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# Parental attitudes towards the socialization of children in terms of sex roles

Madiha El Safty

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PARENTAL ATTITUDES  
TOWARDS  
THE SOCIALIZATION  
OF CHILDREN  
IN TERMS OF SEX ROLES

MADINA EL SAFTY  
1976



Soc. Anth.  
318

PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
THE SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN  
IN TERMS OF SEX ROLES

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1989

A THESIS  
PRESENTED TO  
THE SOCIOLOGY-ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF  
DR. DONALD COLE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, CAIRO

MADIHA EL SAFTY

المؤلف


JUNE, 1976

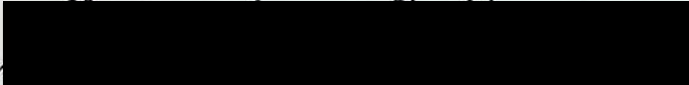
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THESIS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

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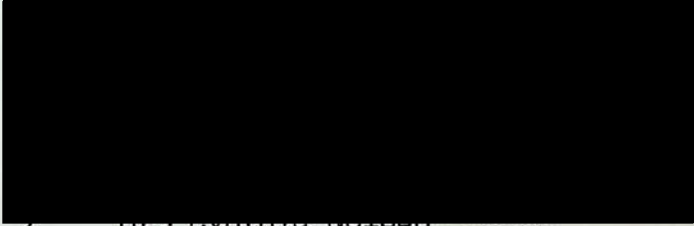
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to dedicate this manuscript to my dear father, who I consider my first and greatest teacher, and to the many others who have helped me in my life. The experience I am living through is a result of many years of hard work and dedication. It is difficult to express my gratitude to all those who have helped me, but I am sure that my father, in my eyes, is the most important person in my life. He is the one who has always been there for me, and I am proud to say that I am his son.

TO MY FATHER WHO WOULD HAVE GREATLY BEEN  
PROUD HAD HE LIVED TO SEE THIS WORK.

I would not have achieved this work

My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. [Name] who I consider responsible for this research. He has been my mentor and teacher, and his guidance and support have been invaluable. He has helped me in many ways, and I am sure that his influence will be felt for many years to come. I am proud to say that I am his student, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with him.

I also wish to thank Dr. [Name] who has helped me in many ways, and I am sure that his influence will be felt for many years to come. I am proud to say that I am his student, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with him.

Many thanks are also due to Dr. [Name] who has helped me in many ways, and I am sure that his influence will be felt for many years to come. I am proud to say that I am his student, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with him.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my family and friends who have supported me throughout my life. I am proud to say that I am their son, and I am grateful for the love and support that they have given me. I am sure that their influence will be felt for many years to come.



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## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the issue of sex roles in Egyptian society as it appears in the attitudes of parents of the middle class with respect to the socialization of their children. The parents of eight families were interviewed, but care was taken that each parent was interviewed separately. The families were chosen from among the members of the middle class on the basis of certain criteria which I set for "middleclass." The research depended mainly on interviews which were partially structured, partially unstructured. The questions on which these interviews were structured are included in the Appendix.

The results of the research reveal an existing sex differentiation among the parents of the middle class with respect to the socialization of their children. The conclusion that could be inferred from the attitudes they expressed in the interviews is in accordance with this differentiation.



PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
THE SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN  
IN TERMS OF SEX ROLES

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PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
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INTRODUCTION

SOCIALIZATION VIS-A-VIS SEX ROLES:

The central thesis of Simone de Beauvoir's book, The Second Sex, holds that women have been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men. Their position in this respect is comparable to that of the racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race. (1968, p. 3) Dr. Nawal El Saadawy also presents the same view in her book Women and Sex in Egyptian Society but with particular reference to Egyptian society in terms of special cultural and environmental conditions with regard to the biological determinism of women. The dominant theme, throughout the book, is more of an appeal to raise the status of the Egyptian women to that of a human being equal to the man rather than that of an inferior being, more so of an animal. (1971, p. 2)

The differentiation between sexes is a universal phenomenon that has its roots in both biology and history. However, because the inferior status of women in society has no logical scientific basis in anatomy, the question arises - why have women for long years been confined to it? Maybe the division of labor in earlier societies - here based on sex - is one



answer to the question. Juliet Mitchell presents the picture in Women's Estate, saying: "In the early stages of social development, men's physical superiority gave him the means of conquest over nature which was denied to women. Once woman was accorded the menial tasks involved in maintenance while man undertook to conquest and creation, she became an aspect of the private property and children. Robin Fox gives his own version of the picture when he says that for the greater part of human history, women were getting on with their highly specialized task of bearing and rearing the children. "It was the man who hunted the game, fought the enemies, and made the decisions." This, he believes is rooted in primate nature. (1967)

It follows, therefore that society holds for a woman a role different from that of a man. Consequently, when a female is born into a culture, she is prepared for a role befitting her sex. This is when the role of socialization as a process becomes significant. It is necessary, therefore, to clarify the term "socialization" at this point.

Paul Spencer states: "Socialization has a narrower and a broader sense. In the narrower sense it tends to be confined to the social learning of children, to the processes whereby they acquire the values of adult society so as to participate fully within it. In the broader sense, it may be extended to adults whenever they join a new social group and are expected to acquire a new set of values before participating fully within it and even, logically, to social deviates who have to conform." (Socialization: the Approach from Social Anthropology, 1967, p. 127.) In this



research, I will use as a working definition the term in what Spencer calls "the narrower sense" to apply to the process in which the child learns to prepare himself for the role he is to play in society.

According to Sullivan, socialization is a product of a gradual accumulation of experiences with certain people, particularly those with whom we stand in primary relations. These "significant others" are those who are actually involved in the cultivation of abilities, values, and outlook. (Manis, Jerome, 1967, p. 168) Social scientists agree that human infants do not possess culture at birth; they do not have a conception of the world, a language or a morality. All of these things then must be acquired by them through the process of socialization.

It is a logical sequence of the above premise that members of one society be socialized in the same way by virtue of the fact that they are equal in being human beings and members of the same culture. It so happens, however, that society and not nature differentiates between its members, the differentiation here being based on sex differences. Judith Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan depict the picture very briefly in the following words: "Sex differences in infancy and childhood are enhanced through socialization." (1970, p. 4)

Because society does not view both sexes in the same way, the socialization of the members of each sex therefore proceeds along a different line. It follows then that role socialization constitutes one of the most important learning experiences for the young child. Hartley reports that by the time they are four, children realize that the primary



feminine role is housekeeping, while the primary masculine role is wage earning (1960). Here we can refer to Erikson's concept of "inner and outer space" with reference to the two sexes. When Erikson attributed to the females the concept of "inner space" and to the males that of "outer space," he did so as a result of his study of preadolescent children of both sexes in play construction. The concern of the girls tended to be "peaceful family scenes" which represented "inner space." Their representation of house interiors was interpreted as a concentration on the anticipated task of taking care of a home and of rearing children. On the other hand, the boys' tendency to picture outward and upward movement was seen as another expression of their anticipated roles (1963, p.100)

With respect to the Arab Muslim society, Bouhdiba explains the socialization of the girl as an apprenticeship in the superiority of the male and in the necessity to prepare herself to accept throughout her whole existence the harsh constraints which nature, men and God Himself have decreed for her. ("The Child and Women in Arab Muslim Society")

The other side of the picture is different, however, resulting from the mere fact that the boy is prepared for a role of superiority whereby he reigns master of the female world. When Erick Fromm said that there is a masculinity and femininity in character, he referred to those traits which society and the family encourage in the child. The boy is thus taught to develop those qualities which prepare him for such a role - namely aggressiveness, audacity, independence, and similar qualities which all center around the one attribute of "masculinity." Kluckhohn believes that the problem of securing for the child an adequate level of aggression



for later adult life appears to center in the early management of age roles and privileges in his relationship to parents and siblings (1965).

On the other hand, the girl learns to be submissive, weak, shy, obedient and to acquire those traits which win for her the quality of "femininity." A girl who, for some reason or another, rebels against this stereotype is seen as not conforming to the norms of her society.

It seems feasible to refer in this respect to I. Hallowell's concept of self-awareness. He says, "One of the distinguishing features of human adjustment, as compared with that of animals lower in the evolutionary scale, rests upon the fact that the human adult, in the course of ontogenic development, has learned to discriminate himself as an object in a world of objects rather than himself: self-awareness. The nature of the self is a culturally identifiable variable." (1967) According to Erikson, the child's concept of self develops as his identity emerges with reference to a variety of roles, chief among them being his role as a male (1963) which Fromm considers as being "drilled" in intensively and continuously throughout childhood. (1971).

The development of female identity is approached by Erikson with the following words. He says:

"I think that much of a young woman's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and selectivity for her search for the man. Young women often ask whether they can 'have an identity' before they know whom they will marry and for whom they will make a home." (1963)

In spite of the fact that Erikson believes, according to the above words, that the definition of a woman is made only in terms of a man, his



image of woman is not as "negative" as the other orthodox Freudians. To confirm my point here, I would like to refer to the following words:

"This is not an attempt to 'doom' every woman to perpetual motherhood and to deny her the equivalence of individuality and the equality of citizenship. But since a woman is never not a woman, she can see her long-range goals in the modes of activity which include and integrate her natural dispositions."  
(1963, p. 26)

The gist of the above point is that sexual roles are socially created - that is, as Nancy Reeves says, "Neither providence nor anatomy blueprints them for all time, but rather, they are socially developed." (1971, p. 17) Furthermore, since all societies use sex as a convenient means for assigning adult roles, the socialization process whereby children learn to play adult roles involves their becoming aware of which sex usually performs these roles. This socialization, according to G. Jaffe, literally starts at birth with its proverbial pink or blue blanket that is given to the newborn infant. (1971, p. 467)

#### THE PROBLEM STATED:

Starting with the assumption that because differentiation according to sexes tends to be a universal phenomenon, childhood is the crucial period in which the individual is prepared for his or her role as a male or female in society. Consequently the problem as I see it is:

Is there a differentiation according to the sexes in the socialization of children from eight to twelve years of age among Egyptian families of the middle-class?

I would like to emphasize the point that I have chosen this



particular age group because I feel that it represents the pre-adolescent period in which sexes become more especially differentiated. Prior to this period, children are not clearly segregated and lines of demarcation between the sexes are not sharply drawn.

#### METHODOLOGY:

In this paper, I depended on two techniques of research in investigating the problem - namely, observation and interviews. Observation in this respect is not more than an awakening of the sense of the researcher whereby I can observe what goes on in the society, relevant to my area of study. Yet observation alone cannot give the necessary data for such a research, as it tends to give more of a superficial view than an in-depth one. Furthermore, one has to keep in mind that even if the researcher tries to notice everything, he cannot. There are those events that he might miss because they happen while he is not observing, or because of their intimate nature. Therefore a complementary technique has to be used. In this study I used interviews. Benjamin Paul believes that interviewing is an indirect means of observation. The combined use of these two techniques are, to him, the means of providing better perspective. (1953, p. 438)

An approach using observation, complemented by interviews has the advantage of providing both an objective and a subjective view of the situation. It tends to achieve what Benjamin Paul means when he considers that the researcher aims to gather and state two sets of data: a description of the situation as he sees it from the outside, and as the informant sees it from the inside. The outside view is that provided by observation, while



the inside view is provided by interviews. (1953, p. 447)

A. THE INTERVIEWS:

My previous experience with interviews has revealed to me that for an interview to yield valid data, it is better to be partially structured, particularly unstructured. Consequently, I followed the same method in this research. By "structured" I mean that I had certain issues in mind which formed the basis of my questions. If the answers of an informant were suggestive of a certain point which had not occurred to me but which added knowledge to my data, I pursued this point according to its relevance to the research. This is the "unstructured" aspect of the interview.

The major issues of the interview questions will be included in the appendix.

Peter Mann considers that an interview is a form of human interaction and may range from the most informal "chat" to the most carefully precoded and carefully systematized set of questions and answers laid out on an interview schedule. (1968, p. 92) Relevant here is the point that I would rather keep my interviews informal for the sole purpose of providing an atmosphere of ease around both informant and interviewer, and hence a relaxed informant would be more willing to talk and more ready to cooperate. As Peter Mann describes it, the informal interview does not have the amount of direct questioning that could give an interview the air of a lawyer and witness relationship. (1968, p. 46)



B. THE CHOICE OF INFORMANTS:

But who are my informants? The answer is the parents. In other words, I interviewed eight fathers and eight mothers who represent eight families. The choice of the parents depended on the following criteria:

1. The parents must have children from both sexes
2. They must come from Islamic middle class families.
3. The parents must not be separated or divorced.

No one single parent of a child was interviewed, but both parents of the same child were interviewed to give a clear picture of the situation. Yet, I chose to interview them separately so as to avoid any influence from either side.

I believe that at this point I need to clarify certain issues. The first one is raised by the question, "why especially the choice of parents for a study on socialization?" I need not emphasize the role of the family as the main socializing agent in the first years of a child's life. C. Jaffe believes that although it is generally agreed that sex role socialization is everywhere, certain institutions are of course more crucial in the cultural transmission of these expectations than others. Two of the most centrally involved agencies in the sex role socialization of the young are the family and the schools. (1971, p. 467) Samiha Sedhoum considers that the first agent of socialization is the family, whether extended or nuclear. However, as the child grows up, his peer group becomes the second agent. (1967, p. 4) Likewise, Parsons believes that before puberty the family's role in socialization is crucial. After puberty, the community at large plays the most important part in the



process of socialization. (1968, p. 216)

The importance of the parents as socializing agents is approached by Ostrovsky through his belief that they play a significant part in the child's emotional growth, in the evolution of his sense of values, and in his conception of himself and of his future role in life. With respect to the boy, he sees that for reasons of identification the boy should have an understanding of his father's role and a well-rounded conception of the male figure on which to pattern his behavior. When he studied boys whose fathers were dead or absent for long periods, this identification was necessarily lacking, hence creating psychological problems for the boy. (1959, p. 8)

Because the parents are the ones who bear the major burden of socializing the young, and because the age range of the children under study falls within the preadolescent period, the parents are the informants best fit to provide me with valid data on how they - the main socializing agent - "gear" the process of socialization with respect to their children by virtue of their proximity and influence.

The fact remains, however, that the socialization of children, to be studied, requires intensive observation whereby the researcher can really get at the way in which parents socialize their children - which represents the aim of the study. Consequently, this research does not study socialization as such, but in fact, it aims to get at the attitudes of the parents towards socialization. The rationale here is the fact that the data yielded by the interviews represents the ideal data but not necessarily the actual data, and hence the reliability of the



research will be greatly reduced. What parents say they do is not what they actually do. Many factors may interfere here to influence their answers. In short, since his research does not depend on observation as a major technique but instead uses interviews, the aim of the study is not Socialization as such but the parental attitudes vis-a-vis Socialization, especially as the parents are the source of information.

The second issue is that relating to the choice of families from among the middle class. The criteria I set for "middle class" are:

1. education of father: a university degree  
(B.A. or equivalent)
2. education of mother: a high school certificate  
or equivalent
3. income of family : approximately 50 L.E.  
per month.
4. a flat rent of about 10-15 L.E. per month.

#### THE MIDDLE CLASS:

This group represents Egypt's middle class. In Janet Abul Lughod's view, the middle class "is undergoing the most drastic social change of any group in the city, and yet the areas of its domain virtually escape notice, so overshadowed are they by the extremes of modernism and medievalism that tend to monopolize the observer's eye." (1969, pp. 179-180)

My choice of this group in particular tends to confirm Abul Lughod's words when she says:



"If one wished to study the future of Cairo and, indeed, the future of Egypt itself, one could find no more crucial laboratory than these 'grey areas' in which both rural and traditional roots are fast being exchanged for the future promised by the Revolution. The dreams being nurtured here, the pains that are being felt as the price of change and the conflicts that are being resolved even now by the group most buffeted by the cross-currents and pressures alive in Cairo today, preview those which will beset more and more Egyptians as their society is transformed by modernization. These zones are transitional in more than a physical sense." (1969, p.180)

The families under study come from the above-mentioned "grey areas" of Cairo. These are Abbasseyah, Ghamrah, Hadayek El Kubbah, and Sakakini.

It would be feasible to refer in this respect to Joseph Kahl's description of the middle class members as "the people who seldom make basic decisions about their work, yet carry out the instructions of others with intelligence, technical understanding, and considerable initiative." The central value orientation of this group is respectability. Its members accept many of the career values of the upper-middle class, and are constantly striving to get ahead. (1957, p. 203) Such striving can be seen in the strenuous and unrelenting push which members of this group exert to motivate their children to study their lessons. Marroe Berger highlights this point with relation to the Arab world by considering that the striving which the middle class pupil exhibits is driven by socially adaptive forms of anxiety learned in his class world. (1962, p. 468)

One would assume that members of this group will, to maintain such a value orientation - namely, respectability - strongly uphold to traditional values to the point that may go beyond those of upper or



lower class members. In other words, sometimes members of this group may seem more "traditional" than the traditional group in society. However, one must not forget that the group under study is one that has its roots in the traditional elements of society. It is the group which represents the second or third generations of migrants from the countryside, and if we agree with Abul Lughod that the urban economic structure helps to sustain traditionalism within Cairo, we need to keep in mind that the equally potent force of migration tends to maintain the elements of traditionalism in the city, helping to infuse it afresh with ruralism.

The gist of the above presentation is that the members of the group under study, being from the middle class, have their roots in traditionalism. I believe that it is necessary, at this point, to define certain terms in order to give a clear understanding of their use in this paper.

#### TRADITIONAL, MODERN, AND TRANSITIONAL:

The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences defines traditionalism as the naive conservatism of individuals, who desire only to live and die as their fathers lived and died and who therefore recoil from any radical social transformation." (Vol. XV, p. 67)

In this paper I use the term "traditional" to refer to those families in which there is, among other features, a rigid sex role differentiation, the concern with sex roles being the relevant issue in this research. The lines between the sexes are clearly and strictly



demarcated in this family. Consequently, the socialization of its children proceeds along lines which tend to keep these demarcations clearly separate, with the females placed in a subservient status.

On the other hand, the term modern is used to refer to those families where sex roles are not clearly set apart - in fact, the limits of each sex tend to fade into those of the other. This family has no hard and fast lines drawn around each sex, but unlike the traditional family, these lines of demarcation are quite vague.

These two categories represent two ends of a continuum along which families are placed. Midway between the two extremes, there lie those families which I call "transitional" and which are actually moving from one end, the traditional, to the other which is modern. They thus still retain certain aspects of the traditional family, but are changing others on their way to the modern one. As has already been mentioned, it is my assumption that the members of the group under study are of the transitional type and hence by virtue of their being in this group, they would necessarily represent some aspects which are traditional and others which are modern, in this respect limiting those aspects to sex role differentiation as the relevant issue under study. Such people who are springing from traditional roots and have been socialized along traditional lines - how do they socialize their own children? Does their idea of socialization reflect modern attitudes, or do they uphold to the same traditional values by which they, as children, had been socialized, or still, is their idea of socialization midway between the two extremes?



It seems plausible to pause here a while to give a brief historical sketch of the change in the Egyptian family which is highly significant to the understanding of the parental attitudes towards the socialization of children, socialization in this respect being a major aspect of the family.

The following section includes the results of two studies made by the writer of this thesis which highlight important points on the change in the Egyptian family with special reference to the change in the status of women. The first paper investigated "The Value of Education in the World View of Upper-Class Egyptian Women" (1972) and the other studied "The Changing Role of the Egyptian Woman" (1974). A third research work was made by Soha Abdel Kader in the Social Research Center, Cairo, in 1973, and its results likewise add to the picture.

#### THE EGYPTIAN FAMILY:

Studies of the family in the Arab world in general have been more numerous than studies on the topic of childhood, children, and child rearing in this area of the world, the latter being extremely limited in number and scope. Studies of the family, however, are mostly part of general descriptions of the Middle-East as a whole, few of them being wholly devoted to the family.

##### A. THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY:

The traditional Egyptian home is of the patrilocal type. The



family is patrilineal and extended, where sons marry and continue to live with their parents, adding to the household the new members of their family - wives and children. Such a family is strictly patrilocal, and the womenfolk continue to occupy a subordinate position in the household. Consequently, the birth of a son is greatly welcomed. Goode describes how an Arab mother rejoices at the birth of a son. He says:

"Aside from the expected love of a mother for her son, she has some reason to find in him a major center of her being. By producing a son, the woman helped to build up her husband's house, both symbolically and in fact (since a son became part of her husband's work force). She was unlikely to be divorced if she bore a son, and he represented her primary link with her husband's line." (1970, p. 143)

It follows, therefore, that the birth of a daughter is no happy event, and at one time, the girls were buried alive at birth in some parts of the Arab world. Though the practice ceased to be done with the advent of Islam, the accompanying attitude remained.

Polygyny is allowed in the Islamic world, religion here being used as a justification. In traditional homes polygyny is common, especially in rural areas, and the children of the different wives live together in the same household, either in peace or in conflict, as in most cases. Males reign supreme in this world, but females are not altogether deprived of decision-making. Within the domestic sphere, they can exercise sufficient authority. Robin Fox believes that from her hearth, the woman exercises enormous influence. (1967) The home is her ultimate domain, whereas the man is the breadwinner. Segregation is the rule and the sexes do not mix freely.



## B. THE MODERN FAMILY

On the other hand, the modern Egyptian family represents various changes. No longer do present urban conditions allow for the residence of the extended family in one place. Neither does modern urban design allow for that. When sons marry, therefore, they seek separate residence and the household includes parents and unmarried children only. Sometimes, however, sons tend to seek residence near their parental homes, and one sees that members of the same patrilineal line tend to cluster in the same neighborhoods. Such a phenomenon, of course, is reminiscent of the traditional patrilocal type of residence, however in modified form.

Females still occupy a subordinate position and male children are still highly valued. Segregation is not the rule and the sexes mix rather freely, though certain rules still control such mixing - e.g., in sleeping arrangements. Polygyny is less common than in the traditional family, and many Egyptian writers tend to explain this phenomenon in economic terms. It is common to hear people saying that houses today are small, and one has to have two separate houses for the two wives, but "nobody can afford to do this nowadays."

The men are still the breadwinners, and the womenfolk of the household are responsible for domestic work. Such a division of labor between the sexes, though still existing, has been slightly modified, because the woman in the modern family goes out to work. It must be understood, however, that the modern female has not discarded her role at home, once she has come to hold a job outside the home, but in fact, she has added to it



the responsibility of this job. From the traditional point of view, this is greatly rejected, because the economic aspect of the marriage was seen as the concern of the man and never the woman. Dr. Laila El Hamamsy gives an explanation of this point in "The Changing Role of The Egyptian Woman" she says in presentation of the traditional outlook.

"The inherent value and dignity of work has not always been axiomatic in Egypt. There was a time when a man who did not need to work for his living had greater prestige than the one who did. It followed that the man who could provide for his female dependents had greater prestige and self-respect than the man who allowed them to share in his financial responsibilities through outside work." (1965, p. 599 in Readings in Arab Middle Eastern Societies and Cultures.)

Such a change in outlook, however, may be traced to the great value which has recently been attributed to education in general, and to the education of females in particular. Dr. Hamamsy comments in this respect, "The most important factor, perhaps that has changed the role of the Egyptian woman is education. The feminists of Egypt - both men and women - have been aware from the start of the significance of education in developing within women a new concept of self which would make them insist upon equality with men, and also in offering women a means for social and economic independence." (1965, p. 598)

In highlighting the change with respect to the education of women and thus their participation in the working force of Egypt, I would like to refer to the census of 1971 which shows that the number of female students at the Cairo University was 14494 at that time, while that of 1966 was 10646 and that of 1954 was 2092 only. (The Statistical Abstract of the United Arab Republic, 1972). Likewise H. Badran found out that



women in Egypt constituted approximately 50% of the economically active age group in 1972. In the census of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics of 1969, female workers were 20,495 in number in Cairo in 1957; 27,614 in 1960; 40,059 in 1964; and 49,141 in 1967. (1972)

A study of the Egyptian family is therefore closely related with the emancipation of women in Egypt. It must be remembered that the Egyptian woman used to be hidden behind a veil until an active movement began to encourage her to discard the veil at the turn of the century. The dominant figure behind the emancipation of women in Egypt was Kassem Amin whose efforts receive primary credit in this respect. The veil came to be symbolic not only of the woman's subservient status but also of her inability to take an active part in Society, especially as she had previously been deprived of the right to be educated and practically "locked up" within the home. When the Egyptian woman became unveiled, she started to ask for rights which she had never dared to mention previously. Along with the unveiling, therefore, came a new awareness of self as the "active half of society," and a demand for the right to be educated. But of course, the forces of traditionalism were strong against such new ideas, and it took her long to establish herself on the practical level as "the active half of society," although theoretically many voices had been raised in this respect long before that.

Yet the question remains - Has the Egyptian woman really been emancipated? Naturally the answer to this question does not lie within



the scope of this research, but I believe that some aspects of it have been highlighted during its course.

One aspect of the woman's emancipation can be felt in the change of the attitude of the parents with respect to the children's marriage, and especially with respect to the girls. In the traditional families, arranged marriages are the rule; and the girl has no say in the matter, because the parents know better. Yet Islam, the religion to which such families, strongly uphold, does not deny the girl the right to choose her partner in marriage. The modern family, on the other hand, allows the children the freedom to choose their partners in marriage. The girl can now choose her future husband, or at least can have a say in the matter. Such a change is significant because the parents who had been themselves the victims of arranged marriages very willingly now allow their daughters the freedom to choose their husbands. One has reason here to reflect - Has the Egyptian family changed because the modern family now starts on a basis different from the one on which the traditional family starts? Or has the basis on which a new family starts changed because the relations within the family have changed? Or still further, is it a vicious circle in which one aspect is tied to the other and vice versa? I believe that the last point seems to be the most plausible, and hence the effect of change extends to the different aspects of the family both in terms of relations and the basis on which it starts.

Relevant to the choice of mate is the age at which girls marry. Up till one decade ago, the typical age of marriage was sixteen years.



Today girls marry at a later age. This change is explained with reference to the education of girls. Because now a girl goes to university to be educated, she does not marry before she graduates, and sometimes even not before she has a job. The modern Egyptian family thus has daughters which marry at later ages than the daughters of the traditional family, but this does not negate the fact that there are many exceptions to this rule.

The early age at which girls in traditional families marry is closely related with the highly-valued chastity of the females. Chastity represents a major concern of the male member of the traditional family. The modern family highly values chastity as well, but the restrictions which are made on the female in the traditional family are loosened in the modern one.

Any discussion of chastity in Egyptian Society necessarily leads to circumcision as an issue. Circumcision of the male consists of cutting away the prepuce or foreskin of the penis for hygienic reasons. This rite has a historical basis in the Middle East. It was practiced by the ancient Egyptians, and the custom may thus have spread to other peoples of the area, especially the Hebrews. Islam retained the rite, although it is not mentioned in the Koran. Furthermore, because the rite has its roots in ancient Egyptian history rather than a religious context, both Muslims and Christians practice it.

The age of male circumcision tends to be around ten years - preferably before puberty. Raphael Patai describes it as having the character of a test of personal courage and endurance, much in the



fashion of initiation ceremonies known from many primitive peoples.  
(1959, p. 201)

The significance of male circumcision is explained by Van Gennep on the basis that the mutilated individual is removed from the common mass of humanity by a rite of separation which automatically incorporates him into a defined group. (1960, p. 72) It reflects a separation from the previous environment, the world of women and children.

In Egypt male circumcision is falsely explained on a religious basis. Yet the fact remains that it is one of the attributes of masculinity in an Egyptian man, and a male who is not circumcized is subject to ridicule. Nowadays many parents prefer to circumcize their sons right after birth, because then the wound can heal more easily.

It may seem irrelevant to discuss male circumcision here, but the above presentation was necessary to differentiate between the rite and its significance as opposed to female circumcision, which is the relevant issue to chastity, as male circumcision is never seen from the perspective of chastity but from that of masculinity.

Female circumcision, having a different purpose from that of male circumcision, consists of removing the clitoris, which is regarded as the center of sexual excitability in women. The main idea behind the whole practice is to ensure premarital chastity, which is an important value in Middle Eastern culture. Van Gennep uses "excision of the clitoris" rather than circumcision and I personally prefer the term because it is more indicative of the practice. With respect to



the cross-cultural significance of the practice, he remarks,

"The length of the clitoris varies with individuals and races. In certain cases, the object of the excision may be to remove the appendage by which the female resembles the male (a view which is correct from an anatomical point of view), and the operation is nothing more than a rite of sexual differentiation on the same order as the first (ritual) assigning of dress, instruments, or tools proper to each sex." (1960, p. 72)

Excision of the clitoris, unlike male circumcision which takes the form of a public ceremony, is carried out in complete secrecy and privacy, but also before the girl reaches puberty. The result is that the sexual desire of the woman is impaired, which leads in most cases to frigidity. The sexual significance of male circumcision, on the other hand, is approached by Pere Marie-Joseph Lagrange and Peter Wilhelm Schmidt as such: "It seems more and more evident among the semicivilized peoples that circumcision was supposed according to their simple and incorrect ideas, to facilitate the reproductive act." Likewise Schurtz believes that the purpose of circumcision is to increase fertility. (from Rites de Passage, 1960, p. 73)

Whereas the traditional family, to ensure the chastity of its girls, subjects them to excision of the clitoris, the modern family has discarded the practice. This is one significant distinction made between the two types of families, because implicit in the cessation of the practice is a different outlook vis-a-vis the status of women. Such an outlook necessarily takes into consideration the right of women to sexual satisfaction, of which she had long been deprived.

We can infer from the above presentation that the Egyptian family, like other aspects of society, has naturally undergone change. This research investigates one area of family life, and as such aims at revealing the degree to which change has affected the area.



## CHAPTER I

### Part I

#### REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

The problem I have chosen is, I feel, significant in Arab culture in general, and in Egyptian culture in particular, as it represents an aspect of considerable weight - namely, the attitudes of parents with respect to the socialization of their children with special reference to sex roles. However, it must be remembered that ethnographic literature on socialization in general is not extensive - in fact, it has been extremely limited. Yet it must be remembered that some works of significance have approached socialization as an area of study. Chief in this respect is Beatrice Whiting's work which represents a classic major study of child rearing and its causes and consequences in six different cultures. (1963). Likewise, J. Whiting and I. Child give a description of the major classic cross-cultural study of child-rearing in Child Training and Personality (1963). They also present a field guide for this research study in Field Guide for a Study of Socialization (1966).

Margaret Mead also presents us with a study of girlhood in a Samoan culture (1928). This work which describes youth in a primitive society has served as a classic scientific study in Socialization. Geertz studied Javanese society from the perspective of family life and as such approached socialization in The Javanese Family. Oscar



Lewis' study of five families in Mexico is another example. In this work Lewis presents us with case studies "in the culture of poverty." His book Five Families is a detailed description of the everyday life of five different families (1959). The most notable modern source for an extended description of the family is Goode in World Revolution and Family Patterns (1970).

In the Arab world, such literature is as yet more limited. The only traditional source in this respect is Ammar's study of Silwa- Growing Up In An Egyptian Village (1954). Hilma Granqvist gives a detailed description of childhood among the Arabs in two books which she calls Birth and Childhood Among the Arabs (1947) and Child Problems Among the Arabs (1950). In H. Ayrout's The Fellahin and Morroe Berger's The Arab World Today, some parts are devoted to socialization as one aspect of ethnographic study. Likewise, all books of ethnography of the Arab world approach socialization in some part, as a relevant issue. Goode's study has a detailed chapter on the Arab world, which serves as an excellent background reading for the other family and village studies.

Edwin T. Prothro in Child Rearing in the Lebanon (1967) uses a large urban and smaller rural sample of various class, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Group and class comparisons are made for the Lebanese groups and cross-cultural comparisons with American findings are also highlighted. This book represents the only study of this type.

Dr. Nawal El Saadawy, in her book Women and Sex in Egyptian Society strongly attacks the outlook that "anatomy is destiny" through a presentation of how Arab society in general, and Egyptian society in



particular, socializes its females by virtue of their being the inferior group in society, more so of a caste, in comparison to male superiority (1971).

More limited studies have been reported in periodicals. C. Jaffe writes about "Sex Role Socialization and the Nursing School" (1971). Weitzman and others also present a similar study in "Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children" (1972). Aldous studied "Children's Perception of Adult Role Assignment" (1972). M. Hamadani and B. Abu Laban studied "Game Involvement and Sex Role Socialization in Arab Children" (1971).

A study that was carried out by a student of the American University, Cairo was presented as a master's thesis under the title "The Process of Socialization in a Bedouin Family." (Samiha Sedhoum, 1967)

## Part II

### DIFFICULTIES IN FIELD WORK

Field work is not an easy task. It is not simply imposing oneself upon a group of people which one chooses to study; in fact, it is a more complicated job which involves a variety of aspects, and in which each aspect represents one of many problems. I believe that the very first problem that a researcher encounters is that of how he comes to be defined by those he chooses to study, especially when the main research technique depends on interviews. According to this definition, they



either accept him or reject him. The theme of "being accepted" by the interviewees is a common preoccupation of researchers. According to Benjamin Paul, there is no prescription for being accepted by the interviewees. He believes that the field worker defines his own role; in part it is defined for him by the situation and outlook of the interviewees. (1953, p. 40) In my case, such an outlook was definitely colored by my being an Egyptian member of the female sex who, sometimes, had to deal with sensitive matters. The difficulty of being a female researcher has been commonly discussed by woman researchers. In Women In The Field various woman researchers present us with the different experiences they encountered, as females, during the course of their research work. Consequently the main issue here is: How the interviewees would define the role of a woman researcher determines whether they would accept her or reject her. Some feel that their sex is a hindrance to their field work; others believe it is a great help. Between the two views the fact remains that a woman researcher is first and foremost identified as a female, and hence either an advantage or a disadvantage to her research.

One view is presented by Laura Thompson as a result of her field work with the American Indians. She says, "If there were disadvantages in being a woman, I was not really aware of them. In fact, being a woman seemed to me in this and other field jobs to be a positive asset. The experience reinforced my preconception that anthropology is one profession in which women are indispensable." (1941, p. 61) Peggy Golde confirms the same view and believes that her being a female



counterbalanced the natives' mistrust of her. (1959, p. 79)

The other side of the picture, however, is presented by Ann Fischer when she says,

"It is difficult for the woman field worker to adopt a womanly role in a culture in which women are subservient to men. This problem is accentuated if there is no academic tradition that allows a scholarly role for women." (1965, p. 27)

#### THE FEMALE "WE" SOLIDARITY:

My own field experience falls midway between the two views. Sometimes, I felt my sex being—as Laura Thompson calls it—"a positive asset." At other times, it was a real hindrance to the progress of my research work.

In the first place, I could gain access to the women's world through the "we" solidarity which helped win for me the mothers' confidence. Being a woman, talking to another woman was a kind of "open sesame" to the hearts of many mothers. They found it a chance to talk out their inner feelings, and I felt that this was a chance to make them "think aloud" what they have been undergoing for years. One mother frankly said to me, "you know something, I have been living with my husband and children for years, doing certain things, and dealing with them in a particular way, but I never stopped to think of it. Having talked it out with you I feel that maybe I am depriving my daughters of many of their rights at the expense of their brother." This is the mother who has three daughters and the last child is the boy. She is



the one who, in her own words "had to go through three daughters to have a son." She further frankly admitted that now she feels secure that her husband would not think of taking another wife to bear him a son. Here we can refer to Goode's words with respect to the security the birth of a son gives to the mother (1970). It is relevant to mention at this point that the wife of the Upper Egyptian whose health prevented from having another child greatly lacked this sense of security, because she knew quite well that her husband was eager to have another son. She frankly admitted to me that she was willing to do anything to have a child and she whispered softly, "I have seen many shaykhs for this reason, and I even have a hegab (an amulet) hidden inside my clothes, but I don't want him to see it. I want to keep this whole matter of children out of his mind."

Once can thus say that no resentment was shown on the part of the mothers and they soon talked freely. Yet the rapport that was established between us - the mothers as interviewees and myself as an interviewer - was no easy task at first. Three mothers considered me probing into their private worlds and thus resented my bold intrusion at first. These were: the mother of the twins (the third family), the wife of the upper Egyptian (the sixth family), and the mother of the three daughters and the only son (the fifth family). It took me a great effort to explain quietly that my work is not to be published in any newspaper or magazine - that is, it is no public work. On the contrary, the secrecy of the subjects is highly guaranteed, and no names will be written. They thus relented, however, at the expense of some wasted



time and much wasted effort on my part. The subject that was too willing to talk freely to the point that made us deviate from the main subject when discussion was the mother that feared the envy of her sisters-in-law. It seems that this is a favorite subject to her, so she kept returning to it over and over again and giving me more details than was necessary, sometimes delving deep into the private relations between her and her husband, but always talking freely with no restrictions on her use of words. She was always repeating, "I liked you the first moment I saw you. I feel you're a sister to me, so I can tell you everything." She was keen to insist that I come back to visit her again, not necessarily for work, but for an "informal chat." The friendliness this subject showed was not common to the rest, as she represented an extreme case to the point of kissing me good-bye when I left. Frankly I can say that her attitude is not due to an extra skill on my part, but to the kind of personality she has - outgoing, introvert. She could have done the same with any other researcher, provided she is a female. This mother, I felt, just wanted to "talk out" many things, and she found in me a good listener.

#### THE SOCIAL WORKER STEREOTYPE:

Although research work in the social field is not an old tradition in Egypt, it has been carried out for long years. Somehow it has come to be linked with social works. Consequently, a researcher has to



make clear that his job is not the same as a social worker. My own field experience showed me that there are middle-class Egyptians who still define the role of a researcher within the scope of social work. The wife of the Upper Egyptian was constantly asking me advice on how to keep her husband from marrying another one, believing that I was there to find an answer to her problem. The words "What do you think?" were also constantly repeated by many subjects during the conversation. All mothers, without exception, when they first met me, believed I was a social worker, studying family problems to help find an answer to each. As a result, I was very careful to explain that I was not there for this purpose but that my job was a different one namely, to study their attitudes towards socialization. On a second visit to one of the families to interview the father, the daughter who is thirteen years old announced me to her parents as "the social worker."

#### WOMAN VIS-A-VIS MAN IN AN INTERVIEW

In "The Woman Field Worker in a Purdah Society," Papanek states that she believes that being a woman in the field is an advantage because she can gain entry to the world of local men and women alike, whereas a man's role would be more rigidly defined. (1964, p. 160) Laura Nader adds to the picture by saying that she was respected as a woman who was different from the local women. Consequently," she adds, "I had access to both men and women's cultures.



No man, even if he was considered different from the local men would have had access to women's culture equal to mine to the men's culture." (1967, p. 114)

My own experience in the field, however, greatly negates the above words. Much as the men tried to be polite with me, they showed great resistance during the interviews, especially when we were discussing such sensitive matters as menstruation, homosexuality, and the like. All fathers without exception were very reluctant to talk when I asked them about their daughters' menstruation. They looked at me askance and one frankly said, "These are very sensitive matters. What do they have to do with your study?" The rest almost unanimously agreed that such matters were no concern of theirs and that they were left to the mothers, but I could feel that behind their words was the feeling that they resented my questions because it was not decent for a woman to discuss such matters with a man. This made me wonder - if I were a man, would the men have talked more freely to me than they do now? The Upper Egyptian especially showed the most resentment. His attitude reminded me of Helen Codere's experience when she tried to establish herself in a community where an anti-feminist attitude prevailed among the men. She says in her description of an assistant who was chosen to help her and he expressed every kind of hostility towards her:

"He despised women. For him even Tutsi women were a lower order of life, and working for me was so impossible for him that he must have set a record for absenteeism and contemptuously improbable excuses." (1959-60, p. 153)

With slight modifications the above words could apply to the



Upper Egyptian husband, because although he was not working for me, as the assistant was for Codere, he made me feel he was doing me a favor by accepting to be interviewed by me, and I had to call at their house twice before he accepted to be interviewed. Furthermore, at times I used to feel that his attitude towards me was almost disrespectful. I came to understand it better as, during the interview he showed his contempt for a girl who goes to university and worse, for one who works. To him, this is immoral, because then the woman mixes freely with men, which is against the teachings of religion. I had to pull the words out of him, and the worst moment came when I asked him whether his daughter was circumcized or not. I felt then that he was about to hit me, but he said, "Should we talk about these matters?" When I insisted, he gave me his answer, throwing the words at me.

The least resistance came from the father of the twins (the third family.) He was more willing to talk freely than any of the other seven fathers - even more willing than his wife. I explained his attitude on the basis that he was the one who gave more time and care to his children than the mother, and thus he was closer to their affairs than her, even the private ones. Therefore he found no problem in discussing his daughter's menstruation or her chastity. It is important to mention here that he is the one who believed that his daughter must not have as many restrictions as his wife lays on her, but that she must be made free to learn for herself. In this respect he is unique among the eight fathers. Relevant here is the attitude of the Upper Egyptian when I asked him about how much freedom does he give to his daughter. He gave



me a meaningful look and answered bluntly, "No freedom whatsoever. A girl is controlled by her feelings and so she is more likely to go astray."

In between the two extremes - the Upper Egyptian on the one hand with his hostile attitude towards me and the father of the twins with his willingness to discuss freely - come the remaining six fathers - whose attitude can be said to be midway between the other two. However, the fact remains that the mothers were easier to respond than the fathers. Maybe the explanation here lies in the fact of my being a wife and mother and introducing myself to them as such to guarantee at least some emotional identification with me on their part.

It would seem advisable, therefore, if future research is carried in similar areas, to provide joint work where a woman researcher approaches the women and a man researcher approaches the men. In this way, more reliable data can be yielded, as the obstacle of resistance on the part of the men can be overcome and better rapport can be established between members of the same sex.

#### THE ACTUAL VERSUS THE IDEAL:

The interviewee who is resistant to give information or in some way holds it back represents but one problem that a researcher might come across during his field work. There is also the problem of lying. One must of course, keep in mind that an interviewee may



at one time, not tell the truth. The idea of his lying or his denying is in itself illustrative of a relevant issue. Benjamin Paul provides three means by which a researcher can check the accuracy of an item of information: (1953, p. 447)

- (1) Through observation
- (2) Through other informants
- (3) Through the self-consistency of the original informant.

With respect to the last point, the informant may lie at first, but given a favorable opportunity, he may make his own retractions and hence provide a valid item of information. It is for this reason that Vidich and Bensman believe that the anthropologist acts as both a detective and researcher. (1960, p. 354)

Why would an informant lie? Daniel Katz believes that if an informant does not tell the truth, this gives knowledge of his perspective. Does he have reason to lie? In this case, there arises the necessity for further exploration. (1953, p. 70) I would further like to add that if the accuracy of the informant is checked either by observation or through other informants, and his information is not confirmed, it is then illustrative of the fact that a discrepancy between the actual and the ideal can be detected.

In most cases I could feel such a discrepancy among my interviewees. In the first place, it was very obvious that they were eager to give me the ideal data more than the actual. This appeared in their tendency to idealize what their children did. For example one mother



would talk of how well her daughter, aged fourteen, cooked. Another mother was sure to point out how "manly" her son, aged fourteen acted. "He is a man in every sense of the word." The Upper Egyptian father admitted confidently that he was sure that his son would make a great man the way he is bringing him up, and that all his wife's worries of spoiling the child have no basis. "The boy is of good stock, and he cannot be bad."

#### CONTRADICTIONS:

Naturally there was no way to detect such discrepancy save using common sense, to follow Schutz. Sometimes, however, the interviewee himself presented his own contradictions - that is, he would say one thing and then later contradict himself. For example, the mother in the first family kept repeating over and over again that women are now equal to men, equal in receiving the same kind of education and in getting the same jobs. However, when asked if her son helped with the housework, she cried, shocked, "He's a man! How do you think he would feel if he washed clothes or something like that! No, no, a man is a man and he has to feel that."

The mother in the second family also contradicted herself during the interview. She insisted that there is no difference between boy and girl. All are equal now. However, she was sure to emphasize that the elder son, aged four, showed his manliness by feeling responsible for his sister and accompanying her out. She can never



go out alone. Her words thus implied an inferior status pertaining to the girl and a dependency on the male, hence assuming inequality.

Likewise, the father in the eighth family said he is liberal-minded and he believes that there is no difference between the sexes and he brings up his children as such - a boy and a girl. But he admitted during the interview that a girl must be handled with care at her father's home simply because in the future she will be "under the command" of a husband who might not give her good care or treatment. "Girls are weak. They have, as we say 'broken wings' and men have the upper hand, whether we admit it or not. The man is the master."

Another point worthy of consideration is the fact that a discrepancy could be felt between the husband's words and those of his wife. In one case, for example - this is the father who has one son, while his brothers all have girls - the father said proudly that his brothers who have no male children all love his son and consider him as their son, "and even more." Their wives too are very kind to him and he likes to spend hours at their homes. The mother, however, said that the uncles openly express their hatred to the boy and are very harsh with him. Likewise, their wives are unkind to the boy and even cruel and he does not bear to stay with them. She explains this kind of treatment on the basis of envy.

The father in the second family, likewise, said he does not beat his children - in fact, he does not like to inflict any kind of



physical punishment on them, because they are "good children" who know how to obey their parents. The mother, on the other hand, complained that her husband beats the children cruelly, although she does not like that and she believes that this is the wrong way to bring them up, especially as he beats them sometimes for trivial matters.

I believe that such a discrepancy could well have been clarified if I had had the chance to interview the children. This would have served as a good test for the parents' words. In general, however, the mothers' words were consistent with the fathers', save for the two above-mentioned cases, and hence the reliability of the data was not affected to the point of hindering the research.

#### LANGUAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF MEANING:

It is common belief that a foreigner can have a better perspective of a certain society than does a native, for the latter takes for granted the various aspects of his society. A native has grown into one culture, has lived among one group of people, has learned to accept one type of institutions. As a result, he has come to accept his society and culture as a matter of fact. A foreigner, on the other hand, comes to an alien culture with his own background and thus can see this culture with a foreigner's eye, one that is keen to probe into its hidden aspects. Furthermore, he can have better guess to situations where a native cannot. He seems to have a certain "carte blanche" by virtue of his role as a foreigner, and further as an anthropologist to get acquainted with



the different aspects of one culture, where he can form a clear, thorough picture of this society.

Contrary to this belief, I am inclined to believe that a native is able to comprehend his culture more fully than does a foreigner. True enough the different aspects of his culture are no novelty to him, because he has come to take them for granted. Yet being born into a culture, having absorbed its institutions, he is much more able to interpret its meaning than does a foreigner.

The difference between working in one's own society and in one that is foreign provides a basic point of departure in the concerns of research work. It lays the foundations for the conditions within which the researcher's perceptions and interpretations take on meaning. Cicourel approaches this problem with the following words:

"The sociologist who limits his work to his own society is constantly exploiting his personal background of experience as a basis of knowledge. He can be assured of successful communication only because he is dealing in the same language and symbolic system as his respondents." (1964, p. 40)

Cicourel's words now bring us to the problem of language, as the importance of language in research can never be underestimated. An anthropologist who is both native and researcher stands a better chance of having a more thorough understanding of a culture than an anthropologist who is communicating with a different tongue. Understanding a language is more than just understanding the denotation of words. Goodenough's view states that the aspect of meaning to be dealt with is significant as distinct from connotation. (1956, p. 196) Connotation then is of utmost importance.



It follows that my being a native of the culture under study facilitated greatly my communication with the interviewees. The expressions, sayings, and idioms they used were no source of trouble to me with respect to understanding. However the problem appeared when the necessity to translate the interviews into English arose, as naturally all interviews were carried on in Arabic. I chose the Arabic language for the interviews for two reasons: In the first place, the problem of meaning; secondly, most of the subjects neither talked nor understood English properly to the degree of comprehension in the conversation. It appears therefore from the last reason that I had no choice, and I had to carry the conversation in Arabic.

Now the difficulty arose with translation, and I felt I was facing the same problem an anthropologist has when he studies a foreign culture - namely, adjusting the meanings of one language to those of another. Language is not only a means of communication; it is also a way of perceiving and classifying the world of experience - in fact, it shapes an individual's experience. "Complete semantic equivalence is a statistical fiction," remarks Herbert Philips in "The Problems of Translation and Meaning in Field Work." "The fundamental problem is not translating language but translating culture." (1960, p. 268) Likewise Cicourel believes that "those who have worked in non-Western societies and languages will attest to the difficulty encountered in adjusting their meanings to the common meanings of the society investigated." (1964, p. 40)



Consequently the problem of meaning made me, most of the times, translate literally to help maintain the same meaning of the words said by the interviewee. I even kept some of the words in their Arabic form and the Glossary will clarify the meaning of those Arabic words which are written in English. Much as I tried not to deviate from the original meaning of the data collected, I would rather have presented it in its native tongue. The fact remains, however, that in spite of the problem of translation, the fact that I am a native speaker of the Arabic language made me enjoy many obvious advantages, chief among them being the ability to win the confidence of the interviewees, free from any mistrust which is usually shown to foreigners, and above all, the ability to explore those areas which are otherwise inaccessible to speakers of a foreign tongue who are not thoroughly acquainted with the minute details of the Arabic language.



## CHAPTER II

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The eight families under study live in middle-class districts. These districts are, as I have previously mentioned: Abbasseyah, Ghamrah, Hadayek El Koubbah, and Sakakini. Furthermore, these families fit into the criteria I set for "middle class" and which are mentioned in the introduction. For matters of simplification, the criteria will be mentioned again. They are:

1. education of father: a university degree (B.A. or equivalent)
2. education of mother: a high-school certificate or equivalent.
3. income of family: approximately 50 L.E. per month.
4. a flat rent of about 10-15 L.E. per month.

The above-mentioned criteria puts the families in the category of mowazzafin or government officials which includes school teachers, minor bureaucrats, and those of similar occupations. The children of the eight families go to public schools - a further status symbol of middle-class members, because such schools offer free education. Upper-class children, on the other hand, are educated in private schools, which are mostly language schools where foreign languages are taught. The fees here are quite expensive, and hence their association with upper-class life style.

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tended to be a government policy as one solution to the problems of overpopulation and traffic jams. It is relevant to mention here that none of the families owns a car.

The four districts where the families live are very similar in physical layout. Each of them has one main road from which spring different side streets and alleys. The districts are overcrowded with people and shops. Everywhere one finds children playing in the streets. Peddlers are always wandering about and the buildings do not in any way reflect an upper class status - in fact, they are old and in no good shape, except for a few new buildings scattered here and there.

The basic feature in these districts is that the modern and the traditional are intimately interwoven - in fact, they are seen to co-exist. The old vegetable and fruit shops, the traditional coffee houses or qahwa baladi are found side by side with the ladies' hair dressers' shops and the clean grocers' with their glass-fronted windows. The inhabitants dress in western clothes, except for a few elderly women who still keep to the galabiya or Arab garment. Some elderly women, too, wear a black coat over their dresses and a black headcover or tarha. This is the traditional costume for urban women which is reminiscent of the old habara or garment which covered the whole body, from head to toe and which had a veil. Sellers, of course, still retain the galabiya, too.

Janet Abu Lughod, in her study of Cairo, concludes that the subareas in the city tend to specialize in accommodating populations with similar social characteristics and needs, levels of income, and styles of living.



(1969, p. 172) The inhabitants of these four areas are mainly clerks, minor bureaucrats, and petty proprietors. One can find many workers as well. Few, if any, of the big proprietors, white collar workers, or what we might call the elite can be found to live in these districts.

Scattered here and there, however, one may find big houses of the old style, surrounded by big gardens. These represent the type of residence typical of the "big" families of thirty to fifty years ago. They are the old stock of the upper class urbans. They lived there at a time when these districts formed the core of upper class society, but because they have become overcrowded, the owners of these houses have moved to the more modern areas of Zamalek, Garden City, or Dokky. Most of these houses are now being pulled down, and new buildings are being built to accommodate for the newer residents of the areas. Of these residents one can say that they represent the urban life most typical of Cairo; it is what J. Abu Lughod calls, "earthy, noisy, gregarious, family-centered, and ambitious for the younger generation." (1969, p. 179)

#### THE FIRST FAMILY:

The first family is made up of the father, mother, and three children: two girls aged eight and fourteen respectively, and a boy aged twelve. The father is a mouazzaf in the Ministry of Finance, being a graduate of the University of Commerce. The mother is a graduate of a high school for girls which specializes in Home Economics.



Few, if any, girls from the upper class go to such schools which prepare the girl to be an efficient housewife, teaching her cooking, sewing, needlework, child-care, etc. The mother does not have a job. All three children go to school. The husband's salary is sixtytwo pounds per month, and this salary represents the only source of income for this family. They live in Abbasseyah in a flat for which they pay ten pounds and fifty piasters each month. This flat consists of three rooms plus the living room. The mother does the housework, and she has no maid to help her with it, because they cannot afford to keep one. The elder daughter gives her the most help, while the other children help too, the least help being asked from the boy.

#### THE SECOND FAMILY:

The second family includes the father, mother, and three children: two boys aged fourteen and twelve respectively, and a girl aged eleven. The father is a graduate of the Faculty of Arts and works as a mouazzaf in the Ministry of Education. This salary is forty pounds per month and he makes an extra twenty pounds (approximately) from visits outside Cairo. It is for this reason that both he and his wife consider him a busy man and he says that the main job of taking care of the children is that of his wife. She, in turn, devotes all her time to her children, as she does not have a job. She reached the level of Thanawiya Amma (The High School Certificate) in her education, but she failed in this last year, and as she was engaged to be married at that time she quit school altogether and stayed at home. Her husband had then refused to let her go on with her



education; he preferred her a housewife. Her parents also agreed with him, and she had to devote herself to her husband and later her children, although she would not have liked to give up her education at that stage. They live in Abbasseyah, and they pay eleven pounds and thirty piasters per month for their flat which is made up of three rooms and the living room. The three children go to school - the two boys go to a preparatory school, while the girl is still in the primary grade. They have no maid to help at home for economic reasons, but the three children share equally in the housework to help the mother.

These two families show great similarity in terms of the attitudes of the parents towards their children. The parents in both families believe that the girl is a great responsibility, and having a daughter these days is a problem, "because times are getting worse and one has to keep his eyes wide open." Consequently, they take great care not to let their daughters go out alone or mix with members of the other sex. The second family especially lays more restrictions, as the father is away most of the time. The father said proudly, "Why then am I married to an educated person?" (She's a high school graduate) He added, "That is why I feel secure about the matter, and I know that she takes good care of my children when I'm away." Furthermore, in this family, the elder boy is seen as "the man of the house" when his father is away and is treated as such. Consequently, this boy's concept of his role as a male has helped shape his behavior within the family and he is allowed to order the other members of the family around in his father's absence. His mother feels proud of him, because he "acts like a man."



THE THIRD FAMILY:

The third family is made up of the father, mother, and twins who are twelve years old. These are not identical, representing differences of sex, height, looks, and rate of growth. The girl is far taller than the boy and she looks to be more mature with respect to physical growth. They go to the same school, which is a school for both boys and girls and are in the same grade. The other two families preferred to have their children in a school where children are of the same sex rather than have them have co-education. This family, however, accepted co-education, "as long as the twins are together. If each one were alone, it would have been different. No co-education." The mother had her Thanawiya Amma before marriage and started one year of higher education in a teacher's Institute but she quit when she was married. She is a little bit weak in health, she says, and that is why the father takes over most of the children's responsibility. The father is a graduate of the Faculty of Arts and works as a mouazzaf in the governorate. His salary is forty-five pounds per month and it is the family's only source of income. They live in Ghamrah in a flat whose rent is twelve pounds per month and which has three rooms and the living room.

This mother is unique in some respects. Of the eight families, she is the one who showed the greatest concern for her daughter's sexuality. She was almost nervous about it. An incident occurred in my presence which greatly aroused my interest. A male friend (or



perhaps a relative) came to visit the family and quite friendly, he bent to kiss the daughter. The girl quickly pulled herself away to the shock of the guest and myself, too, being a spectator. On asking the mother later for an explanation, I felt that I was stepping on some kind of "forbidden territory," but she told me quite nervously that such an act would unnecessarily arouse the girl's sexuality and might even lead her "to do bad things." In other words, she explained, the girl could be used to letting males kiss her and she would not realize how major an act the kiss is. "She has to know that she's not supposed to be kissed by men," the mother said.

The mother further insisted that children of different sexes, although they might be brother and sister, must never be left "behind closed doors." "I take care not to close the door at night," she said quite enthusiastically when she was discussing the sleeping arrangement. "Houses now don't have enough room for separate bedrooms," she added. But the gist of the whole point appeared when she explained, "I never leave them behind closed doors so that I can keep an eye on them, and so that they can feel that there is no privacy."

This family is unique among the sample in one other respect. The father is less willing to make any restrictions on the children. In fact, he is in favor of giving their daughter more freedom than the mother allowed her. "I don't like my daughter to be locked up the way her mother wants her to be," he remarked quite sadly. "I prefer that she goes out alone and learns for herself. I can trust my daughter



because I see that she has a good mind and she is not rash. Her mind is quite mature for her age." In all other families, the situation is wholly reversed, and the father is the one who restricts the girls' freedom, while the mother obeys his orders in this respect, sometimes blindly, but mostly out of conviction, because she, too, shares his beliefs, and above all, believes he knows better.

This family has no maid to help with the housework, and the mother is strictly against hiring one, not for economic reasons as much as for fear of a bad influence. "Maids are very low in their sense of morality," she said, "and I would not bring one at home to teach my children bad things. Every day you hear of maids who are pregnant. It is safer like that." The children help her at home.

#### THE FOURTH FAMILY:

The fourth family is made up of the father, mother, one son aged twelve, and two daughters aged seven and eight respectively. The father is a school teacher who earns forty pounds per month as a regular salary, but he makes an extra twenty to twenty-five pounds per month from private lessons which he gives to pupils at home. Giving private lessons has lately become a predominant phenomenon, to which school teachers in Egypt resort as a way of increasing their income. The father here is a graduate of a Teachers' High Institute. They live in Hadayek El Koubbah in a three-room flat for which they pay ten pounds per month. The mother received her Thanawiya Amma Certificate before marriage, and she does not have a job.



This family is different from the other three families in that it lives close to the husband's family. He has two other brothers, and they all live in the same neighborhood, quite close to each other, almost in the same block of houses. The son of this family is the only male child among the children of these three families, and so he receives special care from all, and a little bit of envy from the two uncles and their wives, as the mother reported to me. Here of course we can refer to the high value of a male child, thus a cause of envy from others, especially those deprived of children in general, or male children in particular. In this case, the two uncles have female children only.

The fact that this family lives in proximity to the husband's family is significant with respect to the factor of socialization. The first three families of my sample said that they live far from the rest of the family. This point is worthy of consideration with respect to the effect of the other members of the family on the socialization of the child, especially if they happen to live quite near to him and thus take part in it. Their role here is important. "They all consider him their son," remarked the father in the fourth family with pride. "He is the representative of our family. He is the bearer of its name." The mother, on the other hand, although feeling proud of him, said, "I am very anxious about my son, because all eyes are directed towards him and I fear it, especially from my brothers-in-law and their wives who have only girls. That is why I don't like my son to stay with them for long."



A point of consideration here in this family is the remark of the mother that she's greatly concerned about her younger daughter because she is fond of boys' games. "I don't want her to develop strong muscles," she remarked sadly. "She will spoil her body in this way. I have tried to make her act as a girl, but she does not like it."

This family hires no maid, but one of the uncles has one, and she occasionally helps with the housework.

#### THE FIFTH FAMILY:

The fifth family is represented by three daughters, aged fifteen, twelve, and ten respectively, a boy of nine, and the parents. The father is a graduate of the Faculty of Law working as a mouazzaf in the Ministry of Agriculture. His salary is approximately forty-five pounds per month, but he makes an extra ten pounds from giving private lessons to primary students at home. He gives lessons in Arabic, Arithmetic, and even, science. They live in a flat of four rooms in Hadayek El Koubbah, for which they pay ten pounds per month. The boy has a special prestige in the family here, by virtue of his being the only male child. This prestige is given to him not only by the parents but by his sisters, too. The mother remarked to me quite frankly, "I had to go through three girls to have him."



THE SIXTH FAMILY:

The sixth family is unique in having its head an Upper Egyptian with all the rigidity and conservative outlook such a person might reflect. One can very well say that he represents a typical picture of the Upper Egyptian in its stereotype. He is a graduate of the Faculty of Agriculture and works in the Ministry of Agriculture. His salary is thirty-five pounds per month and he receives an extra sum of about ten to twenty pounds per month from his land in Upper Egypt, which his family sends after harvest time. He visits his village occasionally but he never takes his family along. Likewise, his parents and sisters never visit Cairo. "They can never live in Cairo," he explains. "Likewise, they will be shocked if they see my wife and children with all their modern appearances - clothes and so on."

This family lives in Sakakini in a flat for which they pay twelve pounds per month and which has four rooms besides the living room. Here there is no problem with respect to the sleeping arrangement, as the family includes only two children - a girl of twelve and a boy of nine. The first four families have problems with the sleeping arrangement because the flats have only three rooms. In this family, however, the problem takes on a different shape. The husband greatly values male children, but he has only one. Consequently, he is very upset. What aggravates the matter is that his wife's health does not allow her to have more children. She is likewise greatly upset and feels insecure, because she knows that her husband greatly desires more children, especially



male ones. They are what he calls "Ezwa" or a source of solidarity and support. Very frankly he remarked to me, "My family - my mother and sisters urge me to marry another wife to bear me sons." However he adds, "I don't want to," and the reason he gives is "I can't afford another one." But he has hopes for the future and he says, "Maybe we can try later on, when she feels better."

In this family the differentiation between the sexes is greatly marked. The girl's freedom is greatly restricted, while the boy has no restrictions whatsoever on his freedom. Likewise, although he is younger, he receives twice as much pocket money as his sister. The father rationalizes this point by saying, "I'm following al Shara' (religious law) the male has twice as much as the female. These are God's words."

The girl in this family is the only girl in the whole sample who was circumcized. This act was done on the father's orders. "It is necessary for a girl to be circumcized. All our Upper Egyptian girls are, and I don't like these modern ideas. God and religion have said that the woman is lacking in mind and religion, so we can't contradict this. I'm protecting my daughter."

As of the boy he says, "He's the bearer of my name - of my family name. Without him, I'll just die and be forgotten, and no memory of me will be left." Consequently, he believes that the boy has to be tough to know how to take care of his "Harem" or womenfolk. It follows that his word has to be obeyed by his sister, although he is younger than her.



"I scold her if she does not obey him. If he does not start to assert himself now, he never will."

One other point which is worthy of consideration here is the father's unwillingness to let his daughter go on with her education up to university level. "I can't have the girl sit side by side with a boy," are his words. "Also what is she going to do with her degree? She had better busy herself with something more useful to her - sewing, embroidery, or something like that." He is different in this respect because all other fathers are greatly enthusiastic about their children's university education, both boys and girls. It is true that they showed more concern about the boys, but they all had hopes for their daughters to complete their education at the university and then have a job. We may refer in this respect to the above mentioned increasing value attributed to education of girls and to which Dr. Hamamsy refers. This value is further seen in the modern Egyptian family as opposed to the traditional one. The father in this family, therefore, tends more towards traditionalism, both in value orientation and in actual practice, and thus one can feel the conflict within him in the face of a changing world.

#### THE SEVENTH FAMILY:

The seventh family is the family of a school teacher who graduated from the Teacher's High Institute. He earns forty pounds per month and makes more money from private lessons - a sum of about fifteen pounds per month. He has two children, a boy of thirteen and a girl of ten. They



live in Hadayek El Koubbah in a three-room flat, excluding the living-room, for which they pay twelve pounds per month.

In this family, the role of the grandmother is quite significant. She is the mother's mother and lives next door to the family. She had had the responsibility of bringing up the first child, the boy, for seven years before his parents took him over, because the father was working in a village where there was no electricity or clean water, and so the parents could not keep the child with them. Now the problem arose when the parents took back the child. They accused the grandmother of having spoilt him, while she accused them of giving more love and care to the second child, the girl. As a result, the socialization of the child is a source of clash between the grandmother on one side and the parents on the other. This is the only family, among the eight families, where the role of a member of the grandparent generation is felt in the socialization of the children.

#### THE EIGHTH FAMILY:

The eighth family lives in Abbasseyah in a large flat of five rooms for which the family pays ten pounds per month. This large flat used to belong to the mother's father, and being the only child, she lived with her parents after her marriage. But quite different from the seventh family, this family has not felt the role of any member of the grandparent generation, because the grandfather had died before his daughter's marriage and her mother continued to live with her for three years after her



marriage. This means that she died when the first child was two years old, and thus her role in the household left no obvious trace on him, as he had only been in the infant stage. If she had lived, however, the situation might have been different, because this is the only family of the sample in which the grandmother lived in the same household.

This family includes only two children, besides the parents, a boy of thirteen, and a girl of eight. The father is a graduate of the Faculty of Arts, and he works in an administrative job in the Agricultural Museum. His salary is forty-two pounds per month, and he has no other source of income, but the wife, although not working, has an extra income of about ten pounds per month from some heritage left by her father. She finished her secondary education and received her Thanawiya Amma before her marriage.

The wife here complains that the father is very strict with the boy, while he is very lenient with the girl. She therefore feels that she has to make up for that vis-a-vis the boy. Consequently, the father accuses her of spoiling the boy. He explains his own attitude, however, by saying, "A girl is spoilt only at her father's home. Later on, she has to obey her husband, and never again will she see such good treatment as she used to have at her father's home." With respect to the boy he says, "I prefer to bring up my son the way I was brought up. When I was late at night, my father used to wait for me with a stick. After all, I am protecting him that way."



It is significant to mention that the wife here is the only wife of the eight families who has an income of her own. Little as the sum may seem, it gives her a feeling of security which I feel the other seven wives lack. She talks of "my father's flat," "my father's land" with a kind of pride mixed with confidence. The factor of economic independence appears in this respect. Feminists in Egypt ask for the woman's economic independence as one major aspect of her emancipation, and only when I talked to this wife did I grasp the real significance of such a demand.

The eight families thus presented tend to represent the continuum already mentioned in the introduction, with respect to the type of family. On one extreme end, there lies the Upper Egyptian with his family, a typical example of the traditional family with its sharp dichotomy between the sexes, keeping for the women her inferior status. On the other extreme end, there lies the twins' father with his more egalitarian attitudes, representing the modern family. In between the two extremes and along the continuum there lie the remaining six families reflecting degrees of variations of attitudes, but almost all to the same position.



### CHAPTER III

#### RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

I have chosen to categorize the results of my research themes, according to the categorization already made in the questions of the interviews, mentioned in the appendix. These questions have been grouped according to relevant issues, each group under one theme. The same scheme is used here to facilitate interpretation and thus analysis.

Each theme is to be discussed separately with respect to both sexes. Under each theme will be presented the parents' attitudes on how they socialize their children, as boys or as girls, with respect to this particular theme.

Three of the families live in Hadayek El Koubbah, three in Abbasseyah, one in Ghamrah, and the eighth in Sakakini.

It must be remembered that what is written under each theme indicates what parents say they do, but not necessarily what they actually do, because no observation was made to confirm such data.

#### SOCIABILITY OR THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE CHILD MIXES WITH OTHERS:

The answers here show that all parents without exception are keen to have their sons develop a sociable personality, and hence allow him to mix with friends of the same sex. Two fathers, however, said they made some restrictions on the son, lest he choose the wrong kind of friends



and fall under some bad influence. The remaining six, however, said frankly that they lay no restrictions on their sons' choice of friends. One father said frankly in this respect, "why should I? He's a boy and he's going to grow up to be a man. He has to know the world well to be able to mix with people of different kinds."

The mothers, however, showed some anxiety. All of them said that they cannot know all of their sons' friends, because the boys are likely to spend most of their time outside the home, but they at least can "keep an eye," though not a close one, on the boys' friends, to be sure that they are not bad ones. The guidance of the boys in this respect, agreed all mothers, is the father's job, and thus the father's responsibility includes some kind of supervision on the boys' choice of friends.

With respect to the girls, however, the answers were different. All fathers, except one, admitted that they interfere with their daughters' choice of friends of the same sex. Sometimes a father might find his daughter talking to a girl friend, whose behavior or maybe appearance he does not approve of. In this case, he forbids his daughter to keep this girl as a friend. He has the right to do so by virtue of his being her father who knows better than she does. "A girl spoils another girl," remarked one father. "You can be sure that if one girl does something wrong, she is pushed by another girl." The mothers also agreed that they have to know what kind of girls their daughters have as friends. In this case, it is easier to know the girl's friends than it is the boy's, because



the girl's freedom is greatly restricted, while the boy's is not. The girl is allowed to bring her friends at home. All fathers, as well as mothers agreed to that. However, all of them denied their daughters the right to visit their girl friends at home." We can't guarantee what kind of home it is, so how can we send our daughter there?" remarked one of the fathers. "What if this girl friend has a brother? you can't tell what can happen then."

While the parents agree that their daughters bring their girl friends at home, they do not like their sons to bring their boy friends at home. The rationale here is the fact that there are girls at home, so the privacy of the house is molested. Furthermore, the boy can easily go out, so he has the freedom to see his friends wherever he wants to, while the girl is not allowed to go out alone, so the home is the only place where she can meet her friends. One father admitted that although he allows his daughter to bring her friends at home, he does not like it when her brothers are around. He feels that the parents of this girl have trusted him with their daughter, and so he has a sense of responsibility for her. He is then very careful to keep the boys away.

Sometimes it happens that a boy comes to visit the son. In this case, he is kept with the son in a separate room, and he is not allowed to wander freely about the house. This is of course a rare event and not a common one.

The twins' father is the only one who can be considered an exception to this rule. He says he does not mind to let his son and



his daughter alike bring their friends at home. They can stay together, without any particular restrictions on the girl. She knows all her brother's friends, just as he knows all her friends. Likewise, she can visit her girl friends at home, just as they come to pay her visits. "What matters here," says the father quietly, "is the right guidance that one gives his daughter. If she knows how to act decently, how to keep her self-respect, she can mix freely with the other sex without any fear."

It is significant to mention here that his wife is strictly against this attitude, and she believes that she must never let the girl mix freely with boys. She is the one who is careful not to keep the twins, being brother and sister, "behind closed doors." The husband admitted sadly that matters of this sort are a source of trouble to the family and if his wife did not suffer from "weak nerves," she would have acted differently, but now he has to do something about it, so he takes over the responsibility and tells her to let him deal with them his own way. But the problems never stop.

The attitude of the parents with respect to their children's mixing with children of the other sex is consistent with the above data. Parents, especially fathers, do not mind that their sons have girl friends or mix with girls in general. Two mothers expressed their indignation at such a thing, and they said that a girl can easily spoil a boy, especially if she's a bad girl. A boy can have girl friends, can mix with girls, but not before he goes to university. Before that, he is only a child



who can be easily distracted and not concentrate on his studies.

A father who represents the majority said, "a boy will not lose anything, if he sits with a girl. But a girl will - in the first place, her reputation, and maybe her honor, too." It follows therefore that all parents, except the twins' father, expressed their shock when I asked them if they would permit their daughters to have boy friends. The Upper Egyptian almost shouted at me, "Are we Europeans? We're still Moslems, no matter what we do."

The parents also deny their daughters the right to mix freely with boys. The mothers are more lenient in this respect, but the fathers are strict. That is why they do not permit their children to go to schools where there are both boys and girls. Only the twins have co-education. The Upper Egyptian said, "How can a girl sit close to a boy and understand any lesson?" Another father exclaimed, "How do you expect them to get good results if they are busy making dates?"

"How far then can a girl mix with a boy?" was my question. The answer was unanimously agreed upon. All parents said that they would allow their daughters to say "Hello" to male acquaintances but not more than that. She can sit with him if in a group of elders, she can answer his questions, join in a general conversation, but no private talks. "What about university?" was my next question. The answer came that not before the girl starts university can she mix with boys, because by then she has reached the age where she can know what is right from what is wrong; she is old enough to judge for herself. And even then her relationship with her fellow students need not be more than a superficial one - she need not



develop any close relationships with the other sex. Such a relationship is the main obstacle in the view of the Upper Egyptian, and hence his antagonistic attitude towards his daughter's education at the university.

It thus appears that the parents are not so keen on their daughters' sociability. They only want to make sure that they know the right kind of friends, and hence the restrictions they lay on their freedom. In fact, it appears that they believe that the more sociable their daughters become, the more they are likely to go the wrong way. In this respect one father referred to "the girls who go to clubbs." He considers that they are "loose" girls because they are left to mix with different people and "God knows what kind of people they mix with." He added with enthusiasm, "If this is modern life, I don't want it. I'd better keep my daughter beside me."

It goes without saying that the girls in these eight families are not allowed to go to clubs as it is "eib." Neither are they allowed to practice any form of activity outside the home. Six of the families, however, allow their daughters to practice such activities at school - sports, girl scouts. All of the boys without exception play football in the streets. Three of them go to a club organized by the Ministry of Youth where they play football. Such a club is not a social club, but one for which no fees are paid to accommodate for those who cannot afford to pay the high fees of the social clubs. The fathers in the eight families do not mind letting their sons join social clubs, but they cannot afford the expenses, and so they allow them to join these other clubs. One father



remarked, "my son (aged thirteen) has excess energy. He likes to play football. Why not let him have the chance to do something he likes. I can't have him in the street all day long." The mothers, likewise, like the idea as much as they dislike allowing their daughters to go there. One mother said, smiling, "she had better spend her leisure time with me. I can teach her more useful things."

#### EDUCATION:

As I have previously mentioned, the children of the eight families go to public schools, which are run by the government and in which education is offered free. Foreign education is a luxury of the rich who can afford to pay high fees for their children to learn a foreign language and receive additional care. Three of the parents admitted frankly that they would not send their children to foreign schools even if they could afford to do so, because these schools "kill" the feelings of nationality in the children. The remaining five said they would be glad to give their children foreign education, only if they could afford it, because such schools give the children enough care. "After all, one pays for what he gets. So he has to get his lawful right."

The boys go to boys' schools, and the girls go to girls' schools, with the exception of the twins who go to a school for both boys and girls. None of the parents is in favor of co-education, except of course the twins' father, but not the mother. She says she is strictly against



the idea but the school is near their home and she prefers to have them go together and come together, so she accepted, although reluctantly. The Upper Egyptian said furiously, "If I was going to teach my daughter in a school for both boys and girls, I'd better keep her at home."

The hostility most parents show towards co-education is mainly for their daughters' sake. The boys "are boys," and it will do them no harm, but still, they will benefit more in a school for boys only, so they can concentrate.

Q This point leads us to the great value now laid on education in Egypt. A person who holds a university degree is greatly respected. Consequently the race for university education is at its height, and the Egyptian culture is today characterized by a feverish competition along all grades of education to reach the utmost level after which one gets his license into the world. Without it, he is worthless.

Such a phenomenon is now felt among all classes, and the result is that parents show great anxiety with respect to their children's education. They are worried lest they at one step fail and have to stop. The result is a person of no value in the Egyptian society - one whose evaluation along the social scale is zero.

The concern of parents for their children's education appears at its utmost with relation to boys. The parents of the eight families show great concern for their boys' education as a step for their future. They want them to work hard to be "doctors or engineers." For the girls, however, they all have great hopes, but as three of the fathers remarked in



different words, but to the same meaning, "After all, she is a girl, and if she fails at school, she will have her place at home, but if the boy fails, where will he go?" The fathers show the most concern for the boys' future, and some of them even go as far as inflicting physical punishment on the boy if he showed some carelessness in his school work. All fathers took this matter very seriously and six of them said they beat their sons if they fail or if they do not study. The mothers, likewise, said they report their sons to the fathers if they feel they are not giving enough care to their lessons or if they play. Four fathers, among them the Upper Egyptian, said they are greatly worried because their daughters are more successful at school than their sons. They would have rather had the boys be better, "because they are going to have families, to feed them, and if they work hard, they will be good. They can have a successful future—a good job." In two other families, the fathers are glad that the boys are better than the girls at school. One of the fathers said, "my son is the one that matters. I can easily keep the girl at home, especially as she is a very good housewife."

It follows that the parents reward their sons when they show success at school and punish them if they fail to do so. Likewise, they make it clear to them that school is the most important thing in their lives at this stage. During the school year, no son is allowed to play football in the streets until he finishes his homework. Further restrictions are also made--no television, no movies--except when



he finishes his school work. One father said that he goes as far as providing a private teacher for his son for every subject to guarantee his success, considering how much such a sacrifice would cost him, at the expense of the rest of the family. This is because every father has hopes for his son's future and every one of them mentioned this to me. We can here refer to Joseph Kahl's analysis of the middle class, when he considers that a useful clue to identify a lower-middle-class person is, in terms of value orientations, the strength of his desire to have his children receive an education better than his in hope of a better future. (1965, p. 203)

Strangely enough, however, the attitude is not the same for girls. Whereas the father would greatly forbid the son to do anything that would keep him from his studies, he does not mind to call his daughter to do him some service in the midst of her studies. True enough, he is keen to let her go on with her education until she goes to university, and true enough he feels boastful to admit such a thing as a sign of broad-mindedness, yet he is not so enthusiastic about it as he is vis-a-vis his son's future. He would say that he dreams of her being a great "doctor or engineer" as most of them said, but he would admit quite emphatically that his plans for his future include her being first and foremost a happy wife and a successful mother and everything else is secondary to that, even her success as a career woman. Consequently, he prepares her for that role--in fact, it is the mother who is responsible for that, because it is her job to bring up her daughter to be a good housewife.



Six of the fathers said that they help their children with their studies regularly. The remaining two include the father who is away most of the time and the twins' father. The first one does not have the time to help his children with their studies, so he leaves that to private teachers, while the second one believes that they are old enough to study without any help, but quite often they seek his help. The mothers admitted that they leave this job to the father. The mothers have hopes for their children, too, and like the fathers they show more concern about their sons. One mother, however, said, "I want my daughter to reach the highest degrees of education. I want her to do what I could not do. That is why I am always encouraging her to go on." This daughter is one of the girls who show better success than their brothers, much to the worry of the fathers and mothers.

None of the children under study go to school by school bus. Neither do they use any public means of transportation, because they all go to schools in the same neighborhood. The parents all agree that going to school is no problem as far as the boys are concerned. One mother only showed her concern in this respect. This is the mother of the three daughters and the only son who admits that she was so eager to have a son that she now goes as far as spoiling him. The son here is a cause of worry to her, because she fears if he goes to school alone, he might be hit by a car. Consequently, his sisters take him to school, before they go to their own school, as they are older in age. She admits



that only this last year did she allow his sisters to take that responsibility, because she feels that now they are old enough to take good care of him on the way. Before that, she used to take him to school herself in the morning, and then bring him back in the afternoon, much to the opposition of his father who believed that she was going too far, as the boy had reached the age of eight and could not go to school alone, whereas his sisters, who are girls and must be taken care of, go to school alone--in fact, they have done so ever since they started school. The father here does not like that the girls go to school alone, but he believes that so long as the school is close to the house and the girls of the neighborhood go together in groups, he can accept them to do so. The case is reversed here in this family in comparison to the other families, because in the other seven families the boys take the girls to school first before they go to their own schools, even if the boys are younger than the girls. Only the case of the twins is of course different as they go to the same school.

"This is the worst time," remarked one mother. "I know how it is in the morning and in the afternoon at the beginning and at the end of the school day. The streets are filled with boys and girls and anything can happen then. So one has to be careful."

The Upper Egyptian said that he used to take his daughter to school himself before he went to work, because she is older than the boy until his boy reached the age when the father could depend on him to take care of his sister.



MENSTRUATION:

All fathers agreed that menstruation is no concern of theirs so far as their daughters are concerned except that it marked a new period for the girl. She has to be subjected to further restrictions and she has to learn how "to take care of herself." This is mainly the job of the mother. Strangely enough all fathers consider it the mother's responsibility to see that her daughter "does not do something bad or wrong." A father remarked in this respect, "I have warned my wife to be careful--especially as she is now responsible for a grown-up girl. My daughter is fifteen and she has a full-grown body." It goes without saying that all mothers expressed their apprehension lest their daughters "misbehave" and they be held responsible for that. One mother expressed her worry in the following words, "I take good care that she does not see or mix with her brothers' friends. Also, she never goes out alone. Once she menstruated, I told her that no nonsense is acceptable. She is grown-up now."

However, the attitude of the mothers with respect to their daughters' menstruation showed some variations. Three mothers only preferred to prepare their daughters for menstruation beforehand so that they will be prepared for it when it comes. They tell them in a gradual way how to expect it and how to behave once it comes. They make it clear to them that menstruation marks an important period in their lives and therefore they have to know that once they start to menstruate they have to remember that they are "no longer children." Not being



children any more marks an important change: it means no mixing with boys, taking care to cover oneself properly when sitting, not wearing short clothes that might show more than necessary, and not going out alone. Such things are necessary for proper behavior. The other five mothers, however, prefer not to talk with their daughters about menstruation—"not to discuss such matters until they come so as not to open their eyes to new things." They believe that every age has its own problems and so they, as mothers, need not bother about menstruation until their daughters menstruate. Then the daughters will be able to understand whatever the mothers explain to them, but not before that. /But this does not mean that ideas of chastity need not be implanted in the girl from early in her childhood. Some parents believed that this should start as early as five years of age, whereas some admitted that it need not be before seven years. The Upper Egyptian father said that he believed that such ideas need to be implanted in the girl from earliest childhood—from the time she learns how to walk, talk, and understand what is said to her. "Once a girl starts to learn something early in her childhood," he remarked, "she will never forget it, but if we wait until she grows up, she will have become used to the other ways—which might be wrong, and it will be difficult to correct her."

#### SEGREGATION:

In line with the above, seven fathers believe that their daughters must never change their clothes before their brothers. This is strictly



"eib." In the first place, a girl's body is an "Awrah," a private part, and she must be careful to cover it from all eyes, even her brothers' eyes. Secondly, it is not right for boys who are going into adolescence to see a woman's body. Such a thing might start ideas in their minds, which might make them think of "bad things," here of course referring to sex. Early in their childhood, of course, they can change their clothes before their brothers. These seven fathers believed that they can stop this once they feel their bodies are developing feminine features. One father said the right age for the girl to stop changing her clothes in her brother's presence is seven. Two fathers said that this age is nine and the remaining four said that it is ten. The remaining one father, who is the twins' father, said he does not bother about such things. "After all," he remarked, "he's her brother, and I don't believe that he would look at her as a female. She's his sister, remember." His wife, however, strictly forbids such a thing and she goes as far as hitting any of the twins who dares to do such a thing. "This is 'eib'," she said furiously. "How can he see her breasts and the other parts of her body? and how can she allow him to do so? Later on, she would not mind to let anyone see her body."

This mother represents the view of five other mothers. They all believe that segregation in this case is necessary. A girl's body represents an "awrah" and so she has to learn how to keep it from all eyes, especially male eyes. Three mothers said that the age at which the girl starts to cover her body from male eyes is ten. The other two said that she must do this at the age of nine, but that does not mean that before



that she does not have to be somewhat careful. These mothers represent the majority. One other mother, however, said she does not care about these things, because she does not mind if any of the children changes his clothes in the presence of the others who are from the other sex. The eighth mother admitted that this represents no problem to her as the girls are older than the boy, and "he is only a child." She herself does not mind to change her clothes in his presence. He is only nine years old now, but later on, of course, she has to be a little bit careful, not that she cares herself, because she is sure that her son is good and he will never have "bad ideas" in his mind, but she'll have to obey what other people say. Her friends and neighbors have always criticized her for changing her clothes, and even taking a bath, in her son's presence. They feel it is wrong for the boy. She believes otherwise, however, because she is his mother and if he looks at her body, he knows it is his mother's body.

All fathers and mothers who believe that their daughters must not change their clothes in their brothers' presence also believe that the girls must not do so in the fathers' presence.

The parents likewise, showed great variability with respect to their sons. Three of the fathers believed that the son also must not change his clothes in his sister's presence. She is a girl and her modesty has to be taken into consideration. She has to learn that a man's body is not something to be looked at. This is no simple matter. The remaining five fathers believed it to be no problem if their son



changes his clothes in his sister's presence, "so long as he keeps his sexual organs covered." The other three, however, believe that even though he covers his sexual organs, "a man's body is not the same as a woman's. The underwears can reveal a lot, and it is not nice for a girl to see these things."

The mothers expressed a rather unanimous point of view. They said that they do not mind to let their sons change their clothes in their sister's presence, so long as they keep their underwears on. But a man with his underwears on is not as "eib" as a girl with only her underwears on. The mother of the only son and the three daughters said that until very recently, her elder daughter used to give her younger brother his bath. She stopped doing this only one year ago.

None of the mothers showed any worry with respect to my question, "Do you accept that your daughter be kissed by adults of the other sex?" They all agreed that so long as they are adults and they do this act as a way of expressing friendliness to the girl, it does not matter. Only one mother, the twins' mother, said she completely forbids that. I may refer here to the incident mentioned above which confirms her answer. The fathers, likewise, said they do not mind but there is a limit to the age in which the girl can be kissed by elders. Two of them said that this age is fifteen, three believed it to be thirteen, and two said it is fourteen. The Upper Egyptian said that he can allow his daughter to be kissed until the age of nine at the utmost. "In our village," he commented, "our girls can marry at this age."



On the other hand, all interviewees said that there is no problem at all in this respect as regards the boys. Naturally, adults do not kiss boys as often as they do girls, but even if they do, nothing matters.

#### SEX EDUCATION:

It follows from the above presentation that sex education represents a major problem to most parents. All fathers believed that children must not be given any sex education before they are old enough to understand it—i.e., when the boys reach the age of fifteen, and when the girls menstruate. But who gives this sex education? All fathers agree that it is not for the father to do so. He can not in any way talk to his son about "these matters." It is very awkward for him to do so. The boy has his friends to learn from. Boys at puberty are always talking about sex. "This is how we ourselves learned about sex," remarked one of the fathers. "Our fathers never spoke to us about these matters." One mother, however, expressed her worry in this respect because she expected her husband to discuss "these matters" with their son who is thirteen years old. "He needs to guide him," she said sadly. "He needs to show him what is right from what is wrong. I keep telling him to do so, but he does not want to. He says he feels embarrassed, and the boy has magazines and books from which to learn."

Whereas the fathers do not want to discuss sex with their sons, they believe that the mothers must do so with respect to the daughters.



A mother can give proper sex education to her daughter. Strangely enough, however, such a view of sex education turned out to be a very limited one. By asking the parents further questions, I discovered that their concept of sex education here does not go beyond menstruation and the proper behavior that they expect from their daughters, while sex education in its broader sense is taboo. A girl must never discuss sex with either the father or the mother. "If she thinks of talking about such matters, then she is bold enough to do anything," remarked one father. "Shyness and modesty are necessary for a girl. Once she loses them, she can be bad." Fathers make it strictly clear to me that they would never think of discussing sex with their daughters; it is the mother's job.

The mothers, on the other hand, said that the boys have magazines, books, and friends from which to learn about sex. Fathers can guide them, although they do not like to do so. Mothers find it greatly embarrassing for them to give their sons any sex education. However, they give their daughters enough sex education to let her "take good care of herself." In this respect the mothers' concept of sex education appears consistent with the fathers'. The twins' mother said, "Remember that now they are teaching them a lot at school—in science, and so on, and they can understand many things that way." Another mother remarked, "When my daughter is ready to be married, I'll explain everything on her wedding night. She does not need it before that. It will 'open her eyes' to things she does not need to know."



CIRCUMCISION AND EXCISION OF THE CLITORIS:

All boys in the eight families were circumcized. Yet the age at which they were circumcized varies. Five of them were circumcized at birth, right in the very first week after birth. The other two were circumcized at the ages of two and three respectively. The boy who is the only son among three daughters was kept until eight years of age. This is because the mother was worried about his health and feared lest he might die. When they waited longer, however, the mother took on a more complicated form, and the boy had to undergo an operation. In rural areas, they still circumcize the boys at a late age--usually when the boy is seven.

One mother who had her son circumcized right after birth explained, "The boy is still soft then and the circumcision is easy. He soon gets over it. When he is older, it becomes complicated and sometimes they have to put the boy under anaesthesia."

The girls under study did not have excision of the clitoris, except for one--the Upper Egyptian's daughter. All mothers said that it is inhuman to do such a thing to girls, because they themselves were circumcized and suffered from it. However, they refused to get any further into the matter, but they said that they prefer that their daughters would not undergo such an experience. The fathers, on the other hand, said that although they did not have their daughters' clitoris excised, they would have preferred to do so. Five fathers were in favor of this view, while one father said that it was cruel of men to have their daughters bear such



a "monstrous thing" as excision of the clitoris because the act itself hurts her, let alone its after effects, especially her sexual relationship with her husband. This is the twins' father. "Why deny the girl of a right which God has naturally given her?" he questioned. The Upper Egyptian, being unique among the sample, explained that excision of the clitoris is very important to guarantee the girl's chastity. "In our village," he added, "all girls have their clitoris excised. I don't like these modern ideas. Look around you and see the girls. See how bad they have become. If they had been circumcized, you would not have had them that way. I don't care for anybody else's view. I like to follow what my fathers did." The wife in this family was against the whole idea, but naturally she had to give in and the husband had his way. The daughter had her clitoris excised at the age of seven, and she was confined in her bedroom for a long time until the wound healed and she felt better. She was kept away from her playmates and the whole procedure took on a secret form.

#### INDEPENDENCE:

Relevant in this respect is the degree to which the parents give their children their independence. The answers of the interviewees are quite consistent with their concept of chastity.

Girls are not allowed to go out alone. They are not sent on errands. This is the boy's job. Likewise, girls are not allowed to use public means of transportation alone until they are old enough "to take



good care of themselves." Six fathers believe that this age is reached when the girl enters university. The two other fathers believe that a girl can go out alone before that - when she is sixteen years old, but within certain limits. In other words, she can be allowed to go out alone, but to places known to the parents. The mothers showed much variation in this respect. The twins' mother said she believes that a girl need not go out alone until she goes to university. Then she is forced to do so, because her parents cannot accompany her to university. She herself had never gone out alone before her marriage except with her mother, and it took her a long time to know the names of streets and places. Three other mothers prefer that their daughters be trained to go out alone before they go to university so that they will not have any difficulty doing so. They themselves had suffered from that when they were first married, and they don't want their daughters to do the same. The fathers, however, believed otherwise and so they have to give in to the fathers. "After all," remarked one of them, "He is the master of the house." The remaining four mothers said they believe that their daughters can be allowed to go out alone after the age of fifteen to sixteen.

In line with the above statements, girls are not allowed to use public means of transportation alone. They can accompany their brothers or their parents. "What do they need buses for?" A mother remarked. "We do not send them on errands. It is the responsibility of their brother." Another mother remarked, "It is difficult for me who is a grown-up woman to go by bus. You see how crowded they are. It is a kind of torture. You can imagine what can happen to a girl on a bus. But boys can find



their way through." Therefore boys are not kept from going out alone. Likewise, they can use any means of transportation. The mother of the one son and the three daughters is the only one who does not allow her son to do so, because she wants to protect him from the dangers of the road, and she feels that he is too young to be left to go out alone. Not before he reaches the age of twelve or thirteen can she allow him to do so.

It must be mentioned, however, that fathers, although they lay no restrictions on their sons with respect to going out alone, require that their sons come back at a certain hour. These fathers said that this hour is nine o'clock, four fathers said it is ten, and the remaining father said half-past eight. This last one said, "When I was young I never stayed later than eight o'clock, and if I had to stay later than that outside home, my father would wait for me with a stick. But now we give them more freedom and half-past eight is quite all right. Why should he stay later than that?" The mothers also gave their answers to the same meaning and said that they would not let their sons stay outside the home later than nine o'clock. The mother who is always anxious about her one son said she allows him to play in the street--right in front of the house--or in the back yard but he has to be home early, right after sunset. The twins' mother said she does not bother at all about her son. Relevant here is the point that the twins' father is the only one who does not mind to let his daughter go anywhere alone by bus, yet he does not do so because his wife is completely against the idea.



The degree of independence allowed outside the home is inconsistent with the degree of independence allowed inside the home because factors other than sex-role differentiation interfere. For example, six of the eight families live in three-room flats. The result is that the boys in the families do not have separate bedrooms. The sleeping arrangement in all six families is such that both boys and girls use the same bedrooms. Two of the families are rearranging their flats in such a way so as to allow for separate rooms for the sons. One of the mothers said, "I'm doing away completely with the dining room to make it a bedroom for the boys, where they can study, sleep, and do everything at their ease." The other two families that have larger flats do not have any problems in this respect. One family is the one that has the only son and three daughters and they live in a four-room flat. All girls sleep in one room, while the boy used to sleep in his mother's bedroom until very recently when the father became furious and insisted that he sleep alone. The boy moved to a separate bedroom which was meant to be prepared for his sole use, but he never sleeps in it, because he prefers to sleep with his sisters. He fears the darkness of the night.

All parents without exception would rather have separate rooms for children of each sex. "But what can we do nowadays? You see how it is with houses, and the problem is at its utmost now."



CLOTHES:

The choice of clothes presents a great problem for many fathers. "Short dresses are awful," said one of the fathers. "I can't bear to see my daughter's legs all showing when she sits. I can see up to ... I can't say, but I don't like them."

Fathers therefore are strictly against short skirts. Five of them said that they can allow their daughter to wear short skirts only until the age of nine or ten, when she is only a child, but later on, her body becomes so developed that such skirts are wholly "immoral." The twins' father does not mind to let his daughter wear short skirts, "so long as everybody else does that." One father said that he does not mind to let his daughter wear dresses, whether short or otherwise, but he hates trousers for a girl. "They show everything—every single part of the body—the outline and everything." Apart from such restrictions, the fathers leave their daughters the freedom of choosing their own clothes, under the supervision of the mothers, of course. These in turn have the upper hand in these matters. Five of them said they choose their daughters' clothes, because "they know better," as one of them put it. The remaining three said that they take their daughters along to have a say in the matter, but they give the final word. In general, mothers lay no restrictions on such matters, so long as the clothes are decent and within the limits of the family budget, but above all they have to obey the fathers' orders. If he says not to wear short skirts, it means no short skirts. As one mother explained to me, "He can very simply keep the girl from wearing the dress if he does not approve of it. What can I do then? Throw it away? It'll be a waste of money -- and nothing more."



The boys, on the other hand, have no restrictions on their choice of clothes. Whereas the mothers are responsible for the girls' choice of clothes, the fathers take over the responsibility with respect to the boys. Three of them, however, whose sons are twelve, thirteen, and fifteen respectively said that they make their sons bring some of their clothes--shoes, shirts, stockings, but within the money limits the fathers set for them. Two other fathers, the Upper-Egyptian being one, said they do not like their sons to wear clothes that are bright in color. "These are women's clothes. I cannot respect a man who wears them," said one of them, "What have they left for girls, then?"

#### HOUSEWORK:

All mothers, without exception, let their daughters help with the housework--in fact, three of them were proud to tell me that their daughters are very good cooks. Three of these mothers admitted that they let their sons help with the housework. Two of these three said that the boy can do only certain things in the housework, and not everything. For instance, he can arrange his own room, set the table, or carry things around the house. Dishwashing, laundry, and cooking are completely contrary to a man's nature. These two mothers said that they would not think of letting their sons do any of these jobs. "He's going to be a man, after all," said one of them." How can he wash his clothes? What are we there for, then?" The third mother said that she divides the



housework equally among her three children--two boys and one girl. Each one of them has the full responsibility of the household for one whole day. This mother remarked with enthusiasm, "we are equal now. Women have jobs just like men, so why should they not help us at home? We can't do everything." This is the mother whose husband leaves home for long periods and who considers her son the "man of the house" when her husband is away. She allows herself to be ordered around by him in his father's absence.

The remaining five mothers are completely against letting their sons help with the housework. Some of them even showed their disgust at the idea. One of them said scornfully, "I am there to serve them, and my daughter too. Why should they bother about such things. Why do men marry then if they do everything for themselves?"

The fathers likewise said that they would not respect a man whom they "catch" washing dishes or washing clothes. This is strictly a woman's job. One man expressed his own view in the following words, "A man is a man, and a woman is a woman, no matter what you try to do. Women are there to serve us, and this is why we marry them." Only the twins' father said that he does not mind to help his wife at home; neither does he mind to let his son do so, but his wife does not like the idea, except when she is sick, which she often is, and then the men are forced to give some help somehow.



### HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:

In line with the above results, the hobbies of the children seem to be consistent with their differentiation along sex lines. The hobbies of the girls are those relating to the household or to the girl as a future housewife. All mothers teach their daughters needlework, sewing, and cooking, and the daughters in turn enjoy these things and take them for hobbies. Only one mother expressed her worry because her daughter does not like any of these things and she prefers to spend long hours reading much to the protest of her father, who is the Upper Egyptian. "What is she going to do with books? She had better learn something useful to her. Her husband would not eat books," are his angry words. Two other mothers also remarked that their daughters are fond of reading, but that does not take all their time. They also like to sew, to embroider, and to spend their free time "fussing around the house." Another mother expressed much worry because one of her two girls hated housework and all "feminine activities," and preferred boys' games instead. This girl is pushed by her parents to help her mother as much as she is scolded for "being masculine."

The boys, on the other hand, have football as their main hobby. All of them play football in the streets and three of them are members of Youth clubs. The sons of five of the eight families are members of their school football team, for which they play and take the matter quite seriously.

The sons of three families have collecting stamps as a second hobby. One mother remarked that this hobby costs her son all his pocket



money, as it is quite expensive. One other mother said that her son is fond of electric equipment. He pulls down the different parts of any electric equipment they have, and puts them back into place, sometimes even copying them to make things of his own. Four mothers said that their sons are fond of bicycles and they spend hours cycling around the streets, but they have no bicycles of their own. They hire them by the hour. The mother of the only son among the three daughters said that her son has been dying to have a bicycle of his own, but she would not buy it for him, not that she cares for its high price, because she buys him whatever he asks for regardless of its cost, but because she is afraid of the dangers of the road.

It may be relevant to mention here that the choice of toys may have had an impact on the children's interests. The mothers said that they buy for the boys such toys as they know would interest boys - e.g., guns, automobiles, footballs, marbles, and machines. On the other hand they choose for the girls such toys as dolls, toy kitchens, utensils, and living rooms, and books that teach them how to sew or embroider. All boys find interest in the toys mentioned above, except the only son among three daughters who sometimes likes to play with dolls with his sisters. Likewise, all daughters find interest in their toys, except the girl who prefers to read not that she does not play with these toys, but she prefers to read. When asked which books does the girl read, the mother quite frankly admitted, "anything, anything she gets hold of--sometimes even old magazines, and books that may not be for her age." The "masculine" girl prefers to



play with boys' toys--something which greatly worries the mother.

With respect to the books the child likes to read, the parents gave different answers. Three of the mothers admitted that their children--both sons and daughters--do not read more than the school books, plus some newspapers and magazines if they have the time to read them. The school curriculum is so overloaded that the children cannot spare the time to read anything outside it. The other five mothers said that their children like to read mystery books and children's magazines, in addition to skimming adults' magazines and newspapers. Some of the fathers said that they do not know what their children read, while the others said they do not care. Only one father said he forbids any outside reading during the school year so that the children would not be distracted from their studies. He allows them to read as much as they want during the holidays.

But what kind of books do the children read? And do the parents interfere with the choice of books? As I have previously mentioned, those who like to read choose mystery books, except for the girl "who reads anything." The parents whose children do not read outside their required school books have no problem here. The other parents whose children read said that they do not interfere with their children's choice of books. "But occasionally," said one father, "I have a look at what they read, just to know what it is, especially with respect to the girls." Then he laughed and added, "But remember, if they read any forbidden books, they won't have them at home."



The parents, however, have a different outlook with respect to the films their children see. All fathers are strictly against love scenes that may appear in films. "All our films are now X films," remarked one father." It is as if they are made to teach our children how to be bad. One cannot be sitting among his children and see such things." Consequently, five fathers said that they do not allow their daughters to see films, unless they are sure that they are not "X films." The other three fathers said that they do not like their daughters to see such films, but as this is the common type of films nowadays, they have to give in, or else they will keep their daughters from seeing any film. Even a film whose story may be political is never free from love scenes, and passionate ones too.

The most concern here is of course with respect to the girls. Yet the fact remains that the parents are likewise bothered with respect to the boys. "You know this age and how it is," said one father. "It is not good for them physically when they see such things. I was their age and I know how it is." But the boys are not kept from going to movies alone, while the girls are. Therefore, parents believe that a boy can see the film he likes, regardless of his father's opposition.

The problem arises, however, when films are shown on television. "We can't help it then," said a mother. "We can't keep the children from watching television."

"My blood boils in my veins," admitted a father "when I see kisses and people in bed--just like that, and the children are there to see. But



what can we do?"

The Upper Egyptian admitted quite frankly that he turns off the television if he has doubts about a certain film, or if he knows that "it is not for the children to see." He believes that in this case, not even his wife should see such scenes—simply out of modesty.

#### PARENTAL CARE:

All fathers are "busy," as they say, and so the main job of taking care of the children is that of the mother. "Taking care" here is mainly seen in terms of the time devoted to the children. Only the twins' father is the one who said that he gives more time to the children than does his wife "because she is weak in health." However, mothers have full responsibility so far as the girls are concerned, while the fathers share in this responsibility with respect to the boys. All mothers believe that the father should have a bigger share in the responsibility of the boys, "because he is a man and boys are difficult to handle," as one of them put it.

Strangely enough, and contradicting the above statements, mothers admitted that they give more care to their sons, both in terms of time and service. One of them explained, "A boy needs to be served, but a girl has to learn to serve herself. Furthermore, a boy has to concentrate on his studies—this is his future—but a girl is different." The mothers, therefore, make sure that their sons' needs are met. The order of priority in the household is, as one mother put it, as follows: the father, the



sons, the daughters, and then last comes the mother. The girls receive the mother's help only in female matters, when the girl needs guidance--i.e., menstruation. Otherwise, she is there to help the mother.

The fathers give the opposite picture. They give their sons more time, helping them with their studies to guarantee success at school. They help their daughters but not giving them the same time nor enthusiasm as they give their sons.

It follows therefore that if the girls have something confidential they say it to the mother. The boys, likewise, do the same. The sons of three of the families, however, said they would say it to the father. One of these is one of the twins. His twin sister, likewise, said she would say it to the father, and not the mother, "because Mother is always scolding me and she is giving me orders."

An example of the extra care given to the boys is seen in the additional sum given to the boys as pocket money. Three mothers and fathers said that they give their children their pocket money according to age. The remaining five, however, admitted that they give the boy more than the girl. "A boy goes out with his friends," explained one father, "and he meets people, so he has to spend money just as they do. Also, he uses buses and such things--he goes to movies, too." The Upper Egyptian justified his attitude on the basis of religion. "God Himself has made the share of the boy twice that of the girl, so I'm following the teachings of religion." He therefore admitted that he gives his son twice as much as his daughter, although she is older. Three mothers



admitted quite frankly that they give their sons an additional sum when they need it, because they feel that what they get from their fathers is not enough, but they make sure that the whole thing remains secret, lest the fathers know and become upset. Of these three mothers, one said that she believes that her husband knows about this additional sum but he pretends he does not know, as he is quite aware of the fact that the pocket money he gives his son is not enough to afford for his expenses and especially the stamps he is so fond of collecting.

#### OBEDIENCE:

The results here reveal that the parental attitudes clearly reflect sex differentiation. In the first place, all parents without exception require strict obedience from their children, both boys and girls. However, they also require that the girls obey their brothers. One father justified such an attitude on the basis that the brother will be responsible for his sisters in the long run, and if she does not learn to obey him from now, she never will. Only two mothers said that obedience depends on age, and a child obeys his elders, even his elder brothers or sisters. One father shared the same view, but the rest gave priority to maleness.

The parents likewise required obedience of their sons. However, they are not bothered if the boys fought back. One father said smiling, "I scold him then, but I am glad because he knows how to fight back and is not weak. This way his rights will never be lost." On the other hand, the fathers would be shocked if their daughters fought back. "Obedience is required from a girl,"



explained one father. "She learns to obey her parents and later on her husband." Both parents then agree that one of the important attributes of a girl is obedience. They believe the same for the boy. Whereas the father may expect obedience from his son, he does not require it of him towards outsiders—in fact, he encourages him to fight back," or else he will be lost." Yet that does not negate the fact that the parents require that their son be obedient to elders.

One mother complained to me that her son sometimes disobeys her and she asks his father to punish him, but the father smiles and tells her not to be too fussy about such things.

"ADAB":

Similar views are presented with respect to the children's politeness or "adab." Parents are careful to bring up their child to be "mu'addab." The common derived meaning of this word when used about children is "well-behaved," but its original sense carries the notion of education, training, improvement by careful disciplining. Mu'addab includes respect of elders, good-manners, and politeness. Parents are especially careful to bring up their daughters with the strict rules of adab. They are less careful for the boys, however. They require adab from the boys when dealing with them, their parents, and with elders in general. But they are not strict about it when the boys deal with their equals or with outsiders—"people in the street," for instance, as one mother put it. A boy has to fight his way through life, and if he keeps strictly to the rules of adab throughout his



life, people will believe he is weak and take advantage of him. Only one mother expressed her desire that her son be mu'addab with everybody, whether young or old. One father frankly admitted that he heard his son "using bad words" while talking with his friends, but he pretended he did not hear him. "A little of these words are necessary for a man's vocabulary," he remarked smiling.

#### DISCIPLINE:

It follows that a girl who is not well-behaved is punished by her parents. This is one case when parents punish their daughters. The mothers agreed that a daughter is punished when she answers back while talking to one of her parents, or if she says a "bad word," or if she is "lazy"—"lazy" here is seen within the perspective of domestic activity. Such acts of misbehavior are punished by the mother, as they fall within her sphere of influence. She may beat the girl, slap her, or she may be satisfied by just shouting at her and calling her names. The mother resorts to the father when the misbehavior is major—e.g., disobedience, failure at school, or lying. Only one mother said she prefers to punish her daughters herself, because the father usually beats them, no matter what their mistake is. She only threatens them to tell the father if they do something wrong, but she usually does not report them.

The boys are punished mainly for failure at school. Disobedience, lying, and staying out later than the fixed hour are other causes for punishment. However, the fathers in most cases prefer to do the disciplining of



the boys. Five fathers said they would rather beat the boys than let their mothers do it. One father remarked, "It is not nice for a boy to be beaten by a woman. It will weaken his personality. She can scold him or do anything else, but not beat him." The mothers in this case report to the fathers who beat the boys. One father said that he does not mind to let his wife beat their son if he misbehaves, provided she does not do it in his sisters' presence. The father who leaves occasionally said that his wife beats his sons if they disobey her; otherwise, they would not respect her, as she is the one who is dealing with them most of the time. In this case, she needs to be firm and strict.

Fathers do not mind to punish the girls—in fact, as one father remarked, "A girl has to be beaten every now and then to feel that she is under good control."

The mother of the only child said she has never beaten him and she would not let his father lay a hand on him. Yet she has other ways of punishing him. She closes him up alone in a room, but not for long, because she soon gives in and lets him out. But she does not mind beating the girls.

All children in this group are beaten, but the offenses for which they are beaten vary. The most general one, however, is failure at school and especially with respect to the boys. Only one father said that he does not beat his son when he fails at school, but only deprives him of his pocket money for one whole week until he feels he has to work harder.



RESPONSIBILITY:

By virtue of the above-mentioned attitudes on the part of the parents, the children learn to place themselves in a certain category of sex into which they are not only recruited by birth but also maintained by virtue of their socialization as either male or female. The boy thus develops his own attributes as a male, while the girl acquires hers as a female. Implicit in the male concept is a responsibility which extends beyond one's own person. The male is responsible not only for his behavior as an individual but for that of the other members of his family. Of the eight families, seven fathers made it clear to their sons that they are the representatives of the family name and thus must remember always to keep it high, and never to degrade it. Therefore, they have to prove themselves as men and keep a close eye on their sisters. Their honor is the brothers' responsibility and thus they have to learn very early to bear that responsibility. The father who leaves home frequently said that he has made it quite clear to his older son that he must substitute him in his absence and that he must be very careful of all the household members, including his mother. No men are to be allowed into the house during his absence. This is one reason why the boy does not allow his friends to visit him at home. Furthermore, the boys accompany their sisters to school and to other places. Only the twins' father said that he has taught his daughter to be responsible for her own behavior, and any wrong doing will fall back on her. True enough, the honour is the family's and any act of shame will turn back on the



family name, but the girl has to develop a sense of responsibility for her own behavior. He is unique in this respect, because all other parents, mothers as well as fathers, believe in training the son to develop a sense of responsibility that includes all the womenfolk of his family.

It goes without saying that so far as the boy is concerned, he is the only one who is responsible for his own behavior. The Upper Egyptian explained this contradiction to me in the following words, "God has clearly mentioned in the Koran that women are 'lacking in mind and religion', so they can't judge right. Also, they are always motivated by their own feelings. A man uses his mind, so he can easily guide the woman as well as himself."

#### NURTURANCE:

Girls are trained to develop a sense of responsibility of a different sort. They learn to feel responsible for their brothers with respect to service and care, especially in the domestic sphere. Mothers, as well as fathers, make sure that their daughters serve their brothers well. They help them develop a motherly attitude towards their brothers, even though the brothers might be older in age. The mother of the three daughters and one son said, "My eldest daughter, who is only fifteen, is a sort of second mother to her brother. He feels closer to her than he does to me, and we sometimes fight—she and myself—over his things. She scolds me if she feels I neglect him, and tells me to let her handle his



things. She spoils him even more than I do."

#### HOMOSEXUALITY:

Homosexuality represents no major problem in the minds of parents with respect to their daughters. It is less so with respect to their sons. Four mothers said that they warn their sons not to mix with boys who are "bad." Two of these four said that they warn their sons not to let their joking with their playmates include handling their genitals. The remaining four mothers said that their husbands make this warning. As mothers, they do not like to tackle these matters with their sons.

The fathers, on the other hand, believe that homosexuality is not to be found where boys are highly "open"—i.e., it is found in such closed societies as prisons or boarding schools where residents are of one sex only. One father expressed his anxiety with respect to his son, because his son is "very attractive" in terms of appearance. He fears that his light hair, complexion, and eyes might be a temptation to homosexuals. This father takes good care that his son mixes with the right kind of persons. Besides, he has explained to him that "some boys might like to do bad things with you," so he must never let them handle any part of his body.

One father explained that at one time he had been actually against his son's joining a youth club because he feared that the atmosphere of sportsmen might turn him into a homosexual. "You find homosexuality prevail-



ing among sportsmen," he added. "In the rooms where they change, they are likely to do such things." But because his son was fond of sports, the father accepted to let him join the club, but he made it clear to his son that he must be careful of others, especially while changing his clothes.

The remaining fathers said that they mention homosexuality to their sons, but at the right age. Three of them believed this right age to be nine, and three believed it to be from ten to eleven. "Anyhow," remarked the Upper Egyptian, who is from the last group, "Homosexuality has special people—those colored clothes, long hair, and feminine characteristics. If my son is a real man, you can guarantee that he will not be tempted to anything like that. This has special people."



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

#### ANALYSIS

I have started this research with the assumption that the sample under study is representative of the transitional family, because the eight families come from a class whose members retain those aspects which they share with the traditional family, at the same time that they are moving towards the other end of the continuum—namely the modern family. The data presented in the previous chapters have confirmed this assumption.

The conclusion that can be reached here is that parents express attitudes which show that they socialize their sons differently from their daughters. Sex differentiation is a phenomenon which operates in Egyptian society like it does in all other societies of the world. Whether it cuts vertically across the different strata of society is a point that needs to be further investigated, but which I consider irrelevant here. The fact remains that the urban middle class in Egyptian society exhibits features of sex differentiation which have been exposed by this study. In this chapter I choose to present this differentiation through the presentation of one family, and in this way I hope to give a clear picture of the typical way in which a middle class Egyptian family socializes its sons on one hand, and its daughters on the other, the socialization here being inferred from the attitudes the



parents expressed. To make the study more concrete, I will give names to the different members of this family. These names are, of course, not real names, but only pseudonyms.

THE SOCIALIZATION OF TWO CHILDREN: THE FAMILY OF MR. ALY MAHMOUD:

This family which represents the typical forms of socialization for the group under study is made up of Mr. Aly Mahmoud, the father, Mrs. Nadia El Sayed, the mother, and two children--Ahmed, the son, aged twelve, and Laila, the daughter aged eleven.

A. AHMED:

The great value attributed to male children in Egyptian culture can be seen in this family even before the birth of the first child, as appearing in the ardent wish of both parents to have a son when the first signs of pregnancy were felt by Nadia. When the child turned out to be a boy, he was received by signs of great welcome. Early in his first year, he was circumcized, and the event took on the form of a celebration, in which all the relatives participated. Ahmed was then ready to be a man.

Ahmed was soon followed by his sister, Laila. Her arrival, however, was not highly welcomed, especially by the father.

Ahmed spent the first years of infancy and childhood between parents who were careful to prepare him for his role as a male adult. When he reached the age of seven to eight years, this preparation took on a more serious form.



Ideally, a child should be able to form for himself a secure and knowledgeable view of the world and to achieve little by little a clear conception of his own role in it. The role of the parents is very important here. Ahmed has thus developed an awareness of self, implicit in which is an identification with the father as a member of the same sex. He likewise follows his father in priority at home. He is served by the female members of the household. He does not help with the housework, because such work is belittling for a man; the housework is a woman's job. Ahmed has therefore grown up to know that the home is the woman's world but not his.

It follows that Ahmed is allowed to go out alone. His parents lay no restrictions on his whereabouts, except that his mother sometimes feels a little bit worried if he stays late outside. However, this is no common thing, because his father expects him to be home at eight o'clock in winter, but sometimes at nine during the summer holidays. He has the freedom of choosing his own friends, yet because of his sister, his friends are not so welcome at home. He can meet them outside the house, but the home is a kind of sanctuary with respect to its female inhabitants. Of these, the boy considers himself responsible. Goode refers to this sense of responsibility in his study of the Arab family and considers it to be a strong operating feature in Arab society. (1970) Ahmed accompanies his sister out, he takes care that nobody hurts her, and he can go as far as reproaching her for any slight misbehavior she might show. Likewise, his responsibility extends to his mother, and she often depends on him to accompany her on errands if his father is not free.



Mr. Mahmoud believes that his son has to learn for himself, and this is how he can be a man. It is through trial and error that he will be admitted into the world of men. Yet he still believes that Ahmed needs some advice every now and then. He sometimes interferes if he sees that his son has chosen the wrong persons as friends. The criterion Mr. Mahmoud uses for judging the right kind of friends is seen mainly within the perspective of school achievement. A good friend is a friend who scores high in scholastic achievement. Next comes honesty. Smoking is the worst habit that a boy can learn from his friends.

Ahmed sometimes uses obscene language, but that does not worry his father. It worries his mother a little bit, though, but she lets it go, because after all, he is a man. She has given him enough care as a child, but now she feels that as he is on the threshold of adolescence, he automatically shifts to the father's responsibility. Consequently, it is Mr. Mahmoud who has the responsibility of disciplining Ahmed—in fact, he has started to do so after the first two years of school, when Ahmed was about eight years old. Nadia can shout at her son if he lies to her or if he disobeys her, but she cannot beat him. It is the father who does that for major offenses, chief among them being failure at school. Both parents believe that if Nadia beats Ahmed, he may lose his self-respect.

Mr. and Mrs. Mahmoud have been bringing for Ahmed such toys as fire engines, different kinds of guns, and footballs. Likewise, Mr. Mahmoud does not stop his aggression—in fact, he encourages it in him. He believes



that this is one way that Ahmed can develop and prove his masculinity, at the same time that he is not taken advantage of. Consequently, Ahmed is encouraged to fight back, never to be passive. Yet he is expected to be obedient to his parents. He plays football, and this game represents his favorite pastime. He plays it in the street and at school. His father, however, makes sure that it does not keep him from his school work, as the parents, especially the father, are greatly concerned about their son's education. To the father, university education is the utmost dream. He keeps steadily before Ahmed the status goal of university education and a good job which promises a successful career, especially that of "a doctor or engineer."

The continuous urge of the parents to make Ahmed study hard, almost in the form of anxiety, has resulted in a stereotyped boy whose interests barely exceed those of the school textbook. He has no time for any outside reading. Neither can he indulge in any other activity except football. Although this game is much enjoyed and encouraged by Mr. Mahmoud, it sometimes appears as a threat to him, because, as has already been mentioned, it may interfere with Ahmed's lessons. Consequently, playing this game is necessarily a leisure time activity which Mr. Mahmoud allows only after school work is over.

Sex matters are taboo. Mr. Mahmoud finds difficulty in discussing them with his son. He feels embarrassed. That is why he believes that Ahmed has other means of gaining knowledge about sex matters—magazines and books, for example.



Because Ahmed goes out often—with his friends and sometimes alone—he needs enough pocket money to allow for this. His father gives him one pound per month, but his mother adds an extra sum, which she gives him in secret. She knows that he may need more money at one time, and she hates to have him feel any inferiority in his friends' presence if he happens to run short of money. She feels proud of him and she makes him feel this pride.

B. LAILA:

When Laila was born, Mr. Mahmoud only gave a short smile, justifying his attitude on the basis of Koran. "And when we announce the arrival of a girl, his face darkens in anger." (Surrat El Nessaa) Mr. Mahmoud, as a father, dreads the burden that is awaiting him. Nadia gave her daughter the necessary care. If she was disappointed at having a daughter, she never showed it. When Laila started school, the father began to advise the mother to keep an eye on the girl, because she was starting to grow up more quickly than he had expected. Sex segregation started very early. She has her own girl friends now, and she can only say "Hello" to her brother's friends, not that she is completely kept from meeting them, but both her father and her brother do not like her to mix with them freely. The older she gets, the more restrictions are made on her, and now in her eleventh year, these restrictions are taking on a more serious form.

As a child, and up till her tenth year, Laila was highly envious of the privileges ascribed to her brother as a boy, and this was the most common cause of trouble between sister and brother, much to the worry of



the parents, especially the father. Now she has come to accept the status quo by accepting the role assigned to her without striving for the privileges of the male sex, and if she still retains any rebellion against the differentiation in treatment, she does not show it. She may have repressed it.

She receives seventy-five piasters per month as pocket money. She uses it in buying such dainty things as handkerchiefs or hair ornaments. She does not spend much money on movies, for example, because she does not go to movies except with her brother, and he prefers to go with his friends. He is at the age when the peer group represents the central area of interest from which his activities spring. Moreover, he would not think of taking her to a movie while he has his friends with him. Going out alone is one of the things Laila envies her brother for.

Laila has come to know that her place is with her mother. She feels that there is a sort of dichotomy that cuts across her family, with her father and Ahmed on one side, and her mother and herself on the other. She has thus come to identify with her mother in terms of attributes. Her mother, furthermore, has been channelling Laila's interests towards her role as a female. Early in her childhood, Laila started to help her mother in the kitchen and in housework. Now Laila can prepare a light meal alone. Moreover, her mother can leave her alone to manage the household for, say, one morning. Nadia likes to sew and Lila helps her with the work. As a child, Laila used to play with dolls, toy living rooms and kitchens, and blocks with which she built houses. Now she feels she is a young lady and her interests



are directed more towards elderly interests, which are strictly feminine. She likes needlework and she has dainty little embroidered pieces to decorate her room. She likes to read, but she spends more time on the other activities.

Nadia has taught her daughter how to take good care of herself as a female--how to dress properly, how to keep clean, and how to comb her hair stylishly--not that she has any plans of marriage for her daughter now, but she hopes that she will grow up to be an attractive young lady who will have quite a good number of suitors from which to choose her future partner.

Mr. and Mrs. Mahmoud's plans for their daughter's future include their wish that she goes to university, but their main concern for her is a successful marriage. It is for this reason that Nadia--and naturally, Mr. Mahmoud, too--feel it is Nadia's job to prepare her for the role of a successful wife and mother. In line with this role, she has to be obedient, polite, passive, and submissive.

Laila has some girl friends, and they often come to visit her at home. Ahmed is then not allowed to join the group. He may say "Hello" to them but he must not exceed that greeting. Mr. Mahmoud does not allow her to visit these friends at home, because he does not like the idea of her staying at other people's homes, especially if he does not know these people well. She can visit relatives, however, but she has to be accompanied by her brother or one of her parents or both of them.

Laila has not menstruated yet. But her mother feels that she is



about to have her first menstruation, because her body now is fully developed Nadia thinks it better not to tell her daughter anything about menstruation. She may know about it from her friends, but Nadia believes that she had better wait until she has her first monthly period and then she will explain to her daughter enough about it to take care of herself hygienically. She need not know more than necessary about sex matters. It is enough to know that she is a girl and therefore must not let a boy or man touch her body, as it is "eib." Furthermore, her deportment then must be that of a young lady. She must sit properly, cover her legs properly while she's seated, and talk in a low, polite voice. In general, she must be "muaddaba." She must not talk to men who are strangers to her. The punishment that she gets if she disobeys any of these strict rules can be very strong. The father may interfere and beat her, and this in itself shows how major an offense her misbehavior is, because usually it is Nadia who is responsible for disciplining her daughter. She can shout at her, call her names, or refrain from speaking to her for sometime if the daughter disobeys her mother, neglects her responsibilities at home, and lastly comes her carelessness at school. A very major act of misbehavior that may require the father's interference is answering back. A good girl who is "muaddaba" must never answer back. Can she ever answer her husband back in the future?

Laila did not have to undergo the practice of excision of the clitoris, not because her father is against it, but because he believes that it has come to be legally banned. [There is no legal evidence on this point, but it is the belief of all parents that a law was passed after the Revolution of 1952 to



prohibit excision of the clitoris and those who practice it do so illegally.<sup>7</sup> Nadia secretly rejoices at that because she does not want her daughter to go through what she has gone through in terms of both the physical and psychological implications of the practice. Mr. Mahmoud, on the other hand, would gladly have had his daughter undergo the practice, at least to give himself a sort of psychological sense of peacefulness if he knows that his daughter's sexual desire is reduced, to guarantee her chastity. Dr. Nawal El Saadawy approaches this problem in her study of the woman in Egyptian society and draws the readers' attention to the great importance the Egyptian man lays on this practice to safeguard his honor which is represented by his daughter(s) at the same time that this practice is more of a traumatic experience to the female both physically and psychologically. (1971, p. 11)

Nadia has to make sure that her daughter knows the right kind of friends. "Adab" is the most important criterion for judgment here, and the quality extends to cover clothing, department, way of talking, tone of voice, and language. Once Nadia sees that one of her daughter's friends is not "good," she tells her to bring their friendship to an end. She cannot accept at home anybody whose character may be doubtful for fear of a bad influence on her daughter.



## C O N C L U S I O N

I had started this research with the assumption that sex roles are socially created. Because roles are sets of norms and norms are prescriptions for behavior, every society assigns for each sex the role appropriate behavior. With this assumption in mind, I chose to study sex role differentiation among one group of people—namely the Egyptian middle class, the issue under study therefore being: Is there any differentiation with respect to sex in the attitude of parents towards the socialization of children among this particular group? The assumption with which I had started my research has thus served as a guideline throughout the investigation. On the basis of the presentation mentioned above, the conclusion can be made that in Egyptian middle class society, the parents express attitudes with respect to socialization, implicit in which is the preparation of members of each sex for one particular role. Sex roles and personality are thus trained by society in general, and the family and school in particular, through their insistence upon sex appropriate language, clothes, hairdress, gait, pitch and intonation of voice, play, recreation, and work. Kluckhohn, like many others, believes that to this sex appropriate behavior there is certainly no biological basis of sex-linked traits, but it is dictated by the social outlook. (1966, p. 459)

In the Egyptian middle class, the boy is prepared for a role of superiority in which the main attributes are dominance, aggressiveness,



audacity, adventurousness, and independence. On the other hand, the girl is socialized to be meek, submissive, dependent, subordinate, and nurturant to fill her future role as wife and mother. I believe that this view is much in accordance with the image of a woman as defined by Freud. He sees the woman as inferior, childish, helpless, with no possibility of happiness unless she adjusted to being man's passive object. Her true nature is actually that of a happy servant. The image of a woman as seen by members of the middle class in Egypt is much to the same view, the difference being one of degree with respect to the various attributes Freud assigns the woman. One need pause therefore before those who question the application of the Freudian concept of femininity to women today, because though much of its outward signs seem to have apparently changed, the image of the woman remains the same at its core, with respect to certain groups of people. The middle class of Egypt is one such group.

The reference to Freud is made here because most of the research on the development of sex differences has been guided by Freudian-derived concepts. The relevance of this research, however, is not so much with respect to sex role differentiation as much as to the impact of this sex role differentiation as occurring among this particular group--the middle class--with its particular value orientations. The members of the middle class in Egypt, in accordance with the views of Kahl and Mayer, are more likely to function along traditional lines, with the men dominant and freer of responsibility and the women more likely to be tied to home and children. (1965, p. 207) I had started the research with the assumption that the value orientation of this class includes



traditionalism as a main component. The results of the research greatly confirm this point. The middle class in Egypt still adheres to traditionalism as one sign of respectability, which represents a major value orientation in the repertoire of its members. This traditionalism is therefore reflected in the rigid differentiation of the sexes.

The fact remains that members of this group are, according to Abul Lughod, representative of the areas "in which both rural and traditional roots are fast being exchanged for the future promised by the Revolution." (1964, p. 180) They represent the transitional group of Egyptian society. The issue now is: those children who have been socialized along traditional lines—how would their future be as adults? What kind of relationship would exist between the two sexes as adults? What kind of family life will they lead? How much of the dynamics of the traditional family will be in operation in these "new families?"

#### ROLE CONFLICT:

The effect of modernization will naturally be more felt as the years go by. There is enough evidence that the differences between the sexes as to status and value are changing in the direction of greater equality. One problem that is likely to arise in this case is that of role conflict, as a result of shifts in norms in sex-related behavior. Such a problem will be felt in the newer generation of the families under study—namely, those children whose parents were interviewed.

As men's values become less clearly masculine, in the traditional



sense, and women's values correspondingly less feminine, the inevitable result is an increase in ambiguity. When role prescriptions tend to be clearly traditional in their orientation, they are quite clear and defined for each of the sexes. But in changing societies, men traditionally display such masculine behavior as befits their sex, while if they act in gentle, kind, understanding, and sympathetic ways they may be accused of behavior that is considered "feminine." The fact that there are several somewhat contradictory roles available for men in urbanized cultures does make for role conflict. The more sharply defined sex-appropriate roles are, the less the role conflict. (Lindgren, 1969, p. 174-175)

However difficult problems of role conflict are for men who have been socialized along traditional lives, they are even more difficult for women, especially if they go on with their education to attend university. Carl Binger (1961) notes that women who choose to pursue their higher education are confronted with a choice between marriage, a career, or some combination of both. No matter how they resolve their choice, they are likely to feel guilty or somewhat less than fulfilled. (El Safty, 1972) These are the problems that await the girls under study. These girls will feel the need to follow the traditional injunction of displaying behavior that is traditionally feminine and thus attracting a potential mate, in line with their parents' attitudes, as expressed in the interviews, but at the same time their friends and teachers expect them to go on to university in preparation for a career, hence the role conflict.

If a woman chooses a career at the expense of marriage, she is



looked down upon in Egyptian middle class society as a sort of "left over." If she chooses to "drop out" of education to marry, she is made to feel guilty by friends, family, and teachers, because "everybody is going to university now, even girls, and why should she be any less?" If she attempts to combine marriage with a career, she is always in the position of feeling she is letting someone down. It is as though she is fighting on two fronts, and on each front her work is only half-fulfilled. The problem is not the same for men, because marriage and career are generally not perceived as different choices, or as especially incompatible with each other.

The prospect that awaits the children under study therefore is one in which there is the problem of role conflict. Lindgren believes that role conflict will occur in any situation in which two or more sets of expectations operate, and the usual result is some degree of tension and anxiety. (1969, p. 175)

Role conflict represents but one aspect of what the future may hold for the children under study. Further questions are raised in this respect. However, they fall beyond the scope of this research, but they may well serve as a starting point for further investigation.

#### CONTRADICTIONS IN SOCIALIZATION:

A point worthy of consideration here is the contradiction that arises when the parents socialize their daughter as a dependent person, and at the same time insist on her education, by virtue of the present value dominant in Egyptian society. She is dependent insofar as she cannot go out unless accom-



panied by a male member of her family and as she feels under the guardianship of these male members. She is independent insofar as she goes to university, because members of the middle class are inclined to see university education in strictly vocational terms. A woman who works and earns money is naturally a freer person than one who does not, because her contributions to the family income give her the implied right to share in decisions, about how it should be budgeted. Furthermore, the fact that she has a job shows that she is able to support herself if the marriage should be dissolved. In other words, the university education and then a career will normally give the woman a feeling of independence, contrary to her socialization as a dependent female, hence the contradiction. (El Safty, 1974)

Another contradiction arises when the male child is trained to be independent. Independence is in fact a personality trait which is built in the boy in the process of socialization. He goes out alone, he is his own guardian in most cases, and the interference of the parents is very minimal in his case. Yet when we look at the boy at home, we realize that he is completely dependent. Outside the home, he can visit friends or visit different places without any restriction on his freedom of movement. At home, however, he is wholly dependent on the womenfolk. This is where the latter are serving, nurturant, and protective. This is their domain, their world. This is where their quality of dependence is not at work.



### THE CHILDREN'S POINT OF VIEW

I believe it is necessary to mention that if any issues of this research be carried further in investigation, it would seem highly feasible to take into consideration the children's point of view. In my research on "The Changing Role of the Egyptian Woman" I interviewed five mothers and five daughters. The latter highlighted the results of the research because they spoke about their self-concept which was quite indicative of their future role. Important to mention here is their insistence to rebel against the passivity that characterizes their mothers, not to accept the status quo, and never to fall victim to the "sense of oppression" from which their mothers suffered. (1974) When women accept the status quo, they imply a willingness to grant more status to man. Such is a masculine-dominated culture. The point of view of the daughters in the above-mentioned research, however, expressed a strong unwillingness to grant more status to man. On the contrary, they sought equality between the sexes and as such saw themselves as equal to men. The question that arises now is: if the self-concept of the daughters denies the inferiority of their sex, at the same time that their socialization confirms it, how can they function as adults in society? To what degree will their self-concept be retained, as adults? To what degree will it be modified, once they are confronted with a male-dominated society on the practical level? Likewise, what is the self-concept of the male children? To what degree will they retain, or modify it in their later life? Further still, what kind of relationship can exist between the two sexes as a result? The children's point of view is, therefore, an important dimension to be taken into consideration if a complete picture is desired.



### INTER-SEX HOSTILITY

Relevant in pursuing the later adjustment of the children under study, each to his particular sex role vis-a-vis the other sex, is the degree of hostility between the two sexes. Lindgren believes that it has been traditional to have a degree of hostility and even some aggressiveness between boy and girl subcultures, particularly during the pre-adolescent period of development. (1969) If we assume that this hostility already exists among the group under study, being as they are in the pre-adolescent period, we may wonder if this hostility be channelled along other lines. It is among the values of the middle class, according to Lindgren, that every effort is made to channel hostility into more constructive (or at least socially acceptable) forms of behavior, such as competitiveness, sports, and games (1969). The question now is: this intersex hostility which characterizes the pre-adolescent boy-girl relations--will it die out during later years, or will it be apparently repressed while in reality it still operates beneath the surface, somehow affecting man-woman relationship? The interviewees in this research showed none of this inter-sex hostility, save in a few exceptional cases, and the interviewees represent the group that has been socialized in the traditional way. But their children, though having been socialized in the traditional way, stand midway between this traditional socialization and the prospects of a more modern future. My own speculations are to the belief that inter-sex hostility will cease to be, as the barriers that limit or inhibit interaction between the two sexes will evidently be lowered or weakened as more equality between the sexes is approached.



In an article in Al Akhbar (1975) the issue under discussion is intersex hostility among adults. The article presents a point that wholly contradicts the point I present above. It says that a hostile attitude towards the other sex is becoming a common trend among females of the modern world as a sign of their growing independence. Girls therefore declare war on men to prove that they are independent of them. They refuse to get married—in fact, they refuse to be themselves down to any man, but run away from marriage life to live in a world of independence which each of them builds for herself. The article goes on to say that such a phenomenon is definitely a threat to the role of women in society, as it leads to a reckless denial of human feelings as apparent by the attitude of the females. The reaction on the part of the males will naturally be very strong and the result is intersex hostility among men and women.

Psychologists believe that the cry for equality that women raise nowadays is not helped by such extreme attitudes. On the contrary, these attitudes are detrimental to all feminist movements, because these movements have among their supporters a good number of females who believe that men are monsters who deny the woman every human right. Psychologists, therefore, believe that the feminists have to be careful of these females who express great hostility towards men by showing them as monsters and consequently refuse to marry. These females have to be given the right advice and guidance by which they can act as normal individuals. Although such guidance would not be feasible on the practical level, it is worth the trouble because it would in this way restore the woman to her position as the "active half of society" beside the man. The fruit of such work is evidently beyond evaluation.



The article appeals to people to fight such an attitude on the part of any female at all levels, so as to restore the warmth of feeling to her heart instead of this growing hostility which is contradictory to her true nature as a woman. In this way, the woman can be placed in her natural position as a vital agent in building the family which is the basis of society i.e., she can then fill her role as mother by virtue of her being married.

If the female goes on to feel hostile towards the man, the consequences on the social level would normally lead to the break-down of the family, as normally no families would be formed. On the psychological level, her hostility would extend to include her outlook towards life and her self-concept as well. (Al Akhbar, Oct. 1975, p. 5)

However, I doubt that this hostility on the part of females would operate in middle-class Egyptian society to the degree that would make the female refuse to marry. In this class, the girl has been socialized into a culture which considers that marriage is the utmost aim of the girl. It preceeds all other aims. No matter how much she seeks her independence, she does not refuse the prospect of "a secure home with the husband and children." Neither the values nor the expectations of the middle class can uphold the idea of an unmarried female who is beyond the age of marriage. The chances are that such a female would be either looked down upon as an old maid or ostracized as unchaste.

The points raised in this section serve the function of posing certain questions for further investigation. I have made certain specula-



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tions in some respect, but they are no more than speculations. Yet their main concern is the children of the parents who were interviewed, because these children are the ones who are moving towards the modern family while they are strongly held by roots of traditionalism.

### S U M M A R Y

I started this research with the assumption that members of the Egyptian middle class express attitudes of sex differentiation with respect to the socialization of their children. I chose to interview eight families which I selected from the criteria I set for "middle class." I depended on interviews for my data. Each parent in each family was interviewed separately. The interviews did not follow a structured type, but they were left open. They were, however, based on particular issues which appear in the appendix in the form of questions that serve as guidelines for the interviews.

The results of the interviews revealed a discrimination along sex lines among the parents of this group with respect to their children. These parents prepare their children, each for a role befitting his/her sex. I chose to present these results categorized under separate themes, according to the categorization of the questions in the appendix. The responses of each parent were discussed separately under each theme. From these results I came out with an ideal type family which represents the typical way of socialization among the middle class members, as inferred from the attitudes the parents



expressed. This family has two children, a boy and a girl. Each one is therefore being socialized clearly along sex lines.

The research finally raises certain issues for further study. Chief among these is the role conflict that is likely to be detected in the children of the families under study when they become adults, by virtue of the fact that the group under study represents the transitional group of society which is fast moving towards equality between the sexes, hence the role conflict. Another issue which is worthy of further consideration is the inter-sex hostility that is also likely to result among the children of this group in their future lives. For these and other reasons, I suggest that if this research be pursued, the children's point of view be taken into consideration, significant it will be in this respect.



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A P P E N D I X

Sociability or the Degree to which the Child Mixes with Others:

- 1.a. Do you allow your daughter to mix with children of the other sex?
- b. Do you allow your son to mix with children of the other sex?
- 2.a. Does she have friends of the same sex? Do you encourage her to have friends?
- b. Does he have friends of the same sex? Do you encourage him to have friends?
- 3.a. Do you allow her to visit her girl friends at home? alone or in your company?
- b. Do you allow him to visit his friends at home? alone or in another person's company?
- 4.a. Do you allow her to bring her friends at home?
- b. Do you allow him to bring his friends at home?
- 5.a. If her friends are allowed to come at home, does she meet them in privacy or do they mix freely with members of the household, especially those of the other sex?
- b. If his friends come, does he meet them in privacy or do they mix freely with members of the household - especially those of the other sex?
- 6.a. Is she a member of a club?
- b. Is he a member of a club?
- 7.a. Does she practice any form of social activity? (e.g. sports)? What kind?
- b. Does he practice any form of social activity? (e.g. boy scout)? What kind?



EDUCATION:

- 8.a. What kind of education do you give her? Foreign?  
Public?
- b. What kind of education do you give him? Foreign?  
Public?
- 9.a. Would you allow her to have co-education? Why or  
Why not?
- b. Would you allow him to have co-education? Why or  
Why not?
- 10.a. How much stress do you lay on her success at school?
- b. How much stress do you lay on his success at school?  
More or less than his sister? Why?

SEGREGATION:

- 11.a. Does she have a separate room in the house?
- b. Does he have a separate room in the house?
- 12.a. Do you allow her to change her clothes in front of her  
father? brothers? (any members of the other sex in the  
household)?
- b. Do you allow him to change his clothes in front of members  
of the other sex?

SEX EDUCATION:

- 13.a. Do you give her any sex education? Do you allow her to  
have it from any other source - books, magazines, friends,  
elders?
- b. Do you give him any sex education? Do you allow him to  
have it from any other source?
- 14.a. Do you accept that your daughter be kissed by adults of the  
other sex? Why or why not?
- b. Do you accept that your son be kissed by adults of the other  
sex? Why or why not?



CIRCUMCISION AND EXCISION OF THE CLITORIS:

- 15.a. Did you have her clitoris excised? Why or Why not?  
If yes, at what age?
- b. Did you have him circumcized? Why or Why not? If  
yes, at what age?

MENSTRUATION AND REACHING PUBERTY:

- 16.a. When she menstruates - will you make further restric-  
tions on her? Going out alone? mixing with members  
of the other sex?
- b. When he reaches puberty - will you make any restric-  
tions on him?

INDEPENDENCE:

- 17.a. How does she go to school? By school bus? Does any-  
body accompany her?
- b. How does he go to school? alone or accompanied by  
someone?
- 18.a. Would you allow her to use public means of transporta-  
tion alone? (Buses, cabs, trains?)
- b. Would you allow him to use public means of transporta-  
tion alone? (Buses, cabs, trains?)

CLOTHES:

- 19.a. Do you make any restrictions on her clothes? e.g. short  
dresses? Does she choose her own clothes?
- b. Do you make any restrictions on his clothes? Does he  
have any share in choosing his own clothes?

HOUSEWORK:

- 20.a. Do you let your daughter help with the housework? What  
kind - dishwashing, laundry, setting the table, cleaning,  
kitchen work?
- b. Do you let him help with the housework? What kind?



HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:

- 21.a. Does she have a hobby? What is it?
- b. Does he have a hobby? What is it?
  
- 22.a. What kind of toys do you usually buy for her?
- b. What kind of toys do you usually buy for him?
  
- 23.a. What kind of toys (games) does she actually like to play with?
- b. What kind of toys (games) does he actually like to play with?
  
- 24.a. What kind of books does she like to read? films she likes to see? Do you allow her to read or see what she wants?
- b. What kind of books does he like to read? films he likes to see? Do you allow him to read or see what he wants?
  
- 25.a. Have you any plans for her future? Marriage? A job?
- b. Have you any plans for his future? Marriage? A job?

PARENTAL CARE AND ATTENTION:

- 26.a. Do you give her the same care as her brother? In terms of time? Why or Why not?
- b. Do you give him the same care as his sister? In terms of time? more? less? Why or Why not?
  
- 27.a. Do you give her the same pocket money as her brother?
- b. Do you give him the same pocket money as his sister? more? less? why?
  
- 28.a. If she has something confidential - does she say it to her father or mother?
- b. If he has something confidential - does he say it to his father or mother?



- 29.a. Who has the bigger share in caring for your daughter?  
The husband? The wife?
- b. Who has the bigger share in caring for your son?  
The husband? The wife?

OBEDIENCE:

- 30.a. Do you encourage her to fight back in dealing with  
you? with her brother(s)? any outsider?
- b. Do you encourage him to fight back in dealing with  
you? with his sister(s)? any outsider?
- 31.a. Do you require from her strict obedience? to you  
only? to her other parent? To her brother(s)? To  
elder people in general?
- b. Do you require from him strict obedience? to you  
only? to his other parent? To his sister(s)? To  
elder people in general?

"ADAB":

- 32.a. How much consideration do you lay on politeness or  
"adab" with respect to your daughter? Within the  
family circle only? outside it? In attitude only?  
Behavior only? or both?
- b. How much consideration do you lay on his "adab"?  
within the family circle only? outside it? In  
attitude only? Behavior only? or both? More than  
his sister? Less? Why?
- 33.a. Do you ever implant in her ideas of chastity? How?
- b. Do you ever give him advice as to his future sexual  
behavior in terms of chastity? How?

DISCIPLINE:

- 34.a. What kind of sanctions do you use with her? physical  
or otherwise?
- b. What kind of sanctions do you use with him? physical  
or otherwise?



- 35.a. When do you use these sanctions? For which kind of behavior?
- b. When do you use these sanctions? For which kind of behavior?
- 36.a. Who does this disciplining? Father? Mother?
- b. Who does this disciplining? Father? Mother?

RESPONSIBILITY:

- 37.a. Do you make her understand that she is the only one responsible for her behavior or that male members of the family are responsible for her? (especially in terms of wrong doing?)
- b. Do you make him understand that he is responsible for his behavior only or for that of other female members of his family, too?

NURTURANCE:

- 38.a. Do you make her feel responsible for her brother in terms of caretaking?
- b. Do you make him feel responsible for his sister in terms of caretaking?

HOMOSEXUALITY:

- 39.a. What if you know that your son has homosexual tendencies? Will you punish him? How will you feel about it?
- b. What if you know that she has homosexual tendencies? How will you feel about it? How will you punish her?



G L O S S A R Y

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| adab            | good behavior  |
| awrah           | private parts  |
| eib             | improper   |
| ezwah           | solidarity, support  |
| galabiya        | Arab garment   |
| habara          | garment which covers the whole body from head to toe, but no longer in use in Egypt. |
| hareh           | womenfolk  |
| hegab           | amulet   |
| mu'addab        | well-behaved (male)  |
| mu'addaba       | well-behaved (female)  |
| muazzaf         | government official (singular)   |
| muazzafin       | government officials (plural)  |
| qahwa baladi    | traditional coffee houses  |
| shara'          | religious law  |
| tarha           | head cover   |
| Thanaweyya Amma | Secondary School Certificate   |



