

Myths, Lies, and Impotence: Structural Adjustment and Male Voice in Egypt¹

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In the first few minutes of Sharif Arafa's 1996 Egyptian film *Al Nom fi el asal* (lit: sleeping with honey),² we witness a wedding celebration followed by a scene in the newlywed's bedroom and then by the suicide of the groom. When investigators arrive to question the widow she explains how despite their effort at foreplay her deceased husband remained "unaroused" and may have taken his life to avoid confronting his sexual dysfunction.

As the film's central character, the chief of police investigation for Cairo, played by the "six hundred pound gorilla of Egyptian [commercial] cinema" Adil Imam,³ returns to his office after investigating the groom's death, he finds the waiting area full of men and women fighting with each other. The reason for this commotion turns out to be that the women were upset at their husbands' lack of sexual vigor. That same evening the protagonist returns home to celebrate his wedding anniversary and tries to make love to his wife, but does not succeed. The next day, now himself afflicted, Imam orders an official survey of those city districts that report domestic disturbances. All parts of the city, upper class, middle class, and popular neighborhoods, report affliction with this mysterious problem. Impotence as a form of cultural shame from here on becomes central to the film's narrative structure as it plays on the constructed arguments of Arab manliness and its links to sexual prowess.

Seeking to find the cause of this affliction, Imam takes on the task of visiting religious sermons and indigenous healers. Unsatisfied with the answers he receives, he finally consults an eminent physician who explains that the epidemic could result in the whole community becoming clinically depressed. The doctor asserts that the lack of sexual fulfillment for men and women could lead to widespread hopelessness and the malfunctioning of the human body, further leading to social disorder, and chaos. According to him, the cause of the affliction was due to people in Egypt being constantly exposed to misinformation and lies on television and in the newspaper by the political establishment.

Mass impotence is depicted, through the physician's voice (a voice of reason and of science) as a result of manipulation of people's will. Through Imam's accep-

tance of this position the film develops this theme as a metaphor for the lack of democratic voice within Egyptian national politics. It is this alienation of the people's bodies and minds in the Fanonian sense of the term⁴ that the protagonist now seeks to cure through the process of consciousness raising; a move that would also ensure a more orderly resolution to the threat of disorder. This becomes explicit at the end of *Sleeping with Honey* when Imam leads a group of chanting men in a procession—those who through his persuasion have found their voice—toward the People's Assembly (the national parliament) and accosts a group of parliamentarians and ministers to pay attention to the people's plight.

Imam's earlier films, like *Terrorist and Kebab*, also directed by Arafa, have similarly exposed bureaucratic inefficiency, yet end on a note of social harmony.⁵ In contrast, *Sleeping with Honey* has a more confrontational tone to it. The film, due partly to its critical message, was popular in Egypt. It resonated well with the social mood of the day that was aspiring for a more open and pluralistic political system in Egypt. The question does arise, how did it pass the strict Egyptian censors. The mid 1990s were a peculiarly open moment for the security-conscious and autocratic Egyptian state. President Hosni Mubarak had been elected to his third term in office, the Islamic insurgency of the early 1990s had been brutally crushed, Cairo was the scene for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and the regime was proud of its international status in the revived Middle East peace process. These events gave the government self-assurance to allow a limited internal debate on civil society. The film's producers may have taken advantage of this particular political opening to suggest a more democratic society, as we see the protagonist proclaim in the final scenes of the film.

Arafa's is an evocative film that has many subtle subtexts to which I cannot do complete justice in this paper. I invoke it here to remind us of the similarities between the film's thematic emphasis and the internationally sponsored arguments⁶ on civil society and democratic freedoms popular within the Egypt of the mid-1990s. *Sleeping with Honey* enables me to evaluate and

detail the impact of the internationally subsidized development agenda coupled as it was to the privatization of key industries and with economic liberalization in Egypt. In this regard the movie's message, much like the international agenda, selectively criticizes certain state ministries and senior bureaucrats, yet fails to mention the dismantling of the welfare state and its impact on people's living conditions. Taking my cue from the film, I argue in this paper that the emphasis of political reform over questions of social and economic equity fits neatly and comprehensively into the neo-liberal agenda propagated by Egypt's international donors and its funded non-governmental organizations during the 1990s. This was an agenda that risked friction with Egyptian state functionaries to pursue its developmental aspirations, yet also collaborated with them to push its own economic goals of structural adjustment and fiscal constraint.

Building on the portrayal of male impotency,⁷ this paper uses *Sleeping with Honey* as a road map to rethink and analyze Egypt's recent history of the mid-1990s. I will first critically evaluate the internationally funded development agenda in Egypt and its emphasis on family planning as a key developmental strategy for Egypt's future economic and social well being. The paper will then relate the relationship this process holds to the economy and to the non-government organizations (NGOs) that become the conduits of international aid and supervise the developmental agenda (a role analogous to what Imam plays in the film). As I develop the analysis it will become evident that the family planning program contributes to and expands on the arguments on the body, fertility, and sexuality so pivotal to the message that the film sought to portray. Within this context, the film's depiction of male anxieties surrounding sexual inadequacy prompts me to focus on the attention paid to male behavior in fertility decisions by the Egyptian family planning program.

Although the film does not explicitly make the case, its representation of impotency does assist me in making an argument about Egyptian society similar to Judith Farquhar's description of impotency and the changing economy in contemporary China.⁸ Farquhar partly shows how in a competitive capitalist market those men who profitably served in Maoist China now find themselves on the margins of the social change. Similarly the liberalization of the Egyptian economy in the last two decades has also produced its own sets of winners and losers. Along with the multitude of urban and rural poor, the career civil servant, the *muvazzaf*, the epitome of Egyptian modernity and state patronage, too became a threatened species as the state under international pressure shrunk the size of its bureaucracy. Guarantees for new state jobs for university graduates were systematically eroded as the progressive social contract of a

welfare state faded in the 1980s. My critical reading of the film is linked to this particular moment in Egypt's recent past and elaborates upon the theme of how structural changes in Egyptian social and economic life have affected society's productive/reproductive abilities.

The film also allows me to ethnographically examine its central trope, the representation of Arab masculinity. Recent discussions of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean masculinity have retained their conceptual affiliation with the concept of honor and thus with notions of virility, fearlessness, moral strength and structured violence.⁹ These descriptions, nuanced and multi-dimensional as they are, to a large degree subscribe to idealized and hegemonic notions of masculinities.¹⁰ An important rethinking of these constructions comes through looking at how a plurality of gendered identities emerges through an investigation of social practice.¹¹ For example, discussing hegemonic and subaltern masculinities in the Middle East, Deniz Kandiyoti¹² places the production of masculine identities in generational and institutional terms and shows how masculinities are produced as men move through their respective life cycles. Similarly, Lindisfarne¹³ argues that if hegemonic constructions of masculinity are linked to sexual performance, then the humiliation of impotency and the failure to deflower brides may also construct subordinate forms. I would add that as dominant notions of masculinity are unsteady concepts that are created in gender relational terms, they, at least in the Egyptian case, are also intrinsically linked to social and economic aspects of life.

I conducted fieldwork in Egypt from 1992 to '94 and on revisits later in the decade. My fieldwork was in family planning clinics, in offices of international agencies, and in a delta village in the governorate of Sharquiya. I also worked in a poor urban neighborhood of Behtem in Cairo. Based on my fieldwork, in this paper I revisit the issue of impotency in Egypt, so graphically depicted in Arafa's film, and broaden the argument to show that its occurrence is not only due to lack of political freedoms, but it is also a direct consequence of social and economic deprivation specifically among the working poor, the real victims of the structural adjustment-dictated privatization policies. I argue that as much as the fear of "impotence" and sexual dysfunction persists among the Egyptian poor (symbolically, metaphorically, or otherwise), its cure may not lie only in the liberal notions of giving voice, as envisioned by the protagonist in Arafa's film, but in a more comprehensive and sustained attention to social and economic inequities.

The Economy and Family Planning

In one of my first few days in Cairo, while riding in a taxi, I tried to initiate a conversation with the driver to practice my colloquial Egyptian dialect. I asked whether

he had an opinion on the family planning program. The taxi driver responded slowly but with perceptible anger in his voice. He said he was a commerce graduate from the Ain Shams University in Cairo; he drove the taxi because he was unemployed, which meant he did not have a job in keeping with his university degree. He lived with his wife and two young children in his parents' two-room apartment in a poor neighborhood of the city. "*El mushkila mush fi ziyadit el sukkani*" (the problem is not over-population), he said, rather the problem was the wrong priorities of the state. God had promised Muslims that he would provide for them. Not to trust God was forbidden in Islam, he argued. "The Egyptian state was diverting resources by importing cigarettes and opening up hotels for people to drink alcohol while the money could be used to open up projects (*masbruaat*) to employ people," he angrily added.

The taxi driver's anger, although couched in the language of Islam, was also clearly a response to the effects of the structural reform of the Egyptian economy that the Egyptian state was implementing in the early 1990s under international pressure. In May and November of 1991 the IMF and the World Bank negotiated a Standby Agreement and a Structural Adjustment Loan with the Government of Egypt. This package makes up the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP). These agreements primarily extended the open door policies of the mid-1970s and pushed for further institutional changes in the Egyptian economy to make it more market oriented.¹⁴ In the 1990s unemployment levels remained high, with university and technical institute graduates making up 65-75 percent of the unemployed. Although official figures reported unemployment at 8-10 percent, other estimates ranged from 15-20 percent of an Egyptian workforce of almost 18 million.¹⁵ Recent fluctuations in the exchange rates and the devaluation of the Egyptian pound in early 2003 have made it clear that even after 12 years of IMF regulated "bitter pills" the Egyptian people continue to suffer the consequences. For example, along with rising inflation that unofficially is in the double digits at 12-14 percent, unemployment levels may rise higher as more state-owned enterprises are privatized along with a retrenchment of workers.¹⁶

The population program in Egypt¹⁷ needs to be understood as a corollary to the above-mentioned changes in the Egyptian economy. A USAID report in 1989 painted a picture of Egyptian social life, recounting how urbanization had caused loss of agricultural land, how the universities could not absorb more students, how the government's capacity to employ graduates had diminished and how gross domestic savings had declined.¹⁸ A reduction in the population's size was represented as a solution to reduce development expenditures. This reduction was to eventually put less

pressure on the state to provide for education, health care, and jobs in the future.¹⁹

In the 1980s and 1990s, as international development agencies like the USAID compelled the Egyptian state to rationalize its economy, privatize its assets, and remove social subsidies,²⁰ they also provided the largest subsidies for population control. These agencies asserted that a reduction of state support would increase the cost of supporting many children and persuade families to adopt planning as a "voluntary and non-coercive" choice. As the IMF-sponsored structural adjustment policy in the early 1990s was supposed to cut excess in the economy, the family planning program presumably was going to guarantee a correspondingly lean family. Playing on the imagery of surplus and waste, the structural adjustment program and the population program in Egypt should be seen, as suggested above, in conjunction as methods to streamline the social and economic corpus of Egypt.

Non-Governmental Organizations and Family Planning

In Egypt the last twenty years have evidenced positive increases in individual income and in other developmental indices, yet the gradual removal of welfare structures and state subsidies on food, education, and housing sectors have adversely affected the economic well-being of the rural and urban poor. Within this social and economic framework Egyptian NGOs funded by international donors play a vital role in propagating ideas about self-help and personal responsibility. These NGOs primarily, like anywhere else, employ educated men and women from the urban middle and upper professional classes. Motivated by a development agenda of "social good," some of these groups conduct research seeking to transform the "un-modern" living habits of the peasantry and the urban poor. The film's protagonist, I argue, represents this elite. This class, allied with the state in most circumstances (as represented by Imam's position as a senior police officer), takes upon itself the civilizing project of the post-independence nation-state, attempting to incorporate the populace, through pedagogy and consciousness-raising, into a unitary nation.

Keeping this background in perspective, the internationally sponsored family planning and development initiatives in Egypt funded many NGOs with women and development components in the 1990s (e.g. Cairo Family Planning Association, Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services [CEOS], the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women [ADEW], Appropriate Communications Techniques [ACT] etc.). These NGOs generated debates within Egypt on internationally defined positions on women's reproductive rights. Under the auspices of the Popula-

tion Council, Ford Foundation, the USAID and the UN agencies, such groups, along with other activist women and secular women's groups, organized seminars and wrote position papers on reproductive health-related issues of women's individual rights and autonomy. International literature on reproductive health affirms the crucial role of such NGOs in making governments comply with international treaties on women's emancipation, and also their role in halting acts of discrimination that affect women's status in different countries.²¹ Hence, some women's groups and NGOs, as pressure groups, bridged the gap between international legal standards and the Egyptian state's position on these issues. In such instances these formations remained within the parameters of the debate set by the larger agenda of international development. By speaking the language of liberal democracy, and in their quest to make the Egyptian state conform to international rules and forms of conduct, these groups became interlocutors for the international donor agencies. Such arguments clearly questioned the sovereignty of the Egyptian and other Middle Eastern states by advocating the supremacy of international standards. They inevitably also became sites of tension between the Egyptian state bureaucracy and international donor agencies.

Despite these frictions many NGOs participated along with government agencies in family planning and other development projects. Liberal-minded Egyptian scholars have argued that civil society in Egypt may have a pivotal role in achieving the goals of the population program.²² They have asserted that rivalry among government ministries and the resultant bureaucratic inertia make the state unable to fulfill its role in implementing the program.²³ Civil society institutions, therefore, needed to be strengthened for substantial improvement to occur in development goals, which include family planning.²⁴

Such arguments for democratic freedoms and transparency in government functions in Egypt notwithstanding, the donor agencies, especially the USAID, have themselves been exclusionary in their funding choices. Non-governmental organizations that use explicitly structural, developmental, or other approaches to population reduction have not received much external funding.²⁵ On the contrary, USAID largely supported NGOs that echoed its priorities. Transfer of technology, training of competent local staff, family planning research, family planning service provision, and private sector distribution of contraceptives are some of the fields in which these Egyptian NGOs worked under USAID supervision. They became the conduits through which the internationally sponsored family planning program sought to establish itself outside the realm of governmental control.

The Contraceptive Social Marketing Project (previ-

ously Family of the Future), for example, was allocated twelve million dollars between 1988 and 1993 to market contraceptives through the private sector to lower- and middle-income Egyptian couples.²⁶ Another NGO, Clinical Services Improvement Project, budgeted thirteen million dollars for the same period to establish 112 upgraded, fee-for-service family planning clinics in different governorates.²⁷ Similarly, the Egyptian Young Medical Doctors Association was given two million dollars for a five-year period to recruit doctors in private practice for family planning training and to establish private clinics as extensions of the family planning services.²⁸

Most such NGOs remained ideologically committed to family planning and to the related structural adjustment program. In an interview with a senior member of the Egyptian Fertility Care Society, an NGO that works primarily in the area of research and evaluation of contraception, I was told that contraceptive use should precede focus on economic growth if a rapid fall in fertility rates is desired. My informant stated that structural adjustment policies and the removal of social subsidies would benefit the program because they would force people to realize the costs of having a large family. While talking to a clinical staff member of the Cairo Family Planning Association (a pioneer NGO in the family planning field formed in 1977) I was informed that along with cultural grounds and the low social status of women, a major reason parents did not desire a small family was due to some of the existing social subsidies guaranteed by the state.²⁹ Only a removal of this support would make families aware of the real costs of raising children. These arguments are comparable to views on welfare reform that have been prevalent in the last decade in the United States. They are also clearly influenced by the emphasis placed by international donor agencies on the removal of social subsidies and its link to fertility control. In short, the positions of many NGO members on family planning tended to be a part of a world-view that they shared with the international donors.

Male Involvement in Family Planning

I submit that in Egypt the family planning program, through its pedagogical and other efforts, not only seeks to reduce population size, but also introduces notions of individual choice and self-regulation.³⁰ In Egypt, as elsewhere, a primary target of the family planning program is the female body, although the male body is not ignored. In the last decade, international family planning policy has paid special attention to the multiple forms in which different cultures organize fertility decisions, and has moved planners to consider the views of male partners regarding fertility control.³¹ Within this context, after investigating male views, planners seek to over-

come the perceived threats from “traditional” men to the family planning program. They do this through a concerted media campaign to educate and inform men on the importance of family planning. International family planning efforts have successfully integrated male methods, such as condoms and vasectomy, into their various programs. In Egypt, however, the user rates for these methods are extremely low. Policy makers explain this failure partly by evoking traditional culture, patriarchal norms, native notions of maleness, the “backwardness” of the peasant population and “Islamic doctrine.” Male involvement is based on the premise that although men may not use contraceptives themselves they should be persuaded to allow and enable their wives to accept and use contraceptives. By way of an example I shall illustrate how some NGOs use cultural perspectives to influence Egyptian male fertility-behavior patterns.³²

In the summer of 1993, I attended the Family Health Week workshop. This week-long workshop was organized in Minya, an Upper Egyptian governorate,³³ through the collaboration of Johns Hopkins University Population Communication Services (funded by USAID), the Egyptian National Population Council, The Ministry of Health, and 16 local family planning and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) organizations. Components of the program consisted of outreach activities, seminars, evening meetings, church and mosque meetings, and small community meetings aimed at promoting general awareness about family planning.

Developmental experts regard Upper Egyptians as culturally and politically conservative. Although most of the country’s development projects are based in this region, development experts argue that traditional behavior patterns in the region are difficult to change. The Health Week was designed to motivate Upper Egyptians to modify their negative attitudes toward accepting family planning and hence allow their spouses to use contraceptives. Minya was chosen as a test site for this program.

During the week, I accompanied religious leaders and doctors to a nearby village where a lecture was arranged for men on the benefits of fertility control and the conformity of Islam to family planning. When we arrived after sunset there were about twenty men present at the primary school building. The shaykh, an important person among local leaders of Minya, started speaking in the glow of kerosene lanterns. Using Egyptian Arabic (i.e. non-classical Arabic) he argued Islam was not against having children, “but the children should be healthy and educated.” He continued to assert that a physically, morally, and intellectually unhealthy nation would be undesirable in Islam. He added that the present deteriorating economic circumstances would force large families into dire social conditions. Hence family

planning was necessary to avoid a bleak future. He gave graphic examples of how too many children could also affect the health of the mother. “We could imagine,” he continued, showing his theatrical skills, “how a mother may have two babies suckling on her two breasts while she is already pregnant with another child.”

If this was supposed to amuse or shock the men, they did not show it, or it may have been too dark for me to notice. However, during the question and answer session one of them asked why, since women had started taking pills, they now had more twins and even triplets and thus were endangering their lives? The shaykh responded with annoyance and admonished the crowd that these rumors were spread by the uneducated and the idle. Raising his voice he said: “The people should only trust the doctor while discussing birth control and its effect on the body, for they have the scientific knowledge.”

This episode reflects how local-level NGOs work with the Ministry of Health and international donors to create consent and argue for the legitimacy of scientific method for family planning. It also shows how the questioning of the state message was firmly dealt with not by polite persuasion or counseling, the preferred methods in family planning literature,³⁴ but by condemning local knowledge as rumor-based and by reasserting the authority of the speaker. State planners and international donors also had mutually shared concerns on the success of their program. For example, using the shaykh to deliver the message to men aided in offsetting arguments against family planning from religious leaders belonging to the oppositional Islamist movement.

To elaborate on this a bit further, so as to make clear the larger social context of these interventions, during the period of my stay in Egypt (1992-94) the governorate of Minya was a hot-bed of Islamist resistance to state authorities. At the time of my research there were daily armed attacks on police convoys by Islamists. In exchange the security services would be involved in search and destroy missions in the countryside. This political situation itself had its effect on the outcome of this Health Week.

The organizers had produced a play that was aimed at male participation in family planning and was scheduled to be performed at several sites during the course of the Week. The script of the play had been pre-approved by the government censors and the security apparatus as having no politically “objectionable” material. The actors were also considered politically “trustworthy”, meaning they were not sympathetic to the Islamists. Yet on the day of the first performance the governor of Minya, an army general, cancelled the play. It should be kept in mind that the Health Week activities were part of the government-sponsored development program for the region. However, assembling a large audience, given

the prevalent violent skirmishes between the state forces and the Islamists in the area, was considered a security risk by the governor's office. The international sponsors of the program protested to the higher authorities in Cairo, but were politely told to follow the regional government's orders. The political system with its heightened concerns of maintaining law and order became a hindrance to the propagation of the state's own policy initiatives, leaving the foreign donors and their locally supported NGOs frustrated and incapable of completing their goals. Two kinds of responses to the potential of "disorder" were at play here. One was that of the state seeking to crush all opposition through acts of brute force. Second was that of civil society forces seeking to mitigate backwardness through pedagogical techniques.

The above example echoes the friction between the film's protagonist, Adil Imam and Egypt's political elite as he tries unsuccessfully to reason with his superiors to take the affliction seriously and help people out of their misery. Similarly, the international donors and their funded NGOs faced predicaments in the implementation of their program. States like Egypt have yet to completely develop the administrative and ideological apparatuses typical of Western democracies that lead to creating "free subjects".³⁵ Therefore, force and coercion still take precedence over techniques of persuasion and pedagogy as methods of managing populations, methods at least rhetorically favored by the NGOs. Although the program closely followed the politically progressive arguments on consent and choice in determining family size, the localized implementation of this agenda, at least in the case of Egypt, remains enmeshed within the political and social power of the lending agencies and the Egyptian state. In essence the liberal desire to understand male perspectives remains subservient to the goals of the family planning program. For if people's health was this week's primary focus, then, in my opinion, the emphasis should not have been only on consciousness raising, but also on alleviation of poverty and social economic problems of the community, which are responsible for most disease conditions in this population.

Representation of Men

As the film metaphorically connects to male anxieties about their sexual function in rapidly deteriorating economic conditions, it also symbolically connects the lack of people's participation in public life to the suppression of particularly *male* voice. We see this clearly in the final scenes of the film as Imam leads chanting men in a procession. Even with its critically attuned message, the film has a gendered argument that potentially divides political and public space into inside/outside, public/domestic, male/female arenas. This argument works

within the framework of parliamentary states that tend to delegate relatively more power to men through family law, tax law, law of inheritance, and through encouraging differential power of men over women in the labor markets.³⁶

In this section I wish to expand on this theme by reminding readers how the emphasis on the loss and retrieval of primarily *male* voice in Arafa's film is not dissimilar to an effort through the family planning program to reconstitute the *male* role within the Egyptian family. Ranajit Guha in an article on the relationship of the Indian national movement with the Indian masses borrows the Gramscian concept of hegemony to show the processes through which consensus was built by the nationalist elite leadership.³⁷ He argues that these leaders needed to harness the intuition and enthusiasm of the people so that order could evolve out of chaos. The subalterns' popular initiatives, autonomy of function, the immediacy in their politics, and the spontaneity of their actions were to be disciplined by the bourgeois national elite for it to control and hegemonize the national movement. An undisciplined and autonomous subaltern collectivity was to be made into a disciplined, controlled national movement that would respond to the desires of the leadership. It is within a similar framework, I suggest, that social-actors such as Imam (the film's protagonist)/NGOs (as shown in the previous section), and even modern national governments, seek to change the independent and autonomous practices of the lower classes. In the film, through Imam's persuasion, the men (the procession was all male) eventually found their voice and participated in an organized and orderly demonstration to present their grievances to their elected representatives. This was in contrast to the chaos and disorder (the Islamist violence and high crime rates) that the society could ultimately face (as suggested by the physician) if the elite did not seriously attend to the central cause of affliction through liberal democratic reform. Imam's character can be read, therefore, as a part of those elements in society that pedagogically work toward constructing a responsible citizenry in an attempt to create self-disciplined subjects that respond to their social problems through "proper" political channels rather than through disruptive, violent, and chaotic actions.

To elaborate on this point in the context of the discussion on the family planning program let me offer an example. The Egyptian family planning program sponsors a series of advertisements that address the issue of men's role in contraceptive decision-making. These advertisements are produced by the State Information Services under technical guidance and financing from the USAID and Johns Hopkins University. Through television advertisements, men are increasingly made aware of their familial responsibilities as providers.

Some of these television advertisements represent men as heads of families, yet simultaneously criticize them as defenders of the status quo, as conservative, traditional, and anti-modern—that is, as anti-birth control. Others encourage men to be flexible and uncritical towards female decisions to use contraceptives. Some summon men to behave better toward their womenfolk, showing images of modern urban men helping their wives in domestic household chores. The advertisements are geared toward convincing Egyptian men to act as “real men,” that is, being more responsible individuals and hence producing fewer babies.

Ironically the issue of responsibility of the head of the household to provide for their families and toward the social good is emphasized at a time of general economic instability for the Egyptian poor. The advertisements seek to construct arguments of men’s responsibility toward their families even as the opportunities to fulfill that role are rapidly diminishing. By concentrating on issues of birth control, the internationally-sponsored family planning program deflects resentment against the state onto the domestic sphere, holding couples with large families responsible for the economic plight in their lives. On the one hand, these advertisements seek to encourage socially responsible fathers to follow the state’s advice on family planning and restrict their family size. On the other hand, the high unemployment rate, socio-economic deprivation, and the undemocratic political environment push most people onto the margins of the system, creating political conflict and deep resentment.

Continuing with the above argument, I emphasize that one of the major concerns of the family planning program is to create a progressive, positive, and modern family space devoid of pressures from other kin, friends and relatives on reproductive decisions. There is an assumption for the household to be a decision-making unit that is free and open to discussion regarding fertility choice and the sole locus of social respectability. In liberal political theory, family is regarded as the natural basis of civil life. As a location of biological ties and affective emotions among its members, it may, however, stand opposed to the working of the liberal state. Family can be “thus simultaneously the foundation of modern state and antagonistic to it.”³⁸ Hence, the family needs to be reconstituted on modern grounds. Its allegiance has to reside with the state, linked as it is to the ideology of social good. Therefore, the Egyptian state may still need the father as the head of the household. Yet now a new kind of patriarch is desired, responsible about his civil duties and subservient to the state; duties that include enabling the state to have access to female bodies for contraceptive purposes without hindrance from their male partners.³⁹

This focus on behavior change is also theoretically

connected to the notion of the self-regulating individual. Liberal thought, from this perspective, does not consider individuality as foundational given that political institutions can regulate individual behavior. Rather it is a process of coming-to-be, a constructive agenda through which the individual is fashioned. A picture of liberalism that incorporates the ethical individual with collective rights and governmental restraint may be proper, but we need to also pay attention, as Uday Mehta⁴⁰ reminds us, to liberalism’s underlying fear of libertine excesses and human passions. People need to be taught to control their desires and learn to curb “natural” instincts in order to become self-disciplined and disciplining individuals. I argue that Egypt, as a modernizing state, utilizes the family planning program as a pedagogical project (as Imam’s project in the film) to create such a self-regulating population (with responsible, subservient, and disciplined fathers). Of course we need to keep reminding ourselves that as the construction of the “new” self becomes the focus of persuasive techniques to create responsible men and women, economic pressures simultaneously create conditions to curtail re-production.

In light of the above discussions, in the following sections I present the responses of men in Cairo I lived with and spoke to. I show how men themselves give meaning to the language and practice of fertility control as it enters their households and affects the notions of their bodies, fertility, and sexuality. I emphasize how social and economic changes reinforce or destabilize their positions by impinging on gender relations within the household.

Male Anxieties

As mentioned, Adil Imam, the protagonist in the film, is a populist character that confronts government ministers and senior bureaucrats and seeks to find the cause and the remedy for this social affliction. His impotency gets cured when he and his wife travel to the desert outside the city and are able to make love. The remedy for impotence found in the desert away from the over-populated urban center hints at the possibility of an ecological argument; a back-to-nature kind of solution that invokes simpler times with less social worries. This theme is not well developed in the film but it has echoes in the preoccupation of some Egyptian planners who responded to population growth by proposing new communities to be built in the desert areas not far from Cairo. These self-sufficient towns were meant to provide employment and housing, decreasing the spatial and social pressures on Cairo. The Ministry of Housing and New Communities issued legislation in 1979 to work toward a master plan for new cities connected to the regional development of cities like Cairo, Port Said, and Ismailia. These satellite cities were esti-

mated to have one-half to one million inhabitants. Some of these schemes have been finished while others are still being developed to encourage people to leave the Nile valley and construct desert communities. The Aswan Dam in the south of the country and the Eastern and Western Deserts are propagated as areas where people could earn a living through agriculture, fishing, small industries, or craft production.⁴¹

These schemes notwithstanding, owning a house in Cairo still remains difficult for most low-income households. With credit and house financing on easy installments hard to acquire and with the rising cost of land and construction, renting remains the main solution for most families' housing needs. Families that already have apartments with frozen rents fare better in this market.⁴² Young couples that try to get into the rental market now pay more than twenty-five percent of their salaries—the common standard in a free market economy—to acquire a rental dwelling. This skewed accessibility to shelter has forced most poor families to pool their resources and create what is commonly known as informal housing.⁴³

The growth of these housing areas has progressively expanded the city's boundaries. Cairo has spread outward by incorporating agricultural land and the surrounding desert. In densely populated areas, buildings are increased in size by adding additional floors to the already existing residential or commercial structures. Area surveys indicate that the inner city of Cairo is losing population due to changes in land use. The widening of existing roads, the reorganizing of sewerage facilities, the removal of encroachment, and the collapse of old buildings have evacuated people from the more crowded neighborhoods of the city. In contrast the outlying northern, southern and western edges of the city have a very high growth rate and communities have doubled or tripled in size in the last twenty years.⁴⁴

My urban fieldwork was primarily conducted in one such outlying neighborhood of Cairo, in the low-income residential area of Behtem, which is situated in the governorate of Qualubiyah, north of the city. Behtem is an extension of the industrial sector of Shubra-al-Kheima where numerous textile factories and public housing estates were established in the post-World War Two period. As land prices remained low, Shubra-al-Kheima was a highly desirable area for housing expansion for middle- and low-income families in the 1960s.

In this community, as perhaps elsewhere in Egypt, impotence as an ailment, along with sterility, destabilized male positions. Periodically people blamed impotence on curses and magic (*sehr*) by rival men. I would constantly hear stories of how some men were tied (*marabou*), and rendered impotent by magic performed by some *amil* (magician) in the service of some enemy. The

sexual act was also connected for men with their procreative ability. Sterility was considered shameful enough for men not to go to doctors, and they considered getting a semen analysis a humiliating experience.

Attar or herbalists were very popular in these urban neighborhoods. Men and women both went to them for a variety of ailments. They deal with a range of male problems of sterility and impotency. An *attar* whom I frequented would tell me about the different herbs and their healing effects on men's loss of sexual drive and impotency. Men would also tell me of commonly used natural oils that decreased sperm count. For example, cottonseed oil (*zeit il kafoor*), according to my male friends and the *attar*, was rumored to be used by the military in preparing food for the male recruits to ostensibly control their libido and perhaps their ability to reproduce. Such conspiratorial stories expose men's anxiety over losing their sexual potency, yet they may also hint at people's resentment at a state that seeks to curb their procreative abilities.

As I show in earlier work,⁴⁵ men often did not use condoms because they complained that they did not receive, and were incapable of giving, sexual pleasure when they used them. These men insisted that women received heightened sexual pleasure when they felt the ejaculation passing through their vagina into their uterus. This pleasure was mixed with the gradual cooling down of female bodies from a hot state. Moreover, there was a general consensus among my informants that women take longer to reach orgasm. Men sometimes took medications to maintain sustained erections, so that they could help their wives reach sexual climax. I spoke to several pharmacists in the urban and rural sites. The pharmacists would show me anti-depression medications that were popular with men. These medicines had priapism as a side effect, giving men a painful yet prolonged erection. Men would also buy local anaesthetic sprays for the same purpose.

Women may have different constructions of pleasure, but as a male, I could not explore their ideas to the same extent. Female constructions may or may not overlap with those specified by men. Still, male concern with their spouse's orgasmic pleasure indicates a sense of sharing and giving sexual pleasure. This is important to note, as seldom does literature on gender in the Middle East address the issue of affection among husbands and wives and how bonds of mutual support and caring are constructed within households. Most studies take the unequal gender relations as a given, rarely questioning how it is maintained, perpetuated, or changed in linkage to the social changes in society. Challenging prevalent stereotypes of Arab/Egyptian men, Marcia Inhorn⁴⁶ shows the multiple ways in which "conjugal connectivity" happens among urban poor families in Egypt; families in which men and women coexist in an atmos-

phere of mutual respect, feeling, and commitment.⁴⁷

This being so, men's concerns about sexual performance may also pertain to worries about their ability to sustain prolonged erection. Local notions of sexuality are linked to popular interpretation of Islam that encourages sexual relation not only as a procreative act, but also as something to be enjoyed by both sexes. Yet, there is room here for subtle forms of social control. As women are constructed as wives, mothers, and daughters within systems of prestige with various ideological underpinnings, there is a competing construction of woman as an essentialized, over-sexed figure, which Mai Ghossoub⁴⁸ reminds us of in her reading of historic sex manuals in Arabic. This popular description emphasizes women's overpowering sexuality. Where in an earlier era women could be secluded to contain their social threat, now with changing societal norms women are able to traverse into mixed environments in densely populated cities.⁴⁹ Thus my male informants' emphasis on female orgasm may have reflected their fear about "unsatisfied" women seeking others to fulfill their needs.⁵⁰

Anxiety over the spouse's infidelity made some men restrict their wives' movements and also at times lead to extreme forms of domestic violence. On the one hand, this fear exposed the popular imagery of women as oversexed and unfaithful. On the other hand, it pointed toward a construction of competing masculinities where men fear other men with more erect penises as potential rivals for their women. Impotence therefore, becomes the extreme insult. An erect penis and its power to satisfy are directly linked to the rhetoric and practice of power that men believe is needed to control women.

Social Life and Male Sexuality

The economic pressure people faced during the mid-1990s in neighborhoods like Behtem made them socially vulnerable. With the decrease in social subsidies, food expenditure within households had substantially increased in the last ten years. This led many households that were already spending more than 75 percent of their bills on food to substantially cut their food consumption. People in urban poor neighborhoods where I worked had stopped consuming meat and their main nutrient intakes were staples like bread and beans. These processes in turn influenced calorie supply and food intake among the poorest section of society. In addition, even after adjusting for inflation, real wages by 1990 had gone down by five to seven percent since the mid-1980s.⁵¹ With unemployment and rising poverty, places like Behtem in the mid 1990s were considered politically volatile areas by the state. The state was threatened by the possibility of urban oppositional movements related to the Islamist groups recruiting in these communities. This was the official reason given for the heavy

policing of these areas by the local police and by security details of the intelligence services. During my stay, the social unrest unleashed by the removal of subsidies and the rising unemployment rates continuously created problems of law and order and civic management for the Egyptian state. The news media in Egypt was full of reports of the state's violent engagement with the Islamist groups as attacks on "terrorist violence." Seldom was there an analysis of the social and economic violence of poverty and the lack of amenities suffered by the Egyptian rural and urban poor.

I frequently became aware of the popular dimensions of this opposition while doing fieldwork among a group of urban working-class men in Cairo. Some of my male informants/friends invoked the notion of a large powerful family, the *aila*, in linking themselves to larger group solidarities. This view became especially evident when these men spoke about the fertility-control program in Egypt. As world events evolved over the period of my fieldwork, the news from Bosnia was the most ominous for my rural and urban informants. The perception of Muslims being persecuted because of their religion evoked anger and frustration among them. The situation in Palestine and the first intifada against the state of Israel also immensely affected them, more-so because many of them were veterans of earlier wars against Israel. They interpreted these and other world events as discrimination against Muslims and took it as personal humiliation. For many, the internationally-assisted family-planning program was part of these series of events and of a larger Judeo-Christian plot to weaken the Muslims of the world. Ishaq, an urban informant explained further:

Allah is the creator, and the world belongs to him; then accordingly, the national boundaries are meaningless and the whole universe was created to be populated by Muslims. People should be allowed to travel, work, and spread the message of Islam wherever they please. Therefore, it becomes a religious duty to enlarge your immediate family so that the larger family may become stronger.

These articulations point toward some important issues. Given a chance, most of my friends sought to travel as migrant laborers, primarily to escape the lack of good employment opportunities in their lives. Keeping this background in mind, and the framing of their position in religious terms (similar to the taxi driver) notwithstanding, they deemed family planning to be a contrived social issue. For, they thought, if they were allowed to travel, the world had enough resources to accommodate them. The imagery of a larger family and the critique of artificial geopolitical boundaries challenges the modern discourse on the geographical boundedness of nation-states. It simultaneously critiques the internationally-sponsored family-planning program, based as it is, on

the thesis of limited assets within given borders of a nation-state, seldom arguing for international or local redistribution of resources.

As discussed earlier, the privatization of state industries have led to widespread layoffs with shrinking possibilities of employment in Behtem. As opportunities to earn a livelihood in the Gulf countries and in Iraq diminished after the Gulf War (1991), people returned home to reduced chances of employment. Inflationary tendencies had, furthermore, made certain important food items like meat unaffordable for many. Such living conditions created pressures on men who were most of the times the only source of livelihood for families. My informants would speak of their inability to have pleasure in life if they could not provide a "decent" living for their families. To be laid off under these circumstances was catastrophic. Even those who held steady jobs as factory workers or low-level public servants spoke of their inability to provide for their families. Some of my luckier informants held two or three jobs: working as a civil servant (*muwazzaf*) in the morning, driving a taxi in the afternoon and selling home-cooked *tamiya* (falafel) at night. They, like others, complained of a shortage of money. One of the less fortunate among my informants, Bilal, told me:

I earn 100 pounds a month while working in a factory. I live in this room with my wife and four children. I share the toilet with three other families. My upstairs neighbors have nine people living in the same space as ours. Where should we go? Housing is so expensive. So is meat, I bought it today for 14 pounds a kilo. This is the only time we are going to have meat this month. There is no money left after all the other expenditures.

Further, as Bilal suggested, certain food products enhance the physical state of the body. For men, meat and meat products in particular were crucial energy-giving foods (popularly called *protienat*), and were essential to leading a healthy life and for sexual performance. Bilal added: "without meat and with all these worries I ejaculate in a few minutes, whereas the rich man can keep his erection for half an hour, and satisfy his spouse." The inability to sustain a sexual act goes back to the imagery of not being able to control one's woman through prolonged sex. In relation to upper-class men, rural and urban poor men generally consider themselves potentially more masculine, however, poverty may be undermining these positive self-constructions. Unlike the portrayal of generalized impotency among all classes in the film *Sleeping with Honey*, my friends construct the rich not only as wealthy and fortunate but also more masculine as they can keep their women happy and provide for their families. Wealth and access to better paid jobs guaranteed a reduction of social worries and also the income enabling them to consume more meat products.

My informants felt that poverty caused their sexual performance and their own standing as men to suffer. Economic deprivation made them physically and socially impotent.

This argument is akin to the one that Julie Peteet⁵² makes while describing how physical violence during the first Intifada by the Israeli security forces on the bodies of Palestinian young men became their rites of passages into adulthood. She argues that Israeli security services shifted their techniques of torture and violence once they realized that acts of bodily violence take on the meaning of empowerment and future political agency for the tortured men. Rape and other kinds of sexual violence started becoming more common to deprive men of their masculinity and manhood.⁵³ Although the circumstances are very dissimilar, I argue that the social and economic deprivation of the Egyptian poor and the concomitant pressure on families to curtail family size is experienced as a form of violence that socially castrated and humiliated the men with whom I spoke, in the process depriving them as well of their masculinity and manhood.

In this global moment of New World Order, employment remains the only source of male dignity.⁵⁴ As poverty levels increase in urban and rural areas, families struggle to manage under increasing adversity. Women are forced to seek employment outside their homes to help pay for the increasing costs of educating and rearing children. In urban areas, women from lower classes are seeking employment as domestics and as factory laborers. For men their wives' excursions outside their household cuts through the rhetoric of idealized domesticity. Men grudgingly agree to their wives working because of the need for the additional income. Yet they also complain that their spouses are neglecting domestic duties, including the proper training of the children. The fact that their partners need to work to support the household destabilizes the male roles as providers and challenges the man's authority within the family, further curtailing their productive/reproductive abilities.

Concluding Discussion

Development in the post-colonial era is linked to a teleological narrative that is modeled on histories that have already been experienced in the West. It becomes the self-representation of modernity for third world states that aspire to bring the fruits of progress and innovation into the lives of their citizens.⁵⁵ National governments such as in Egypt, armed with an anti-imperialist rhetoric, in the 1950s and 1960s did seek to create a debate on a path of development that was critical of Western impositions. Yet increasingly by the late twentieth century, developmental initiatives linked to economic globalization meant the rationalizing and naturalizing of capitalism's power in progressivist terms,

“as the engine that brings those on the bottom ‘up’ toward those who are already there”.⁵⁶

As this process also gets related to representative democracy, liberal laws, and free market, it frames the legalistic arguments of rights and law as elements of political strategies that enable modernizing states to destroy old options and create new ones.⁵⁷ Within this context the international pressure on states like Egypt to comply with this production and management of “free individuals” and conform to international norms is sometimes exerted through the promotion of civil society.

The relationship between the social and the individual, and the relationship between the state, international organizations, and its citizens are mitigated through NGOs.⁵⁸ International development agencies and Euro-American governments celebrate internationally-funded NGOs as the foundations to strengthen civil society in Egypt and as a counterpoint to the undemocratic and oppressive state.⁵⁹ This is a familiar refrain in the democratic politics of “lesser-developed” nation-states. In this work I have, however, argued that the role of civil society organizations in Egypt may also be linked to the neo-liberal international economic agenda.⁶⁰

The transnationalization of global capital also requires a post-state class system. The process to strengthen international civil society assists the entry of global capital to organize the civil and legal boundaries of independent states according to its own prescriptions. The universalizing of a Western agenda through collaborative NGOs that challenge the “rogue states” may increasingly be seen as a part of this universal civil society. It should also be reemphasized, however, that the argument on male responsibility linked to choice in fertility control is made as welfare structures are being dismantled (also under international pressure) in Egypt, leaving families, especially women and children, economically and socially vulnerable. This process of structural adjustment gets intrinsically connected to the push for universalized standards of law and rights as moves toward creating a civil society that guarantees political and cultural equity. By the late twentieth century this move was “concomitant to the spread of markets, and it becomes identified with acceptance of social and economic inequity in the name of democracy.”⁶¹ The tensions, polarizations, and entanglements that accompany these processes across and within state boundaries shape new forms of historical categories, which Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls “fragmented globality.”⁶²

The integration, albeit unevenly, of global markets and media forms has no doubt produced universalized forms of consumptive desires. Yet social and spatial polarization inhibit the majority of Egyptians from satisfying those needs, producing conflict and tension. Despite the rhetoric of international agencies and also the

Egyptian state, free market capitalism in Egypt has not been able to deliver the abstract cultural pleasures of freedom, democracy, and the ideal of citizenship. Rather, the state, sometimes in collaboration with international development agencies, has through public health campaigns, austerity measures, political violence, and police aggression coerced people to become more compliant with their fate.⁶³

To conclude, I take the reader back to the *Sleeping with Honey*. In an earlier scene of the film Imam forces himself onto the parliament’s floor and delivers an impassioned speech. He asks the parliament to consider the epidemic seriously and think about a remedy. In a rhetorical mode he argues that if people have lost hope, then we should give them hope, and if they have forgotten how to sing, we should play music for them, and if it is a psychological problem, then we should look at its causes. Unless the state gives people hope, he pleads, people may not lead a natural and contented life. If this does not happen, he states, then people will continue to be fed myths and lies and will become a nation of donkeys that say yes to everything.⁶⁴ Like the protagonist in Arafat’s film, Egyptian civil society organizations have periodically put forward an agenda of liberal political change and democratization. Some among these organizations have also faced the full force of the state’s wrath as a price for their criticism. Yet there has been at best a muted attack on the feasibility of the structural adjustment program and the related policy of economic liberalization. Keeping this in mind, the elitist title of the film overlooks the fact that most Egyptians are not “sleeping with honey” or in any other kind of slumber; rather they are wide awake, living the reality of social manipulation and economic oppression.

NOTES

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²In common usage the phrase refers to those people who are oblivious to their own unsatisfactory living circumstances.

³See Walter Armbrust, “Terrorism and Kabab: A Capraesque View of Modern Egypt,” in *Images of Enchantment*, Sherifa Zahur ed. (Cairo: AUC Press, 1998), 283-300. Arm-

brust argues that prominent actors in commercial cinema are like texts themselves, texts that are conditioned by positions that the audiences take and by the audiences' association with the performer's previous roles. Commercial cinema audiences by and large view films through their actors, not their directors.

⁴David Scott, *Refashioning Futures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) reads Frantz Fanon's problematic of liberation within the framework of an alienation model that denies its victims an authentic expression of "their real selves that are concealed from themselves" (206).

⁵Armbrust, "Terrorism and Kabab."

⁶I refer here to arguments put forward by national agencies like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and to multilateral agencies like The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the affiliated development agencies of the United Nations.

⁷The question of impotency is raised here within a heterosexual economy of desire. Same sex relations and homoeroticism is not openly discussed in popular discourses on Arab masculinity. See Mai Ghousoub, "Chewing Gum, Insatiable Women, and Foreign Enemies: Male Fears and the Arab Media," in *Imagined Masculinities*, Mai Ghousoub and Emma Sinclair-Webb eds. (London: Saqi Books, 2000), 227-235; Joseph Massad, "Reorienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World," *Public Culture* 14,2 (2002): 361-385; Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe, *Islamic Homosexualities* (New York: New York University, 1997) for discussions on Arab and Muslim male homosexuality.

⁸Judith Farquhar, "Technologies of Everyday life: The Economy of Impotence in Reform China," *Cultural Anthropology*, 14, 2 (1999).

⁹See Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Steve Caton, *Peaks of Yemen, I Summon: Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Mai Ghousoub and Emma Sinclair-Webb eds., *Imagined Masculinities* (London: Saqi Books, 2000); Michael Gilsean, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Michael Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) among others.

¹⁰See Nancy Lindsfarne, "Variant Masculinities, Variant Virginites: Rethinking "Honor and Shame," in *Dislocating Masculinities*, Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindsfarne ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 82-96.

¹¹Lindsfarne, "Variant Masculinities," 82.

¹²Deniz Kandiyoti, "The Paradoxes of Masculinity: Some Thoughts on Segregated Societies," in *Dislocating Masculinities*, Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindsfarne ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 197-213.

¹³Lindsfarne, "Variant Masculinities."

¹⁴Gouda Abdel Khalek, "Egypt's ESRAP: The Orthodox Recipe and the Alternative," Unpublished Manuscript (1993); Heba Handoussa, "Crisis and Challenge: Prospects For the 1990s," in *Employment and Structural Adjustment*, Heba Handoussa and Gillian Potter eds. (Cairo: AUC Press, 1991), 3-24.

¹⁵See Karen Pfeifer, "How Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Even Egypt Became IMF 'Success Stories' in the 1990s,"

Middle East Report #210 (1999); US Embassy in Cairo, "Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States." Report for the Arab Republic of Egypt (1993).

¹⁶The Law 203 was enacted in 1991 to restructure and privatize 314 public sector companies, almost 70 percent of Egypt's industrial sector. See United States Embassy in Cairo, Foreign Economic Trends, (1993).

¹⁷Elsewhere I show how the Egyptian state has in the last decade cooperated with international donor agencies on an ambitious population control program. Emphasizing contrasts between tradition and modernity, the program puts forward the argument that rapid population growth is one of the prime obstacles to the realization of development goals set by the Egyptian state. Accordingly, a high population growth rate (2.6 percent) in the late 1980s was deemed responsible for the economic and social crisis faced by the country. State proclamations and the media primarily held the poor, who have more children, responsible not only for the plight in their personal lives, but also for the country's general economic crisis. An obvious solution to this predicament was to reduce population to levels that would permit the country to continue on its path of development. See Kamran Asdar Ali, *Planning the Family in Egypt: New Bodies, New Selves* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

¹⁸Duff Gillespie et.al. "Egyptian Population Assessment," A Report for USAID Cairo (1989).

¹⁹In other works I comprehensively analyze the Family Planning program in Egypt. My argument there incorporates most if not all major contributions to the emerging literature that engages with the dialogue between anthropology and demography. See Asdar Ali, *Planning the Family*; Susan Greenhalgh, "Anthropology Theorizes Reproduction: Integrating Practice, Political Economic and Feminist Perspectives," in *Situating Fertility*, Susan Greenhalgh ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-28; Caroline Bledsoe, "Reproductive Mishaps and Western Contraception: An African Challenge to Fertility Theory," *Population and Development Review*, 24, 1 (1998): 15-58; David Horn, *Social Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); David Kertzer and Tom Fricke, *Anthropological Demography*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Agnes Reidman, *Science That Colonizes: A Critique of Fertility Studies In Africa* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

²⁰In the late 1970s and the early 1980s the USAID exerted considerable pressure on the Egyptian government to change its focus toward a more directed fertility control program. Bilateral U.S. assistance to Egypt's population program through the USAID commenced in 1977 and far exceeded any other source of international funding. The timing of the funding was linked to the Carter administration's peace initiative and the signing of the peace accord between Egypt and Israel. USAID allocated \$87 million in funds between 1977 and 1983 to the state-run program, with a promise of an additional \$20 million in 1985, The World Bank Status Report on Population Problems and Programs of Egypt. (1984). An additional \$102 million was allocated to the population sector for the years 1983-1988 (to a total of \$117 million by 1992). Also see Soheir Morsy, "U.S. Aid to Egypt. An illustration and Account of U.S. Foreign Assistance Policy," *Arab Studies*

Quarterly 8, 4 (1986): 358-389.

²¹See Rebecca Cook, "International Human Right and Women's Reproductive Health," *Studies in Family Planning* 24, 2 (1993): 73-86; Nahid Toubia, and Abdullahi An-Na'im, "Legal Dimensions of the Health of Women in Arab and Muslim Countries," Unpublished Working Manuscript for Population Council and Ford Foundation, 18-24.

²²See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "State, Women, and Civil Society: An Evaluation of Egypt's Population Policy," in *Family Gender and Population in the Middle East*, Carla Makhoul Obermeyer, ed. (Cairo: AUC Press, 1995), 59-79.

²³Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *State, Women*, (1995).

²⁴This use of the concept of civil society is based on the classical Hegelian understanding that separates social life into the public and the private spheres, where the private family stands in contrast to the public civil society and the state. In terms of intervention into the private sphere, civil society may play a role in furthering the developmentalist policies, whether generated by the state or the international community.

²⁵Until the early 1980s family planning delivery services remained part of a development process that included better living standards, expanded education opportunities, improvement in the status of women, mechanization of agriculture, industrialization in rural areas, lower infant mortality, improved social security coverage, and better informational and communication facilities. See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *State, Women*, (1995).

²⁶USAID Status Report: "United States Economic Assistance to Egypt," (1992).

²⁷USAID, Status Report (1992).

²⁸U.S. based consultants such as Family Health International, Futures Group, Pathfinder, Johns Hopkins University Population Communication Services, and John Snow Inc, supervised these NGOs. USAID-funded NGOs follow the rhetoric of fertility control embedded in policies of expanded contraceptive choice and behavior change. These NGOs aided the expanded policy of service delivery that was projected to be almost 50 percent of the USAID's population budget by 1993. They were also major players in the dissemination of family planning information, in training of counseling techniques to physicians, and in holding workshops and outreach programs to educate women and men on the benefits of contraceptive use. See Duff Gillespie et. al. "Egyptian Population Assessment," (1989).

²⁹Although these subsidies are being rapidly dismantled, the middle-class, university-educated NGO employees still berate the poor for relying too much on government handouts.

³⁰Asdar Ali, *Planning the Family*.

³¹Surveys conducted in developing countries over the last decade to study male beliefs and practices related to family planning have helped in comprehending male behavior in fertility regulation and in identifying trends for future family planning policy initiatives. See Jejeebhoy, Shireen. J. and Sumati Kulkarni, "Reproductive Motivation: A Comparison of Wives and Husbands in Maharashtra, India," *Studies in Family Planning*, 20,5 (1989): 264-272; Mona A. Khalifa, "Attitudes of Urban Sudanese Men Towards Family Planning," *Studies in Family Planning* 19, 4 (1988): 236-43; Michael T. Mbizvo and

Donald J. Adamchak, "Family Planning Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of Men in Zimbabwe," *Studies in Family Planning* 22, 1 (1991): 31-38; M.A. Mustafa, "Male Attitudes Towards Family Planning in Sudan," *Sudan Fertility Control Association* (1982); Hussein Abdel-Aziz Sayed, Fatma Hasan El-Zanaty, and Anne R. Cross, *Egypt Male Survey*, Cairo Demographic Center Cairo Macro International Inc. Columbia Maryland, USA (1992).

³²This shift is related to changes within the discipline of demography that, for example, now emphasizes the micro-practices of individuals as prime determinants of fertility change. Embedded in this new approach, demographic research works with a concept of culture that links an ideational change model to the acceptability of modern birth control: see W. Penn Handwerker, "Culture and Reproduction: Exploring Micro/Macro Linkages," in *Culture and Reproduction: An Anthropological Critique of Demographic Transition*, W. Handwerker ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 1-28; John Caldwell et. al. "Anthropology and Demography: The Mutual Reinforcement of Speculation and Research," *Current Anthropology* 28, 1 (1987): 25-43. This argument again consists of a narrowly construed formulation of culture as communication within a household with minimal reference to the social, political, and economic forces of the larger society: Greenhalgh, "Anthropology Theorizes," 7). It also encompasses the idea that people in traditional cultures are more fatalistic about their fertility outcomes and are willing to leave reproduction to the will of God: see Jane Schneider and Peter Schneider, "High Fertility and Poverty in Sicily: Beyond the Culture vs Rationality Debate," In *Situating Fertility*, Susan Greenhalgh, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 179-201. This understanding of culture effectively places households/families and their behavior patterns on a traditional to modern continuum.

³³Minya city is the capital of Minya governorate.

³⁴See Population Reports, "Family Planning Programs: Counseling Makes a Difference," Series 1, no 35 (1987).

³⁵Talal Asad, "Conscripts of Western Civilization," in *Civilization in Crisis*, Christine Ward Gailey, ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), 333-352.

³⁶Susan Gal, "Feminism and Civil Society," in *Transitions, Environments, Translations*, Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan and Debra Keates, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 30-45.

³⁷Ranjit Guha, "Discipline and Mobilize," in *Suabaltern Studies* Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, eds. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), VII: 40-68.

³⁸Carol Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1989), 21

³⁹Michel Foucault argues that the father is not the representative of the sovereign or the state, and the latter are not projections of the father either. Yet the reconstitution of the father's role within the family is necessary to accomplish the transformative requirements of the modern state, whether for the control of population or the medicalization of sex. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 1: 100.

⁴⁰Uday Mehta, *The Anxiety of Freedom*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁴¹*Egyptian Gazette*, 17 July 1993.

⁴²Rent control apartments were a commitment of the Nasrinite social welfare program that has been drastically eroded in the past three decades.

⁴³See Milad Hanna, "Real Estate Rights in Urban Egypt: The Changing Sociopolitical Winds," in *Property, Social Structure and Law in the Modern Middle East*, Ann Elizabeth Mayer, ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 189-211; The Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme, 1991.

⁴⁴Cairo grew at a rate of slightly less than three percent in the 1980s, whereas the southern area of Giza, now incorporated into the city, grew at a rate of five percent. Similar areas in the north of the city, like Shubra-al-Kheima, grew by about eight percent: United Nations, "Population Growth and Policies in Mega-Cities, Cairo," Population Policy Paper No. 34. Dept. of International Economic and Social Affairs (1990).

⁴⁵Kamran Asar Ali, "Rethinking Masculinities: An Egyptian Case." in *Learning About Sexuality*, S. Zeidenstein and K. Moore, eds. (New York: Population Council and International Women's Health Coalition, 1996), 98-109; Kamran Asdar Ali, "Making Responsible Men: Planning the Family in Egypt," in *Fertility and Male Life Cycle in the Era of Fertility Decline*, Caroline Bledsoe, et. al., eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119-143

⁴⁶Marcia Inhorn, *Infertility and Patriarchy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

⁴⁷Inhorn, *Infertility*, Chapter 3.

⁴⁸Ghoussoub, "Chewing Gum."

⁴⁹Ghoussoub, "Chewing Gum," 231.

⁵⁰This construction of disorder of women is historically present in Western political and social thought as well. In my interviews, this construct was an overarching argument on the need to physically restrain women and also the reason to circumcise them, as circumcision was thought to sexually cool women down. However, in private talks with my male informants none of them believed that their wives would leave them, as they were very much in love with each other; although most admitted that their sexual lives were affected by their poverty.

⁵¹See Nader Ferghany, "Characterisation of the Employment Problem in Egypt," in *Employment and Structural Adjustment*, (Heba Handoussa and Gillian Potter, eds. (Cairo: AUC Press, 1991), 25-56; Handoussa, "Crisis and Challenge."

⁵²Julie Peteet, "Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence," *American Ethnologist* 21, 1 (1994): 31-49.

⁵³Peteet, "Male Gender," 45.

⁵⁴Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Diasporas Old and New: Women in the Transnational World," *Textual Practice* 10, 2 (1996): 245-269.

⁵⁵Akhil Gupta, "Agrarian Populism in the Development of a Modern Nation (India)," in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 320-344.

⁵⁶Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, "Introduction," in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, 1-44.

⁵⁷Asad, "Conscripts," 334-336

⁵⁸See Julia Elyachar "Empowerment Money: The World Bank, Non-Governmental Organizations and the Value of

Culture in Egypt," *Public Culture* 14, 3 (2002): 493-514, for further elaboration on this theme.

⁵⁹A role bravely played by some of these NGOs. Especially the Egyptian Organisation of Human Rights, among other groups, has been repeatedly harassed and intimidated by the Egyptian state security services.

⁶⁰For those Egyptian NGOs that are more radical and politically active it is, however, extremely difficult to survive as a legal entity. Under Egyptian law, all not-for-profit groups need to be registered with the Ministry of Social affairs, which retains the right to close down any organization that it deems subversive. The Law 32 of 1964 regulates the legal and administrative structures of all NGOs in Egypt. The Ministry of Social Affairs and its governorate-level directorates are responsible for the registration, control, supervision, oversight, and appointments of these voluntary organizations. A new restriction, Law 156, was imposed in 1999. This law, in addition to earlier restrictions, requires NGOs to seek approval from the Ministry of Social affairs before accepting foreign donations/grants, prohibits NGOs from participating in political and unionist activities, and closes the legal loop hole used by some NGOs to register as not-for-profit "civil companies" to avoid the provisions of the earlier Law 32: see Krista M. El-Gawhary, "Egyptian Advocacy NGOs, Catalysts for Social and Political Change?" *Middle East Report* 214 (2000): 38-41.

⁶¹See Anna Tsing, "Transitions and Translations," in *Transitions, Environments, Translations*, Joan Scott, Cora Kaplan and Debra Keates, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 264.

⁶²Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Anthropology of the State in the age of Globalization," *Current Anthropology* 42, 1 (2001), 129.

⁶³Like the human rights NGOs, the state security apparatus also periodically harasses those that speak about democratic reform. For example, after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo (1994), the state apparatus put greater legal restrictions on the functioning of secular women's groups and NGOs. In recent years the Egyptian state has further strictly monitored foreign funding of NGOs; in the process it has sought to stifle the voices of those groups that criticize it.

⁶⁴A common phrase used in colloquial Arabic that links the image of donkeys to yes-men.