, institutions, and identities within particular sociocultural and economic environments. Furthermore, these individuals are more likely to still be developing gender strategies and negotiating competing expectations compared to older individuals whose gender strategies may be less flexible, less malleable and not in negotiation anymore. This provides me with a greater opportunity to observe gaps and cracks in people’s gender beliefs as well as discrepancies between beliefs articulated in interviews and in lived reality, which are indicative of ongoing negotiations.

### **3.3.2 Data Collection**

I spent a total of 9 months conducting fieldwork in Cairo; this fieldwork consisted of interviews, informal conversations, and participation observation. The interviews were conducted in 4 different waves corresponding to the 4 trips I made from Dublin to Cairo for fieldwork. The first 10 interviews (7 women

and 3 men) were pilot interviews and mainly for exploratory purposes. The interview guide was loosely structured and included a wide range of questions on gender in the family, household, and relationships. Most of these questions were open-ended (i.e. describe your parents relationship) and asked about individuals' experiences and attitudes of childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and dating, and day-to-day roles and responsibilities. These interviews were preliminarily open coded in order to refine my interview guide and to focus on themes that respondents had repeatedly mentioned.

By the time I had travelled back to Cairo the second time, I had developed a more detailed interview script that was more structured. This updated interview guide focused mainly on parents' relationship, personal romantic relationships (premarital and marital), and social expectations surrounding marriageability and ideal partners. The questions asked about disagreements or conflicts in relationships and also about everyday behavior. During this second wave of fieldwork, I conducted another 10 interviews: 3 men and 7 women. I continued to use this same interview guide for the remaining two waves; by the end of the 4 waves I had conducted a total of 40 interviews with 36 different men and women of the cosmopolitan class (4 interviews were follow up). I interviewed 5 married couples, the husband and wife were interviewed separately. This allowed me to hear about the relationship from

the points of view of both genders and was helpful in further delineating the strains in the relationship.

In the beginning of fieldwork, respondents were first recruited through convenience sampling; since I attended the American University in Cairo I had relatively easy access to a large amount of men and women through personal networks, acquaintances, and family networks that fit the age group and were part of the cosmopolitan elite. Convenience sampling during the pilot phase of the fieldwork allowed me to determine the scope of the phenomenon and to decide on a specific trajectory for the remainder of the fieldwork (Morse, 2007). Respondents during the second and third waves of interviews were recruited through a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling with the goal to maximize variation in meanings (Morse, 2007). According to Patton (as cited in Coyne, 1997, p. 624), the “logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research”. This combination of purposeful and snowball sampling allow me to access a variety of life positions and statuses as well (i.e. married, unmarried, dating, with children etc.).

If a respondent was in a relationship, I attempted to interview their significant other; however most of the time it

was difficult for husbands to find time for an interview. In the last stage of fieldwork, I recruited interviewees through theoretical sampling in order to produce a sample that would enable me to develop the theoretical ideas that were emerging in the iterative process between the theory and the data (Edwards & Hollands, 2013; Morse, 2007). This led me to recruit more male respondents, which I needed to test some of the emerging ideas.

Interviews usually lasted anywhere from an hour to two hours and were mostly conducted in coffee shops such as Starbucks or Coffee Bean. Participants were asked to read and sign consent forms prior to the start of the interview. These consent forms provided a brief summary of the research study and stated how the data collected would be utilized; they also mentioned that the interviews would be recorded for later analysis. Data collected was securely stored in password-protected files and any identifying information was stored separately; both confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed and maintained. Participants were asked if they would like the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and make any changes they saw fit; however no one availed of this opportunity. Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation, with no identifying information written. Ethical approval was secured from the department and the school prior to the commencement of data collection.

In addition to participant observation in casual social interactions at home, in coffee shops and social outings such as shopping, I observed and participated in a variety of social events: one engagement party, 2 weddings, 3 dinner parties, and one occasion where I visited the house of a newlywed couple. This allowed me to observe the respondents interact with each other, with their extended family, and with peers. As most of these events were grounded in rituals, these observations were a great opportunity to see and hear how young cosmopolitan Cairenes interpret, respond, and participate in these rituals; these observations also revealed insights into their feelings about gender roles, which I noted down during or immediately after the event in question. In some instances, I would note down observations on my cellphone until I arrived at home where I proceeded to take more detailed notes of my experience. As highlighted earlier, participant observation also allowed me to locate gaps between what was articulated in the interviews and behavior that I observed.

### **3.4 Analysis and Interpretation**

After the data collection stage was complete, I translated (since the interviews were conducted in Arabic) and transcribed the interviews. I gathered the notes from my cellphone and typed up my handwritten ethnographic field notes. Then, I



analyzed the data; since one of the aims of the dissertation was to complement and contribute to existing feminist and social theories, I utilized a grounded theory framework, which uses an inductive approach to interpreting data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1968). Grounded theory enabled me to identify new conceptual relationships grounded in actual practice and daily material realities. Analysis was primarily data driven, facilitating the development of theory that is readily (and not forcibly) applicable to the data under study and also relevant to the specific context studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1968).

Once the interviews were translated and transcribed, I open coded the interview transcriptions and fieldnotes. In a grounded theory approach, open coding refers to “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 61). My coding was a data driven process; I started out with no codes and developed them through reading the transcriptions. In the first cycle of coding, my codes were short, immediate, and meant to describe the action or experience described by the interviewee. During the second and third cycle of coding, the codes became less descriptive and more theoretical, by the last end of the third cycle of coding the analysis had reached “saturation” and no new insights or interpretations were emerging from the coding process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The next step was to sift through the large amount of codes and refine the ones that were relevant to my research question. Some codes I eliminated straight away because they were irrelevant to my focus, the remaining codes I gathered into the first draft of my codebook. In order to refine my codebook, I created coding documents where I placed all of the interview sections coded with the same code into one document. At the top of each document was a description of the code and what it included and excluded; this allowed me to systematically refine and reformulate my codes into more useful concepts. At this point, I also created different conceptual levels within my codes and produced sub-codes. Throughout the coding process, I had written various theoretical and analytical memos as a method of capturing my thoughts during the research process; I also coded these documents.

Glaser and Straus (1968) point out that the strategy of comparative analysis in grounded theory emphasizes theory as an ever-developing process or entity. This process of theory-development was constantly in the background as I was refining and reformulating the codes, engaging with the literature, writing memos, and then repeating this process all over again. The continuous reconceptualization of the categories in the data and their conceptual properties and the generalized relations among these categories resulted in the findings and conclusions presented in throughout the dissertation. Some of these

concepts and their properties are based on language the respondent has used in the interview and others are a result of analysis that both reflects respondents' perspectives on events and issues but also takes into account broader socioeconomic phenomena.

This chapter has provided an account of my fieldwork, the underlying methodological assumptions informing it, and my position, which has influenced my choice of research questions and the specific modes of inquiry I adopted. I have prefaced these discussions with an account of how I have grappled with complex issues of positionality, representation, and interpretation as an Arab-American woman studying gender in Egypt. The following three chapters present the results of my fieldwork and analysis, each exploring a different aspect of the relationship between class, gender, and social change. The next chapter explores the tensions that arise with the newly emerging field of premarital relationships and the ways in which idealized notions of masculinity and femininity are reinforced through the marriage process.

#### **4. Keeping Up Appearances: The Cosmopolitan Class, Global Flows, and Gender**

Global cultural and economic flows through mass media, technology, travel, and education has brought these transnational Cairenes into contact with a global youth culture that does not necessarily oppose premarital relationships and sexuality (Appadurai, 1990; Bennett, 2007; Utomo & McDonald, 2008). These transnational flows transmit images of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to as “discrepant worlds” and provide young men and women with new sources of identity linked to specific masculinities and femininities. I postulate these discrepant worldviews are further complicated as a result of changing relations between the sexes and class-specific notions of femininity and masculinity. Although the young men and women in my sample were attuned to global trends they were ultimately rooted in local sensitivities and class specific notions of femininity and masculinity and continued to construct gender within discourses of class and respectability. Once young men and women enter the engagement and marriage process, parents play a central role in reinforcing traditional gender norms, practices, and expectations. This chapter begins the exploration of why and how traditional gender norms are maintained and reinforced and adds to our empirical understanding of premarital relationships among this segment of Egyptian population.

This chapter introduces the cosmopolitan Cairenes of my sample and portrays the aspects of their lifestyle that have contributed towards personal trajectories that include deviations from traditional notions of manhood and womanhood. I provide an overview of the study community, locate this group of Egyptians within the socialscape, and describe their everyday lifestyle. I posit their position in the class structure in Egypt associated with wealth and freedom of travel has bred a sense of freedom and exposed them to competing masculinities and femininities. This freedom continues during university when premarital relationships are common, especially for men, yet becomes impinged upon when it comes to marriage. At this time, there is a clash between young Cairenes personal preferences and their parents' expectations surrounding marriage norms and rituals. There is also a clash between the reluctant relinquishers of autonomy (women) and the rapid relinquishers (men) that often results in ambivalence; men are less hesitant in assuming traditional gender roles since the division of labor and norms are tilted in their favor. Afterwards, I postulate gender norms are getting retrenched as part of the preoccupation with reinforcing class status and keeping up appearances.

The following sections are meant as an introduction to this particular segment of the Cairene population: young cosmopolitan Cairenes. More importantly, this chapter focuses

on the distinct yet overlapping fields these young elites inhabit and the corresponding class-specific constructions of masculinities and femininities in both every day practice. While the next chapter mostly concentrates on the field of marriage, this chapter explores the emergence of two new field: waithood and premarital relationships. Although these two new fields overlap at times, both gender and class structure these fields in distinct ways. I begin by providing an overview of the cosmopolitan Cairenes and their position in the general social field; I examine their position by looking at their economic, cultural, and social capital. Afterwards, I explore the new fields emerging and the different ways that class and gender structure these fields and habituses and subsequently impact behavior. The chapter ends with an overview of the marriage process and the ways the emergence of these two new fields have altered the marriage process by introducing greater freedom pre-marriage. Young elites' experiences during waithood lead to tensions that begin during the marriage process and manifest more fully during marriage. During the marriage process, many of these tensions can be traced to a discord between parents and the young Cairenes. Parents and extended family utilize the marriage process as a means to reproduce and consolidate power and social status, while young Cairenes are increasingly reframing marriage in terms of companionate ideals and individualistic notions. The marriage process has not adapted to

the emergence of the fields of waithood and/premarital relationships or to changes in the general field of power.

It is important to note that the aim of this chapter and study in general is not to delineate a “cosmopolitan” habitus or a “gender” habitus. Similar to many feminists engaging with Bourdieu’s theory of practice, I do not believe gender constitutes a field or that gender has its own habitus but rather conceptualize gender as a part of the gender social field or field of power (Adkins, 2004; McRobbie, 2004; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2004). The aim is to explore the changes in the general field of relationships and the emergence of/changes in the corresponding subfields and the ways class and gender structures these fields. As Bourdieu (1977) argues, practice is not a direct result of habitus but rather a direct result of “an obscure and double relation between habitus and field”. While “habitus. . . captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history in our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others”, these choices depend on the context or specific position one occupies in a particular social field (Maton, 2012, p. 59). With this in mind, the chapter positions these young Cairenes in the overall field of power and in specific fields such as waithood and premarital relationships.

#### 4.1 The Cosmopolitan Cairenes

When I started attending the American University in Cairo (AUC) as an undergraduate student I was surprised at how many of the students spoke at least three or four languages. Almost everyone spoke at least two – Arabic and English – and those who had attended non-English foreign language schools also spoke French or German depending on the schools they had attended. After classes, we would have dinner at American chains that I had never heard of in spite of living the last 16 years of my life in the United States. These American chains would usually be located in new massive shopping centers with luxurious décor such as marble floors, a courtesy of investors from the Gulf region. Such spectacles of luxury, modernity, and consumption are in stark contrast to the 26.1 million people or 27.8% of Egyptians who lived below the poverty line in 2015 (World Bank, 2017). Each year new shopping centers are built and young Cairenes have to keep track of which ones are “trendy” and which ones have become too accessible to the Egyptian masses. Once places become too accessible to other Egyptians, they lose their translocal charm that had previously seemed “to put them neither in Cairo nor anywhere else in particular” (Peterson, 2011, p.1).

Living in Cairo you quickly realize that it’s a “connected” city - Cairenes look abroad for models of development and study



foreign languages in pursuit of social mobility while the country is economically dependent on foreign aid, tourism, and foreign investment (Peterson, 2011). Chinese salespeople roam door-to-door selling cheap products, Apple products are sold in high-end shops throughout the city, and you can buy a Harley Davidson from a dealership in the neighborhood of Mohandiseen. There are more American brands, restaurants, and chains in Cairo than in anywhere else I have traveled to outside of the US, other than Dubai. In the few occasions that I have walked down the street in Cairo, I have noticed every person clutching a smartphone; iPhones were characteristic of the upper middle class and less likely to be found among the people strolling on the sidewalks in downtown Cairo. American films play in high-end theaters while Bollywood films share the low-market niche alongside Egyptian films.

However similar to what Peterson (2011) argues in his examination of the cosmopolitan class in Cairo, I found that not everyone in Cairo was equally connected and not everyone was connected in the same ways. The moment I step outside of the mall Cairo Festival City where there is a dancing water fountain similar to the one in Dubai Mall, an Ikea, and a Ted Baker, I see a short hunched over woman wearing a black *galabiyya* (a long and loose traditional garment) begging for money. Down the street is a slight variation – a middle aged tanned man is pretending to sweep the sand from the middle of the road to the

side of the road as a way to ask for money in a more dignified manner than begging. For these individuals and many more like them the world of luxury displayed on television, films, internet, and on the Cairenes driving past them in BMWs is unattainable. Some people view this cosmopolitan lifestyle as morally suspect, while for others it is an aspiration; for most Egyptians the “morality of these transnational connections” lies somewhere in the middle of these two extremes (Peterson, 2011, p. 2).

Before I delve into more detail about my sample, I would like to define the way in which I will be using the terms cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan class. In recent literature on globalization, “cosmopolitanism” has come to be understood as “a mode of managing meaning” involving “the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience” (Hannerz, 1990, p. 238-239). The Cairene elites interviewed were consistently managing different cultures in ways that would reinforce their status in local hierarchies. I chose to utilize Peterson’s (2010) conceptualization of cosmopolitanism partly since it was developed during his time as a professor at the American University in Cairo, where 22 of my 36 respondents attended university. He describes cosmopolitanism as both a practice and an identity, a capacity “to inhabit not only the territorial landscape but simultaneously the fluid, multi-branching topography of imagined communities, migration routes, media circulation, and financial networks across which global culture

flows (Peterson, 2010, p. 227). This cosmopolitanism is a form of cultural capital comprised largely of style, a set of tastes, linguistic codes and registers, bodily comportments, and other practices that distinguish the Cairene upper class from the rural Egyptians and the urban lower and middle classes (Peterson, 2010, 2011). More specifically:

Cosmopolitanism . . . is conceived here specifically as a set of practices through which the Egyptian upper classes and those with upwardly mobile aspirations construct themselves as transnational elites whose unequal control over Egypt's economic and political resources is justified by their modernity, and whose modernity is in turn revealed by their cosmopolitanism: their Western educations, their easy movement across transnational border, their consumption of transnational goods, and a general display of tastes in music, literature, film, clothing, and technologies that distinguishes them from the masses. (Peterson, 2010, p. 228)

I believe this conceptualization captures my research participants more than a traditional definition solely based on income and/or education. The changes in class structure introduced by social and economic reforms since the 1950's have created such diversity within the upper middle/upper class in Egypt that utilizing an approach that relies on education and/or income would obscure the strategies of distinction that rely on cultural and symbolic capital.

In many of the informal conversations I had, I found out many of the men and women of this cosmopolitan class travelled to European cities such as London, Barcelona, and Rome at least

once a year in order to go shopping. They also travelled for cultural events such as music festivals and concerts. During the interviews, respondents pointed out that they attended private schools where they learned foreign languages and mingled with children of the expatriate community. This “connectedness” of these young men and women through their participation in global economic and cultural flows – seen in their travel, education, and consumption – resulted in the development of “generative logics that allow them to unreflexively keep tabs on changing fashions and markets so as to maintain their style and the statuses that accrue to it” (Peterson, 2010, p. 229). This very connectedness has also resulted in aspirations and personal trajectories encompassing masculinities and femininities that were vastly different from the lives of their parents as told to me by the respondents.

While the research participants shared this connectedness to global economic and cultural flows, it is important to keep in mind that the cosmopolitan class does not comprise a singular entity (Peterson, 2010). In local marketing literature they are nicknamed the “A and B+ classes” and are estimated to only make up 3-6% of the population, but this still includes about 2 to 4 million people. Based on 2016 official expenditure and income data from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), Egyptians from the richest 10 percent spend 70 times more than the poorest 10

percent. An Egyptian family that spends about LE 60,700 annually (LE 5,000 per month) is considered among the richest 10 percent, while the poorest 10 percent are those who spend LE 3,300 annually (LE 277 each month). This gap is larger in urban areas with the expenditure of the richest person in a city is about 100 times more than the poorest person (CAPMAS, 2016). According to this data, Egyptian families in the top 10 percent spend 5,000 LE a month; to further put this into perspective, many of the students at AUC have monthly allowances that range from 2,000 LE to 5,000 LE.

Even within my sample there was a wide range of income and wealth; one young woman's family owned an apartment in Miami and a summer house in the Mediterranean resort Hacienda, the cost rumored to begin at 20 million Egyptian Pounds, while another young man interviewed told me the story of how he was given the choice of a new car or an education at the American University in Cairo. All of the parents of the 36 men and women interviewed had obtained at least a college degree and many had pursued further studies. Parents' occupations fit into three main categories: small business owners (i.e. restaurants, medical clinics, travel agencies, currency exchanges); professionals such as doctors, engineers, and professors; and high-level positions in mostly regional and multinational companies and banks. The research participants themselves largely followed in the footsteps of their parents,

especially those with family businesses. Most of them pursued degrees in engineering, mass communications, business, and medicine. The common perception was that as long as these young men and women either pursued a degree in medicine or engineering, pursued any degree at AUC or abroad, or became employed at a regional or multinational company, they had held onto one of the main building blocks of prestige and status.

#### **4.2 The American University in Cairo and the Reproduction of Social Status**

Social institutions such as the American University in Cairo (AUC) play a central role in the production and reproduction of elites (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Khan, 2012; Nash, 1990). Today, elites such as the cosmopolitan class in Cairo navigate institutions that help credential them, rather than inherit titles as it were in the past (Khan, 2012). While the family is integral in the reproduction of social status especially by teaching people ways to mediate other social institutions, educational institutions play an equally integral role in both elite reproduction and broader social mobility. For the young cosmopolitan Cairenes in this study, the American University in Cairo (AUC) – along with private high schools and translocal spaces – functions as an institution that constitutes and elite and excludes people from social power.

AUC is an institution that creates forms of protection from the “rising, threatening mobility of the new rich” (Khan, 2012, p. 371). This is done by excluding the “new rich” from opportunities or manipulating them into coordinating their interests with an older elite. AUC also constructs a shared culture and creates class consolidation.

Although schools are a great source of mobility, they can also be gatekeeping institutions (Khan, 2012). AUC is an example of the ways in which schools and universities are engines of inequality, converting birthright into credentials and consequently obscuring the ways in which elites are reproduced. Bourdieu argues that the logic of educational systems corresponds to the orientations of the elite – the strategies and behavior valued within AUC generally match rules the “already advantages” already know (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Khan, 2012, p. 372). Elite educational institutions such as AUC use the language of talent, merit, and hard work, with no mention of family and or/business ties. Many of the young men and women interviewed confided they had been hired through personal connections of some sort – usually through family or social networks. Yet all had stressed that it was their hard work and the reputation of an AUC degree that had secured them high-paying jobs in multinational companies.

According to Bourdieu (1984) cultural capital exists in 3 forms: embodied as a disposition of the mind and body;

objectified as cultural goods; and institutionalized i.e. educational qualifications. AUC plays a key role in transmitting these three forms of cultural capital. In addition, AUC provides its students with an environment in which to build and strengthen social capital. Graduates of AUC mobilize social connections formed while at AUC for the remainder of their lives; these connections are mobilized in situations from job searches to traffic violations. In these ways, AUC provides or more accurately builds upon these young Cairenes pre-existing economic, cultural, and social capital. The curriculum is designed to further prepare these Cairenes to take on high level and high paying professional and managerial positions in multinational companies, the Egyptian government, and in international organizations. Through English language instruction, an emphasis on soft skills and extracurricular activities, and professional training in a variety of majors, AUC strengthens cosmopolitan Cairenes' place in local status hierarchies and ensures elite reproduction.

#### **4.3 Translocal Spaces, Gender, and Class**

This 'connectedness' has exposed the cosmopolitan Cairenes to global flows that have added to circulating images of masculinities and femininities and loosened traditional norms, practices, and expectations surrounding gender; however, these



changing constructions of gender can only be enacted in certain spaces. I argue these enactments occur largely in translocal spaces, which Peterson (2010) describes as spaces that are not connected to any specific physical location. This section examines translocal spaces and the types of masculinities and femininities enacted in these spaces; I expand Peterson's discussion on translocal spaces and gender by postulating that the existence of such spaces has not translated into changes among the cosmopolitan elite's gender ideologies. Traditional notions of masculinity and femininity are still reinforced in other spaces and in the field of premarital relationships through gendered notions of space and respectability. Young cosmopolitan Cairenes and their negotiation of translocal spaces is indicative of an emerging field of waithood- a field that is heavily structured by both class and gender.

As mentioned previously, 22 of the 36 respondents had attended the American University in Cairo (AUC), a private English-Language liberal arts university that was founded in 1919. It is considered a leading institution of higher education in the Middle East as well as Africa and has students, faculty, staff, and alumni from more than 60 countries. On its website AUC is described as "Egypt's Global University" and as "a crossroads for the world's cultures"; for most Egyptians it is seen as the educational institution for Egypt's economic, social, and political elite. A semester at AUC currently costs around 100,000 to

150,000 Egyptian pounds (LE). For perspective, a maid that works 7 or 8 hours a day makes about 100 to 150 LE, averaging about 3000 LE a month if she works 5 days a week.

Before AUC'S campus moved to the suburbs in Greater Cairo in fall of 2008, it was in downtown adjacent to Tahrir Square. Before the streets became pedestrian only after the revolution in 2011, students would take cabs and stop right in front of the main campus gate. It was common for students to withhold their specific destination from the cabdrivers; instead naming a close-by intersection in order to avoid the inevitable reaction of the driver once he found out AUC was the destination. The reactions usually followed a similar pattern: first the driver would express curiosity about the campus' amenities and supposed grandeur (entrance to the campus was only possible with an AUC ID) followed by an attempt to overprice the trip. Almost every AUCian I knew (and I had experienced this personally as well) had encountered a cab driver asking – or even stating with complete confidence – about the rooftop pool, the one on the third floor of the campus. Buildings in the Tahrir campus were nothing particularly spectacular, most of the buildings were either renovated and Oriental in style or simple functional concrete buildings; there was no reason to assume such an old campus would have a pool and indeed there was no pool. Most of the time, students did not

correct this tidbit of information allowing the cabdrivers to continue to believe that AUCians had a pool on campus.

While the Tahrir campus was not particularly impressive, the new campus in the suburbs of Cairo is another story. The new campus cost \$400 million dollars and weaves both Egyptian architectural traditions with modern décor to create an accessible and sustainable campus. It houses the largest English-language library in the region as well as a student-housing complex similar to a small village. Most of the campus is pedestrian only and full of gardens complete with fountains, benches, and palm trees. AUC is not only a place where upper-class Egyptians receive an education but also where wealthy elites display themselves to one another via clothing, accessories, cars, etc.; the campus is a “self-contained world of consumption in which one exchanges economic for social capital” (Peterson, 2011, p. 139).

In the Tahrir campus there was a hangout by a particular building commonly known as the “Gucci corner” where the ‘ultra-rich’ and ‘ultra-trendy’ students hung out. Social spaces such as AUC’s campus allow upper-class Egyptians the space to construct cosmopolitan identities away from the disapproving moral gaze of the public (Peterson, 2011). AUC, certain coffee shops, restaurants, shopping malls, and resorts are sites where people not only purchase goods and services but also purchase an exclusive site to consume them. These venues ensure

(sometimes utilizing security measures) that the public is of a similar identity and therefore cosmopolitan Cairenes feel some control over their displays of identity. Peterson (2011) argues these venues provide the opportunity for gendered ways of displaying cultural capital, especially since mixed-gender socializing is one of the markers of a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

As mentioned earlier, many Egyptians outside of this elite “bubble” associate “elite appropriations of global modernity” with immodesty for women and with effeminacy for men (Peterson, 2011, p. 141). Peterson explores the particular kinds of masculinity and femininity constructed in different kinds of coffeehouses and argues that modern coffee shops such as Starbucks provide the opportunity for women to socialize with one another and with men without fearing a loss of status and respectability that comes from mixing with the lower classes and with men. These coffee shops are an example of a translocal space – “at once of Cairo and not of Cairo” (Peterson, 2011, p. 142). At the same time, this space is an uncomfortable site for performances of masculinity for upper-class men, as the masculinities enacted deviate from ideal types of masculinity at times. As a result, upper-class young men gather in more traditional coffee shops where they can engage in performances enacting more traditional masculinities around men of other classes. This highlights the gendered construction of

cosmopolitan identity in Egyptian translocal spaces, as Peterson points out:

While the exclusion of the middle and working classes provide a safe site for young professional women to engage in leisure activity outside the home. . . the very presence of so many women, combined with the traditional association of wealth with effeminacy, leads some cosmopolitan men to enter into the popular space of the '*ahwa* to reassert their masculinity (Peterson, 2011, p. 142)

In this way, class and gender are mutually constructed; class and gender identities are enacted before carefully selected audiences of peers.

As a female, I did not have access to sites where the reassertion of masculinity that Peterson described occurred, yet my observations, interviews, and personal experiences emphasized the gendered nature of spaces. My analysis reiterated the link between space and accepted constructions of masculinity and femininity and highlighted young women's constant awareness of the ways in which less modest clothing was indicative of femininities that were deviations from ideal types. I observed young female Cairenes constantly reviewing their clothing choices to ensure their clothing was sufficiently modest for the audience, especially when venturing into spaces that were not translocal or in the instances where they would be interacting with Egyptians of other classes.

For example, Mona, a 23-year-old woman who works as an enrollment specialist at an admission center of a university, describing her attire for a Christmas party, explained to me that she had to borrow her friend's coat after she lost her own in order to go downstairs to her car – because of the driver. She said, "I can't go downstairs with the driver in short shorts, even if I was wearing tights under them, they're still shorts". Mona emphasized that she generally does not have any objections to wearing shorts, however she was aware this enacts femininities that are not accepted among working class Egyptians such as the driver. All of the women interviewed mentioned this common situation, especially with regard to less modest clothing, which was associated with less than ideal notions of femininity.

Perihan, a 20-year-old undergraduate student at AUC, recounted that she commonly has to plan two outfits when going out at night: one suited for the club or bar and some sort of additional piece of clothing (depending on what part of the body needed to be covered) for the car ride there if she was taking a cab or using the driver. More recently, there has been a 'free the shoulder' movement where young women have decided to venture into public non-translocal spaces with bare shoulders (i.e. wearing a tank top) as a sign of protest and resistance. I attempted to do this once, taking a short 5-minute cab ride from my mother's apartment to the nearest Starbucks; all of the women and the men walking on the sidewalk or loitering around kiosks selling

chocolate and chips stared and made me feel so uncomfortable that I slipped on a cardigan on the cab ride back.

Another example in which space was both classed and gendered was the oft-used phrase “her clothes didn’t match the place”. The men in my sample were the ones that made this comment to describe a scenario where there was a conflict between them and their female significant other regarding her clothing choice. Kamal speaking about his wife said, “If we’re in *sahel* [the North Coast] for example I wouldn’t tell her not to wear a bathing suit, I’d be stupid, or if I told her not to wear a short skirt, that’d be ridiculous.” In the North Coast, upper-class women are able to wear clothing that would seem immodest in other contexts in Egypt, largely because the ‘public’ is carefully controlled and enforced through security at gated beach resorts and nightclubs. These resorts are gated, with strict security, and are only accessible if you or someone you know owns property inside. Many times, security will grant access based on how ‘un-Egyptian’ women look; many times, veiled women are rejected at the gate simply because they are veiled. Once inside, these translocal spaces are similar to AUC’s campus in that they are spaces where cosmopolitan identities are constructed without disapproval; there are plenty of bikinis, alcohol, and mixed-gender interactions to elicit disapproval. In front of this specific “public” audience, Kamal does not mind if his wife wears a short

skirt however back in Cairo, among the middle and lower classes, he described her clothing as “unsafe” and “out of place”.

As another man described to me with regards to his girlfriend’s clothing choices, “Where is your self-preservation?” Mounir spoke similarly about his sister arriving home late at night and the issues that caused with his parents, he stated “we’re not in a villa or a suburb somewhere. The street . . . and the community around us, it’s not proper that she comes home late by herself. . . I know the level of the people in our neighborhood”. Mounir’s reaction indicated an awareness of valued notions of femininity in the context of their neighborhood. I argue these notions are also class-specific; by pointing out they do not live in a villa or a suburb somewhere, he emphasized the class factor. His use of the word ‘villa’ was associated with upper-class homes and therefore an acceptable public audience to his sister’s behavior.

#### **4.4 Chastity Capital: The Appearance of Chastity and Premarital Relationships**

In addition to the enactment of class-specific and transnational masculinities and femininities in translocal spaces that Peterson (2010) describes, I found a loosening of traditional gender expectations, norms and practices in three main areas: the emergence of premarital relationships; the delaying of



marriage; and in the choosing of marriage partners. These changes, although slight and inconsistent, indicate an emergence of masculinities and femininities that deviate from ideal types; however, I argue these changes were superficial and unable to prevail in the face of traditional norms enforced by family and benefitting men. Gendered notions of respectability and guardianship were common during the transitional phase from university-to-work-to-marriage and in the newly emerging field of premarital relationships and continued to reinforce traditional gender hierarchies.

Global flows along with contemporary social transformations such as the later age of marriage, the resulting extended period of “waithood”, and increased rates of women’s education are slowly changing notions of progress and success associated with masculinities and femininities (Adely, 2012). The emergence of dating and premarital relationships is one of the indicators that valued notions of manhood and womanhood are shifting to encompass a wider variety of gender constructions. When asked about how their parents met, 34 out of the 36 respondents answered their parents had met through the traditional avenue of a matchmaker – usually a matriarchal figure such as a grandmother, aunt, or female family friend; only two had met through common friends or at university. In previous generations, it was for matchmakers to suggest potential unions, this suggestion would then be followed by both

families including the son and daughter meeting in the *salon* or the formal sitting room for the first time; hence the term *gawaaz salonaat* or sitting room marriages. Subsequent meetings always included family members, usually mothers or older siblings, and occurred in public places such as the sporting club. While this type of marriages still occurred, their frequency has decreased especially among the younger cosmopolitan Cairenes – only 3 out of the 14 married research participants had met this way (1 couple and 1 individual). The remaining 11 respondents who were married had met in university, work, or through common friends and had dated prior to marriage; their premarital relationships lasted anywhere from two or three months to several years before culminating in marriage.

The women I observed and interviewed, and to some extent the men as well, were aware that they were not judged the same for pursuing a premarital relationship. Women jokingly mentioned that men could do almost anything before marriage, avoid judgment, and then insist on a wife that had never dated, smoked, or drank. As Perihan, a 21-year-old female undergraduate student pointed out:

I don't think it's acceptable for a guy for example to grow up and do whatever he wants, sleep around, smoke, drink, then come and say I want a very respectable woman. Ok fine, why do you deserve her? That girl spent her whole life not doing anything, sitting at home, going home early. And at the end after all you've done you want

someone like that. I don't think it's fair. If I could change one thing I'd change these double standards.

Men's behavior was brushed off as "being a phase" or "gaining experience" while women's moves were scrutinized and analyzed in terms of respectability and marriageability. This is similar to what Salamandra (2004) labels "chastity capital" in her examination of distinction and authenticity in Damascus, Syria. She found that the *appearance* of chastity and sexual purity becomes a form of capital for young women and its absence is "disastrous" for future marriage prospects. While Damascene women do have premarital social and sexual contact discretion is of the utmost importance, which was also the case with the Cairenes interviewed.

I was told that when young women do not exercise the 'proper' amount of discretion, they were judged and labeled as "trashy" and "slutty". Respondents differed as to what they described as maintaining an appearance of sexual purity; some indicated clothing was a major factor (which the previous section explored), others emphasized the number of boyfriends before marriage, and a handful mentioned the importance of being a certain age before engaging in premarital relationships. Many of the strategies employed to simulate and *appearance* of chastity were linked to notions of class. The previous section explores the importance of clothing on gendered notions of respectability depending on the audience – clothing standards

were less strict when in translocal spaces with a cosmopolitan audience. Similarly, the assumption that men of a certain social status were more respectable and less likely to discuss the details of their relationships was common.

The importance of “chastity capital” is yet another example of the ways in which this segment of the population maintains a certain image or reputation (Salamandra, 2004). Chastity capital is not only integral in the construction of ideal femininities but also in class and religious identities; the image of chastity is linked to classed notions of piety. In Altorki’s examination of elite Saudi Arabian women, she emphasizes the importance of prestige (Altorki, 1986). She further unpacks the notion of prestige into five concepts: reputation, descent, piety, wealth, and individual achievement. Although she observes a gradual shift between older and younger generation women on issues such as descent, piety, wealth, and individual achievement, the importance of reputation remains unchanged. This reflects the idea that reputation must be upheld; similarly, my findings emphasize the importance of chastity capital in maintaining the reputation of cosmopolitan young women.

Although the increasing prevalence of premarital relationships – and not only ones that culminated in marriage – indicated traditional notions of respectability associated with idealized femininities were changing – this emphasis on the appearance of chastity capital hinted that underlying

dispositions responsible for reproducing gender inequalities in other fields such as the household had largely remained the same. Consequently, this new field of dating and premarital relationships was running based on the same logic of other fields and reproducing the same gender hierarchies in new ways. Yomna, a married 24-year-old female recounted an incident during high school where a boy had asked her to date:

I didn't want to be the girlfriend. I didn't want to date. . . . I was a respectable girl. . . . I didn't want to be stamped with "she dated" . . . . I don't know why. Maybe socially. You know, oh she's been in a relationship before. In the past it was different than it is now. Now it's more normal, she's been in a relationship a couple of times, it's ok. In the past you'd hear, "oh she was in a relationship before, how could she do that."

This was a sentiment that was repeatedly expressed by the female interviewees, especially when asked about relationships during high school and early years of university. Around the third or fourth year of university, female respondents explained this attitude begins to slowly shift to one of "maybe dating isn't so bad if it might end up in marriage" or as Yomna put it: "I felt like ok I'm 19, maybe in 2 or 3 years this could go somewhere, I wasn't 13 anymore, what am I going to do at 13. We're not going to end up with anything." Although Yomna was hesitant in dating during high school, she dated three guys during university and married her fourth boyfriend, after dating him for two years. Women's decision to date was an example of the

tension women experienced in their reconciliation of valued femininities, which were based on traditional avenues of marriage, with other femininities that encapsulated dating before marriage.

My findings also indicated a tension between expectations based on transnational sophistication, which is assumed to be more liberal and 'free spirited', and prevailing cultural norms that are more traditional; I argue the increasing prevalence of premarital relationships obscures the continued emphasis on traditional types of femininity and masculinity. Bennett (2006) explores women's negotiation of sexual desire in Eastern Indonesia, a climate that idealizes confinement of female sexuality within marriage similarly to Egypt. She argues that single women resist from within the hegemonic sexual culture by bending the rules of courtship conventions without visibly transgressing dominant sexual ideals and performing sexual purity in public. My sample indicated that female cosmopolitan Cairenes also resisted this sexual culture from within since interviewed women's experiences in and around dating pointed to the arena of premarital relationships as one where women's participation carries more risk than men's participation, especially in terms of future marriage prospects. A common assumption among the women in my study community was that 'respectable' men would never reveal sensitive details of a premarital relationship, especially anything related to the sexual

level. Ines, a 26-year-old female who until a year ago was veiled and did not date, told me she was shocked and disappointed when found out her ex-boyfriend had been retelling details about their relationship to other people:

It was the last thing I expected, I was betrayed. Relationships go bad. . . but you don't do that. He was the last person I ever expected to go talk about me, behind my back like that and that's why I felt comfortable. He comes from a family where even if it's a fling you don't talk about girls badly. Some guys do in our [social] class and they do it as a joke, I've seen it, it's really bad. But he comes from a family where this goes against everything they've been raised with. And that's why I genuinely trusted him.

The assumption that men of a certain social status were more respectable and less likely to discuss the details of their relationships was common. As a female, access to groups of men discussing women was not possible for me due to the norms of the study community I was researching. My conversations with women revealed women perceived this protective gesture as noble; however, this was another method that reinforced unequal power dynamics in the field of dating. This gesture is also an example of 'paternalistic masculinity', which reconstitutes individuals in accordance with masculinist priorities and maintains dominant forms and practices of masculinity (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993).

For example, Salah who had broken up with his fiancée about 2 years ago due to differences in their approach to life –

she wanted to travel the world and become a yoga instructor while he believed he needed to run the family business and support his family – said that wearing a bikini was acceptable however dancing or doing yoga while wearing a bikini was unacceptable.

You're going to attract trash because you're doing trashy stuff. . . . Boys do things that aren't really them to give an impression to girls that isn't really true and girls believe it. And then they do stuff that isn't them to attract guys that won't even like what they're doing. The world's a mess. Those guys don't even want that type of girl, he'll take you for a spin and leave you. We all want our wives to be respectable, because of culture or something inside us we can't control. He doesn't want a slutty girl that he can clean up, he wants someone already clean and respectable. But she has to be good, he won't like her if she's slutty.

It is interesting to note that before Salah discussed girls doing yoga in bikinis, he had been saying that we as a culture needed, “to reach the point of seeing a girl irrespective of what she looks like or what she's wearing, respect her, and if you don't like her look away.” This statement is in direct contradiction to the one he makes shortly after; men are maintaining a system where they have the freedom to engage in whatever behavior desire before marriage while they also set the value for different types of female behavior. Although, premarital relationships were more common, women constantly needed to enact an appearance of sexual purity and chastity, which was integral to the construction of ideal femininity in this particular context.



Strategies to maintain an appearance of sexual purity and chastity were largely utilized in the field of pre-marital relationships. Gendered notions of respectability and chastity play a large role in marriageability; therefore, once cosmopolitan women are married, the emphasis on purity and chastity is less common. As sex within marriage is permitted, there is no longer a need to maintain an appearance of chastity. None of the young women or men interviewed divulged details about sexual relations pre- or post- marriage. This supports the commonly expressed belief that individuals of this social status do not discuss details about sexual relations- past or present. Consequently, my data did not reveal how women simulate a façade of sexual purity post-marriage if they had had sexual relations with another partner pre-marriage. Based on the ethnographic data, I would postulate that young cosmopolitan women withhold details about previous relationships. Furthermore, rather than engage in sexual intercourse, I believe these young women engage in other sexual relations that can be concealed if necessary.

My analysis also indicated circulating notions of ideal types of masculinities in the field of premarital relationships that were reflective of “the currently most honored way of being a man” (Connell, 1995). Both men and women repeated the phrase “he’s not a man” often throughout the interviews; this phrase was then followed by a trait that hinted at either

financial obligation or guardianship. Perihan, who was single at the time of the interview, explained that many of the guys she has dated in the past were not “men”. When asked to elaborate, she replied:

Like for example, I think it’s normal that if I’m going home late, you should call me and be like ‘are you home?’. He’d never call me and ask if I reached home safely, even in *sahel* [the North Coast], he’d never call me and ask if I was home safe. . . . I stayed in dorms for like a month because my parents went to Dubai. His best friend called me and was like ‘do you need anything? I’ll come get you whatever you want’. And he [her ex-boyfriend] never asked me if I needed anything. . . . I just started realizing that he wasn’t *ragel ‘awy* [very masculine].

Salah also repeated this phrase and said increasingly younger men are “letting her [their girlfriend] sleep over a [male] friend’s house”. These comments indicated that guardianship and control of women still continued to be tied with constructions of hegemonic masculinities in the context of women and men’s interactions in prior to marriage, interestingly by both men and women.

Although deviations from traditional notions of masculinity and femininity prior to marriage have occurred in translocal spaces and the emergence of dating, my data contributes to our understanding of cosmopolitan men and women’s experiences of these trends. I posit these trends have introduced minor and superficial changes in the beliefs that underlie the construction of masculinities and femininities

among my study community. Similar to experiences of urban middle-class young men and women in Indonesia, mass media, technology, travel, and education has brought these transnational Cairenes into contact with a global youth culture that does not necessarily oppose premarital relationships and sexuality (Bennett, 2007; Utomo & McDonald, 2008). These transnational flows transmit images of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to as “discrepant worlds” and provide young men and women with new sources of identity linked to specific masculinities and femininities. I postulate these discrepant worldviews are further complicated as a result of changing relations between the sexes and class-specific notions of femininity and masculinity. Although the young men and women in my sample were attuned to global trends they were ultimately rooted in local sensitivities and class specific notions of femininity and masculinity and continued to construct gender within discourses of class and respectability. The remainder of the chapter examines the central role of family and parents in reinforcing traditional gender norms, practices, and expectations during the marriage process, which contrasts sharply with women and men’s experiences of freedom during the transitional phase of waithood described throughout this section.

#### **4.5 Distinct Vision of Family: Marriage, Ambivalence, and Class**

While the cosmopolitan elites studied experienced an unprecedented degree of freedom compared the experiences of their parents during the university-to-work-to-marriage phase in terms of movement, finances, and interaction with the opposite sex, this freedom is quickly rescinded once they enter the engagement and marriage process. I posit this causes widespread feelings of ambivalence for two main reasons: a reaction to the sudden lack of autonomy and the clash between personal preferences and beliefs and traditional norms and customs associated with marriage. In my study community, parents played a central role in enforcing certain practices and customs that served to both reinforce existing class and gender hierarchies. The emergence of the fields of waithood and premarital relationships have altered the marriage process by introducing greater freedom pre-marriage. Young elites' experiences during waithood lead to tensions that begin during the marriage process and manifest more fully during marriage. During the marriage process, many of these tensions can be traced to a discord between parents and the young Cairenes. Parents and extended family utilize the marriage process as a means to reproduce and consolidate power and social status, while young Cairenes are increasingly reframing marriage in

terms of companionate ideals and individualistic notions. The marriage process has not adapted to the emergence of the fields of waithood and/premarital relationships or to changes in the general field of power.

I argue parents' emphasis on certain marriage customs, norms, and practices is largely driven by the need to keep up appearances and maintain a certain image of the family as a strategy of distinction. One of the few studies exploring class differences in the family is Tucker's examination of upper and lower class families in Palestine and Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth century; she similarly found that upper class households and families in Egypt were formed and defined in such a way as to emphasize the importance of "family solidarity and continuity to the social order" and this formulation included marriage practices and gender relations that perpetuated traditional gender hierarchies (Tucker, 1993a, p. 199). My findings parallel Tucker's conclusions especially regarding upper class families and their stronger control of marriage, when compared to lower class families. In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss this stricter control of the marriage process and the resulting ambivalence and tensions. Although the respondents expressed feelings of ambivalence and disagreement towards many of the expectations associated with the marriage process, few acted on these feelings; most followed

their parents' wishes due to a sense of obligation, indifference, or combination of the two.

As I engaged in discussions and informal conversations with the study community about the marriage process, I was repeatedly told the marriage process was rarely an enjoyable one; many stressed the goal was to survive the necessary rite of passage without causing major rifts within the family or with your significant other. My aim is not to provide a comprehensive account of marriage negotiations in the study community but rather to focus on specific practices that emphasize the conflicts between young Cairenes' preferences and desire for autonomy and tradition and parental expectations. The ethnographic data presented in the following sections highlights class-specific traditions and norms that decrease women's bargaining power and reinforces traditional power structures. From the beginning of the engagement process, the preoccupation with displays of status lays the groundwork for a continuation and retrenchment of gendered displays of status and consumption.

Marriage conventions and protocols among the cosmopolitan Cairenes did not vary greatly, with most of the variation occurring along religious lines. I will be providing an overview of the marriage process among the Muslims of the cosmopolitan class since all of my respondents were brought up as Muslims. This overview will be divided into two main sections: pre-engagement and post-engagement. The pre-

engagement phase was described to me as more straightforward with fewer conflicts, while the post-engagement phase was more likely to be characterized by a variety of disagreements, conflicts, and compromises; however, the whole process involved a constant preoccupation with keeping up appearances.

#### **4.5.1 Pre-engagement Phase**

As previously discussed, spouses were either chosen through more traditional ways such as in “sitting room marriages” or through dating: 11 out of the 14 respondents who were married had been dating before they decided to formalize the relationship. Before the couple decides to formalize the relationship the prospective bride must be close to graduating from university (one of the more flexible stipulations) and the prospective groom must fulfill four main criteria: he must have graduated university, he must have a job that is considered stable (i.e. marketing, advertising, medicine, engineering) and that he has held for at least a year, he must be ready for the financial commitment, and he must come from a background of comparable social status. Once these criteria are met the first stage is the formal declaration of intent, signaled by both families getting together and reading the opening verse of the Qur’an. This is referred to as *il fat-ha* and usually occurs in the bride’s house with family members and a small group of close friends. Some *fat-has* are catered professionally but most are

more informal affairs. The couple is then considered to be “formal” from the point of view of the families however sometimes *fat-has* are not publicized widely and the couple becomes officially ‘formal’ with the larger engagement party.

Financial commitments and a general timeline are only vaguely discussed; many of the respondents believed it was “vulgar” to discuss such details. This attitude persists throughout the marriage process and is the cause of many conflicts since negotiations and renegotiations are based mostly on assumptions and hearsay rather than direct interactions. The couples that had dated before marriage reported their parents were less involved in the details of the engagement and marriage process compared to the couples that had not dated prior to marriage. The couples that were introduced to each other in a more formal manner were less involved in the negotiations, most of the decisions were made between the two sets of parents. This contrasts with what ethnographies of low-income communities in Cairo have described – a “tone of financial transactions” from the very first stage of marriage negotiations, with terms like “buying” or “selling” the bride to express the degree of the prospective spouse’s commitment to marriage (El-Kholy, 2002; Hoodfar, 1997; Singerman, 1995). While there was variety in the way the financial responsibilities were divided, most followed the same broad patterns: the bride’s family was always responsible for the *fat-ha* and the



engagement party; the groom and his family was always responsible for the apartment or villa, however the financial responsibility of the contents (i.e. furniture, electric appliances, redesign) of the apartment were usually divided depending on the context; and the groom and his family were responsible for the honeymoon and the wedding unless the couple decided to have a larger wedding - then the wedding expenses were divided.

Within a couple of weeks or months at most of the *fat-ha*, the formal engagement occurs consisting of the engagement party and the *shabka* a gift typically in the form of jewelry from the groom (and his family) to the bride. The *shabka* is expected to be some form of diamond jewelry, usually a diamond ring similar to the engagement ring in the West in combination with a necklace and/or earrings, and the *dibla* or band that will be worn on the ring finger of the right hand during the engagement phase. While these are gifts implying the exact criteria should be at the discretion of the gift giver, families exert indirect pressure usually in the form of underhanded comments to their daughter about what is expected based on what is considered the norm in the community at the time. The *shabka* is expected to consist of at least two diamond rings, one with a larger diamond that at the time of my fieldwork had to be at least 1 carat in size and another diamond ring, a diamond band with smaller pieces of diamonds. This is in addition to the *dibla* or the band that is

bought from the following brands: Tiffany's, Chopard, or Cartier. The brands that are trendy change from time to time and many couples due to financial restraints have high-quality knockoffs made of iconic designs from these brands and pass them off as originals. The *shabka* is usually presented to the bride during the engagement party, which can be a small affair in the bride's house or a larger affair in a rented venue with as many as 100 or more people. Wherever its location, it is usually catered professionally and paid for by the bride's family. The bride and her close female relatives custom make dresses for the occasion and also get their hair and makeup done professionally.

#### **4.5.2 Post-Engagement Phase**

After the engagement party, the couple is considered formally engaged; according to all of the married research participants, this was the phase of the marriage process where the most conflict occurs usually over wedding budgets, venues, apartment location, and cost. One of the men interviewed who was single at the time of the interview had to break up with his fiancée during this time due to disagreements between the two families. The length of the engagement usually depends on how long it takes to buy, renovate, and furnish an apartment or house and to also plan a wedding – usually at least a year. At this stage of the marriage process, the groom and his family has proposed

a potential neighborhood for the couple's future home, as it's the groom's responsibility to provide the future home. Renting is seen as a compromise with most families of the bride preferring an apartment that is owned. Before rising real estate costs without a corresponding rise in salaries, homes were all bought or had been previously been bought by the groom's family. As real estate prices are rising especially in neighborhoods considered acceptable, more and more young couples are having to turn to rent as an option.

Reem, a 26-year-old female, and Shehab, her 27-year-old fiancée (now husband) almost broke off their engagement a couple of times because of disagreements over their future residence – a common source of conflict. At the time of the fieldwork, Reem and Shehab had just gotten engaged after dating for about 2 years. They both work in the television and film industry: Reem as a creative director and Shehab as a freelance producer. Shehab's father is an engineer that had been working in the U.S until recently while Shehab, his brother, and his mom lived in Cairo. Shehab's father had recently moved back and did not have a steady source of income anymore. When they had gotten engaged, it was understood that their apartment would be in the building that Shehab's father owned in a neighborhood in greater Cairo, about 20 minutes from where Shehab's family lived. Reem had expressed concern about the apartment since it was not in a gated compound with security

and it was in a neighborhood that had a lot of ongoing construction; however, she was aware of the financial constraints and was willing to compromise at least until both their incomes increased and then she was planning on renting an apartment of her choosing or buying one. The apartment was still under construction and Reem was actively involved in the choosing of the layout, the bathroom tiles, etc. with the understanding that Shady and his family were financially responsible for at least finishing the construction and redesign of the apartment.

As Reem recounted to me one day as we are sitting in Starbucks' outdoor seating area and she's furiously chain-smoking as usual, Shehab's father in an effort to save money had continuously cut corners and the apartment's quality was making her unhappy. Even when she decided to buy her own bathroom tiles (under the guise that her mother had contributed the money as a gift), she arrived one day to check in on the bathroom to find that he had arranged them on the floor rather than on the walls. Since this was not the first incident of this type, Reem convinced Shehab to rent an apartment in a neighborhood of her choosing arguing this was costing them a lot of money and it was not even turning out the way they envisioned.

Because of Shehab and Reem's jobs, they both get paid per shoot and therefore during the on season for commercials

and television they earned larger sums of money at a time. This allowed them to pour large sums of money into the process of furnishing an apartment; respondents with occupations that had a consistent and stable income were unable to do this and ended up with considerable debt during this part of the marriage process. One such example was Mounir, a 27-year-old man who worked in sales at a multinational company and had just gotten married. When I asked during the interview about the allocation of expenses, Mounir answered:

78% of my salary goes to paying off debt, loans, installments. Banks mainly. I had taken a couple of loans for the marriage process. The rest of it goes towards the household expenses, outings.

Although I do not know exactly how much Mounir's monthly salary was, he had told me he had been working at a multinational company since he graduated 4 or 5 years ago and had been promoted several times. Mounir had also mentioned his father had helped him pay for the townhouse they were currently living in; he had also mentioned the wedding expenses had been split between his and his wife's families – yet he still had accrued a substantial amount of debt.

His wife, Nariman, came from a family that was much wealthier than his: her dad owned an oil and gas company while Mounir's parents had worked as engineers at a pharmaceutical company for most of his life. When I visited their house shortly

after they were married, I saw that the main kitchen was still not completed yet the downstairs floor had been fully furnished as an entertaining space (in addition to the formal living sitting upstairs) complete with a kitchenette. Prioritizing the entertaining space over the functional and everyday space highlights the concerns of the marriage process – and class ethos – perfectly; appearances were consistently chosen over function and personal preferences. This attitude extended down to the specific objects that parents insisted the household must include. Braheem a 25-year-old man who had just gotten engaged explained that living abroad while getting married was easier than the process in Egypt due to all of the formalities:

People coming over every weekend for months. Having to serve them tea on a silver tray in the crystal glasses. I have such a problem with that, why do I buy something to put it away most of the time and use it only for guests, this is my home. We've discussed this a lot. This is the conflict between her mom and I. She says you have to follow tradition. Nora is more flexible in these things but she wants to keep her mom happy. Plus it's not harming her in any way, her mom wants to buy her a specific plate set, fine, get me one. For me it's an extra cost. I tell her if we're getting guests, we can use my mom's plates or your mom's. Why son? We're going to get you your own set! It's not just the money, I don't want to waste the space. *Nas takol wishina*, zombies – we need to save face (laughs).

Braheem and his fiancée (now wife) were one of the few couples that insisted on implementing at least some of their personal preferences. Their engagement and wedding were slightly less

traditional in that they were held in nontraditional venues (not a 5-star hotel or resort) and were smaller in size.

Other respondents who were engaged expressed similar feelings of ambivalence; Hesham a 28-year-old man who recently got engaged explained:

... that's the tradition. There are a lot of things I don't agree with in Egypt. I don't agree with our weddings but I'm going to have to have one because of people and family. So, there are a lot of things I don't agree with but I do them because of society. ... weddings, engagements, the major events in a relationship I don't agree with those at all. We're a poor country we're not rich and at the same time these events are massively exaggerated, it's all about showing off, the wedding and the engagement.

Both Braheem and Hesham were aware that all of these customs and traditions were being followed largely to keep up appearances, rather than for any other reasons such as religion or enjoyment. Weddings were the largest opportunities for maintaining a certain status and exorbitant amount of money were paid to ensure this goal was met. Most were held at 5-star hotels or resorts such as the Fairmont or the Ritz Carlton and had anywhere from 200 guests to upwards of 1500 guests. Unlike weddings in the West where the wedding includes a seated dinner, weddings in Egypt are required to have open buffets; and depending on the budget, couples add pasta and sushi stations. Certain foods such as smoked salmon and leg of lamb are seen as indicators that the wedding had a larger

budget. Entertainment varies, some weddings have belly dancers, others have famous singers, and the majority have at least a professional DJ. The actual marriage contract is signed during a ceremony called *katb il kitaab* which translates to “the writing of the book”. Most couples decide to have this ceremony separate from the wedding, usually a couple of days before, and some incorporate it into the wedding.

Overall, the whole marriage process from start to finish serves as an opportunity for families to engage in status displays and ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Veblen, 1899). In my sample, this preoccupation with status and appearances largely overpowered the preferences and desires of the couples themselves. I posit this process serves as an ‘orientation’ to adulthood as a cosmopolitan Cairene; parents repeatedly reinforce the importance of image and appearance rather than function or preference. The importance attached to appearances later translates into maintaining the gendered status quo in the marriage, household, and family. I argue maintaining a particular image associated with the Cairene elites – even if it is strongly gendered and associated with feelings of ambivalence – is seen as more important than the potential risk of losing a sign of distinction and status. This results in an atmosphere of conflict and ambivalence where maintaining a certain image is the ultimate goal and personal preferences and desires are second to this goal. The next chapter examines the household



and family in more depth, and the disconnect between the value attached to autonomy with regards to personal aspirations and compromises that are made in the household and relationship becomes apparent.

In Ghannam's study on space and identity in Cairo, she argues that space is shaped by greater power relations and that the interaction between 'the local' and 'the global' should be examined within the larger frame of the "continuous struggle to define 'local' identities' and reinforce gender distinctions (Ghannam, 2002, p. 69). This chapter highlights the role space plays in tensions and strains that arise among this segment of the Egyptian population – the struggle over autonomy is linked to space. The liminal period of 'waithood' where cosmopolitan men and women experienced more freedom and autonomy is lived out in translocal spaces such as AUC and Starbucks, spaces far from family and parents. On the other hand, clashes between autonomy and class preservation strategies associated with the marriage process are lived out in more 'local' arenas such as the household and marriage.

In order to gain a better understanding of these strains and tensions, I argue it is important to understand the 'constellations of power' that form around marriage in Egypt (Singerman, 1995). Among the cosmopolitan Cairenes in my sample, marriage reproduced both class and gender hierarchies. I posit that the maintenance of wealth, reputation, and status

through marriage was the main priority – traditional gender hierarchies were intertwined with class preservation strategies. Similar to Altorki's findings on elite marriage practices in Saudi Arabia, marriage is a reproduction of community and not an individual decision (Altorki, 1986). However, the domain of marriage is evolving – young men and women are increasingly choosing their own spouses and utilizing strategies that decrease familial involvement.

Since these traditional gender hierarchies favored men, the men in my study community gave in more easily to parental expectations, relinquishing the autonomy enjoyed during the 'waithood' period. Women, on the other hand, were more hesitant in relinquishing this autonomy. This transition from the relative autonomy and freedom women and men (especially women) experience during 'waithood' to marriage, along with the merging of class preservation strategies with traditional notions of masculinities and femininities, plays a large part in the strains that manifest later during marital relationships.

This chapter has focused on outlining the emergence of two new fields: waithood and premarital relationships. While these fields are heavily gendered and classed; their emergence provides a unique opportunity for change and for the re-negotiation of gender relations. At the same time, the dispositions passed down to young Cairenes through families, schools, etc. have not adapted to this re-negotiation of gender

relations or the emergence of new sub-fields in the field of relationship. prepared them for changes in the field of marriage. This mismatch has resulted in a splintering of the marriage doxa into a conservative and subversive heterodoxy discussed in the next chapter. This splintering is hinted at during the marriage process and the resulting tensions traced back to a disagreement between parents and the young Cairenes. Parents and extended family utilize the marriage process as a means to reproduce and consolidate power and social status, while young Cairenes are increasingly reframing marriage in terms of companionate ideals and individualistic notions. The field of marriage has not adapted to the emergence of the fields of waithood and/premarital relationships or to changes in the general field of power.

## **5. Ambiguities of Change: Cosmopolitan Cairenes and the Transformation of Intimate Relations**

Global flows coupled with women's increased education and labor force participation have resulted in a loosening of idealized notions of femininity prior to marriage in my study community of cosmopolitan Cairenes. While gender expectations in the field of premarital relationships have shifted slightly, this change is even less perceptible when examining the household and marriage. My data indicates changes in the value attached to individual autonomy in relation to education, careers, and personal aspirations; however, expectations and norms within the household and family after marriage have not experienced a corresponding change. As Hochschild and Machung (1989, p.11) argue marriage "bears the footprints of economic and cultural trends which originate far outside of marriage" – socioeconomic changes do not occur around the household but rather within the household. The erosion of the earning power of the male wage and increased women's education and labor force participation combined with changing cultural images have resulted in a strain between the everyday experiences of men and women and the absence of change in institutions such as the family and marriage in Egypt.

Although, my findings suggest that there is a reversion to less egalitarian gender norms and expectations in the transition

from pre- to post-marital relationships, they also support a theory of transformation and elucidate the ways in which young men and women struggle to transform the traditional model of the Egyptian family into one based more on companionship, a degree of egalitarianism between the genders, and respect for personal autonomy. Based on respondents' accounts of their own relationships and their descriptions of their parents', I found four main transformations in the arena of intimate relations, family and marriage: (1) an emerging period of waithood, which many times encompasses pre-marital relationships; (2) an increase in the marital relationships that are "chosen" and not arranged; (3) a growing insistence on limiting the extended family's involvement in family life; and (4) a pursuit for relationships that satisfy the need for intimacy, companionship, and love. The first two transformations have been discussed in Chapter Four and the latter two will be discussed in this chapter. First, I present the generational changes surrounding notions of autonomy, independence, and companionship and discuss implications for masculinities and femininities. Afterwards, I explore women's struggles to reconcile new material prosperity and opportunity and stronger desires for autonomy and decision-making with traditional expectations of their male partners and family and the resulting tensions in the areas of housework, work, and childcare.

## 5.1 Generational Differences and Global Flows

The female cosmopolitan Cairenes in my study community were aware of the generational differences surrounding notions of autonomy, independence, and companionship. When asked the question ‘What do you want to do differently/similarly than your parents?’ the female respondents would point out many of the differences between expectations and norms during their upbringing and the changes that have occurred to create their lived reality now. Male respondents were less likely to emphasize these changes. I argue this is partly due to the larger amount of changes women have experienced in the past couple of decades as a result of increased education, ease of movement, and increased labor force participation; men’s lives compared to those of their fathers have changed less. As one of the women stated when discussing the limitations her father placed on her during her childhood, “you’re living in a world that’s more open than that now”. Technology has given men and women the ability to simultaneously inhabit both local and global communities and to become exposed to different social worlds (Peterson, 2011; Rainie & Wellman, 2012). This increased exposure coupled with a changing geography of gender has implications for the construction of masculinities and femininities.

### 5.1.1 Desire for Increased Autonomy and Individualization

The women in my sample expressed a desire for autonomy and independence and argued this autonomy was largely linked to financial independence. Many of them mentioned their mothers were not raised with the same emphasis on work and independence. Nariman, a 27-year-old engaged woman, argued that this increased focus on independence has resulted in women's increased desire for autonomy, which has widened the gap between lived reality and expectations:

Now, for example, when you're young you and your brother, it's normal for him to be told 'take care of your sister, if anyone bother her you hit him', these are the paths that we were brought up on since we were young. But on the other hand, when you grow up, that's not the case anymore, no it's the opposite. You have to be independent, you have to work, you're just like the guy, you're as independent as the guy. There's no such thing anymore as I can't do this, anything you want to do, you do.

Women's increasing desire for individual autonomy was largely a result of work force participation and exposure to global flows but in some instances, it was also a product of upbringing. Alaa's mother who worked full time as a banker told her:

... [she] shouldn't let a man be in control, whether financially or decision wise or anything like that, because she believes that if you let that happen, you yield your power of independence. ... money and work. Like if you're working and you're not making that much money,

as long as you're working, as long as you have that stability as a job, then you're ok.

Financial independence was seen as a tool that was to be used in situations such as divorce. As Horeya described it "You have to be independent financially, so when it comes to making the decision of continuing or not it's based on nothing else and just whether or not you want to continue, not because you depend on him financially". With estimates suggesting divorce rates among the upper classes are rising, a stable income was seen as integral to women's independence, especially in instances of divorce where women's financial dependence is a key barrier to the dissolution of the marriage (Egypt Today, 2018; El Refaey, 2010).

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to enforce women's legal entitlement to alimony and child-support, and in situations where divorce is requested by the wife, women abandon many financial rights (Deif, 2004). In the rare cases that women do navigate the complex, time-consuming, and costly court system, the alimony and child-support payments are usually symbolic in nature, not adjusted for inflation and therefore unable to sustain the wife and children's previous standard of living. In the past, women have relied on the financial support of their families when payments were inadequate, however changing economic conditions are making this increasingly difficult due to rising



living costs and a lack of rise in salaries. For example, in an informal conversation, I was told that Yousra's parents divorced when her mother was still pregnant with her, and her grandfather (not her stepfather) was the one who continued to be financially responsible for her until she married. Therefore, I argue increasing desire for autonomy and especially financial independence is a strategy to increase bargaining power in the event of divorce or conflict.

Young women's emphasis on individual autonomy and financial independence indicates an awareness or reflexivity of the power dynamics in the fields of family, household, and relationships. According to Beck and Giddens, two central processes characterize late modernity: individualization and reflexivity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Both argue that increased individualization and reflexivity create changes in the family and in gender relations; these changes are conceptualized as a crisis in family and gender relations. While the interviews indicated that young Cairene women's experiences were characterized by a growing sense of individualization and reflexivity, the interviews did not suggest that these processes were rendering previous conceptions and dynamics of the family and relationships defunct. Young Cairenes reflexivity and desire for individualization has led to tensions and ambivalence in the field of relationships. Furthermore, these surface manifestations of social change and "modernization" that have

occurred in the Middle East serve to remodel and reorganize patriarchal structures and relations in the family (Sharabi, 1988). As the next chapter will discuss in more detail, these changes have resulted in a proliferation of symbolic violence that perpetuates the traditional gender regime in the field of relationships.

### **5.1.2 Increase in Companionate Ideals**

Desire for individual autonomy carried over into women's notions of companionship; women in my sample expressed they wanted marriages that revolved more around the couple as two individuals rather than the couple as embedded in an extended family and general community. The majority stressed they wanted to have more of a friendship than their parents and a relationship that did not only revolve around the children. Nariman expressed that she wanted her marriage with her fiancée to be "more intimate" and "less practical" than that of her parents; Sarah echoed the same sentiment saying "I feel like we're always their priority. . . we can travel more, my husband and I... doesn't always have to be about the kids". In addition to wanting to travel more, respondents mentioned other ways to maintain a relationship with their significant other such as "date nights" and shared hobbies and pastimes.

This focus on the couple aspect of the marriage as opposed to the family aspect was also addressed when respondents spoke about marriage. Marriage was portrayed as a choice rather than an obligation, a choice that was mainly driven by the desire to find companionship. Soha stated, "I don't want to settle, to just be someone's wife, that's not what I want. If I get married it's because I want to be someone's companion." These younger Cairenes valued companionship over traditional notions of 'family' and explained this was different than the older generation's pursuit of marriage, in which marriage was viewed as a logical step in the journey to establishing a family. I posit that this changing conceptualization of marriage has contributed to the delay in marriage more than rising expenses among the cosmopolitan class. The desire for individual autonomy is severely impinged on during marriage as demonstrated in the previous chapter. As Alaa explained about her hesitance with marriage:

... because of how marriage is perceived in our world, not because of marriage itself. Because of all the things that are going to be expected out of me, because of his parents and my parents and society and all of that shit. I refuse it because of the societal pressures it induces. That's my problem with it. I don't necessarily see it as a failed institution or anything because I'm dating and it's obviously the same thing if like 2 people live together. it's just a piece of paper. The problem in the Arab world is how everyone else factors into 2 people's relationship. ... When there are more than 2 people in a marriage it's not a marriage anymore, it's a communal sort of marriage. You become sort of like a tribe, everyone is associated

with everyone and everyone reflects on everyone. Take care don't do this or don't do that because his parents might not like it or my parents might not like what he's doing. It's that pressure, that's what bugs me about marriage here.

This initial hesitation in accepting dominant gender roles spurred on by desire for autonomy and independence often gave away to parental and social pressure. As Alaa described:

. . . they [young Cairenes] do end up sort of floating into the roles that are expected of them, they end up cancelling anything of their own personality that they would have liked to pursue. And they do fall into the roles expected of them and I have yet to see a couple that lives here that has broken that.

As the remainder of the chapter demonstrates, there is a gap between the value placed on individual autonomy regarding personal aspirations and trajectories and women's behavior once they are married. Tensions between young women's construction of femininities before marriage and the pressure to incorporate idealized notions of femininities after marriage have resulted in a variety of strategies employed in an attempt to reconcile this discord.

Increased education and labor force participation as well as exposure to global economic and cultural flows have altered the habituses of the women in my sample. The newly emerging field of premarital relationships is an arena where these changing dispositions, which include deviations from culturally and class valued notions of manhood and womanhood, are

allowed to manifest to some degree due to a lack of family involvement. However, the desires for autonomy, financial independence, and companionship and associated implications for the gender regime are not part of the logic or the doxa of the field of marital relationships – this mismatch causes strains, tensions, and ambivalence.

There is a definite trend in family changes when comparing the experiences of young Cairenes and the accounts of their parents. An increased emphasis on companionate ideals and a certain hesitance towards extended family involvement indicate emerging family patterns that are similar to Goode's hypothesis on changes in the family (Cherlin, 2012; Goode, 1963; Goode, 2003). Goode (1963) proposed the following:

Wherever the economic system expands through industrialization, family patterns change. Extended kinship ties weaken, lineage patterns dissolve, and a trend toward some form of the conjugal system generally begins to appear – that is, the nuclear family becomes a more independent kinship unit. (Goode, 1963, p.6)

Many of these changes can be seen among the cosmopolitan Cairenes. In chapter 4, I discuss young Cairenes' greater autonomy and the increase in chosen marriages compared to the more traditional "salon" marriages. Chapter 4 also discusses tensions that arise during the marriage process when young men and women attempt to decrease familial involvement. All of these findings indicate a trend towards young adults' desire to form independent units that are anchored in "marital bonds"

between husband and wife (Cherlin, 2012, p.578). Goode named these units “conjugal families” or nuclear families as they have been called more recently (Goode, 1963). Similarly, Burgess argued that the basis of family relations changed from that of an institution – with a focus on laws, duties, and customs - to one of companionship – with an emphasis on “consensus, common interests, democratic relations, and personal happiness of family members” (Burgess, 1948, p.418).

Goode (1963, 2003) attributes the weakening of traditional family systems to industrialization, which he describes as: (1) people making their living from jobs, not the land; (2) people are hired and paid based on their competence; and (3) wages are paid to the individual not the family. These socioeconomic changes lead to his postulation that “the widespread decline in the willingness of people to make long-term investments in the collectivity of the family may actually be caused by the decline in its ability to protect its members” (Goode, 2003, p. 19). I believe Egypt’s incomplete industrialization along with class specific notions of family and status have resulted in a state of transition for the fields of marriage and family. While wages may be paid to individuals, many of the respondents had family incomes that included profit from owned land. Furthermore, in many instances young Cairenes were not hired based on their competence but rather

based on networks or indicators of social status such as an AUC degree.

My findings paint a picture of a family in flux or in transition: one that is both an institution with customs and duties and of companionship with common interests and personal happiness. The elite cosmopolitan family seems to provide young cosmopolitan Cairenes with some protection albeit less than in previous generations. This would suggest that young Cairenes are aware of these processes and are struggling to reconcile changing socioeconomic conditions to class specific notions. The reflexivity and individualization experienced by the respondents were not enough to undo the gendering of class specific notions prevalent in the family. There was no release of gender but rather a reworking of gender norms and an abundance of tension and ambivalence.

In one of the few studies exploring masculinities within changing material and socio-historical conditions in Egypt, Inhorn (2002,2015) examines manhood through the lens of infertility and assisted reproductive technologies. Her findings indicate that reproductive technologies have led to new social and cultural transformations including what she has labeled “emergent masculinities” (Inhorn, 2015, p.2). Similar to the generational differences discussed in the past couple of paragraphs, she emphasizes new forms of masculine practice such as: men’s desire to “date” partners before marriage and

men's desires to live in nuclear family residences with their wives and children. Her findings also suggest an emergence of the new field of premarital relationships – one where a wider range of masculinities are enacted or “emerging”. Part of the beliefs associated with “emergent masculinities” is the concept of companionate marriage. Although Inhorn's study was focused on a different segment of the Egyptian population, it seems that the emergence of the fields of waithood and premarital relationships can be seen across different social classes within Egypt.

## **5.2 Incomplete Institutionalization: Premarital Relationships vs. Marital Relationships**

The previous chapter demonstrated that relative freedom prior to marriage among the study community and the changing value attached to individual autonomy in relation to education, careers, and personal aspirations have resulted in deviations from traditional notions of manhood and womanhood. This chapter focuses on the ways in which ideal masculinities and femininities are re-emphasized and enacted in the marital sphere – at times these ideal masculinities and femininities are in direct conflict with personal gender beliefs, resulting in tensions and ambivalence. I suggest using the concept of “incomplete institutionalization” to further explore the



differences in gender beliefs - and consequently marital housework patterns – expressed and enacted by these young women and men across marital statuses (Baxter, 2005; Cherlin, 1978). While I believe the conservation of class and social status plays an integral role in the reproduction of ideal types of masculinities and femininities, I also believe the emerging fields of premarital relationships and waithood in general lack clearly defined structures and conditions; therefore, habituses have not adapted accordingly. More specifically, the habituses passed down to young Cairenes through families, schools, etc. have not prepared them for the emergence of these two fields and for changing in the general field of power.

Research on the domestic division of labor suggests that housework arrangements are more egalitarian in de factor couple households than in married couple households (Baxter, 2005; South & Spitze, 1994). One explanation provided to explain these differences is the concept of incomplete institutionalization (Cherlin, 1978). In his study of blended families, Cherlin suggests that remarried and stepfamilies may be under more stress since “they lack normative prescriptions for role performance, institutionalized procedures to handle problems, and easily accessible social support” (Cherlin, 1978). At the same time, this lack of institutionalization provides opportunities to negotiate more equal relationships. The same explanation can be applied to de facto relationships and in this

case to premarital relationships among the cosmopolitan elites. Although the field of premarital relationships may have undergone a complete institutionalization in other contexts, in the context of young cosmopolitan elites it is definitely a newly emerging field. Normative gender roles may be carried over from other fields however this process is piecemeal – more often young Cairenes are actively negotiating and redefining gender roles.

In Baxter's examination of domestic labor patterns among de facto and marriage men and women in Australia, results showed that although overall women spent more time on housework than men, this pattern was most traditional among married men and women (Baxter, 2005). Women in de facto relationships spent less time doing housework and a smaller proportion of indoor activities than married women. She draws upon the incompleteness of the de facto relationship and its function as a period of relative freedom in which to negotiate more egalitarian gender ideologies and roles. Similar to my findings, she argues that the institution or field of marriage emphasizes ideal types of masculinities and femininities. Her findings also suggest a less traditional division of labor among those who have not only been in de facto relationships but particularly those who have cohabited prior to marriage. The implication is that the patterns and accompanying gender beliefs established while cohabiting carry over into the marital

relationships. Cohabiting prior to marriage is extremely taboo in Egypt and to be expected none of my respondents had cohabited prior to marriage. However, my findings support the idea that gender beliefs established in pre-marital relationships carry over into marriage – mainly those of cosmopolitan women. Young cosmopolitan men were more likely to leave certain gender beliefs in the premarital field as they more greatly benefitted from the gender regime in the field of marriage.

### **5.3 Splinters in the Marriage Doxa: Tensions, Ambivalence, and Acquiescence**

Although my analysis indicated cosmopolitan Cairene women were placing greater value on individual autonomy and constructing femininities encompassing trajectories such as careers that had previously not been associated by ideal types of femininity, once they married their behavior was characterized by ambivalence, acquiescence, and compromise that continued to reinforce the value of certain types of womanhood and manhood. I argue this ambivalence stems from “fractures” in gender ideology or conflicts between what a person thinks he/she ought to feel and what he or she does feel, and to the emotional work it takes to fit a gender ideal when inner needs or outer conditions make it hard (Hochschild, 1989, p. 18). It is also a manifestation of the marriage doxa splintering into a

conservative orthodoxy and a subversive orthodoxy (Atkinson, 2014).

It was less difficult for young women to negotiate 'discrepant worlds' and new sources of identity prior to marriage; however, after marriage women struggled to reconcile new material prosperity and opportunity and stronger desires for autonomy and decision-making with traditional expectations of their male partners and family, and this resulted in tensions in the areas of housework, work, and childcare.

The following sections contribute to our understanding of cosmopolitan Cairenes' day-to-day negotiations of competing gender ideologies in the household and family, arenas where global flows are further complicated by class-specific notions of masculinities and femininities. My findings emphasize the importance of grounding the theorization of globalization and locality in concrete experiences and enactments in order to overcome the tendency to divide the globe into the "West" and the "Rest" and contribute to empirical understandings of social agents' active engagement with global cultural and economic flows (Ghannam, 2002, p. 19). The remainder of the chapter utilizes three main concepts: gender strategies, economy of gratitude, and family myths to discuss the strains and tensions that arise when women have to navigate expectations and norms associated with valued types of femininities that clash with deviations from these ideal types, encompassing desires for

autonomy and decision making. I provide an overview of these three main concepts based on Hochschild and Machung's (1989) study on couples and the 'stalled revolution'; then I emphasize the compliance and acquiescence that is characteristic of men and women's behavior by looking at tensions associated with housework, work, and childcare that serve to reinforce existing gender regimes and obscure women's increased autonomy.

### **5.3.1 Gender Strategies, Economies of Gratitude, and Family Myths**

In this section I provide a brief overview of Hochschild and Machung's concepts of gender strategy, economy of gratitude, and family myth, which I utilize to uncover and describe the strains that arise when women's beliefs clash with those of their husbands and the resulting strategies and myths that manage these tensions. Hochschild and Machung (1989) describe a gender strategy as a course of action that results from an application of gender ideologies or beliefs to real life situations. A gender ideology "determines what sphere she *wants* to identify with (home or work) and how much power in the marriage she wants to have (less, more, or the same amount)" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p.15). While a gender strategy is:

A plan of action through which a person tries to solve problems at hand, given the cultural notions of gender at play. To pursue a gender strategy, a man draws on beliefs about manhood and womanhood, beliefs that are forged in early childhood and thus anchored to deep emotions. He makes a connection between how he thinks about his manhood, what he feels about it, and what he does. It works the same way for a woman. (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p. 15)

Gender ideologies are developed by matching personal assets against opportunities available to men and women “of their type”; individuals recognize which gender ideology best fits their circumstances and identify a certain version of manhood and womanhood (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p. 17). Global images of masculinities and femininities as well as class-specific ones play a role in developing gender ideologies and consequently in gender strategies as well.

Throughout my fieldwork, I focused on fractures in gender ideology, indicative of conflicts between what a person thinks he/she should feel and what he/she actually feels. Conflicts and tensions arise when young cosmopolitan Cairenes negotiate different ‘territories of ideologies’, which reflect in the ‘underlying economy of gratitude’ (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Newcomb, 2009). In their study of couples’ gender beliefs in marriage, they found that when couples struggle it was usually over the giving and receiving of gratitude; this was based on the interplay between a man’s gender ideology and a

woman's gender ideology that is reflective of a deeper interplay between his gratitude towards her and hers towards him. I posit the giving and receiving of gratitude indicates women and men's valued types of femininities and masculinities. When the types of femininities and masculinities valued are not agreed upon – which often times among the cosmopolitan Cairenes they are not – women take on the additional emotional and care work to reconcile these tensions. In some cases, families or couples develop 'family myths' or "versions of reality that obscure a core truth in order to manage a family tension" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p. 19). The women more often than the men in my sample utilized a variety of gender strategies and family myths to reconcile tensions due to a lack of agreement over valued constructions of femininities.

#### *5.3.1.1 A Strategy of Helplessness: Yousra and Amr*

All of the 9 married female respondents expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the distribution of housework between themselves and their husbands. One example of the strains around the domestic division of labor was Yousra who was in her early 30's and had been married to her husband Amr for about 6 years. Yousra and Amr were married in the more traditional method of *gawaaz salonaat*; they were introduced by a family friend, were engaged right away, and

married about a year later. Amr worked full-time in a telecommunications company as an engineer in the information technology department (IT), while Yousra was a full-time middle school mathematics teacher at a private school.

During the first couple of years of marriage, Yousra recounted to me how she attempted to divide the housework more equally and to contribute financially; however, Amr repeatedly rebuffed these attempts. She recalled how he would come home from work and spend hours on the couch while she was left with housework such as cooking and decluttering, in addition to grading and writing lesson plans. Amr's lack of willingness to help around the house is grounded in his ideal types of femininities and masculinities; he believed breadwinning was integral to his construction of masculinity and housework was integral to Yousra's construction of femininity. When I interviewed Amr, he said "She [his wife] doesn't work for money, she works because she wants to." Amr viewed Yousra's work as a hobby, something that was not valued in her construction of femininity. He did not view the housework as a second shift since he believed it was her main shift. Yousra on the other hand, identified with both the household and work, expressed a desire to contribute financially, yet ultimately viewed her husband as the main breadwinner. Her construction of femininity encompassed both work and the household resulting in her view that her



contributions to the household were “extra” while Amr viewed these contributions as essential to her role as a wife.

Amr prefaced his elaboration of gender roles in relationships and marriage by saying he did not want to “oppose society” and then continued:

Anything I do in the house is considered extra, anything she does outside of the house is considered extra. I see that outside of Egypt it's not like that. And sometimes the man stays at home and the woman is the one who is working and who is the main breadwinner. Here that's not accepted, that's *'eib* [a disgrace].

Amr was aware of circulating notions of manhood and of different household configurations around the world. Yet he insisted certain behavior deviated too much from his own cultural notions of masculinity – a stay-at-home father was one of those instances. Stay-at-home fathers were always used as an example of the difference between “Egyptian” and “Western” households. When asked how his knowledge of other countries had affected his relationship, he answered that it did not have much of an impact since he was “*moltazim*” or committed to and tied by “the society he was brought up in”. This was also an example of the way in which the men and women in my sample were aware that certain gender practices, roles, and expectations were symbolically connected to the West while others were connected to the Arab world (Peterson, 2011). Instead of questioning why a stay-at-home father was

unacceptable among this segment of society, Amr dismissed this potential gender configuration as invalid and unacceptable.

How did Yousra manage the tension between her construction of femininity and Amr's construction? What strategies did she utilize to reconcile the contradiction between her desire to divide the housework more equally and the reality of Amr's refusal to do so? Similar to Hochschild's traditional couple Carmen and Frank, Yousra employed a strategy of incompetence and helplessness whenever she needed to underhandedly request her husband's involvement or more specifically decrease the burden of her second shift. Hochschild and Machung (1989, p.75) posit that incompetence is one way to induct traditional men into the second shift. They describe it as an indirect strategy of receiving men's labor in the second shift and renegotiating roles compared to the men's labor that egalitarian women receive through a more direct strategy. Yousra feigned incompetence when it came to cooking and also magnified feelings of dependence outside of the home in order to pursue an image of submission that matched Amr's traditional notions of womanhood. This strategy of female helplessness gave Yousra the opportunity to decrease some of the workload associated with the second shift; with time Amr adapted to her perceived "incompetence" in the kitchen and no longer expected her to cook every day, ordering delivery when necessary. By squelching her independence – i.e. expressing

worry at the thought of driving in traffic - outside of the household, she successfully got Amr involved in the errands associated with running a household as well.

#### *5.3.1.2 Top Versus Bottom Gender Ideology: Lara and Ehab*

Another example of tensions around housework was the discord between Lara and Ehab's economies of gratitude. Lara, who had been married for about a year and had a fulltime marketing job, had attempted to divide the household chores equally between her and her husband Ehab when they first got married. However, she explained that "... he didn't accept it at all. He doesn't like the idea that the household chores are divided between us and kept track of on paper. ... He felt like it was hurting his ego." She later pointed out that Ehab did not mind helping with the household chores when the maid did not show up and described his help in dividing the cleaning as "so understanding". Lara's description of Ehab's help in the event that the maid does not show up was indicative of Lara's underlying economy of gratitude – she described Ehab's help as a 'gift', as extra (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Yet as evidenced by her attempt to divide the household chores more equally, Lara also believed that his help should be expected and not a 'gift'.

Lara's conflict between believing the household chores should be divided more equally and her feeling more responsible for them was consistent with Hochschild and Machung's (1989) findings. They also found contradictions between what people "said they believed about their marital roles and how they seemed to *feel* about those roles" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p. 16). Hochschild describes this contradiction as the interplay between the top and bottom of an individual's gender ideology or gender beliefs. Some men and women seemed to believe in certain gender roles in the household "on top" yet "underneath" they felt differently. Lara was a great example of this clash between the top and bottom of gender ideology. Interestingly, Lara was aware of this clash:

I do more household chores than him, it takes more of my time. I was thinking 50/50 in the beginning but it did not work out (laughs), it did not work out. Because of the way we are, I feel responsible for it, why do I feel responsible for the household and he doesn't?

Afterwards when asked "What does Ehab do that you appreciate and see extra?" she replied, "If one day he had a day off from work or something and I come home and he's de-cluttered the house, that is extra. But it doesn't happen a lot." This was followed shortly by "... as long as I'm doing more than him housework wise then he's not really doing anything extra." Again, this reflected her conflict between perceiving any help as extra and a 'gift' (which implied she did not believe this was

expected from him) and expecting him to be equally responsible for household chores. This was clearly a struggle that Lara negotiated and renegotiated on a daily basis based on her accounts of the variety of strategies she had employed in an attempt to encourage Islam to become more responsible for household chores.

Using data from Australia and the United States, Bittman, England, Folbre, Sayer, and Matheson (2003) explore the effect of spouses' contribution to family income on how housework is divided. They found that women decreased their housework as their earnings increased, but only up until the point where both spouses contributed equally to income. In the cases where women provided more than 50 percent of the household income, the change in housework was actually opposite what exchange theory predicted – these couples seemed to compensate with a more traditional division of household work. According to both Lara and Ehab, Lara's earnings did not largely contribute to the family income and household expenses. However, they both pointed out that her income was higher than Ehab's; I postulate this deviation from the normative income standard (in which men make more money than women) plays an integral role in Lara's feelings that she was responsible for most of the household work.

Lara was the only respondent who disclosed to me that her mother had regretted leaving work when Lara's older

brother was a baby and never going back to work again. Her mom had worked after graduating from university but was forced to stop when Lara's grandmother who had been taking care of Lara's brother had fallen sick and as a result she had to take care of her mother as well as Lara's younger brother.

According to Lara:

She [her mom] always said that she wishes she could have worked. . . . She sees what she did was wrong that she should've worked and that she should have had her own life. Now she feels like she didn't do anything else in her life except us, which is a very good thing, but not enough, she should have done something for herself.

Lara's father died of a heart attack in the middle of Ramadan while praying almost 10 years ago; her mom was widowed at 45 years old, since she had married in her early 20's. I posit these feelings of regret are partly due to her specific circumstances - both children are married and live in their own apartments and her husband has passed away - rather than a reflection of her gender beliefs. As Lara pointed out later in the interview her mother believed "the main responsibility of the man is financial. . . it's not a man's responsibility to do household work".

#### *5.3.1.3 Paid Domestic Help and the Household*

Even in the cases where housework, especially cleaning and decluttering, was the responsibility of a paid female

domestic worker, women were still expected to be in charge of overseeing the work of the maid. Fatma a 24-year-old woman who had recently married her boyfriend of 5 years, described ongoing fights between her and her husband over who was responsible for overseeing the maid on Saturdays. Similar to most of the study community, Fatma hired a maid to clean the house once a week on Saturdays. At first, she had tried to create a system where she and her husband took turns waking up early and overseeing the maid; however, her husband was not a fan of waking up early on his day off, which was also her day off. In an effort to avoid waking up early, he argued that Fatma “should be meaner” to the maid and insist that she starts work at a later time. Fatma, worried that the maid would quit and then she would need to replace her, decided to wake up early and oversee the maid every Saturday from that point onwards. Retelling this story, Fatma presented this outcome as a compromise, as something extra she was doing that should be appreciated; this was reflective of her belief that household chores should be divided more equally. Her belief contrasted with that of her husband’s who viewed this task as part of her role as the woman in the household and therefore continued to not express much appreciation when Fatma woke up early on her Saturdays off.

Although housework was and continues to be integral to the construction of valued types of femininities, most households of the cosmopolitan elites have the help of a paid

domestic worker. Using data from Consumer Expenditure Survey, Cohen (1998) found that families in which women have more relative power as reflected by their incomes and occupational statuses and wealthier families – similar to the cosmopolitan class in Cairo – consume more housekeeping services. He suggests housework service consumption is also an arena for gendered negotiation and another way that gender relations vary by class. While all of the households of the respondents employed domestic help, what tasks the help was assigned and whether the help was live-in or not differed from household to household. Households mostly employed domestic help a couple of times a week to assist with cooking, cleaning, laundry, and decluttering, and a handful had full time live-in maids who functioned as housekeepers and/or nannies.

Of the 22 women interviewed, 2 had nannies growing up and also had mothers who worked full time, one mother was a banker and the other was in marketing at a multinational company; without the support of domestic help especially with regards to household chores and childcare, these women would have been unable to hold full time jobs. Hochschild (2003) describes this as the growing ‘care gap’ and questions the implications it has for both family life and growing class inequalities. When Perihan was asked if her mother cooked dinner, she answered, “No, never. We had Pamela for my entire life. . . . Pamela was there before I was even born. She’s like my



second mom.” Even if the majority of the household tasks were the responsibility of hired help, oversight of the domestic help always fell to the women never the men.

#### *5.3.1.4 The Supermom and Work Trajectories*

With the introduction of children into the family, women who want to continue to work must find a way to balance the demands of work, the household, and the children; as my analysis indicates, housework and childcare is still mostly viewed as integral to constructions of valued femininity. Sanchez and Thomson (1997) concluded after examining the effect of the transition to parenthood on the division of labor among married couples, that parenthood “crystallizes a gendered division of labor, largely by reshaping wives’, not husbands’, routine”. I argue this ‘crystallization’ of a gendered division of labor was definitely present among my sample, based on the three women interviewed with children and observations in the study community. One woman was a stay-at-home mother; one was able to balance a full-time job as a Human Resources (HR) manager due to a combination of daycare and her mother; and the third was what Hochschild & Machung (1989) called ‘the supermom’ and had the financial resources to employ a combination of a daycare and a nanny/maid. Childcare facilities ranged in price and the prestigious ones sometimes had waiting

lists and interviews, which is why some parents opted for nannies. Prices of nannies depended on whether the nanny was Egyptian, African, or Asian, with Egyptian nannies considerably cheaper than Indonesian or Philippine nannies.

While she pursued a masters in engineering at the American University in Cairo, Talia, a married 25-year-old woman, had to place her 2-year-old son in daycare. Her husband Samir worked in the family business and also took MBA classes in the evening. Talia and Samir met while they were undergraduate students at AUC and got married right after they graduated. Talia became pregnant right away and had Youssef, their son, 9 months later. After her son Youssef's birth, she spent the first 4 months of his life at her mother's house while Samir continued on with his life back at home. This was a relatively common practice however rather than encouraging husbands to contribute towards childcare it reinforces the notion that women are responsible for childcare: countless times I heard variations of the statement "men do not know what to do with newborns". During this time, she was on maternity leave from the multinational company where she worked as an engineer.

When her son was 6 months old, she decided to pursue a master's degree and left her job. At the time of the interview, Talia was juggling a master's degree, a teaching assistant job that required her to be on campus full time, a 2-year-old son, and a household. In contrast, Samir went to work – at the family

business – and was completing an MBA during the evenings.

When I asked how Samir helped around the house, she was unable to give concrete examples or details and merely repeated how “busy” and “supportive” he was. According to Talia, Samir was:

... a bit careless when it comes to tidying, he throws whatever, his boxers on the floor. I pick up after him, who else would? The other thing is that he never cooks anything. ... but he doesn't accept someone that would come and stay [a live-in maid]. He has rules regarding that if she cooks he'd never eat.

Many of their fights were centered on raising Youssef and the responsibility of disciplining always fell to Talia while Samir “just pampers him”. When asked how they divided the responsibility of childcare, she answered:

It's not divided (laughs). It's not divided at all. No, no, for real, I love him, but if he was here he would admit it. It's not divided. ... he just spoils and pampers him. I went and surveyed the nurseries alone. Again, I wake him up, I feed him, I dress him, I take care of it all, the whole parenting thing. ... he's busy with work and like for example he wouldn't want to take him to the doctor because he doesn't want to see him cry. ... one time he changed his diaper. I was at the doctor ... he picked him up from then nursery. I got back home and it was a total mess ... I went into the bathroom, I found his poop everywhere, it was horrible, and gloves. He put them on to change the diaper. ... and a mask. I swear. So that's the one time he changed a diaper.

She went on to explain that he was just “not willing to learn” and that many of their fights continued to revolve around this topic.

Similar to Sanchez and Thomson's (1997) findings, the women in my sample experienced a shift to more traditional gender roles and expectations once there were children. Samir was an extreme example; Horeya's husband Ali contributed more to childcare giving his son baths and playing with him when at home. Childcare was still seen as part of the women's responsibilities in the household. Women were left with the option to become 'supermoms' and relied on family, hired help, and daycares, or postponed their careers until a later time. The men and women in my study community emphasized women's responsibility in "balancing" the household and work. Men viewed a full-time job as "extra" something that women took on willingly and therefore did not decrease their responsibility towards the household. I argue women in my sample were increasingly identifying more with work and less with the household, yet their husbands had remained more or less the same. Since most of my sample did not have children, it is difficult to predict the long-term effect children might have on these women's career trajectories; however according to the female respondents many of their mothers had to adjust career goals or even change fields in some instances, in order to balance household and childcare responsibilities with work. Kahn, Garcia-Manglano, and Bianchi (2015) argue that motherhood is costly to women's careers, but the effects attenuate at older ages.

Research on gender and parenting supports the findings discussed in the past couple of paragraphs. According to Hays (1996), intensive mothering is a gendered ideology that encourages women to “expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children”. Intensive mothering plays a large role in shaping women’s attitudes and behavior and is one of the ways in which women “do gender” (Blair-Roy, 2003; Johnston & Swanson, 2007; Stone, 2007). Literature suggests that the pressure to intensively mother is not equally experienced across class groups- with pressure being particularly strong for middle-/upper-middle class women- such as the Cairene elites studied (Barnes, 2008; Lareau, 2003). Beliefs about mothering are deeply entrenched, even among women committed to careers (Blair-Roy, 2003; Stone, 2007). My findings, in line with literature on gender and parenting, suggest that intensive mothering ideologies play an integral role in why women continue to do gender in ways that reinforce traditional gender dynamics, in spite of employment responsibilities and career commitment.

Just as intensive mothering is an opportunity to “do gender”, fathering also presents the same opportunity. Research suggest two models of contemporary masculinities and fathering (Shows & Gerstel, 2009). The first is “modified traditionalism”, which incorporates the idea of mothers’ employment into masculine ideals yet continues to privilege

men's breadwinner status and deemphasizes equal responsibility for children's care (Gerson, 2010). All of the males with children interviewed would fall into this category. The other model is one that is more egalitarian, which includes both men's employment and substantial responsibility for children. Shows and Gerstel (2009) posit these differences are due to structural differences in men's jobs and the role that husbands' employment plays compared to wives' employment. Additionally, I believe that social status also shapes these beliefs.

### **5.3.2 New Fields, Splinters, and Mismatches**

This chapter has examined cosmopolitan women's experiences in and around the 'stalled revolution' in the household and the continued emphasis on certain or 'ideal' types of femininities and masculinities. I found that valued notions of femininities among the women were changing or more accurately widening to include desire for autonomy, work, and financial independence yet men continued to value traditional constructions that relied on the household and childcare; this discord has resulted in strains and tensions in the areas of housework, work, and childcare. Although 'autonomous femininities' were slowly becoming part of cosmopolitan women's dispositions and habituses, the class-specific doxa or logic of the interdependent fields of marriage, household, and

family continued to value traditional and 'domestic' femininities. Women's struggles to reconcile new material prosperity and opportunity and stronger desires for autonomy and decision-making with traditional expectations of their male partners have resulted in 'ambivalent' femininities.

Cosmopolitan women's struggles and tensions can be explained by Altorki's concept of "polar coordination" or the idea that while individuals may hold certain beliefs these beliefs are not all put into action (Altorki, 1986, p. 21). Changing realities and situational aspects – such as different fields and the accompanying rules/dynamics of each field – affect how much of these beliefs are put into action. Altorki describes that these clashing beliefs and behaviors result in the appearance of a dual or multi-faceted belief system where women and men enact different beliefs in different spheres or fields. While many of the women interviewed held beliefs more easily enacted in fields pre-marriage such as AUC or work, they were less able to do so in the field of the household and marriage.

As the next chapter will explore in more detail, the objective structures of the field of marriage have changed, spilling over from changes in the general field of power. Trends such as increasing women's education, increasing women's labor force participation, and men's declining economic power have altered the field of marriage yet the subjective elements have yet to adapt to these changes; this causes a sort of

mismatch between field conditions and corresponding habituses. The dispositions passed down to young Cairenes through families, schools, etc. have not prepared them for changes in the field of marriage. This mismatch has resulted in a splintering of the marriage doxa into a conservative and subversive heterodoxy discussed in this chapter.

Further complicating this mismatch is the symbolic 'connectedness' of certain gender roles, expectations, and practices with the 'West' or the 'Arab world' (Peterson, 2011). Men and women in my study community were aware of circulating notions of manhood and womanhood and acted as 'culture brokers', mediating transnational cultural flows and creating hybridities that also acted as class preservation strategies. This struggle for authenticity was not simply a struggle between modernity often interpreted as anything associated with "the West" and a sense of Arab-ness and/or Egyptian-ness. While internal dilemmas may exist regarding issues of identity and selfhood, I found men and women in the study community continuously negotiated different masculinities and femininities depending on the context; different gender strategies were utilized in different contexts to ensure their place in Cairo's socialscape in terms of class hierarchies. In doing so, they reinforced traditional gender hierarchies. The last data chapter explores the relative erosion of men's economic power in the household and family and



implications for these gendered class preservation strategies. I argue this erosion has resulted in a proliferation of symbolic processes that serve to reinforce idealized notions of masculinity and femininity.

## **6. The 'Third Shift': Protecting Masculinity**

Increased women's education and labor force participation and the erosion of the earning power of the male wage combined with changing cultural images have resulted in a strain between the everyday experiences of men and women and the absence of change in institutions such as the family and marriage in Egypt. In my study community of cosmopolitan Cairenes, there has been a loosening of norms and practices prior to marriage yet no corresponding change in the household and family after marriage. This dissertation examines the tensions that are produced by the clash between class preservation strategies grounded in specific gender dynamics and greater desire for autonomy and expectations for equality held by women and men of the cosmopolitan class, and how these tensions are managed. I am also interested in the implications these tensions have for the existing gender regime in marital and premarital relationships. Studies have noted socio-economic and demographic transformations in Egypt such as prolonged waithood, the decoupling of sex and marriage, and alternative forms of marriage (Dialmy, 2005; Megahed, 2010; Roudi-Fahimi & Moghadam, 2003; Singerman, 2007). However, there is a dearth of studies examining women and men's experiences in and around these phenomena.

Previous research has largely focused on low-income communities and women's gender strategies. This dissertation adds to the body of literature by gaining a better understanding of women *and* men's changing gender construction and roles, particularly in premarital and marital relationships in upper class communities, specifically the cosmopolitan elite in Cairo. Moreover, my findings contribute to understanding the intersection of class and gender and the role appearances and consumption have in reproducing existing gender hierarchies. I utilize a theoretical framework that synthesizes Bourdieu's theory of practice with feminist discussions on agency, reflexivity, and social change to gain a better understanding of men and women's experiences of the intersection of class and gender and the impact on gender roles in premarital and marital relationships in this segment of the Egyptian population. I found men and women in the study community continuously negotiated different masculinities and femininities depending on the context; different gender strategies were utilized in different contexts to ensure their place in Cairo's socialscape in terms of class hierarchies.

In this chapter, I postulate that the relative erosion of men's economic power in the household combined with women's increasing financial independence has led to a proliferation of symbolic processes that serve to reinforce idealized notions of masculinities and femininities. First, I

demonstrate the ways in which male financial power is declining especially when compared to women's increasing financial power. Second, I present the processes of symbolic violence that trivialize women's financial contributions in order to obscure men's declining economic power, which are integral in the construction of cosmopolitan elite masculinities. These processes not only contribute to the misrecognition necessary to perpetuate the existing gender regime but also hinder women's ability to recognize their potential bargaining power. Third, I postulate women are taking on a 'third shift' consisting of both care and emotional work; the goal of this 'third shift' is to protect men from tensions brought on by socioeconomic changes and to curate images of masculinities and femininities that are suitable for the public.

### **6.1 The Relative Erosion of Men's Economic Power**

In November of 2017 urban consumer prices rose 26 percent compared to 30.8 percent a year earlier in 2016 (El-Tablawy, 2017). Each time I travel back to Cairo the jump in prices is startlingly obvious: when I first began fieldwork a small Starbucks Frappuccino was about 22 Egyptian Pounds (LE), last time I was in Cairo in spring of 2016 it cost almost 50 LE. Increasing rates of inflation without a corresponding change in salaries has made it increasingly difficult to sustain the lifestyle

of the cosmopolitan Cairenes, which is integral in maintaining social status. It is becoming more and more necessary for young couples to depend on both incomes to maintain the traveling, consumption, and other expenses associated with the globalized elite lifestyle. I argue these economic changes have resulted in the relative erosion of men's financial power in the household and family as evidenced by generational differences in men's spending abilities, women's perceptions of husbands' economic power, and the prevalence of men's debt.

According to the cosmopolitan Cairenes in my sample, previous generations lived a much more lavish lifestyle on the men's income solely. The following excerpt from Mona's interview illustrates the quintessential life of the upper-class Cairene woman up until the last couple of decades:

My mother does not cook at all, not dinner or breakfast (laughs). She knows how to cook but mommy blonde and let's get our nails done and get manicures and I want glitter on this nail and flowers on this one and so on. She goes to Inner Wheel and Rotary, she's a socialite of sorts. . . . Yes of course [always someone who cooked], there was Om Adel [a maid] of course and Sabah [another maid] would clean. Now there is Anise like Alice in Wonderland, she's Indonesian. They used to come 3 or 4 days a week. . . . Never [did her mother do any housework], no, no, no you married me and I get manicures, you divorce me and I'm still getting manicures.

In some families, this characterized their mother's lifestyle but among the majority of the research participants this was more characteristic of their grandmothers' lifestyle; this was largely

influenced by financial factors that dictated when this lifestyle became less attainable. Throughout my fieldwork, I have heard many mothers from the previous generation including my own reminisce about the way households were run when they were children. My mother lived in a two-bedroom apartment on the third floor of a building located in a neighborhood that was considered upscale and suburban at the time. Every time she describes the amount of people that lived in that apartment, I am astounded as to how the apartment that barely fits my brother, mother, and I could fit that sheer amount of individuals. In addition to her 2 siblings, mother, father, and at least one or two of her extended family members at any time (i.e. grandparent, aunt, etc.) the apartment also accommodated a team of help including a cook, a maid, and a “washer”. I never understood why a household would need someone with the sole task of doing laundry until she explained that automatic washing machines and dryers did not exist back then.

Most of the younger Cairenes of the cosmopolitan class grew up hearing such stories about their grandmothers while a few such as Mona experienced firsthand her mother’s modified version of this lifestyle. Her mother worked on and off part-time until Mona was about 14 years old however her spare time was devoted to social functions, not the household. Similarly, my grandmother did not work as was common of women of that generation; upper class women from rural areas were more

likely to work managing family land. Cairene elites viewed women's lack of responsibility towards the household as a privilege stemming from their social status. One or two of the respondents mentioned a commonly told *hadith* or a tradition based on the sayings of prophet Mohammed that says husbands are required to hire a housekeeper, cook, wet nurse, etc. (whatever help needed for the house) if they can afford to do so. This *hadith* is usually told to support the belief that women, who can afford domestic help, are not supposed to cook and clean, even if they are not working outside of the house.

In the past, the men of the household were solely responsible for financially supporting every aspect of this lifestyle: household expenses, cars, utilities, children, summer vacations, shopping, domestic help, schools, social outings, etc. With rising levels of inflation and living costs, this lifestyle has become more of a nostalgic narrative of the past for most people and men are increasingly less able to provide for this lifestyle on their own. Yousra commented on men's decreasing financial power yet their inflated sense of "masculine ego" when asked to contribute towards traditional female arenas such as housework:

*'Ana ragel [I'm a man] I'm not going to help you with housework. I can help you outside in the street. 'Ana ragel you can't work when I don't have work. . . . you know when someone is showing off something they don't have, compensating? It's that. . . . There was a time during the past when there were women who had sons and they*

would keep on feeding him this, they fill him with all this prestige about being a man. That was a long time ago when *il ragel kan beekafy beito* [the man used to fill his house] but now there's no man that does that so why this attitude? Because [why aren't men "filling" their houses] now the women work. Get any man whose wife works and he'll tell her you're working because you want to. Tell him she's going to stay home, he'll find 1000 reasons for her not to stay home. Because he depends on that income to some extent, so if you're able to provide for your house completely then you can come and show off for being a man.

I heard variations of this attitude echoed in other interviews and during informal conversations as well. The women in my sample compared their lived reality with that of their mothers and grandmothers and expressed frustration at not only men's declining financial power but rather men's continued insistence that their masculinities derived from economic power and could not encompass other roles such as housework, although lived realities suggested otherwise. In addition to women's perceptions and experiences of men's declining economic power, three of the 9 married women in my sample had higher salaries than their husbands and 3 of the 5 married men admitted to accumulating debt in order to maintain a specific lifestyle.

Inhorn's examination of manhood through the lens of infertility and assisted reproductive technologies in Egypt is one of the few studies that explores masculinities within changing material and socio-historical conditions (Inhorn, 2002, 2015).



She demonstrates how these reproductive technologies have led to new social and cultural transformations including what she has labeled “emergent masculinities” to capture all that is new and transformative in Middle Eastern men’s lives (Inhorn, 2015, p.2). Inhorn emphasizes the enactment of emergent masculinities or new forms of masculine practice such as: men’s desire to “date” partners before marriage; men’s acceptance of condoms and vasectomies; men’s desires to live in nuclear family residences with their wives and children; and men’s encouragement of daughters’ education; her argument that men are striving for different notions of masculinity contrasts with my findings. I posit class mediates the enactment of masculinities resulting in class-specific constructions. While aspects of emergent masculinities are seen in my study community pre-marriage, men of the cosmopolitan class are enacting more traditional masculinities once they are married.

## **6.2 Women’s Financial Contributions: “Upgrading” and “Extras”**

Men are increasingly less able to provide for the lifestyle associated with Cairene elites on their own as more women are choosing to join the formal workforce, motivated by a combination of perceived financial need and personal desire. These changes have led to a reinvention or repackaging of the

ways traditional gender structures are reproduced rather than a production of a new gender dynamic that is more representative of women's changing economic status and potential bargaining power. All 7 of the married women interviewed (except 1 who was currently a stay-at-home mom) were financially contributing towards the household; however, their contributions were considered "extra" and part of women's role in "developing a lifestyle". All but three respondents believed women's incomes should not be directed towards any consistent and basic living expenses such as utilities and rent; women's salaries were to be used as personal "pocket money" and for "upgrades".

In their examination of Canada Family Expenditure Surveys, Phipps and Burton (1997) found that male and female incomes do not always exert identical influences on household expenditures. Moreover, they argue that although incomes are pooled for some categories of consumption, traditional gender roles play a role in the way in which incomes are allocated. For example, expenditures on child care increase only with women's incomes, not higher male income. In my study community, no respondents openly admitted to pooling incomes, however the allocation of male and female incomes did reflect and reinforce traditional gender dynamics. I posit that insisting women's financial contributions should be limited to nonessential living expenses such as shopping and vacations reinforces the role of

breadwinning as integral to ideal masculinities and obscures women's increasing material power within the household and family.

Although the married women in my sample were not financially responsible for recurrent expenses, they all described contributing consistently in some manner. Yomna who worked as a marketing research analyst said:

He [her husband] doesn't like it when I put my money towards the house but if I'm alone and the house needs something I'll just get it myself. If he's not here and I want to call the supermarket, I won't wait till he gives me my [household] allowance.

By "allowance", Yomna meant the household allowance. None of the married women interviewed received a personal allowance from their husbands, although a handful stated they hoped this would change in the future as their husbands' salaries increased. The married women consistently contributed in this manner - buying groceries, paying the dry cleaning bill, and ordering take-out - in addition to the money they spent on their personal appearances, clothing, and jewelry. Moreover, women also contributed to travel expenses; the pattern in my data was men paid for vacations and travel within Egypt and women helped with trips outside of Egypt. While most of the husbands accepted this help and were content with the financial situation as long as they were responsible for recurrent and essential living expenses, some of the men insisted on paying back their wives if

they ever were to pay for something “more substantial than groceries”.

Women’s financial contributions were commonly referred to as “upgrades”. Nariman, Mounir’s wife, explained her salary was for “anything extra, like if we want to increase the outings budget or our friends are going on this trip and we want to go”. Lara, Ehab’s wife, said the same thing: “All of the luxuries and extras I can pitch in and help him”. Lara and Ehab were an interesting case because Lara’s salary was larger than Ehab’s yet he did not believe she should be contributing financially in any way. Lara acknowledged this was tied to his masculinity and explained:

He likes to be financially responsible for the house but as long as he’s able to fulfill that role, that’s his feeling of being a man, as long as he’s able to secure the basics, he’s happy. . . . That way he’s secure in his manhood.

This is similar to what Kamal, a 28-year-old married male, said:

What matters to me is that I’m the main breadwinner, if she’s going to contribute towards something better I have no problem with that.

“Upgrades” usually fell into one of two categories: traveling and social outings, both important aspects in maintaining their status of globalized elite. In rare cases women combined some of their savings with their husbands’ to purchase a house or an apartment. In previous generations, men would have been able

to cover all of these expenses whether recurrent, essential, nonessential or upgrades however changing economic conditions are slowly eroding men's ability to sustain the same lifestyle as that of previous generations. In the following section, I explore processes of symbolic violence that trivialize women's financial contributions in order to obscure men's declining economic power and women's increasing bargaining power.

### **6.3 The Trivialization of Women's Work: "She Doesn't Work for Money" and "Her Money is Hers"**

Most of the married men interviewed had no problem with their wives' financial contributions as long as they were inconsistent, small in amount, and directed towards "nonessential" things. When I asked how they would feel if their wives contributed to more substantial and recurring expenses such as car installments, housing installments, or children's schooling all but one of the 6 married men interviewed stated they disagreed with depending on both incomes. When Amr a 35-year-old who had been married for 6 years was asked to elaborate, he replied:

Because if one day she stops working we don't get negatively affected and find ourselves unable to pay the car installment. If I start depending on her income I won't be able to stop depending on it. The same goes for if god blesses us with children and we were putting them in school. Yasmine was talking about helping pay for their school fees so we can put them in a better school. And I

rejected this idea. If you stop working then we won't have to move the kids from the better school to a worse school.

Yousra was a middle school math teacher and had expressed that although she would like to take time off after having a baby, she ultimately did not believe staying at home would be ideal for her. I then asked Amr "What if she was thinking of never leaving work?" to which he answered:

Which I also reject. She doesn't work for money, she works because she wants to. If she's unhappy or something upsets her at work, when she comes and tells me, if she really has a valid point and isn't just being dramatic, I'll tell her then leave.

This perception of women and work was common and expressed by both the men and women interviewed. This attitude not only functions as a myth to alleviate the tensions surrounding finances in the household but also as a mechanism of symbolic violence by undermining women's work and financial contributions. Research on marital power examining couples who seem to have negotiated more egalitarian relationships emphasizes one key point: spouses in more equitable marriages see wife's paid work as at least as important as the husband's (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998; Schwartz, 1994; Tichenor, 1999). Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) argue the valuing of women's paid work is a *necessary* condition to a more equitable relationship. As the rest of this section demonstrates, the devaluing of

women's paid work is integral in maintaining unequal gender relations and dynamics.

Gerson (1993) similarly found that husbands refused to relinquish their identity as the family's economic provider even in instances where their wives brought in an income. While employed wives continued to shoulder responsibility for both domains – financial and household – men insisted on limiting their responsibilities to one, the financial domain. She argues having an employed wife “not only posed a challenge to these men's status as breadwinners but also undermined the rationale that excuse them from domestic work”; deeming their wives' earnings as inessential and supplementary was one of the strategies employed to manage this potential threat (Gerson, 1993, p. 192).

I argue that the persistent trivialization of women's work was the most widespread and obvious form of symbolic violence in the household in my study community. Of the 36 young men and women interviewed, only 4 did not endorse some aspect of the idea that women pursued work as a pastime and therefore were liable to stop working at any moment. A handful of the men interviewed explained their lack of dependence on their wives' incomes as a result of women's “unstable” and “emotional” natures. Hesham a physician went as far as to bring into the discussion an overview of women's hormonal cycles and the role hormones play in making women unstable. The perception that

women's commitment to work was unreliable supported the traditional view that men should be the main breadwinners and played a large role in the construction of valued masculinities and femininities.

Processes of symbolic violence such as this reproduce field conditions by playing a role in the social returns to economic capital; consequently, men continue to occupy a position in the family where they are able to accumulate economic capital in contrast to women's role as capital bearers (Moore, 2012). Symbolic violence allows dominant members of the field to maintain domination in an efficient manner- they only need to adhere to the rules of the system that provided them their positions of privilege (Schubert, 2012). Systems of domination are then reproduced due to the perception that these systems are legitimate, resulting in misrecognition and internalization by members of society, which only perpetuates the symbolic systems of domination.

The arbitrary connection between idealized types of masculinities and earning money is fostered from a young age in the household when parents teach children the value of money. When recalling her childhood, Nariman mentioned that parents tended to place a larger emphasis on teaching the value of money to boys than girls and as a result, girls were more spoiled than boys when it came to money. She went on to say "... if it's a girl that's spoiled that's better than a boy who is spoiled. ...



because the girl will not take the full responsibility in leading the relationship". From a young age, girls were not taught the necessary skills to value and/or gain economic capital, most women portrayed this as a privilege rather than a weakness. This prevailing idea that women's motivations for joining the formal labor force were primarily nonfinancial was reinforced by the belief that men were also responsible for providing their wives with "pocket money", irrespective of whatever income the wives may be receiving. Male and female participants repeatedly stressed that "money you [wife] get from your work is yours, totally. . . . and you also get pocket money [from husband]". In the cases where husbands were currently unable to provide "pocket money", women expressed desire to receive this money in the future when their husbands would be more financially secure.

The portrayal of women as irresponsible, unreliable, and fickle led to the conclusion that they were not to be trusted with recurring living expenses. Both men and women continue to associate men with the role of the sole breadwinner; consequently women's work is trivialized and its potential financial contributions and bargaining power is ignored. This may partly explain why increased rates of women's education have not translated into the corresponding workforce participation *in this particular class*. It is interesting to note that this attitude ignores changing economic conditions, which are making it increasingly difficult for young Egyptian men and

women to sustain a certain lifestyle on a single income. This arbitrary connection exacerbates the gap between changing field conditions and existing dispositions by making it more difficult to fashion new strategies and practices that are more attuned to material conditions. Symbolic violence ensures that fields continue to be produced with no changes in preexisting hierarchies; more specifically in this case it serves to protect idealized notions of masculinity in a time where its material basis is increasingly threatened.

Women's potential contributions were swept aside and deemed unnecessary with the insistence of "her [the wife's] money is her hers". This myth allowed both men and women to ignore men's declining economic power in the household and their inability to provide women the relief from pressure to provide. All of the men interviewed wanted to give their wives or future wives the gift of choice when it came to working; however this gift was not one that was necessary since most of these women given their combination of skill and opportunity would always choose to work. At the same time, this "gift" reinforced existing gender hierarchies.

One of the strategies young women utilized to manage this underlying tension was indifference. When asked about financial contributions to the household, many of the women emphasized the belief that men were financially responsible for the family and insisted on portraying their relationship with the

labor market as fickle and unreliable. Discussing financial contributions inevitably led women to feign indifference and downplay the importance of working as a way of managing tensions created by changing economic conditions. Likewise, men repeatedly portrayed women's incomes as disposable as a way of reinforcing their role as the primary breadwinner and preserving their relation to the "man's" sphere. Ehab whose wife worked at a multinational company and earned almost twice his salary stressed that he'd "rather put it on credit than take money from her, her money is hers". Relegating women's incomes as "pocket money" was a strategy both men and women employed and served to maintain the façade of men's role as the breadwinner.

It is interesting to note that although many of the married women contributed financially towards the household more consistently than their mothers did, they considered their financial contribution as a 'gift' to their husbands. Hadeel who made a "considerable amount" more than her husband working as an engineer at a multinational company said:

... I'm doing this to help him. ... At least the situation hasn't gone the other way, like oh she makes a lot of money she should be completely financially responsible for herself. ... At the end of the day we're partners, my partner needs help right now. Hopefully it will not be the case in 3 or 4 years because. . . he's the person who is supposed to pay for it. And I don't want him to feel that it's ok for me to pitch in all the time. . . don't take me for granted.

Hadeel described her financial contribution as temporary, stressing her belief that her husband should be the primary breadwinner. This attitude was common among the married women interviewed; many portrayed their financial contributions as “extra”, and therefore deserving of appreciation. At times, it felt like the women in my study community fleetingly felt like their husbands were not fulfilling their side of the bargain by failing to fully support their households and wives financially. I argue this attitude indicated a discord between women’s desire to work and their rejection of the associated financial power, due to its potential to cause problems within relationships.

#### **6.4 Revisiting the “Gender Paradox”**

Despite increasing access to education, women in Egypt face very high unemployment rates – particularly young and educated women such as those in the cosmopolitan class (Barsoum, 2018; World Bank, 2008). Development reports have repeatedly stressed the benefits associated with women’s labor force participation: mainly decreasing fertility rates and child mortality and increasing children’s access to education. While a large body of research seeks to explain Arab women’s limited labor force participation by focusing on culture, sociologists

such as Hoodfar and Adely have criticized this approach (Adely, 2009; Hoodfar, 1997). Hoodfar argues that a focus on culture and gender ideology “reflects an unrealistic version of Middle Easterners as living in the realm of ideology while the rest of the world lives within economic structures” (Barsoum, 2008; Hoodfar, 1997). As this chapter has pointed out, even the elite segments of the Egyptian population are experiencing a relative decline in economic power, most visible when comparing the lives of their parents and grandparents to their own lives.

Objective field structures such as economic changes have a direct and bidirectional relationship to subjective and symbolic field structures. As this chapter demonstrates, when material structures change, symbolic violence increases; as men’s material basis is increasingly threatened along with idealized notions of masculinities, a proliferation of symbolic violence can be seen that ensures fields continue to be produced with minimal changes in preexisting hierarchies. While an exploration of the symbolic arena is important, it is equally important to examine objective structures that reinforce these symbolic processes – mainly macro-economic policies and their impact on women’s employment (Assaad & Barsoum, 2009; Barsoum, 2018). As Bourdieu explains, individual action emerges “from an unconscious calculation of profit – albeit symbolic – and a strategic positioning with a social space to

maximize individual holdings with respect to their availability” (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2012, p. 46). It may be that educated Cairene women from the cosmopolitan class unconsciously survey their opportunities and options – within the objective structures in the field of work – and decide not pursuing a career is in their interests. Within this particular segment of the population, the status associated with working as a pastime or not pursuing a career may position these women higher within their particular social spaces.

Prior to Sadat’s succession to power in 1970 and his era of economic liberalization and structural adjustment policies, the “social contract” had been historically enacted with state provided subsidies for food and fuel and a generous remuneration structure in the public sector (Barsoum, 2018). From the 1970’s onwards, subsidies have eroded and public sector-hiring has slowed considerably. Neoliberal policies have complicated women’s employment potential by decreasing jobs in the public sector, which had been the key sector of employment among educated women. Job quality, low pay, and lack of job security have pushed women out of work – especially in light of family obligations. There is also a lack of gender-sensitive employment policies in the region. Policies such as subsidized childcare, paid maternity leaves, and flexible work arrangements have been shown to have a positive impact on the decision of women to participate in the labor force. All of these

objective structures within the field of work limit women's labor force participation and limit women's available options.

Kandiyoti further elaborates a similar notion to Bourdieu's ontological complicity between objective structures and internalized structures (Bourdieu, 1977; Kandiyoti, 2005). Decisions made in the fields of marriage and household are not simply determined by economic factors just as they are not merely cultural beliefs or attitudes attached to economic and political processes; these decisions are actually constitutive of them. Ideal notions of masculinities and femininities within the field of marriage for example have material consequences and vice versa. As Moghadam (2013) stresses, studying women in the Middle East requires a recognition of the diversity within the region and within the female population. By focusing on a specific segment of the Cairene population, I hope to gain a nuanced understanding of the gender paradox and the ways it is experienced.

### **6.5 The 'Third Shift'**

My analysis indicates the myths that have risen from a need to manage the gap between the declining power of men in the household and dominant gender expectations have reproduced existing gender inequalities in new ways. While

these myths helped manage tensions brought on by social and economic changes, I observed women making a conscious effort to manage these tensions as well. The cosmopolitan women interviewed took on a “third shift” during which they managed struggles over competing gender expectations and presented ideal types of masculinities and femininities to their extended families and greater society. In some instances, this meant presenting an image of their relationship that was not representative of the dynamic in the household; however most of the time this included managing their own feelings of ambivalence and personal struggles to protect their husbands from experiencing any change or threat from changing material conditions.

In Tichenor’s examination of ‘status reversal’ couples or couples in which wives exceeded their husbands’ income, occupational status or both, she found that women were reluctant to exercise control or power out of fear of appearing to be powerful (Tichenor, 1999). Furthermore, income and status differences between spouses were problematic and lead to attempts to hide or ignore these differences; the most common strategy was redefining what it means to be a provider. I argue the ‘third shift’ cosmopolitan women take on is similar – it is a strategy that attempts to manage and ignore shifting power dynamics. As Connell has said, “dominance over the other sex is absent from the social construction of femininity” (Connell,



1987, p. 649). Therefore, cosmopolitan women are backing away from whatever power they might derive from their income and status. They either adopt strategies that make it seem as if their husbands are in control or give up control; 'doing gender' in this way reaffirms class valued and cultural notions of femininity, thereby reproducing the gendered relations of power in their marriages.

I posit this shift comprising of both care and emotional work has only developed recently with emergence of structures and concrete conditions that have resulted in the emergence of other masculinities and femininities, mostly prior to marriage as discussed in an earlier chapter. Women take on this additional shift due to a belief that they are better at "emotional intelligence" and therefore this responsibility logically falls to them. The 'third shift' acted like a self-policing mechanism that subtly pressured women's behavior to fit traditional notions of femininities and burdened them with the responsibility of curating images of their husbands and themselves – corresponding to idealized notions of manhood and womanhood- that were suitable for the public.

### **6.5.1 "Look After My Name"**

Protecting men's masculinity or more specifically cultivating a particular image for the public was seen as one of

the woman's main roles in the relationship and marriage in my study community. When asked about the roles and responsibilities of a woman in the family and relationship, Gihan replied, "... she can't go around divulging secrets, she has to maintain the household and the marriage. . . she has to make him proud in front of people." This belief that women were responsible for maintaining the image of the household and more importantly the men's image or as some men said "*tihafiz 'ala ismy*" - which translates to "preserve my name" - was held by both men and women. Women's behavior was always seen as an indicator of her husband's masculinity. For example, when Perihan was on a double date with her boyfriend early on in the relationship and she insisted on paying her own check, her boyfriend later confronted her and claimed her actions made him "look like I wasn't a man in front of everyone".

Similarly, one of the reoccurring fights that Gihan and her husband have centered on her choice of work outfits; Gihan's husband claimed that "now you've become the image of both you and me" and therefore should be more careful with outfit choices. What was interesting in this case was that Gihan's outfit choices were never a topic of conflict before marriage during their many years of dating, only after marriage did Kamal start to care about the image Gihan presented of him (or more probably of his manhood). Premarital relationships were still a relatively new field in Egypt and were considered by many unfit

for the public sphere. I argue this partly explains why some of the norms, expectations, and traditions associated with gender and relationships are temporarily suspended during this phase of the relationship only to be reinstated once the relationship formally enters the public sphere.

It is important not to fall into the trap of assuming women took this role on passively; women actively cultivated different images of masculinities for different audiences. Kamal described how as a child he was unaware of the way in which his mother handled conflicts with this father:

I think it's smart, that has he hasn't even realized it till now and that he's not even bothered by it. He hasn't noticed at all. . . . Making him feel like he has prestige when he's there. Like most Egyptian women. That is actually wrong but sometimes it's the only thing to do. . . . She's not going to fight with him all the time so she just tells him yeah, you're right.

In this common anecdote, the mother's efforts are usually presented as directed towards her husband in an effort to preserve his sense of control and power in the household and family. The husband is commonly portrayed as someone who has successfully been manipulated by his wife, in front of his children; however I speculate this story functions more as a myth, which seeks to conceal women's powerlessness. This myth passes on to daughters such as Fatma who described her father as "more like a symbolic figurehead" in terms of discipline

and Lara summarized the man's leadership role as "... symbolic of course, like the queen. He's not necessarily making the decision but he's interacting with the world, he's the delegate, he speaks for us."

At the same time, many women wish they did not have to constantly engage in the act of preserving a certain image of their husband. The constant mental and emotional effort in doing so increased when the image cultivated for the public was different from the day-to-day realities of the man. When asked what one thing she would change about Egyptian society that would improve her relationship Nesreen answered:

I think the way that society sees a guy that helps, there are people that when they see that Essam is helpful, I worry that they think what is this? He's not a man. And it happens, it's never happened to me, but I think that there are people that think that way. And there's nothing wrong with him helping me, but sometimes I don't want to tell people that he helps me around the house because I feel like people would judge him. This is the one thing I'd definitely change. People say he's whipped or he's not a man. And that's not the case, he's not doing it because you're going to discipline him if he doesn't, he's doing it because he doesn't mind and he's being responsible.

By making this effort to maintain a specific image of the relationship one that was associated with ideal types of masculinities and femininities, women inadvertently played a role in the "stalled revolution", the changes in women lived realities yet the absence of change in men or other institutions such as the family or marriage (Hochschild & Machung, 1989).

### **6.5.2 “A Woman Has Better Emotional Intelligence”**

Part of the reason women felt responsible for maintaining the image of their husbands and of the household was the common belief that women were naturally more gifted with “emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 1995). This was another example of symbolic violence; the misrecognition of the arbitrary nature of this association justified women’s responsibility of the third shift. Women interviewed were responsible for resolving conflicts, mediating decision making processes, planning for long term financial goals such as marriage and children’s schooling, and keeping track (in many cases delegating tasks to domestic help) of the details associated with running the household (Gerstel, 2000). However, participants did not view this added care work as a burden but rather a strength, a source of power. Care work was seen as an asset in relationships and a tool women needed in order to maintain a household. Both male and female respondents mentioned that this care work fell to the woman of the household simply because women were more capable of planning and executing day-to-day tasks. The current job market also rewarded women for this sort of “work”, which further reinforced this association. As Gihan explained:

And generally guys don't think about money like we do, we think about how to save for the future. 80% of the Egyptian population, all they think about is how I'm going to buy something better next month, so I can do that I'm going to save for the previous 3 months. The guy doesn't think like that, he thinks how much do I have now, that's what I want to spend.

Gihan's belief that Egyptian men were incapable of long-term financial planning functioned as a myth, one that rendered her additional care work as necessary and integral to the survival of the household. It was a myth that infantilized men by portraying them as shortsighted and impulsive with regards to financial decisions.

It is important to stress the fact that women did not view this additional labor as a burden but rather a resource and a weapon in their arsenal. Horeya who had been married for about 6 years stated, "as a woman you have to make the person in front of you feel like it was his decision". When Gihan was engaged, one of the two pieces of advice her mother gave her was, "a girl has to have emotional intelligence". When asked to elaborate, she answered:

Look, mommy thinks that the woman has to have emotional intelligence or social intelligence, which means, like I was telling you before, if the man is upset she's the one that calms things down, if the man isn't used to something. Think about it like he's living with his parents for like 27 years and now he has to live with someone else, so he's not used to living with her, same thing goes for the girl but the girl is more capable of easing the guy's transition, making it easier to live in a

different community or standard than he's used to, or whatever. A girl has to have social intelligence, there's also this saying "what you get him used to is how your husband will be". That comes from the fact that you have social intelligence and so you get him used to what you want.

Gihan did not always believe this to be true:

I didn't have that background at all at the beginning, not when I was engaged, so I'd cause a lot of problems and I'd be like why should I put up with this? Why should I be the one getting him used to this? Why should I be the one that has to help him adapt? I don't want to be someone's mom, I'm not with someone to become their mother. I want someone who thinks like me, who has the same concerns, so we can interact, which actually doesn't exist in any man or in any woman. So both of them have to adapt to each other but you're the one that gets him used to adapting, and *with time you find yourself adapting without meaning to* (emphasis added).

This was a great example of how this belief functioned as both a myth and a form of symbolic violence. Gihan and her fiancée broke off their engagement for about a year before reconciling; reframing her role in the relationship in this manner allowed Gihan to later pursue a relationship with her fiancée characterized by less conflict. This reframing was also an example of emotional labor, described by Hochschild (1983) as working on feelings to produce a visible display of other feelings; Dina had to put in the emotional effort to produce the appropriate willingness to fall back into expected gender roles in order to avoid future conflict. This emotional labor adjusted

Gihan's habitus to one that was more sympathetic with existing power structures in the field.

### **6.6 A Resistance to Change: Hegemonic Masculinities and Emphasized Femininities**

Although cosmopolitan Cairene women's increased education and labor force participation has contributed to women's increased autonomy and bargaining power, my data indicates a resistance to translating these changes in lived reality to changes in idealized notions of masculinities and femininities. Furthermore, many of the processes that reproduce traditional gender regimes have moved to the symbolic arena and are now less visible and more ingrained into the logic of the fields of relationships, family, and marriage. Prior to marriage there is a wider range of accepted masculinities yet once young men enter adulthood, breadwinning continues to be integral in the construction of idealized masculinities. In the rare occasion that men enact deviations from this ideal type of masculinity, women are burdened with the responsibility of ensuring these deviations are not presented to the public.

Similarly, women's experiences in my sample prior to marriage indicate a desire for autonomy and decision-making, yet these desires do not carry over into marriage. Women are allowed a wider enactment of femininities but only as long as



they can maintain a specific image of the household and family. I argue the 'third shift' cosmopolitan women take on is an attempt to manage and ignore shifting power dynamics. Cosmopolitan women are backing away from whatever power they might derive from their income and status. They either adopt strategies that make it seem as if their husbands are in control or give up control; 'doing gender' in this way reaffirms class valued and cultural notions of femininity, thereby reproducing the gendered relations of power in their marriages.

Furthermore, this continued insistence on ideal types of masculinities and femininities is mediated by class and by a preoccupation with maintaining and gaining social status in an atmosphere of political and economic turbulence in Egypt.

My findings stress the importance of breadwinning associated with the day to day enactment of hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Although masculinities are configurations of practice that differ according to particular social settings, breadwinning and its significance to hegemonic masculinities is present across social classes in Egypt (Ghannam, 2013). In working/lower middle classes in Egypt, women's income may be absolutely essential in meeting the daily living expenses of the family. When this is the case, men and women perpetuate hegemonic constructions of masculinities and "protect" men's status by hiding the fact that

the woman may be the main or sole income earner of the family from the neighbors and extended family members.

While breadwinning may be an essential component in the discursive construction of hegemonic masculinities, it is still important to explore the interplay of gender dynamics with race, class, and region (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). By examining a specific segment of the Egyptian population, I was better able to explore the ways in which institutional histories, economic forces, and personal and family relationships play a role in the discursive and nondiscursive dimensions of hegemonic masculinities. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the central role of women in the processes of constructing masculinities – as mothers, girlfriends, sexual partners, and wives. Connell and Messerschmidt’s concept of “emphasized femininity” is useful when describing the ways in which these cosmopolitan Cairenes focused on compliance to patriarchy. It is especially interesting to note the ways in which new configurations of women’s identity and practice affect the enactment of “emphasized femininity”.

## **7. Conclusion: Masculinities, Femininities, and Ambiguities of Change**

Since the completion of my fieldwork in Cairo in the summer of 2015, Egypt has continued to experience political, social, and economic instability. In his article examining the reasons why important sectors of the middle class revolted against Mubarak's regime in 2011, Kandil (2012) explains that recent neoliberal reforms have created extensive dissatisfaction by undermining many of the material and political achievements of the middle class while favoring a new class of tycoon capitalists linked to the regime. Moreover, class tensions are deepening as the state fails to provide for citizens' basic needs or to maintain law and order as a result of deeply rooted corruption and a weakened state after years of political turmoil and protests (Khorshid, 2014). In addition to class tensions, rights groups have recorded the worst state crackdown on the LGBT community since the days of Mubarak; some speculate this crackdown is a strategy to gain popularity with the population and to serve as a distraction during election time (Gaballa, 2014; Trew, 2014). The upcoming 2018 election has been described as "neither free nor fair" by fourteen international human rights organizations; potential candidates have been arrested, pressured not to run, or withdrawn in protest (Mada Masr, 2018).

Every time I speak with anyone in Cairo they remark on the general atmosphere of political and economic instability. Many express feelings of what Peterson (2011, p.xi) describes as “antistructure” where “. . . the structure of everyday life of the immediate past have been disrupted or overturned, but new structures have not yet emerged to replace them”. This dissertation examined how socio-economic and demographic changes have disrupted to varying degrees the construction of ideal types of masculinity and femininity among a specific group of individuals in Cairo, the cosmopolitan class. Global flows have further complicated notions of manhood and womanhood and added to competing gender expectations in and around relationships, marriage, and the household. Although deviations from idealized masculinities and femininities may emerge before marriage, I found that the marriage process - more specifically family pressure and expectations during the process - serves to remind and to reinforce traditional hierarchies of masculinities and femininities. Feelings of ambivalence commonly permeated the engagement and marriage process and emphasized the gap between family and societal expectations and personal beliefs and feelings. Gender strategies employed to navigate this gap were complex, at times contradictory, and in continuous flux as they interacted with broader socioeconomic conjunctures.

Class further complicated these processes by introducing the importance of projecting a specific image of the household, an image that serves to maintain and solidify power and influence in Cairo's socialscape. Men's decreasing ability to be the sole breadwinner has resulted in a proliferation of symbolic processes that trivialize women's work and financial contributions as a strategy to undermine their contributions and reproduce existing gender hierarchies. Women spent a considerable amount of time and effort "protecting" ideal types of masculinities and "preserving" ideal types of femininities, at least in appearance; they constantly thought about how to present deviations in ideal types of masculinities and femininities to family and greater society in a way that reinforced traditional understandings of manhood and womanhood. I argued this emotional work is an additional shift Cairene women have taken on: a third shift. The 'third shift' cosmopolitan women took on served as a strategy that attempted to manage and ignore shifting power dynamics. Cosmopolitan women in my sample were backing away from whatever power they could derive from their income and status. They either adopted strategies that made it seem as if their husbands were in control or gave up control; 'doing gender' in this way reaffirmed class valued and cultural notions of femininity, thereby reproducing the gendered relations of power in their marriages.

In this chapter, I reflect on three main themes that have emerged from the analysis: authenticity (and associated notions of modernity and progress), ambivalence, and acquiescence. The saliency of these themes is consistent with previous scholarship on gender in the Arab world; my findings build onto existing scholarship by focusing on the intersection of class and gender in the household and by incorporating masculinities into the discussion. My analysis highlights the possibilities of change in the existing gender regime from cosmopolitan Cairenes interactions with global economic and cultural flows in the newly emerging field of premarital relationships. However, class preservation strategies, often policed or reinforced by family, contribute to a retrenchment of traditional gender norms; this occurs partly through the work of women who protect traditional constructions of masculinity, and partly through the refusal of men to build on the autonomy and agency achieved by both men and women in the 'waithood' period before marriage. It also contributes to our empirical and theoretical understanding of gender and class in the transnational and cosmopolitan segment of the population in Egypt. This chapter will expand on the abovementioned themes with the aim of working towards a theory of gender, class, and social change; one that moves beyond essentialized notions of the "Arab" family, provides a nuanced account of agency, reflexivity, and change, and assists in the formulation of policies that are

sensitive to the changing needs of young men and women in Cairo. Finally, I offer suggestions for future research regarding not only gender in the household, but also for other explorations of gender and class in Egypt.

### **7.1 Globalization: Notions of Modernity, Progress, and Authenticity**

The Cairenes interviewed were constantly connected to global flows whether through actual connectivity such as travel or through displays of goods and actions that were symbolically connected to places outside of Egypt. In line with Peterson's argument, this "connectedness" was utilized by Cairenes of the cosmopolitan class as a form of social and cultural capital that distinguishes them from the masses of Egyptians (Peterson, 2011). I constantly observed the ways in which goods and practices and their perceived points of origin served different functions: certain forms of consumption and practice were linked to "the West" and were valuable in constructing and displaying an elite and cosmopolitan identity while goods and practices from elsewhere in North Africa or from the Gulf states were important in establishing an Arab and/or Muslim identity. Practices associated with gender roles and expectations in the household were no different – certain practices were

symbolically connected to the West and others were connected to the Arab world.

My finding that gender and more specifically women's issues are a terrain on which ideological battles are commonly fought is not new; there is no shortage of literature examining the myriad of ways in which women and women's issues are utilized as markers of modernity, progress, and authenticity (Badran, 1993, 1995; Moghadam, 1994). However, my results illuminate the different ways in which class interacts with these ideological terrains through concrete day-to-day behavior to configurations within relationships and the households. Circulating images of masculinities and femininities are associated with assumptions about progress, modernity, and development (Adely, 2012; Ghannam, 2002). In Adely's study of schools in Jordan and the ways in which they simultaneously function as local spaces, as state socializing institutions, and as discursive projects of modernization and international development, she points out the assumption that pursuing an education is an investment in the labor market. As one of her participants an adolescent Jordanian female asked, "Why do they assume we want to work? Maybe we want to stay at home." (Adely, 2012). This attitude was one I also found throughout my interviews but its manifestation was slightly different. Rather than acknowledge circulating assumptions about "Arab" women and men and questioning their existence, my interviewees



routinely dismissed these assumptions as wildly inaccurate, focusing on aspects of Egyptian culture that rendered these assumptions as invalid.

Contrary to Peterson's (2011) argument of cosmopolitan Cairenes and their dilemma of "how to be at once modern and Egyptian", I found that while the Cairenes interviewed were definitely aware of competing images of womanhood and manhood – through travel, television, and social media – they were more occupied with maintaining the image of a specific type of Egyptian, an image that was associated with status and prestige. I posit the struggle for authenticity in which gender roles and beliefs play a large role is not simply a struggle between modernity often interpreted as anything associated with "the West" and a sense of Arab-ness and/or Egyptian-ness. While internal dilemmas may exist regarding issues of identity and selfhood, I found men and women in the study community continuously negotiated different masculinities and femininities depending on the context; different gender strategies were utilized in different contexts to ensure their place in Cairo's socialscape in terms of class hierarchies. At times this meant women took on a 'third shift' to reconcile deviations in ideal types of masculinities and femininities among family and shifting power dynamics within the marriage, while other times this meant highlighting these very deviations as a means of justifying their place in local class hierarchies.

These gendered notions of authenticity were internally oriented as a means of ensuring power during tumultuous political and socioeconomic times rather than externally oriented. The respondents were more concerned about how other Egyptians (parents, neighbors, friends, colleagues) viewed them rather than how the world beyond Egypt viewed them. They never expressed a doubt about their “Egypt-ness”, describing a baseline of Egyptian gender norms and beliefs that would never be transgressed. The cosmopolitan Cairenes expressed that certain gender practices perceived to be indexical of the West such as stay-at-home fathers and the acceptance of premarital sex would never be accepted in Egypt, at least not in their social circles. Other practices such as dating and less modest clothing (i.e. bikinis, crop tops) were frequently adopted by the study community yet I observed a contradiction between these behaviors and underlying beliefs as evidenced by disapproval and judgment. This disconnect was vivid when men judged certain women’s behavior (i.e. she can wear a bikini but doing yoga in a bikini is too much); this disapproval and judgment tied to gossip and rumors acted as a form of policing and reinforced traditional standards of gender.

This imitation of Western lifestyles found on the level of appearances rather than in mentalities and actions was also noted by Kraidy (2009) in his study on young Maronites in Lebanon and hybrid identities. Baudrillard (1983) describes this

phenomenon as one of simulation or “the concealment of the non-existence of something; in other words, it is the display of a simulacrum, a copy with no original” (as cited in Kraidy, 2009, p. 469). Simulative strategies reflect a perceived lack of cultural identity and mimicking Western culture serves to symbolically fill a void. This study uncovers some of the entangled articulations of global and local discourses in and around relationships and the household and also contributes to empirical knowledge of experiential manifestations of cultural hybridity.

## **7.2 Class, Culture Brokers, and Power**

One of the main goals of this dissertation was to explore the role of class in producing and reproducing hierarchies of gender and how class affects changing constructions of masculinities and femininities. I argue gender strategies employed by the Cairenes interviewed are a means of navigating both local and global flows in an attempt to maintain power and to ensure field positions. In an examination of the enterprise culture among the cosmopolitan class in Cairo, Peterson (2011, p. 171) highlights a finding that is often obscured in discourses about globalization produced by foreigners and by Egyptians: Cairene entrepreneurs usually from the cosmopolitan elite manage flows of transnational popular culture as a means of

making profit while also creating environments they need to construct themselves as cosmopolitan. This undermines the assumption that global flows are cases of foreign imperialism and stresses the role “culture brokers” play in mediating transnational cultural flows. Culture brokers almost always from the cosmopolitan class are:

. . . people who position themselves as able to recognize cultural differences, interpret between these differences, appropriate or create symbols that will travel across differences. . . Culture brokers create the hybridities noted by observers of transnational cultural flows. (Peterson, 2011, p.188)

Peterson goes on to examine the role culture brokers play as entrepreneurs and in management, production, and marketing however this concept of “brokering” or mediating transnational flows is useful in exploring men and women’s navigation of different gender beliefs. Research participants routinely incorporated different aspects of circulating gender beliefs but only after imbuing them with new meanings drawn from their own experiences and cultural traditions; doing so they are continuously enacting hybrid identities through consumption and mimicry (Kraidy, 2009).

Every research participant had been exposed to different gender beliefs and dynamics through television, movies, and social media however most insisted on the lack of fit between most of these dynamics and the Egyptian culture. In practice,

these men and women did not fully reject gender strategies indexical of contexts outside of Egypt but rather carefully mediated or “brokered” gender practices to ensure seamless local translation. The interviews suggest that this “brokering” was commonly conducted with the aim of ensuring positions in local class hierarchies, indicative of a preoccupation with status and distinction rather than one with religion or nationality. This preoccupation with preserving status may have grown in light of recent political and socioeconomic upheavals in Egypt.

These findings are similar to those found in Newcomb’s study on women, urban life, and change in Morocco and in Salamandra’s examination of authenticity and distinction in Syria (Newcomb, 2009; Salamandra, 2004). Newcomb (2009, p.189) argues that middle-class Fassis (from Fez, Morocco) insist on their distinctiveness and their status as an “original” Fassi, a nostalgic identity tied up in kinship, in history, and in past glories of the nation. Many of the gender strategies employed by the research participants hint at an insistence on remaining connected to class conditions of the past; this serves as an obstacle in achieving egalitarian gender dynamics in the household especially since class scripts of the past are no longer a fit for today’s actors due to drastic changes in material conditions. The women interviewed expressed longing for the lifestyle their mothers and grandmothers lived before the major

social, political, and economic transformations that began after Egypt transitioned from a monarchy to a republic.

For many of the interviewees, the part of the struggle in reconciling competing gender beliefs was their links to classed notions of authenticity; if enacted masculinities and femininities deviated too far from the ideal types of the past these Cairenes risk dissociating themselves from the elites of the past and potentially losing status. Deviations from idealized notions of manhood and womanhood are interpreted by the public as a loss of one's social position; therefore, changes in gender roles such as the decline of men as sole breadwinners result in the forfeiture of previous roles in the broader social class milieu. This is also why certain gender beliefs were considered to be more marriageable – as a means of preserving status and social mobility.

### **7.3 Ambivalence and the Changing Contours of Gender**

Classed dimensions of masculinities and femininities added another layer of complexity to women and men's changing constructions of masculinity and femininity. The ambivalence and acquiescence that resulted from this interplay between class, gender, and social change was most vivid around the possibility of deviations in traditional constructions of masculinity. I say the possibility because while the data showed

a wide range of femininities deviating from ideal types of femininity, it did not demonstrate a corresponding proliferation of masculinities. Moreover, the data emphasized the importance of breadwinning in idealized masculinities and the orientation of both men and women in preserving this integral part of hegemonic masculinity. Striving to maintain this particular image of masculinity, women took on a 'third shift' in relationships consisting of both care and emotional work; they cultivated an image of ideal femininity with the goal of protecting classic constructions of masculinity.

In chapter four, I explored men's feelings of ambivalence throughout the marriage process; many expressed mixed feelings about the sizable financial burden of marriage and various details about the wedding. Yet ultimately, they all put aside their feelings of ambivalence largely out of a sense of obligation and fulfilled the expectations of the family and fiancée. While men's mixed feelings were evident during the marriage process, women struggled with competing gender expectations once they were married. The conjugal relationship emphasized the gap between accepted or tolerated femininities pre- marriage and expected femininities post-marriage. Women also experienced contradictions between notions of femininity that were presented as valued during their upbringing and what notions were actually valued once they were married. Confronted with this contradiction, most of the women in my

sample “floated into expected roles, cancelling their personalities” as Alaa, one of the few women who held egalitarian beliefs, described; she explained this was the main reason why she was hesitant to get married. Although they expressed disagreement about the existing structure of gender roles in the household, they acquiesced to the cultural and class specific consensus of the meaning of womanhood.

Unlike Gerson’s work on the changing contours of masculinity in the United States, men in my study community were not experiencing dilemmas about the appropriate obligations and legitimate rights of men (Gerson, 1993). My findings did not indicate a decline of a cultural consensus on the meaning of manhood; there was a definite consensus on ideal types of masculinities. The dilemma faced by these cosmopolitan men was how to maintain their traditional notions of masculinity while faced with the reality of sustaining a particular lifestyle on one income, which was becoming more difficult. Most men resolved this dilemma by undermining and trivializing women’s financial contributions and claiming women “chose” to work for purely noneconomic reasons. Rarely, were men forced to experience effects of social and economic changes; women’s “third shift” cushioned men’s masculinities and reproduced valued notions of manhood and womanhood.

My findings indicate the emergence of two new fields: wraithood and premarital relationships. Although these two new



fields overlap at times, gender and class structure these fields in distinct ways. Similar to many feminists engaging with Bourdieu's theory of practice, I do not believe gender constitutes a field or that gender has its own habitus but rather conceptualize gender as a part of the gender social field or field of power (Adkins, 2004; McRobbie, 2004; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2004). Gender and gender hierarchies of domination are interspersed and structuring of social fields - similar to Bourdieu's description of class as structuring. With this in mind, I postulate that while class and gender structure social fields, they shift in importance and value from one context/field to another. Chapter four and five examined the emergence of these two new fields and the ways in which gender and class structure these fields by looking at the experiences of a certain segment of the Cairene population. Both of these fields are heavily gendered and classed; however, their emergence provides a unique opportunity for change and for the re-negotiation of gender relations.

Equally important is the finding that the doxa - or taken for granted - in the field of marriage is splintering (Atkinson, 2014). Chapter five explores young Cairenes' experiences of these splinters and the resulting tensions, ambivalence, and strategies. As Atkinson (2014) describes the family or in this case the field of marriage is a site of both struggle and potential change. Although there is a marriage-specific doxa, husbands

and wives are not equal co-constructors of it. As the general field of power changes (i.e. increased women's education, labor force participation), struggles can be seen in the doxa of a specific field. These struggles splinter the doxa into a conservative orthodoxy and a subversive heterodoxy. Chapter five emphasizes the ambivalence arising out of the splintering of the marriage doxa and the ways in which young men and women reconcile the accompanying clashes in gender beliefs. While it may seem like the conservative orthodoxy relating to gender dynamics is reinstated in the symbolic arena, it is important to recognize the opportunity for change. It is through these splinters and gaps that "the greatest structural shifts are mediated, negotiated" (Atkinson, 2014, p. 23).

#### **7.4 Towards a Theory of Gender, Class, and Social Change**

This study adds to the scholarship on gender in the Middle East by focusing on the interaction of gender and class among the cosmopolitan class in Cairo. Doing so allowed me to produce nuanced and context-specific analyses that moved beyond essentialized notions of "the Arab family" and "the Arab woman". My research fills an empirical gap by adding to existing knowledge on masculinities and femininities in Egypt, especially in and around premarital relationships an area that is difficult to study due to its sensitive nature. Previous research has largely

focused on low-income communities and women's gender strategies; this research adds to this body of literature by gaining a better understanding of women and men's changing gender construction in upper class communities. Moreover, my findings contribute to understanding the intersection of class and gender and the role appearances and consumption have in reproducing existing gender hierarchies. By observing day-to-day behavior and listening to Cairenes experiences of gender in the family and the household, I was able to explicate new ways in which gender hierarchies are reproduced and in which idealized notions of masculinities and femininities are reinforced. With women's increasing financial resources and men's declining ability to provide for the lifestyle associated with the cosmopolitan class, many of the processes that reproduce traditional gender regimes have moved to the symbolic arena.

Moreover, my findings suggest elite women participate along with elite men in the reproduction and preservation of class, status, and gender hierarchies. By continuing to rely on support such as domestic help and paid child care – privileges stemming from their wealth and social status – they continue to perpetuate the traditional gender and social status regimes. The young men and women in my study community also continued to support ideal types of femininities and masculinities; in many cases the elite young women put significant effort into

maintaining these ideal types. In one of the few studies examining women and class in the Arab world, Al-Mughni and her study of women's organizations, class and modernization in Kuwait similarly found that the increasing education and workforce participation of women has resulted in class consolidation rather than social mobility (Al-Mughni, 1993). The spread of education promoted the development of a new class of Kuwaitis who did not come from powerful old families. In order to maintain the power of this rising merchant class, Kuwaiti social mores adapted so that elite women of the merchant class could take over prestigious positions that otherwise could go to men from emerging social classes. Tetreault and Al-Mughni argue that upper-class women pose less of a threat to the status quo than upwardly mobile men from modest backgrounds (Tetreault & Al-Mughni, 1995).

In addition to empirical and theoretical contributions, this dissertation also makes a methodological contribution to the study of social change and gender. Utilizing a combination of observation and interviews allowed me to zero in on the fissures or cracks between what people said and their actual behavior and what people believed and how they actually felt. I then used these fissures as a starting point for my analysis and untangled the strategies, myths, and symbolic processes that are employed to reconcile tensions that arise as a result. This kept my analysis linked to the symbolic arena and to concrete field conditions and

helped me trace the myriad of ways Cairenes navigate the changing terrain of gender. The remainder of this section further engages my contributions in three main areas of scholarship on the Middle East: reactionary discussions and notions of authenticity; agency, reflexivity, and change; and masculinities.

#### **7.4.1 Beyond Reactionary Politics and Discussions**

Much of the literature examining trends within gender scholarship in the Middle East has argued that women have become symbolically charged realms of authenticity and identity as a result of processes of Western hegemony that have stimulated reactionary tendencies and according to Elie “drove women’s emancipation into the clutches of clerical Islam (Elie, 2004, p. 145). I conducted this study well aware that the discursive site of struggle over gender issues in the Middle East is situated between two equally unattractive discourses: on the one side is the discursive colonization posed by “substantively exhausted androcentric paradigms of Western social thought, riding the waves of globalization and their reductionist or fantasist interpretations” of ME women; and on the other side the threat of discursive appropriation and social disempowerment of women by an Islamic ideology of resistance. My analysis untangled localized struggles of Cairene men and women searching and “renegotiating their destinies in their own

vocabularies”; this focus allowed me to contribute to theoretical frameworks without prioritizing imported agendas of either Western thought or Islamist ideologies (Elie, 2004). Similarly, Rizzo, Abdel-Latif, and Meyer argue that utilizing a ‘clash of civilizations’ approach between Islam and the West obscures the complexities in Arab Muslim countries over women’s rights and democracy – complexities that ‘dwarf’ the importance of divisions between the West and Muslim populations over gender (Rizzo, Abdel-Latif, & Meyer, 2007, p. 1165).

The men and women in my study community did not define themselves or create gender strategies in reaction to the West or to Islam; their focus was constantly inwards. While they were connected to global flows, they utilized these flows locally to maintain status constantly negotiating different notions of femininity and masculinity to present a certain image of family and household. I expanded theoretical understandings of gender and social change by analyzing the interaction of class and gender and moving beyond common depictions of Arab women and strategies of resistance. Throughout the data chapters, I have also emphasized women and men’s feelings of ambivalence towards taken-for-granted assumptions such as women’s desire for work outside the home that are prevalent in development discourse. In doing so, I presented an account of women and men’s experiences with changing constructions of gender consequent struggle to articulate possibilities *they* feel are

liberating, possibilities reconcilable with personal beliefs, family expectations, and class narratives.

#### **7.4.2 Agency, Reflexivity, and Change: Engaging Gender and Class**

This dissertation adds to discussions on agency, reflexivity and social change by arguing that reflexivity is not necessarily transformative or detraditionalizing. Similar to Adam's view on reflexivity in his examination of habitus and reflexivity, I found that everyday practices are highly reflexive but "routinely reflect and maintain gender distinctions rather than dissolving them" (Adam, 2006, p. 519). For the purposes of this discussion, I utilize Adam's (2006, p. 517) definition of reflexivity:

... the ability to reflect with perspicuity upon the previous 'givens' of all dimensions of social structure in relation to subjectivity, to the point of further substantiating transformative social change that makes such reflexivity possible.

While scholars disagree over the transformative power of reflexivity, I posit that reflexivity among the cosmopolitan Cairenes studied was fragmentary, contextual, and discontinuous. Reflexivity was mostly an ambivalent process, one that was incorporated into everyday reproduction of social structures rather than transcending them.

My focus on the cracks between everyday practice and feelings and beliefs supported McNay's views that theories of identity transformation need to consider the mediating effects of processes of symbolic identification on embodied practice (McNay, 1999). My argument that changing economic and social conditions have led to a proliferation of symbolic processes that reproduce gender inequalities in new ways adds to these theories of reflexivity, identity, and social change. Throughout the chapters, I highlighted the presence of these symbolic systems of constraint of which the men and women were unaware. At the same time, my findings do not paint a picture of determinism; I presented gender strategies employed to negotiate these systems of constraint to create meaningful gender identifications. Although reflexivity and agency is bounded by limits of social structure as embodied in one's habitus, my findings highlighted "the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions" especially with increased movement between fields (i.e. women entering the workforce) (McNay, 1999, p. 107). Transformations in micro-social structures depend on configurations of power relations, which are context dependent. This conceptualization captures the great variety of experiences that make up gendered identities found in my data.



### 7.4.3 Emerging Masculinities

Lastly, my research adds both empirically and theoretically to scholarship on masculinities in the Middle East. Almost all of the ethnographies examining gender in Egypt have been conducted by female ethnographers and have examined low-income communities; this positionality made it difficult to interview men and to engage in analyses of masculinities. Interactions between sexes are more common and less fraught with imagined sexual undertones among the cosmopolitan class; this enabled me to focus on masculinities and interview men as well as women. Examining masculinities in addition to femininities allowed me to examine the ways in which men enact manhood in different ways and in different social contexts and to capture new forms of masculine practice that accompanied social, demographic, and economic change.

Inhorn (2002,2015) in her study of reproductive technologies and masculinities in Egypt calls for emergent masculinities approach that focuses on the ongoing, relational, and embodied process of change in the way that men enact masculinity. While she argues that new forms of manhood are emerging resulting in variability, hybridity, and transformation of masculinity, my findings did not indicate such a widespread reconceptualization of manhood. Slight changes in the enactment of masculinities were found between men and their

fathers, however new forms of masculine practice such as men's desire to "date" before marriage decreased in response to life changes such as marriage and fatherhood.

### **7.5 Ambiguities of Change and Future Possibilities**

Three main themes have been consistently engaged throughout this dissertation authenticity, ambivalence, and acquiescence; these themes were not only found in my analysis of changing constructions of masculinities and femininities but also throughout the scholarship on gender in the Middle East. This study adds to this body of literature in three main ways: providing empirical accounts of everyday practices and the enactment of masculinity and femininity in a specific context, incorporating masculinities into the analyses of gender, and developing theories of gender and social change. This dissertation has consistently shown the feelings of ambivalence associated with change and the struggles that arise from deviations in idealized notions of masculinity and femininity.

My findings indicate a variety of directions for future research on gender and social change in Egypt. In this dissertation, I focused only on the cosmopolitan class in Cairo, it would be interesting to utilize a comparative study design with the aim of analyzing differences and similarities in changing constructions of gender between low-income communities and

high-income communities. There are studies that examine gender in low-income communities but only one study (to the author's knowledge) has been a comparative analysis. A comparative research design could further explore the mediating role of class on gender and whether the emphasis on appearances found in my study is present among different socio-demographic groups. My findings point out a difference between the wider range of femininities accepted in premarital relationships and the ideal types expected in marriage. Future research could also examine ideal types of masculinities and femininities utilizing a life course approach – tracing changes in valued notions of manhood and womanhood before and after marriage, after becoming a mother/father, etc. Lastly, a study with the aim of tracing generational differences in gender by interviewing and observing parents as well as their grown-up children could yield a wealth of information about the role of parents and family in influencing gender beliefs and strategies and also delineate shifts in gender practices and ideologies.

Overall, my dissertation shows an attenuation of conventional notions of manhood and womanhood however these changes are piecemeal and discontinuous. In many instances, this attenuation was brought on by movement within and across field of social action but was only evident for a brief period of time until symbolic processes realigned expectations and beliefs. Moreover, I argue the gendered “third shift” partly

arises from reflexivity; an awareness of deviating masculinities and femininities has resulted in care work, which includes reconciling these deviations with ideal types of masculinity and femininity. Although Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field lend themselves more easily to deterministic interpretations of gender, that is not to say Egypt is not on the brink of a gender revolution. El-Feki (2013) argues that many of the underlying forces that drove change in Europe and American during the 1960's and 1970's are present in Egypt: struggles toward democracy and personal rights; loosening family and community controls on private behavior; a large population of young people whose attitudes differ from those of their parents; and the changing role of women. While these factors are true to varying extents especially when discussing the cosmopolitan class, I believe the importance of maintaining a certain image of the household and family in order to preserve status will considerably slow down this process of change. In whatever ways change may or may not occur, it is important to not use the West as a guide; development is not linear and different societies take different paths.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Consent Form for Participants

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study about cosmopolitan Cairenes and their negotiation of competing gender expectations and roles in marital and premarital relationships.

Socioeconomic and demographic transformations have led to the decreased occurrence of early and universal marriage, chipped at the link between sexuality and marriage, and increased the liminal period of 'waithood' in Egypt. This study examines urban educated men and women's experiences of these phenomena and adds to existing knowledge on masculinities and femininities in Egypt. I am also interested in cosmopolitan Cairenes participation in global economic and cultural flows and the ways this participation has further complicated the changing terrain of gender by adding to circulating images of masculinities and femininities.

This interview will focus on marital and premarital relationships, attitudes on gender roles and expectations, and everyday behavior. In order to help with data analysis, the interview will be audiotaped if consent is granted. Audio files will be securely stored and disposed of after relevant sections are transcribed. Electronic files will be password protected to ensure confidentiality and identifying information will be stored separately from the rest of the data. The interviews will be conducted by me, Mariam Nagi, and will take approximately 2 hours.

The contents of the interview will be used to write a doctoral dissertation. Findings may also be presented at a conference or published in a journal article. Pseudonyms will be used and no identifying information will be published.

Please feel free to stop at any time during the interview and/or ask any questions you may have about the study or about your interview afterwards. If you feel uncomfortable with an answer, please feel free to contact me at nagim@tcd.ie or call me on my Egyptian number (+2) 0111-525-1851. Thank you again for your participation!

Signature

Date

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## Appendix B: Interview Guide

### About parents:

1. Describe your parents' relationship.
2. What do they fight about? Give me an example.
3. How are these fights and other differences resolved? Do you feel that one person's desires get priority usually? If so, how do you feel about that?
4. Do other people get involved in the fights?
5. In terms of your relationship(s) or your ideas about relationship/marriage today, what would you want to do similarly to your parents? What did they get "right"?
6. What do you want to do differently from your parents? What did they get "wrong"?
7. Take me through a typical day in your mother's life (during childhood).
8. Take me through a typical day in your father's life (during childhood).
9. What did your mother view as the woman's role/men's role in a relationship and in the broader family? Father's view? Did they agree?

### If single:

1. Tell me about your most recent relationship that has ended.
  - a. What were the traits that you found attractive in your significant other?
  - b. What were the traits that you found the least attractive in your significant other?
  - c. Take me through a typical date/outing.
  - d. What do you fight about? Give me an example.

- e. How are these fights and other differences resolved? Do you feel that one person's desires get priority usually? If so, how do you feel about that?
- f. Do other people get involved in your fights?
- g. Why did the relationship end?

Never been in a relationship:

- 1. Why have you never been in a relationship?
- 2. How does that make you feel?

If dating/engaged:

- 1. Tell me about your current relationship.
  - h. What are the traits that you find attractive in your significant other?
  - i. What are the traits that you found the least attractive in your significant other?
  - j. Take me through a typical date/outing.
  - k. What do you fight about? Give me an example.
  - l. How are these fights and other differences resolved? Do you feel that one person's desires get priority usually? If so, how do you feel about that?
  - m. Do other people get involved in your fights?
  - n. If engaged:
    - i. Why did you decide to make things formal?
    - ii. Has the involvement of parents/family affected the relationship in any way?
    - iii. Take me through the process of taking the next step and making things formal.
- 2. Underlying economy of gratitude:
  - a. What do you expect from your significant other in the relationship/marriage?
  - b. What do you think is extra?

If married:

1. Tell me about your current relationship.
  - a. What are the traits that you find attractive in your significant other?
  - b. What are the traits that you found the least attractive in your significant other?
  - c. What do you fight about? Give me an example.
  - d. How are these fights and other differences resolved? Do you feel that one person's desires get priority usually? If so, how do you feel about that?
  - e. Do other people get involved in your fights?
2. Why did you decide to make things formal?
3. Take me through the marriage process.
4. Has the involvement of parents/family affected the relationship in any way?
5. Take me through your typical day. Take me through a typical day of your spouse.
6. How do you divide the responsibilities of marriage? And the household?
7. Finances:
  - a. How are financial decisions made?
  - b. Where does your salary go? Where does your spouse's salary go?
  - c. For men only:
    - i. Do you feel like your only contribution is a financial contribution?
    - ii. If given the choice to work less and still have enough money, would you?
    - iii. How does it feel to have to put all your money into the family?
8. Leisure time:
  - a. How much free time do you have per day?

- b. How much free time does your significant other have per day?
  - c. How do you spend your leisure time?
  - d. How does your significant other spend his/her leisure time?
9. With children:
- a. How is the responsibility of childcare divided between you and your spouse?
  - b. Has having children affected your marriage? How so?
10. Underlying economy of gratitude:
- a. What do you expect from your significant other in the relationship/marriage?
  - b. What do you think is extra?
  - c. What are some things that your significant other does that you appreciate as extra?

General:

1. What traits is a “good” significant other (male and female) expected to have in your social circle? What makes a man a *ragel* (a man)?
2. What do you view as a woman’s/man’s role in the relationship/family?
3. Has your knowledge of how men/women interact in other countries or other contexts affected how you think your relationship should be?
4. How do you feel men/women in Egypt of your age are same as men/women in other countries? Different? How do you feel about that?
5. What one thing that if changed in Egyptian society would improve your relationship with your significant other?
6. Do you think men/women in their 20’s have too much freedom these days? Or not enough? Why or why not?



7. Open minded:
  - a. How would you describe a man who is “open minded”? What does it mean when a man is “open minded”?
  - b. How would you describe a woman who is “open minded”? What does it mean when a woman is “open minded”?
8. *Siya’a*
  - a. How would you describe a man that is *saye’*?
  - b. How would you describe a woman that is *say’a*?
9. *Si Sayed*
  - a. How would you describe a si sayed?
  - b. Would you date/marry someone who is a si sayed? (girls only)
  - c. Is there a female equivalent?
10. If you could choose to have a daughter or son, which would you choose and why?
11. What do you think makes a marriage successful?
12. How do you think relationships/marriages are different in our community than in other classes?
13. Pressure to get married:
  - a. Do you ever feel pressure to get married? How does that make you feel?
  - b. Give me examples of when you felt pressure to get married.

### Appendix C: Description of Study Sample

Interview	1	2	3	4
Name	Salah	Yomna	Engy	Mounir
Date	Aug. 2014	Aug. 2014	Aug. 2014	Aug. 2014
Age	25	24	31	27
Sex	Male	Female	Female	Male
Occupation	Restaurant owner	Marketing research analyst	Preschool teacher	Sales unit manager
Relationship Status	Single	Married	Single	Engaged (to Nariman)
Children	0	0	0	0

Interview	5	6	7	8
Name	Nariman	Amany	Yousra	Lina
Date	Aug. 2014	Aug. 2014	Aug. 2014	Aug. 2014
Age	27	25	33	25
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female
Occupation	Marketing research analyst	Journalist	Math teacher	Primary school teacher
Relationship status	Engaged (to Mounir)	Single	Married (to Amr)	Engaged
Children	0	0	0	0

Interview	9	10	11	12
Name	Mona	Mahmoud	Amr	Abla
Date	Aug. 2014	Aug. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dec. 2014
Age	23	25	35	24
Sex	Female	Male	Male	Female
Occupation	Enrollment specialist	Mechanical engineer	Hardware and systems	Supply chain
Relationship status	Single	Single	Married (to Yousra)	Single
Children	0	0	0	0

Interview	13	14	15	16
Name	Ines	Perihan	Hanan	Sami
Date	Dec. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dec. 2014
Age	26	21	23	25
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Male
Occupation	Unemployed	Student	Marketing research analyst	Unemployed
Relationship status	In a relationship	Single	Engaged	Single
Children	0	0	0	0

Interview	17	18	19	20
Name	Horeya	Sarah	Soha	Hesham
Date	Dec. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2015
Age	27	25	25	28
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Male
Occupation	HR manager	Customer care	Unemployed	Physician
Relationship status	Married (to Ali)	Single	In a relationship	Engaged
Children	1	0	0	0

Interview	21	22	23	24
Name	Noor	Fatma	Alaa	Hadeel
Date	Apr. 2015	Apr. 2015	Apr. 2015	May 2015
Age	24	24	26	24
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female
Occupation	Marketing	British Tobacco	Physician	Engineer
Relationship status	Single	Married	In a relationship	Married
Children	0	0	0	0



Interview	25	26	27	28
Name	Lara	Gihan	Fady	Nesreen
Date	May 2015	May 2015	May 2015	May 2015
Age	26	27	23	25
Sex	Female	Female	Male	Female
Occupation	Brand manager	IT	Operations manager	Stay at home mom
Relationship status	Married (to Ehab)	Married (to Kamal)	Single	Married
Children	0	0	0	1

Interview	29	30 (follow up)	31 (follow up)	32
Name	Talia	Yousra	Amr	Moez
Date	May 2015	May 2015	Aug. 2015	Aug. 2015
Age	25	34	35	30
Sex	Female	Female	Male	Male
Occupation	MA student	Math teacher	Hardware and systems	Restaurant owner
Relationship status	Married	Married (to Amr)	Married (to Yousra)	Married
Children	1	0	0	1

Interview	33	34 (follow up)	35 (follow up)	36
Name	Ehab	Nariman	Mounir	Braheem
Date	Aug. 2015	Aug. 2015	Aug. 2015	Aug. 2015
Age	27	28	28	23
Sex	Male	Female	Male	Male
Occupation	Project manager	Marketing research analyst	Sales unit manager	Computer programmer
Relationship status	Married (to Lara)	Married (to Mounir)	Married (to Nariman)	Engaged
Children	0	0	0	0

Interview	37	38	39	40
Name	Nabeel	Kamal	Ali	Shady
Date	Sept. 2015	Sept. 2015	Sept. 2015	Sept. 2015
Age	25	28	31	26
Sex	Male	Male	Male	Male
Occupation	Brand manager	Computer programmer	Factory manager	Self-employed, travel agency
Relationship status	In a relationship	Married (to Gihan)	Married (to Horeya)	Single
Children	0	0	1	0

Total number of interviews	40
Follow up interviews	4
Number of respondents	36
Males	14
Females	22
Couples	5 couples (10 respondents total)
Married	14 (5 men, 9 women)
Engaged	6 (3 men, 3 women)
Dating	4 (1 man, 3 women)
Single	12 (5 men, 7 women)
With children	5 (2 men, 2 women)

## Appendix D: Background Information About Respondents in Text

During my fieldwork, many people told me about their experiences in marital and pre-marital relationships and helped me understand the intersection of class and gender among this segment of the population. This is a list of the group of men and women that made it into the final text, alphabetically by pseudonym.

**Alaa.** A 26-year-old female who is about to graduate with a medical degree from Ain Shams University. She works part time with a public health start up. She has been dating her boyfriend for a couple of years; both of their gender ideologies would be classified as more egalitarian. Her parents are the only example of a couple who have a joint bank account.

**Ali.** A 31-year-old male who is married to Horeya. They have been married for about 6 years and have 1 son. They met at a wedding through common friends and quickly formalized the relationship because Horeya did not want to date behind her parents' backs. Their gender expectations match: both believe the financial responsibilities fall to Ali.

**Amr.** A 35-year-old male who is married to Yousra. They met the traditional route and have been married for almost 7 years. Ahmed has traditional gender beliefs, which sometimes conflict with Yousra's more transitional ones. This manifests in conflicts around finances mostly.

**Braheem.** A 23-year-old male who graduated from Ain Shams University with a degree in computer programming. He recently got engaged to his girlfriend that he has been

dating since high school. They are currently in the process of planning the wedding. He stresses he does not want a traditional wedding and says it's a waste of money.

**Ehab.** A 27-year-old male who recently married Lara. They met at an engagement through common friends and then dated for a couple of months before getting engaged. Lara has a higher salary than Ehab. They disagree over how much he should be doing around the house.

**Essam.** Nesreen's husband.

**Fatma.** A 24-year-old female who graduated from AUC with a degree in electronics engineering. She recently married her boyfriend, whom she has been dating since university. Their gender beliefs mostly match. Her husband does help around the house however, she would like him to help out more.

**Gihan.** A 27-year-old female who is married to Kamal. They met at university through common friends, dated for a couple of years, broke up, and then got back together and married. Gihan says they broke up because she was tired of all the effort towards the relationship but then realized that women are naturally better at this emotional work. She has transitional gender beliefs, which mostly match her husband's.

**Hadeel.** A 24-year-old female who is married. They dated throughout university and married after they graduated. Her salary is a lot more than her husband's yet she does not believe it is her responsibility to contribute to basic living expenses. Her husband has the same gender beliefs.

**Hesham.** A 28-year-old male who graduated from Ain Shams University with a medical degree. He is engaged to Amina, who he had been dating for about a year or two



before they formalized the relationship. Hesham has traditional gender beliefs. He also expresses ambivalence about the cost of the marriage process, yet he does not mind going along with what his parents want.

**Horeya.** A 27-year-old female who is married to Ali. They have been married for about 6 years and have 1 son. They met at a wedding through common friends and quickly formalized the relationship because Horeya did not want to date behind her parents' backs. Their gender expectations match: both believe the financial responsibilities fall to Ali. She has a full-time job and her mother takes care of Horeya's son after daycare.

**Kamal.** A 28-year-old male who is married to Gihan. They met at university through common friends, dated for a couple of years, broke up, and then got back together and married. His gender beliefs are transitional.

**Lara.** A 26-year-old female who is married to Ehab. They met at an engagement through common friends and then dated for a couple of months before getting engaged. Lara has a higher salary than Ehab. They disagree over how much he should be doing around the house. She feels more responsible for the household yet does not believe that she should feel more responsible.

**Mona.** A 23-year-old female who graduated from AUC. She is currently single. She has been dating since high school and has had at least 3 or 4 boyfriends since then. Her parents have been divorced since she was 7; she manages the household (the driver, maid, younger brother).

**Mounir.** A 27-year-old male that was engaged during the first interview and married by the follow up interview. He is married to Nariman. They have always been a part of the same group of friends but did not date until after

university. Mounir has traditional gender beliefs especially around financial responsibilities.

**Nariman.** A 27-year-old female that was engaged during the first interview and married by the follow up interview. She is married to Mounir. They have always been a part of the same group of friends but did not date until after university. Both she and Mounir have traditional gender beliefs.

**Nesreen.** A 25-year old female who is currently a stay-at-home mom. She has a daughter who is 2 or 3 years old. She graduated from AUC, along with her husband, who was also her high school sweetheart. She lives in the same villa as her husband's family. Nesreen talks about how she feels she needs to put on a show to preserve her husband's masculinity, pretending he helps less with their daughter than he really does.

**Perihan.** A 21-year-old female who is currently a student at AUC. She is currently single and jokes that she will be single for life because she cannot find a man she likes enough, with the majority "not being man enough" or immature.

**Reem.** A 24-year old female who was dating at the time of my fieldwork. She is now married to Shehab. They dated for 3 years before they were married. Reem and Shehab have a lot of disagreements over gender expectations and roles.

**Salah.** A 25-year-old male who graduated from AUC and recently broke up with his fiancée. She wanted to roam around the world and he felt an obligation to his family and family business and wanted to stay in Cairo. Salah says there is a big disconnect between what men pretend to like in women and what they are actually looking for in a wife.

**Samir.** Talia's husband. He has traditional gender beliefs.

**Sarah.** A 25-year-old female who graduated from AUC with a degree in actuarial science. Sarah recently broke up with her boyfriend of 5 years. She believes the man should be the primary breadwinner and thinks her money should be "her own" yet at the same time she expects her husband to not expect her to cook, to pick up after himself, and to help with childcare.

**Shehab.** A 26-year-old male who was dating Reem at the time of fieldwork. He is now married to Reem. They dated for 3 years before they were married. Reem and Shehab have a lot of disagreements over gender expectations and roles.

**Soha.** A 25-year-old female who graduated from UC Davis, California with a degree in psychology after transferring there from AUC. She just started dating a guy she has known since high school. Sarah spent all of her life until high school living in the US and then during high school and for 2 years of university she lived in Egypt. She says she is conflicted about gender roles in marriage, especially regarding money.

**Talia.** A 25-year-old female who is currently pursuing a masters in mechanical engineering at AUC. Talia has been married for a couple of years to Samir. They married after they dated for a couple of years. Samir has traditional gender beliefs but she does not seem to have a problem with Sheriff's lack of help around the house and only a slight problem with his lack of help with childcare.

**Yomna.** A 24-year-old female who graduated from AUC with a degree in Mass Communications. Yomna has been married to her husband for about 2 years. They live with his parents; the top floor has been converted into a suite. They fight a lot, most of the time about sex.

**Yousra.** A 33-year-old female who is married to Amr. They met the traditional route and have been married for almost 7 years. Ahmed has traditional gender beliefs, which sometimes conflict with Yousra's more transitional ones. This manifests in conflicts around finances mostly.

**Youssef.** Talia's toddler son.