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"Brown Skin Is Half of Beauty":
Representations of Beauty and the Construction of Race in Contemporary Cairo

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Abstract Cover Page

"Brown Skin Is Half of Beauty": Representations of Beauty and the Construction of Race in Contemporary Cairo

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

"Brown Skin Is Half of Beauty":
Representations of Beauty and the Construction of Race in Contemporary Cairo
By Maurita N. Poole

Twenty-first century Egypt is a postcolonial Islamic nation-state where the notion of race is not recognized or explicitly discussed in everyday life. Egyptians from various ethnic and religious groups, and of different hues, confidently assert that race as both a biological and cultural construct is not a meaningful category of differentiation within their society. The significance of the concept of race, from their perspective, is a Western social problem. Nonetheless, racially intoned representations of darker-skinned people and stereotypical signifiers of Africa exist alongside the valorization of whiteness as an idealized physical attribute and sociopolitical category of identity in Cairo. In a cultural context such as the Egyptian one, where the local population neither acknowledges nor utilizes the term "race" as a legitimate labeling device, how can we evaluate seemingly racialized discourses and visual representations? This question serves as the basis of my dissertation research, which focuses on the ways that Egyptian folk categorizations of race and skin color are expressed and articulated in their discourses about physical beauty.

This study is based on thirteen months of fieldwork I carried out in Cairo between 2001 and 2006. In my research, I examine Egyptian descriptions, perceptions, and visual representations of beauty as a way to provide insight into how racial and gendered differences are constructed. The central premise of this work is that discourses of beauty in contemporary Cairo are racialized. These discourses not only signify desirable physical attributes, but also operate to mark inclusion and exclusion between different

groups in Cairo's urban society. I focus on the meaning of Egyptians' desire to create distance between themselves and blackness as well as their rationale for valorizing specific forms of whiteness. In addition, I discuss competing cultural models of beauty among Egyptians (embodied in the phrase "Brown Skin is Half the Beauty") that praises the beauty of brown-skinned women as part of a larger aesthetic ideal that draws upon Islamic and Christian ideologies that emphasize the importance of physical features and the cultivation of an ethical disposition.

Cover Page

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GLOSSARY

Beautiful	*gamila*
Beauty (of a woman that stems from her body, adornment, etc.)	*zina*
Beauty queen	*malaika al-gamala*
Bedouin	*Bedu*
Black	*iswid/soda*
Black (Sudanese dialect)	*aswid*
Black people	*al-sud*
Blue (Sudanese dialect)	*azraq*
Bourgeoisie	*ibn al-zawat*
Brown (for skin color or complexion only)	*samar/samra*
Brown-skinned woman	*samara*
Cairene	person from Cairo
Cairo	*al-Qahirra*
Chaos (result of women's seductiveness)	*fitna*
Chic	*shik 'aawy*
Civilization	*madaniyya*
Commoner/son of the country/native	*ibn al-balad*
Community (small street/alley)	*hitta*
Crow	*ghurab*
Crows or ravens of the Arabs (i.e. darker-skinned Arabs)	*aghribat al-Arab*
Cultivated class/elite/nobility	*wilad al-nas*
Curly hair	*nebed*
Elderly	*al-kibar*
Employee	*muazzif*
Ethiopians	*Habishiyyat*
Ethnicity	*isniyya*
Expatriate (Northern Sudanese community)	*nas al-jaliya*
Expatriate due to persecution or opposing the government	*nas al-mu'arada*
Fear	*khauf*
Foreign-identified or foreign elite	*ifrangi*
Foreigner	*khawaga*
Foreigner (Sudanese dialect)	*khawaja*
Gallantry/Chivalry	*shahama*
Girl	*bint*
Gold (Nubian term)	*nab*
Green (Sudanese dialect)	*akhdar*
Gypsies (Sudanese term)	*halabi*
Half-foreign(er)	*nus-khawagaiyah*
Harem (women/section of the house)	*harim/ haramlik*
Honey	*asal*
Honor	*sharaf*
Housewives	*sittat al-bayt*

Humility	*khushu*
Ignorant	*jahilly*
Impolite/Lacking in Manners or propriety	*mish mu'addab*
Islamic dress	*ziyy al-Islami*
Islamic nation or community	*umma*
Lady	*sitt hanim*
Lower-Egyptian	*Bahawarriyya*
Masculine Woman	*mustagila*
Merchant on the street (female)	*m'allima*
Military-administrative slaves	*kuls*
Modesty	*hishma*
Native, to be of the country	*baladi*
Neighborhood	*hara/harat*
Nouveaux-riche (since Anwar Sadat's Open Door Policy)	*bitu-l-infitah*
Nubian	*Nubi*
Obedient (ce)	*ta'a*
Peasant	*fellah/fellaha/fellahin*
Popular or folk (of the people)	*sha'bi*
Pretty/Sweet	*halwa*
Propriety/To Have Manners	*adab*
Public Sector (for employment)	*miri*
Pudenda/private parts that cause shame	*awra/awrat*
Race	'*irq/ 'unsur*
Racism/Apartheid	*tafriqa 'unsurriya*
Red (Sudanese dialect)	*ahmar*
Refined/refinement/fashionable (for neighborhood)	*raqi*
Regret	*nadam*
Religious or devout or pious person	*mutaddayin*
Repentence	*tauba*
Robe(s)	*gallabiyas/abeyahs*
Servant	*khadim*
Skin color or complexion	*bashra*
Slave	*abd*
Slave traders (specifically for trade in African blacks)	*jallaba*
Slums	*ashwa'iyyat*
Small nose	*manikeer sugheira*
Small sail boat	*felucca*
Style	*la moda*
Social connections	*wasta or koosa*
Straight/soft (for hair)	*naim*
Temporary marriage	*zawag urfi*
Tribe	*qabila/qaba'il*
Turnips (like turnips)	*zayy il-lift*
Upper Egyptian	*Sa'idi/Sa'aida*
Value	*qiima*
Veil/Veiled	*higab/muhaggabat*

Veil/Veiled (showing only the eyes)	*niqab/munaqabbat*
Wax (for hair removal)	*halawa*
Wealth	*ginan*
Wheat-colored	*qamhii*
White	*abyad/beda*
White (Sudanese dialect)	*abyad*
Woman (literally)	*mar'a*
Woman (married)	*sitt/sittat* (pl.)
Women (older married)	*al-sittat al-kabeera*
Yellow (Sudanese dialect)	*asfar*

PREFACE

I conducted my dissertation research in Cairo in 2001 and 2005-2006. During an interview, a fair-skinned male research informant from Cairo asserted, "Egyptians do not have a problem with race; they simply do not find blacks (*al-sud*) attractive." Prior to this interview, my attempts to study the significance of race in Egypt had usually led me to a dead end. Although there may be a host of reasons for my difficulty in getting Egyptians to discuss race openly, I believe one of the key problems is Arabic terminology. I found that the use of direct translations for race (*'irq/ 'unsur*), ethnicity (*isniyya*), and racism or racial apartheid (*tafriqa unsuriya*) increased confusion, since Egyptians primarily associate these words with experiences of people in the West. While Egyptians have never had anything like Jim Crow segregation or racial apartheid in their nation's history, it cannot be denied that it is common for some Egyptians to make derogatory remarks concerning their dark-skinned compatriots' appearance and for proprietors to discourage dark-skinned people from entering elite establishments because they associate dark skin with lower socioeconomic status.

As I reflected on the Egyptian informant's comment, it increasingly seemed ideal to consider how Egyptian perceptions of beauty reveal the significance of race in everyday social interactions. Discussions that foreground differences in physicalities, such as skin color, facial features, hair texture, and levels of attractiveness are everywhere on the streets of Cairo. While Egyptians constantly partake in "beauty talk," ironically they deny the importance of beauty as much as they disavow the salience of race. In this dissertation, I contend that both race and beauty are meaningful in Egypt and that these constructs play central roles in social relations and institutions that Egyptians

openly acknowledge are significant, such as marriage, family and kinship, and religion. I argue that the significance and implications of racialized beauty reveal themselves most explicitly in the marriage arena, since racially informed bodily aesthetic ideals are as influential as ethical dispositions when Egyptians assess who is suitable for marriage and membership in the family – one of the most important social institutions within their society.

Scholarly discussions about race in Western contexts often presuppose that the assertion that an entire ethnic group is physically unappealing, or ugly, indicates a deep-seated racial bias within a society (Drake 1987; Hall 1996; Hobson 2003; Painter 2010). Aesthetic preferences are neither neutral value judgments nor simply indications of cultural chauvinism. Instead, they are notions shaped by racial ideologies and worldviews that insist that individuals and social groups have an innate, biological essence that determines character, intelligence, and morality. As St. Clair Drake (1987) has argued, negative aesthetic evaluations (particularly of Negroidness) reinforce negative beliefs about different group's intelligence and personality traits.

However, Egypt is a North African, Islamic nation where the concept of race is not usually scrutinized in everyday life. Similar to the above-mentioned informant, the majority of Egyptians assert that race is not a salient social category for examining difference and socioeconomic inequality in the Egyptian context. Moreover, while they willingly admit that they view darker-skinned people with physical traits associated with people of African descent (e.g. kinky or curlier hair, broader noses, thicker lips, et cetera) as unattractive, they do not believe that this sentiment indicates that race is meaningful in their society.

The Egyptian informant's assertion that labeling "blacks" unattractive does not demonstrate racial bias is supported by social scientists who caution us to distinguish between ethnocentric aesthetic judgments and racial aesthetic distinctions. According to these scholars, the Egyptian preference for white or fair skin, straight hair, and narrower facial features should be considered a cultural preference rather than a racial notion (Drake 1987; Fluehr-Lobban, et al. 2004; Smedley 2007). Cross-cultural studies of whiteness in contexts as varied as India, Japan, China, South Africa, Iran, Brazil, and the United States explain that the valorization of whiteness is often due to its association with high status, wealth, leisure, westernization, et cetera (Human Relations Area Files inc. and Murdock 1996; Modern Girl Around the World Research, et al. 2005). In addition, research asserts that negative aesthetic judgments of dark skin and "Negroid-looking" people are not racial in contexts where physical features are not viewed as determinants of behavioral practices, temperament, et cetera (Drake 1987; Smedley 2007).

Social scientists who study race and color in Egypt argue that the denigration of dark skin and signifiers of African culture are, at most, evidence of a strong anti-African sentiment, ethnocentrism, and/or colorism (Drake 1987; Fluehr-Lobban 2006; Hatem 1986; Lewis 1971; Toledano 1990; Toledano 1998b). According to this scholarship, the Arab-Islamic slave trade and Ottoman rule during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reinforced the Egyptian preference for fair skin and the belief that whiteness was superior and blackness (or dark skin) inferior. However, this culturally-based perception of skin color did not include the idea that darker-skinned people from the continent of Africa, or anywhere else, were biologically distinct. Furthermore, cultural behaviors were

not believed to be biologically determined – a necessary condition to demonstrate that there is an ideology of race at work.

Within the last decade, a growing body of historical and anthropological research has countered this viewpoint (El-Shakry 2007; Fábos 2008; Powell 2003). These scholars rely on literature, archival sources and ethnographic research to argue that a modern concept of race crystallized in Egypt in the late nineteenth century in the context of the Anglo-Egyptian colonial project in the Sudan. Although still subject to British imperialism, Egyptian nationalists argued that their racial (i.e. biological) superiority and cultural closeness to the Sudanese made them better suited to colonize the Sudan. Describing Egyptians and Sudanese as "Brothers along the Nile," these nationalists couched their conquest as both a civilizing mission and a moral imperative. In their formulation, Egypt, as the elder sibling, had a duty to assist Sudan, its younger kinsman, in its development (El-Shakry 2007; Powell 2000; Powell 2003). At the same time, Egyptian social scientists constructed arguments about the "racial essence" of Egyptian people that claimed that Egyptians were simultaneously biologically and culturally distinct from sub-Saharan Africans and more closely related to either Europeans, through their Mediterranean heritage, or to Arabs, through their blood (El-Shakry 2007). By the twentieth century, Egyptian perceptions of racial difference continued to surface and to be articulated in nationalist discussions about the modernization of Egypt through the Unity of the Nile Valley project, a governmental initiative that sought to unify Egypt and the Sudan under a single regime of power for cultural, linguistic, and territorial reasons (Fábos 2008).

The Egyptian construction of race relies heavily on the concept of triangulation, i.e., the positioning of Egypt between two other entities. As Powell (2003) has cogently argued, race in the Egyptian context developed in the context of a distinct form of colonialism that involved a colonized nation attempting to colonize another nation—albeit one to which Egypt had many cultural similarities. These scholars emphasize the desire of Egyptian nationalists of the nineteenth century to show the affective cultural and kinship bonds between Egypt and the Sudan and the difference between the people of the Nile Valley and Europeans. However, these scholars also point out that Egyptian nationalists also depicted their Sudanese brethren in political cartoons as savage primitives with questionable sexual and moral proclivities to justify Egypt's imperial efforts (Baron 2005; Powell 1995; Powell 2003). Therefore, the first triad, which emerged within the context of colonialism and the nineteenth-century Egyptian nationalist struggle for independence, involves Egypt's attempt to position itself racially and nationally between Britain and the Sudan.

During the early twentieth century, Egyptian social scientists contributed to the racial formulations of Egyptian nationalists by conducting research that they hoped would define explicitly the racial and cultural heritage of Egyptian people. From these scholarly inquiries, two strands of thought became foundational to the Egyptian construction of race. The first perspective asserts that Egyptian Pharaonic civilization indicates that Egypt is the "mother of all civilizations" (including the Greek), and therefore shows that Egypt has strong ties to Europe (El-Shakry 2007). The description of Egyptians as Mediterranean (meant to be read as European and not North African) people is another way of asserting this tie. The second perspective counters the

European/Mediterranean connection by arguing that Egyptian blood demonstrates an affiliation with Arab populations. While the most notable attempt to identify with the "Arab world" can be found during Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime in the 1950s, Nasser's description of Egyptians as Arab-Islamic peoples was not a new formulation since Egyptian social scientists had already used serological studies to make this claim in the 1940s (El-Shakry 2007).

In sum, the concept of triangulation embedded in the work of Egyptian social scientists situates Egypt between Europe, the Arab (Islamic) world, and sub-Saharan Africa. These social scientists' arguments and analyses supported that of Egyptian nationalists who strove to show that Egypt was more closely connected to Europe or the Arab world rather than the continent of Africa. The primary difference lay in their focus on creating a distance between Egypt and the continent of Africa rather than specifically concentrating on the Sudan.

In my dissertation, I rely on the concept of triangulation to show that Egyptian perceptions of feminine beauty and ideal womanhood involve the negotiation of ideologies concerning the best way to represent Egyptian national identity. Egyptian beauty constructs are informed by Islamic and Christian ideologies that stress the importance of virtue and the cultivation of an ethical disposition. While examining Egyptian descriptions and representations of feminine beauty and ideal womanhood, I argue that Egyptian notions of beauty reflect the ways that Egyptians construct and mark racial, national, and gendered difference. Therefore, Egyptian assessments and representations of beauty are influenced by aesthetic ideals in the Arab-Islamic world,

and an international, though often unspoken, understanding of a world hierarchy of races, religions, and cultures imposed by the West since the fifteenth century.

INTRODUCTION: BROWN SKIN IS HALF OF BEAUTY

> "Well, you know they say that brown skin is half of beauty (*al-samar nisf al-gamal*)." - Egyptian professor at the American University in Cairo
>
> Egyptian Professor: "*Do you want to know the joke that goes along with this statement?"*
> Maurita Poole: *"Sure."*
> EP: *"When people say 'you know that brown skin is half of beauty,' other people say, 'yeah, but we know that white skin is all of it."*

The quote mentioned above comes from an informal discussion of my fieldwork with an American University in Cairo professor. This Cairene woman's comment, and the subsequent joke that goes along with it, point to the key issues that are the focus of this dissertation – the Egyptian construction of racial and gendered difference as articulated and represented in Cairene descriptions of beauty and ideal womanhood. As the professor's words suggest, the idea of beauty is a subject of contestation that serves as a nodal point for Egyptian ideas about difference and identity. At the same time, the professor's joke reveals that skin color is a complex signifier, involving contestations over the ideal depiction of Egyptian national, gendered, and racial identities.

The professor, a fair-skinned woman, relayed this comment to me, a dark-skinned woman, as a way to demonstrate that Egyptians praise "brown skin" (*al-samar*) despite evidence to the contrary (see further details in forthcoming chapters). The statement, "Well, you know they say brown skin is half of beauty," evokes ideas promulgated by Egyptian nationalists of the twentieth century, who argued that brown-skinned women should be praised as symbols of authentic Egyptian national identity (Baron 2005; Rifaey 2001). These women, mostly of rural and non-elite origins, were contrasted with fair-skinned foreigners and elite Egyptians who were associated with the subjugation of the Egyptian population from the seventh to twentieth centuries. During my field research

from 2005-2006, traces of this idea remained, particularly among some elites, members of minority groups, and descendants of Upper Egyptians in Cairo.

An alternative construction of feminine aesthetic ideals can be found in the punch line: “but we know that white skin is all of it.” While Cairenes express pride and dignity over their Egyptian heritage, most of them do not deny that white or fair skin is valorized. The allure of whiteness stems from its association with the bodily norm of Egypt’s elite class. These are the members of Egyptian society who have the prestige, status, and the power to both embody and represent the ideal aesthetic (i.e. the totality of beauty). As a consequence, Egyptians in Cairo from all socioeconomic groups acknowledge the primacy given to fair skin in assessments of the physical attractiveness of both men and women.

In quoting the phrase “brown skin is *half* of beauty,” the Egyptian professor also drew attention to the importance of ethics in the Cairene construction of beauty. Egyptians, in my study, contend that beauty and virtue should be viewed as symbolically reciprocal. According to their conceptions of beauty, a woman’s beauty and virtuous character should be so intimately connected that one cannot exist without the other (Hirschkind 2006; Hoffman-Ladd 1987; Mahmood 2001; Mahmood 2005; Zuhur 1992). Nonetheless, in everyday social practice, there is a disjuncture between Egyptian claims that a woman’s beauty is evinced by her ethical disposition and Egyptian beauty discourses[1] that emphasize physical features and social status. In this dissertation, I focus on Cairene representations and descriptions of beauty as a way to highlight Egyptian concerns with physicality as a measure of ideal womanhood and authentic national and racial identity.

DESCRIPTION OF EGYPT

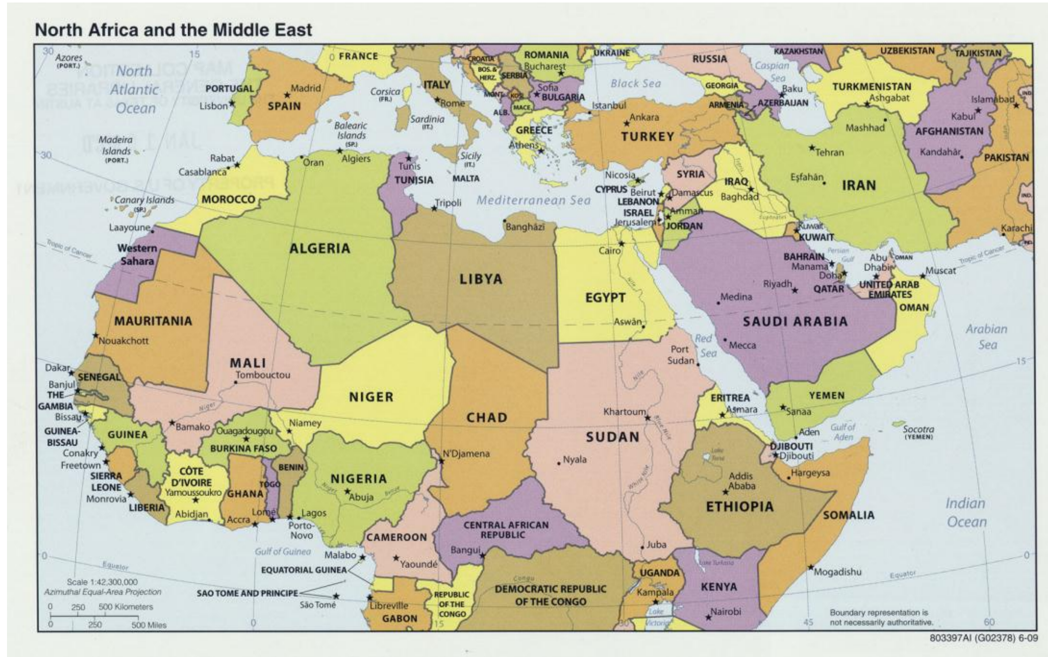


Figure 1: Map of North Africa and the Middle East

Egypt is a transnational country based in North Africa (see Figure 1). It is a part of a small group of countries (i.e., Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, and Mauritania) that can simultaneously claim allegiance and belonging to the continent of Africa, the Arab world and the Middle East, and to the Mediterranean region. It differs from the other five nations, however, in that it is mostly identified with the Nile Valley and the Sudan, the neighboring country to the south with which it shares the northern section of the Nile River.

Egypt's population is 80 million, which makes it the most populous nation in the Arab-Islamic world and the second most-populous nation on the continent of Africa. While Arabic is the official language, French and English are also spoken among the middle classes and the elites in urban centers such as Cairo and Alexandria. Official estimates state that 90% of Egyptians are Muslims and the remaining 10% are Christian;

in addition, 99% of the population is described generically as Egyptian. Subsumed within these categories are small groups of native Egyptian Sufi orders, ethnic minorities (Nubians, Northern Sudanese, Bedouin), Coptic and Orthodox Christians, non-immigrant Baha'i, and a small number of Jews, Greeks, and Armenians as well as refugees from Palestine, Iraq, Southern Sudan and the Horn of Africa. In Cairo, foreigners from the Arab Gulf as well as the Western world also have a strong presence.

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE

Religious identity has always played a central role in Egyptian life (Kennedy 1978; Robins 1993; Shorter 1994; Teeter 2011). However, the significance of religion has become even more important since the 1970s due to the growth of an Islamic revival. This movement called for a return to more explicitly conservative Islamic ideologies that included women's adoption of Islamic dress, greater segregation of the sexes, more religious piety, and the identification with Muslims throughout the Islamic world (El-Guindi 1981; Guindi 1981; Lapidus 1997; MacLeod 1991; Mahmood 2001; Mahmood 2005; Zuhur 1992). The Islamic awakening, as it is sometimes called, gained the most traction within two different populations in Egyptian society. The first consisted of university-educated middle class men and women who felt frustrated by the Egyptian government's failed modernization efforts (El-Guindi 1981; Ibrahim 1982). The second group included Upper Egyptians and Egyptians from lower socioeconomic groups in urban centers, who learned about conservative Islamic practices through Egyptian transnational migrants who had traveled to the Arab Gulf for employment (Dalen, et al. 2005a; Dalen, et al. 2005b). Though different in socioeconomic status, members of each group believed that Islam provided a reasonable alternative to the Egyptian government's

Western-oriented secular modernization attempts because it allowed them to draw upon the Islamic aspect of their identities to engage the global world.

In the twenty-first century, the impact of this movement can be seen in nearly all domains of social, cultural, and political life in Egypt. Nationalist debates center on the ideal ways to incorporate Islam into the nation-state and the extent to which Islam should be considered the cornerstone of Egyptian identity. For its part, the Egyptian government has taken steps to regulate the movement, especially the Islamic education that challenges the nation-state's official secular liberalist orientation. Moreover, Christian minorities increasingly perceive their rights as Egyptians to be threatened by growing support for the more conservative, if not necessarily extremist wings of this Islamic movement (Scott 2010). Symbolically, the impact of the movement has been the adoption of Islamic dress by the majority of the female population, which points to one of the ways that women are negotiating questions surrounding women's engagement with the public sphere (Haddad, et al. 1998; Hatem 1987; Hatem 2002; Hoffman-Ladd 1987; MacLeod 1991; Mahmood 2005; Sherif 1999; Zuhur 1992).

REGIONAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCE

Egyptians divide themselves based upon region. Upper Egyptian (*Sai'di)* is the designation for residents from the southern part of the country and Lower Egyptian (*Bahawary*) is the term used to identify Egyptians from the northern part of the country.[2] Though Upper Egyptians belong to all socioeconomic groups and have had a profound impact on the city of Cairo and the country as a whole, they still remain the butt of jokes, associated with rigid tradition, backwardness, and economic underdevelopment (Bayat and Denis 2000; Bedsted 2003; Denis 1996; Miller 2006; Singerman 2009). Other

negative stereotypes and generalizations about Upper Egyptians include the tendency to identify them as poor unskilled migrants; the source of extremism, crime, and poverty; and with the growth of informal housing settlements (*ashwa'iyat*) (Bayat and Denis 2000; Bedsted 2003; Denis 1996; Miller 2006; Singerman 2009). According to Miller (2006), increasingly Upper Egyptians based in Cairo have responded to these representations by developing a discourse about themselves that valorizes "the pride and purity of their 'genealogical origin' (*asl*), their supposedly specific Upper Egyptian ethos, and their refusal to assimilate to the dominant Cairene urban culture, described as decadent and Westernized" (379).

The retaliatory description of urban Cairenes by *Sa'aida* is a culturally familiar trope; *baladi* Cairenes often use it in defense of themselves against perceived misrepresentations by elite, *ifrangi* (or "foreign-identified") Cairenes. The commonality in the discourse of these stigmatized groups most likely stems from the overlap in their composition, i.e. many *baladi* people are also descendants of Upper Egyptians. Yet, despite the overlap, there remains a distinction in terms of *Sa'aida* and *baladi* because a sufficient number of *baladi* people are not descended from Upper Egyptians or do not hail from rural areas,[3] and because both *Sa'idis* and non-*Sa'aida* associate Cairo with civilization *(madaniyya*) and modernity and Upper Egypt with tradition (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003; Miller 2006). These divisive images and constructs, according to Catherine Miller (2006), have "helped to reinforce processes of ethnicization (the 'we' group versus the 'they' group) and the strengthening of social boundaries" (379). Viewing Upper Egyptians as more culturally conservative and resistant to, or outside of

modernity, also creates tensions between recent Upper Egyptian migrants to the city and the residents of its longstanding urban communities.

The most notable boundary formation, according to both ethnic and racial lines in Cairo, involves Nubians. Cairenes, like all Egyptians, still group and categorize the native Egyptian population into one of three categories, namely, Egyptian, Bedouin Arab, or Nubian, the latter of whom are darker-skinned. Non-Nubian Egyptians in the city of Cairo often confuse Nubians with Sudanese immigrants, and some question whether or not Nubians can be considered authentically Egyptian (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003). While aware of the skepticism with which non-Nubian Egyptians sometimes view them, Egyptian Nubians in my study did not see a conflict between their ethnic and national identity. Similar to other Egyptians, Nubians stress different facets of their identity depending upon the social context (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003:8). For instance, at times Egyptian Nubians strive to show their alignment with other Egyptians through the practice of Islam or through their national identity in contrast to that of foreigners (e.g. Kuwaitis, Sudanese, and Americans). At other times, they emphasize the fact that they are Upper Egyptian (*Sa'idi*) rather than Nubian. Yet, as minorities who are subject to discrimination because of their ethnic and physical differences, Nubians also at times emphasize their Nubian identity to differentiate themselves from the rest of the Egyptian population.

For Nubians themselves, the appellation Nubian refers to a group of people whose native villages extended along the Nile River from the first cataract at Aswan south into the Sudan through the region known as Dongola (Kirwan 1974). Since the late 20th century, the majority of Nubians have been relocated to New Nubia, an area consisting of

villages that are located around 45-50 kilometers north of Aswan (Jennings 1988). However, some Nubians still reside in villages located on their ancestral land because these villages were elevated high enough to avoid being flooded when the Aswan Dam was built during the 1960s (Jennings 1988; Jennings 1995).

Prior to construction of the Aswan Dam, Nubians in Upper Egypt consisted of three distinct groups of people: (1) the Metouki-speaking Kenuz, (2) the Arabic-speaking Nubians of Bedouin heritage, and (3) the Mahas-speaking Fedija (Fahim 1983; Jennings 1988). Since the inundation of Nubian villages and their relocation in the 1960s and 1970s to New Nubia, the focus of the communities, as well as the scholarship, has been to consider Nubians as a unified ethnic group (Fernea, et al. 1991). Though there have been questions about who could be considered authentically Nubian (Doumato and Posusney 2003; Geiser 1980; Geiser 1986; Hale 1996), it has generally been agreed that Nubians are those "who (1) speak one of the *Nubiyyin*[4] dialects; (2) can trace their origins to one of the Nubian regions; (3) are Muslim; and (4) state that they are Nubian and have no visible traits which would belie that affiliation" (Hale 1971: 30). In short, a Nubian is one who defines himself/herself in that manner and who is considered to be Nubian by people from a Nubian village.

Due to the flooding of their villages and subsequent relocation, many Nubians have lost their connection with their traditional customs. The practices, values, and mores of contemporary Cairene Nubians are more similar to that of non-Nubian Cairenes than ever before. For example, though there has been a marked effort to maintain the distinctive nature of their culture through the creation of Nubian *gama'iyyas* (associations) and research centers that focus on Nubian history, culture, and language,

Cairene Nubians under the age of 25 often do not know much about their communities' origins and traditional customs (Kennedy 1978). Moreover, studies have shown that the greater contact with Arabic has greatly impacted the language competency of Nubians who reside in Cairo (Rouchdy 1991).

Initially ambivalent about their relocation (Fernea and Kennedy 1966), many Nubians have adapted well to life in various urban communities and in their new resettlement areas. For Nubian men, the adjustment may have been done with relative ease because they have historically been "a highly migratory group"(Geiser 1981; Geiser 1986) and had already well-established connections and associations with foreigners and elite in the urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria (Fernea, et al. 1991; Geiser 1986; Jennings 1995). The Nubian women who were initially resettled had greater difficulty with the relocation because of their inability to speak Arabic, their lack of formal education, as well as their lack of previous experience in the cities and with significant exposure to members of other ethnic groups. Eventually, however, they became accustomed to life in the city, and their descendants appear to be more at home in Cairo than they are in the families' natal villages.

Because Nubian villages were inundated in 1964, many of the Nubian women in this study are a part of a generation of Nubians who have been living in Cairo for most, if not all, of their lives. These Nubian women speak Arabic fluently, often only using Nubian language in the home with their family or at Nubian weddings and festivals. Though Cairene Nubians live throughout Cairo and are becoming increasingly upwardly mobile (Poeschke 1996), my study deals with Nubians who primarily reside in the lower-income community of Imbaba. Their strong ties to their natal villages remain, but their

comfort as Cairenes increases with each generation, as indicated by their language use and their willingness to intermarry.

Despite their cultural competency, Nubian youth still remain highly concerned about how non-Nubian Muslim Egyptians view them as a community and are cognizant of the prejudice and discrimination that they experience in Cairo as a result of their ethnic and regional background as well as their skin color. For example, in the Cairene context, Nubian occupations can be varied but generally are thought to be service-oriented. The stereotypes stem from the fact that many Nubian men in Cairo have worked as doormen, soldiers, guards and servants to earn income and gain entrée into non-Nubian Egyptian society. In addition, Aleya Rouchdy, a scholar of Nubian and Arabic linguistics, has found that many non-Nubian Egyptians still believe that the word Nubian is derived from a term meaning "slave" though it comes from either the word *nab*, which means gold or from the word *nebed* meaning "people with curly hair" (Rouchdy 1980:334).

Some anthropologists argue that the association of Nubians with slavery and servitude is the result of the unlawful enslavement of many Nubians throughout the 19th century as well as their decision to continue to work in low-status positions in the early 20th century so that they could gain access to employment in Cairo and Alexandria (Fahim 1983; Fernea and Gerster 1973; Jennings 1995; Valsik, et al. 1967). I do not dispute these claims about the originating rationale behind the association of Nubians with slavery and servitude. I would, however, supplement his claims by arguing that the continued association of Nubians with servitude is in no small part the result of 20th and 21st century Egyptian theater and film that cast Nubians and other darker skinned people in such roles. For example, in the 1920s-1930s, Ya'qub Sanu'a character *Al-Barbary* [a

term that Cairenes at times still utter when encountering Nubians, Sudanese, and others of African descent (Atiya 1982)][5] popularized the image of Nubians, as well as the Sudanese, as not only domestic servants but also as foolish, infantilized and childlike beings (Powell 2003). While the Nubian represented by Sanu'a was merely a comical buffoon, his representation of darker skinned people as uncivilized, unsophisticated, and immature arguably played a key part in the racialization of the Nubian community by the larger, more politically dominant Egyptian society.

My research suggests, however, that colorism and racialization are not major concerns for most Cairene Nubians. Their discussions of the less-than-favorable treatment they sometimes receive from non-Nubian Cairenes are explained in terms of non-Nubian Egyptian ignorance (*jahiliya*), impoliteness (*mish mu'addab*), lack of culture or civilization, or merely as a preference for other looks or behavior. I also found that they tended to focus on maintaining strong family connections, and that they are perceived by non-Nubian Cairenes as a close-knit group that excludes outsiders. I would like to suggest that their explanatory models and exclusion of outsiders are a part of a larger coping mechanism developed to manage and negotiate life in a milieu where they are estranged because of their regional and ethnic background. In this regard, they are similar to minority and migrant groups in the Americas, such as American Jews, who have developed various strategies to handle the difficulties of living as either outsiders or semi-insiders in a community (Wagley and Harris 1958).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: REPRESENTATION AND DIFFERENCE

This dissertation utilizes Stuart Hall's theories of representation to argue that Egyptian perceptions and representations of feminine beauty reflect their sociocultural

construction of race (Hall and Open University. 1997; Wetherell, et al. 2001).[6] Stuart Hall argues that the study of representation begins with the idea that culture is a shared system of meaning that is produced through language. His theoretical framework divides the study of representation into two approaches: the reflective approach and the constructivist approach. In the reflective approach, it is assumed that meaning can be found in objects, ideas, or events in the world; therefore, language is thought to function like a mirror that reflects individual and group (i.e., shared) meanings. By contrast, the constructivist approach concerns the examination of concepts and signs as systems of representation that are constructed by social actors.

Utilizing a semiotic approach to the study of culture, representation, and difference, Hall argues that language should be construed broadly as a system of representation that allow humans to communicate, interpret, and represent meaning. Representational systems include spoken and written language, images or visual depictions, body language (e.g., gestures, facial expressions), etc. Analyses of representational systems focus on the implications and function of symbolic language as it is constructed within a sociocultural group. Therefore, as a signifying practice, language is a vehicle or medium that operates through signs and symbols to carry meaning that can be read, decoded, or interpreted by members of the same cultural group.

Although Hall uses and discusses the semiotic approach, his analyses emphasize Michel Foucault's approach to representation (Foucault 1970; Foucault 1976; Foucault and Gordon 1980). The Foucauldian approach is concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning through discourse, which Hall defines and interprets as a system of representation. Analyses of texts and representations are understood as parts of

discursive formations, or “clusters of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity, or institutional site in society” (Hall and Open University. 1997: 6). To understand cultural practice and meaning thus involves examining the broader discourse through which these things emerge.

The dissertation draws upon anthropological and historical scholarship about the Egyptian construction of race to contextualize perceptions and representations of blackness in contemporary Egypt. My chief concern is to connect the Egyptian ideology of race to descriptions, perceptions, and visual representations[7] of feminine aesthetic ideals and ideal womanhood – a notion that is intertwined with Egyptian national identity or understandings of who they are as a people. In the forthcoming chapters, I focus on the signification[8] of racial and gendered difference in Egyptian discourses of feminine beauty. In addition, I argue that repeated representations of darker-skinned people and signifiers of Africa in stereotypical ways contribute to the production and reinforcement of a broader regime of representation[9] about blackness and the idea of race in twenty-first century Egypt.

RESEARCH INFORMANTS

This dissertation focuses on the experiences of unmarried, university-educated women who provide diverse perspectives about the intersection of feminine aesthetic ideals, perceptions of ideal womanhood, and constructions of race in contemporary Cairo. My research participants include 35 non-Nubian Egyptians and 25 Egyptian Nubians. Among the non-Nubian Egyptians, the research participants’ range from women whose families have been in Cairo for several generations to those whose families only recently

migrated from Upper Egypt or the Delta (Lower Egypt). Unstructured interviews and interactions with these interlocutors at Cairo University, the American University of Cairo, the American Research Center in Cairo, and in my neighborhood of residence (Mohandessin) during fieldwork serve as the basis for my discussion of their perspectives about beauty in their personal lives and social worlds.

The Nubian research informants in my study have lived in Cairo their entire lives but maintain close connections with relatives who still reside in their parents' natal villages in Upper Egypt. The non-Nubian research informants come from families that are either native to Cairo or that have been in the capital for at least two generations. Although all of the key interlocutors are unmarried[10], I have insight into the transitional nature of feminine aesthetic ideals and beautification practices from discussions with their peers and with older married relatives. In comparing perceptions of beauty, I argue that the young women are negotiating a socio-cultural milieu that differs from that of previous generations due to several factors: the impact of the circulation of global media; the influx of goods and services from the Western world; the increased influence of ideas and practices of Arabs from the Gulf resulting from the temporary migration of male relatives to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for work; and greater exposure to Arabs from the Gulf who reside in the city of Cairo.

The informants are members of the middle class as defined by Arlene MacLeod's classification system of socioeconomic groups in Cairo (MacLeod 1991). MacLeod (1991) defines the lower-middle class as those who identify with the middle class but whose income places them only slightly above the poverty line, which is defined as earning LE 3, 963 (or $1,268) per year (Sims 2003). The head of lower-middle class

households tends to be a lower-level government employee or skilled worker (35). The middle stratum of the middle class can be distinguished from the lower middle class by their occupations as young professionals, senior clerical workers, or private sector workers, and by the size of their flats, which tend to have three or four rooms. The upper middle-class are identified as those individuals who have university educations, reside in three- to five-room flats, and have professional, mid-level careers in the private or public sector.

METHODOLOGY

When I began the research in 2001, I gathered information from the people in my community and in the institutions that I had access to at the time, e.g. the neighborhood of Zamalek and the American University of Cairo. This strategy yielded information about the views and conditions of darker-skinned women residing in Cairo, such as West Africans from Ghana and Nigeria, Somali, Ethiopians, northern and southern Sudanese, and African-Americans. To focus the research, during my fieldwork in 2003, I used a purposive sample that concentrated on Nubians in Cairo; many of these research informants were migrants from the village of Gharb Aswan (Jennings 1996). From 2005-2006, I concentrated on university-aged Nubians and non-Nubians in Cairo who I gained access to through my affiliates at the American University in Cairo, Cairo University, and the American Research Center in Egypt. These students connected me with people in their social network who they thought would be willing to participate in the study.

The methods employed in this study are foundational to the field of sociocultural anthropology: (1) participant observation, (2) semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and (3) taking notes in a field notebook. To identify particular patterns of

behavior, I rely on what informants and other Cairenes were both doing and saying. In addition, this research draws on representations of beauty from print media (magazines, newspapers and billboards), television commercials, and film. Although only a few of these media are discussed specifically in chapter four, the accumulated images play a key role in my interpretations and analysis of the practices of beauty among contemporary Cairenes.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The data from field notes and interviews are analyzed using the constant comparative method (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Glaser 1993; Glaser 1994; Glaser and Strauss 1967). This approach calls for continuous reassessment of research questions and approaches to ensure that the questions being asked are the most appropriate for the data collection. During the course of my research and throughout the analysis, I continuously reshaped the questions, reconsidered and reflected on the key concepts of race, ethnicity, and color, and posed questions about the extent to which particular behaviors and statements of my key informants could be situated within existing definitions of racism, colorism and ethnocentrism that have emerged primarily from research conducted in the United States and Latin America. This evolving form of analysis ultimately has coalesced into the present study of the representation of race, gender, and beauty in Cairo. In addition, it has helped me to realize that this study is in many ways still preliminary in its scope, requiring further exploration of inequities based on race and color in Egypt, and by extension, the Nile Valley Region and possibly the Arab-Islamic world.

This research focuses on the perceptions and representations of race while being cognizant of the local perspectives provided by the research informants. As discussed in

the preface, very few of the Egyptian informants themselves defined their experiences in terms of race. One concern of the study may be whether introducing a foreign concept precludes the ability to provide a true emic, or insider, perspective. Many of the key informants were great debaters, firm in their understanding of the world and quite expert at contradicting my perspective, thus endeavoring to ensure that Egyptian culture and Egyptian people would not be denigrated by terminology they deemed ugly or considered erroneous. As a consequence, their responses and comments about my study should leave little doubt about the wide range of Cairene perspectives on the intersection of racialized beauty, gender, and class.

While acknowledging the power that stems from my role as a Western scholar – albeit an African-American female whose identity as an American was often questioned by Egyptians – I strive to provide a reflexive critique of beauty and difference in Cairo. My position as an African-American scholar posed conflicts for a number of my informants, who on the one hand desired to be polite and hospitable to an educated foreigner from the United States, yet who on the other hand wished to be circumspect in discussing a stigmatized, even taboo, subject with a woman who is herself darker-skinned. Thus, I view this study as a contribution to the growing exploration and investigation of the significance of race and color in Egyptian culture.

While writing the dissertation, I have discussed Egyptian culture in depth with Egyptian and American graduate students who reside in the United States. These students, male and female, have been generous in their critique of my work and in their explanations of their perspectives about the ways in which I describe the politics of beauty, gender, and race in contemporary Egypt. It is from these readers that I have

learned to think carefully about my subject in relation to debates about Islam and secularism, gender and class in Egypt, modernity and globalization in North Africa and the Middle East. More importantly, it is from our numerous conversations that I realized that a discussion and explanation of feminine aesthetic ideals in Cairo could not be understood outside of analyses about Islam and marriage (an institution deeply connected to family and kinship systems in Egypt).

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISSERTATION CHAPTERS

This dissertation examines the ways that perceptions and representations of feminine beauty reflect the Egyptian sociocultural construction of race. The first chapter provides a description of Cairo, including my initial impressions and a brief sketch of the neighborhoods where fieldwork was conducted. The second chapter situates cross-cultural studies about race and the aesthetic body within anthropology's larger historical debates about race and ethnicity. The third chapter examines the construction of race and color in the Egyptian context with an emphasis on the experience of darker-skinned peoples. It historicizes notions of skin color and the race concept within slavery in the Islamic world and colonization by the Ottoman (Turkish) and British. Relying on my ethnographic research, I provide details about competing interpretations about the relevance of the racial concept in the Egyptian context. The chapter ends with a discussion of the scholarship that outlines the sociocultural construction of race in Egypt. The fourth chapter examines Egyptian nationalist debates about ideal womanhood to argue that the exclusion and marginalization of darker-skinned and non-elite Egyptians in depictions of the Egyptian nation are central to the sociocultural construction of race in contemporary Egypt. I argue that the visual imagery is a part of a racialized regime of

representation that can be found in contemporary beauty advertisements that exclude darker-skinned Egyptians and valorize whiteness and fair skin. The fifth chapter shows the role of the sociocultural construction of race in the promotion of cosmetic surgeries. It juxtaposes this aesthetic practice with the most prevalent aesthetic surgery in Egypt, i.e., female genital cutting, as a way to provide an example of the construction of beauty in the Egyptian context. The Egyptian conception of beauty is then discussed as both an ethical and aesthetic notion, the relevance of which is revealed when single women are in the marriage market. The sixth chapter focuses on the significance of regional difference, race, and gender for Egyptian women interested in transnational migration and global engagement. In the conclusion, blackface performance in a satirical film is briefly discussed to show one of the sites where stereotypical ideas about people of African descent and the Egyptian construction of race surfaces in 21st century Egypt.

CHAPTER ONE:
CONTEMPORARY CAIRO

The bustling city of Cairo can be a blend of ancient and modern elements. If a person wanders onto a typical Cairo street, she must do so with care and alacrity in order to avoid dozens of speeding taxis honking, buses that barely stop to allow passengers to get on or off, minivans with young boys screaming out destinations, men on bicycles with crates of freshly baked bread on their heads, and old men swaying and shuffling down the street in their traditional long robes (*gallabiyas*), pushing carts to sell their wares (loofahs, nuts, sweet potatoes, etc). Cairo is an urban space that is always bustling with men in motion, striving to earn a living for themselves and for their families.[11]

Boys and young men, in their teens and early twenties, are drawn to the streets. At the corner store and gas station on the street called *Game'et El-Duwal El-Arabia (*The League Avenue of the Arab States), they gather to pass the time and to watch the people passing by. They stare at and comment on the appearance of women, hoping to simultaneously increase their stature among their friends and to gain the attention of the women who walk by them. "*Asal*!" (Honey) "*Halwa*" (Beautiful/Sweet) "*Samara*!" (Brown-skinned lady) "*Chocolata*!" (Chocolate) "*Ishta*!" (literally," creamy," but meant to imply that something is cool or that a woman is beautiful because of her smooth, creamy -- and most often fair– skin, though young men in their 20s will say *Ishta* to brown-skinned women as well). Young Egyptian men without employment spend time on the corner with friends, teasing, commenting on their lives as well as on the oddities that they observe in their neighborhood. As they age, the pattern continues, though the location and the focus may shift. Instead of the corner, older Egyptian men tend to hang out at the local cafes or in someone's home to discuss the politics of life in contemporary

Cairo, which is deeply intertwined with religion, family vicissitudes, marriage, opportunities for employment, and more.

These men are not alone in airing such concerns. Cairene women, more educated than they have ever been before, discuss the same issues. When not at home with family, they have learned to negotiate the public space traditionally associated with men in sophisticated ways. Smartly dressed in the latest fashion, often a blend of Islamic and Western clothing styles,[12] young women, often in their early 20s, stroll down the streets with their closest female compatriots or alongside their male counterparts. They head to the markets, the universities, the mosque or the church, their places of employment, or to cafes. They chatter with each other about their lives and comment upon others that they pass along the street: "*Eh da*? (What's that?)," they murmur as they observe people and events in the streets. In front of the numerous storefronts, they may remark "*Halwa di*" (This is nice/beautiful/sweet), "*Shik 'aawy*" (Chic), Bikam *da?*" (How much is that?). The constant discussion of beauty, style, and fashion, as well as the comparison between themselves and those in the streets, is not just idle chatter. Many of them are pragmatic and aware that the ability to make connections and find employment opportunities in Egypt's difficult economy (which in 2006 was characterized by high inflation and unemployment or underemployment for an increased number of college graduates) can be a formidable task for the average Egyptian.

Foreign women unfamiliar with the Cairene discourse of beauty may first come into contact with it in the marketplace through their exchanges with the male members of the petty bourgeoisie (small merchants and shopkeepers) selling their goods. "*Ya Samara"* (Brown), "*Ya halwa"* (Sweetie/Pretty*), "Ya Gamila"* (Beautiful*), "Ya Asal"*

*(*Honey*)*, they mutter to themselves or brazenly call out to foreign women passing by, hoping to draw attention to their goods as well as themselves. As these merchants bargain over the final price of a good, they remark upon and comment about the looks of the potential purchaser: "For *you,* because of your beauty, I will give you *this* price." For some foreign women, the focus on appearance can evoke a myriad of responses—from feeling flattered to feeling befuddled; after all, *what does a woman's attractiveness or physical appearance have to do with the price of a product?* In the markets of Cairo and throughout Egypt, one might argue, everything. Should they interact with a foreign woman on subsequent occasions, male shopkeepers will shift the focus of their conversations from a woman's looks to their now-established congeniality and the potential development of extended relations that could be mutually beneficial or informative. For example, later exchanges can touch upon how the woman's occupation or social networks could encourage business, what city sites and cultural experiences should not be missed, or, if furthering business by way of goods or tourist attractions do not tempt the customer, discussions about differences in the woman's and merchant's respective nation or religion may ensue.

How does attractiveness or the physical appearance of a man impact his transaction? As with women, men's looks can impact the treatment they receive from merchants. Men's and women's appearance should convey their ability to purchase a product, yet they should not contrive to look so wealthy that the price quoted would be exorbitantly high. In Cairo's markets, prices are based not only on the product's value or worth, but also on the customer's appearance. Merchants in markets set and alter prices

based on the assumptions that they make about an individual's socioeconomic status and willingness to pay the concomitant cost for the product.

While discussing negotiations and business practices with Muhammad Osman[13], a merchant who sold Egyptian perfumes and goods (e.g., papyrus, chess sets, Egyptian traditional clothing, etc.) to tourists in a bazaar, I learned that they are often a way for him to gather enough information about the purchaser's background so that he can determine what amount he will charge for his goods. In addition, he talked to me about the importance of scanning a customer's body, observing the style of clothing and shoes, skin tone, complexion, and hair and nails to assess his or her nationality and level of wealth. Speech patterns and behavioral practices were also taken into consideration; for example, he watched to see if a person touched the clothes on display or if they stood still waiting for him to assist. When the customers spoke English, he would wait to see how well they enunciated to determine their nationality, since he felt that Americans were not as articulate as the English, particularly when they pointed at an item to ask *"How much is da one?"* Such market strategies, with their focus on unspoken as well as spoken traits and cues, are connected with the ways that Egyptians in the market identify socioeconomic status or the class of people, regardless of where they are from. Their observations, and interpretations of them, also reflect their understanding of difference and serve as a means for them to reaffirm or disrupt their existing stereotypes about others.

This research on the relationship between beauty ideals, gender, and constructions of race and skin color in contemporary Cairo draws upon social interactions within particular sociocultural arenas (e.g., the bazaar, the universities, and middle-class to

upper middle-class local neighborhoods). Through interactions with people at the American University in Cairo, Cairo University, and the American Research Center in Egypt, I discovered that Egyptians in these contexts, similar to those in the market, notice and comment on the physical appearance, dress, and demeanor of local people and foreigners, sometimes appearing as if they are cataloguing their observations to determine the extent to which they want to invest their time in cultivating long-term or extended relationships with the people in question. Like Muhammad Osman, Egyptian students, professors, and professionals compared the behavior and style of Western foreigners (e.g. Americans versus the French), non-Western (e.g., Chinese versus Japanese or Ghanaian versus Sudanese), Western and non-Western (e.g., English versus Japanese). I view the everyday talk about beauty and difference as a significant Egyptian discourse on global and local socioeconomic and racialized hierarchies.

CAIRO, A STRATIFIED CITY

Cairo is an urban megalopolis inhabited by a diverse population, which includes "European, Levantine, Arab, Turkish, Central Asian and African citizens as well as tourists, refugees, expatriates, students, and business people of every background, inhabiting or transiting the capital" (Golia 2004:111). The city's actual terrain, which is expanding each year into the surrounding rural agricultural lands and the desert, includes at least twenty-seven well-known and identifiable districts as well as growing unplanned areas known as *ashwa'iyyat* (or slums) (Abaza 2006; Raymond 1999; Sims 2003). Both an ancient and modern city, Cairo has been described as the city victorious (Abu-Lughod 1971), a layered city (Raymond 1999), a global, cosmopolitan city (Koning 2006; Singerman and Amar 2006) and most recently as a contested city (Singerman 2009). All

of these appellations continue to be accurate in 21st century Cairo; however, because of the nature of my research topic, in this dissertation, I discuss Cairo as a stratified city. As a city that consists of cities within cities, each with its own characteristics and histories, each "clearly revealing deep social differences" (Raymond 1999:361), it can be divided into areas that are primarily made to either accommodate native, local residents or to cater to more well-to-do foreigners and the upper echelon.

Cairo's segregated orientation has its origins in the nation's history as a country whose ruling caste[14] (the army and administration) was of foreign origins from the 14th until the mid-20th century. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the majority of Egyptians, who were known as *awlad al-balad* (people of the country) or *ahl al-balad* (kin of the country) (El-Messiri 1978; Morsy 1994), differentiated themselves from their foreign rulers, the mediating rich Egyptian merchants, and the learned, propertied Islamic leadership, all of whom discouraged them from patronizing establishments that were created for the foreign and local elite. Because knowledge of a foreign language and adoption of European or Westernized dress were needed to avoid mistreatment and discrimination, non-elite Cairenes were relegated to the traditional residential quarters or neighborhoods (*harat*) of Cairo that were described simply as *baladi* (popular) or *sha'bi* (folk). The line of demarcation between the traditional, native *baladi* areas (Bulaq, Abdin, Sayyida Zaynab, Old Cairo, etc) and the more modern, Europeanized or Westernized ones (Garden City, Zamalek, Ma'adi, etc) was intensified from 1863 to 1936. Power, business activity, and wealth were accumulated and ostentatiously displayed in fashionable (*raqi*) areas inhabited by the British, which stood in clear juxtaposition with traditional areas of the city where "streets were neglected, cleaning

was haphazard, water supply only partial, and the sewers were poor or insufficient" (Raymond 1999:333-334). It is not surprising that Egyptians interested in upward social mobility aspired to be a part of the culture of the more Westernized elite, as the traditional native quarters were disparate and unequal in nearly every respect.

Yet, aware that residential area, as well as class and consumption, are markers of distinction, Cairenes generally take pride in the neighborhoods and communities from which they come, whatever their circumstances[15]. Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz, for instance, explained that his inspiration for his world-celebrated literature was the *hara* (singular of *harat*). By connecting himself with the traditional quarters of Cairo, and their inhabitants, Mahfouz evoked the positive connotations of being *baladi*. Drawing on the work of el-Messiri (1978) and Booth (1990), the anthropologist Walter Armbrust elucidates the positive meaning and implications of *awlad al-balad,* or *baladi,* when he talks about the evolution of the term as a sociological concept (Armbrust 1996; Booth and Bayram al-T*unis*i 1990; El-Messiri 1978). *Awlad al-balad*, he writes, shifted from simply being a descriptor of a particular group or class of people in Egypt, to mean "someone who lives in a *hara* (traditional quarter), works at certain occupations (usually independent trades) and wears a *gallabiya* (traditional robe)" (Armbrust 1996:26) to mean a small merchant and adherent to a traditional code of honor known as *shahama* (indicating both gallantry and astuteness)—in short, an Egyptian who depended less obviously, if at all, on the modernizing foreign order than did functionaries of the bourgeoisie (Armbrust 1996:27).

The terms *bint* or *binat al-balad* (baladi women) evoke images of a smart, working class girl who remains true to traditional values and ways of life though she lives

in the city (El-Messiri 1978; Joseph 2009). While the *hara* is significant for *baladi* women, their more important sociocultural space is the *hitta*. Drawing on the work of el-Messiri (1978), Joseph (2009) explains that, "*hitta* connotes the 'concept of community; it has physical and social boundaries that may extend from a small alley to a whole quarter.' Within the *hitta*, furthermore, men and women interact freely" (77). Because they historically had greater freedom of movement and interaction with the opposite sex than well-to-do Egyptian women, to foreigners and some middle and upper class Egyptians, *baladi* women, at times, appear to push the sociocultural boundaries about propriety. Yet, a constant concern for them is balancing their negotiation of public space well enough to maintain a good reputation in the community (Early 1993; El-Messiri 1978; Lidell 2006).

Some Cairene men and women from the traditional quarters enjoy spending their spare time on the main thoroughfares in the more *raqi* areas. As they wander and stroll through the streets of the *raqi* neighborhoods, lingering around the cafés and restaurants, they are able to partake and participate in the cosmopolitan life of the city even if only in a marginal or peripheral way. Cairo's lower-income inhabitants were once viewed as parochial and provincial in their outlook by the Cairene upper class because they traveled outside of their local neighborhoods only when necessary, and even then with great hesitation or angst (Amin 2000; Golia 2004). In the 21st century, *baladi* (mostly men, but some women) readily migrate overseas for employment that might later afford them the chance to marry and have access to greater resources.

The middle classes and elites, by contrast, increasingly spend their time in expansive suburban-like malls such as City Stars in Nasr City (Abaza 2006). In Cairo,

class and consumption are allies, inextricably linked and bound in the minds of many contemporary Cairenes. The bourgeoisie, sociologically known as *ibn al-zawat*/ *awlad al-zawat* (plural form) or *wilad al-nas* (Barsoum 1999), i.e., the sons of the nobility or the upper class, exhibit a mixture of admiration and envy for those who have been able to achieve financial success in the midst of their depressed economy, as well as a disdain for those farthest removed from wealth and beauty. In discussing this reality in connection with beauty, taste, and consumption, Abaza (2006) links Cairene perceptions concerning beauty and taste to consumption. She writes, "Consumption has affected our notions of beauty and self-perception. It plays a decisive role in distinction .... For many years *baladi* was used by so-called middle or upper classes to show contempt for the vulgar taste of inferior classes. Today *bi'a* is meant to define the bad taste of lower classes, a taste that is even more despicable than *baladi*, thus popular." (Abaza 2006: 11-12) Though she focuses on the disapproval and disrespect that the middle and upper-class Cairenes sometimes exude for *baladi* and *bi'a* ("ghetto" in American slang) people, her remarks can at times be applied to the nouveaux-riche, or those who members of the upper class label as "vulgar" people with money.

According to Walter Armbrust (1996), elites and middle class began to associate negative attributes that were previously reserved for the *awlad al-zawat* in the late 20thcentury with the nouveaux-riche or *bitu-l-infitah* (those of the Open Door, post-Nasserite economic policy). Specifically, he states that to be nouveaux-riche connotes "frivolity, effeminacy (in men), immodesty (primarily in women), greed, and sloth" in addition to "a sense of cultural inauthenticity, invariably linked to the adoption of Western style in comportment and material life" (Armbrust 1996:27). At the onset of the

21st century, I would argue that perceptions of the nouveaux-riche, as well as of the elite aristocracy, have been further complicated by the adoption of a more outwardly Islamic perspective. Therefore, the easily juxtaposed sociological signifiers of *ibn al-balad* versus *ibn al-zawat*/*wilad al-nas* versus *bitu-l-infitah* have given way to more fluid and pluralistic forms of identity that only hint at these older, clearly identified dichotomies.

In the twenty-first century, unemployment has been a major concern for the local populace. In 2006-2007, unemployment statistics for Egyptian women were particularly dire, estimated at 36.7% -50%, a rate more than three times the rate of unemployment for men and five times the rate for unemployment for the entire nation (Assaad 2000; El-Kogali 2001). Though the 2010 Population Survey of Egyptian Youth states that 55% of university students are in programs for Economics and Commerce, Law, Engineering or Computers, analysts and scholars (Assaad 2007; Assaad 2000; El-Kogali 2001) suggest that the highest rates of unemployment are to be found among college graduates as a result of their tendency to attain education that prepare them more for increasingly non-existent public sector employment as well as increased competition among first-time job seekers. In response, these college graduates often seek employment for which they are overqualified, taking any temporary or casual work to generate income. Alternatively, they find opportunities to migrate overseas to the Arab Gulf or to the western world. The problem has become so severe in the local economy that analysts estimate underemployment, or the lack of adequate job opportunities for workers, to be around 40% (Kohler 2005).

Unemployment and underemployment in Egypt have also been attributed to an educational system that produces graduates who lack the particular education required to

succeed in Egypt's existing privatized market economy. Reforms in the educational system in Egypt have led to a reduction in the learning gap between men and women in education and greater access to education for all classes within the society. Yet, the majority of Egyptians entering the market tend to be laborers who lack the specific occupational skills that many companies in the private sector need (e.g. technological and managerial skills). Because the educational curricula, from primary school to university, primarily focus on rote memorization and non-participatory, the majority of Cairenes are unable to "reap the private and social benefits of their investments in education" (Assaad 2007; Galal 2002). Due to this inability to realize their goals and to find suitable employment, young adults in Cairo are expressing greater discontent, fear, and concern about their ability to find work, marry, and achieve the same socioeconomic status of their parents.

This sentiment was expressed by some of the middle to upper middle class Egyptians in my study. As we looked at the traffic along *Game'et El-Duwal El- Arabia* one evening, Nuna, aged 20, her 16-year old brother, and I noticed that police had stopped the cars to allow someone in a Mercedes to pass through quickly. Nuna's brother frowned and grunted disdainfully as he pointed to the car and police. When I asked him to explain his reaction, he and Nuna proceeded to tell me that only an extremely prominent person in the government or a very rich person would be able to stop traffic at that time of the day. But more important for our discussion was the fact that he and his sister expressed their belief that they were disadvantaged, despite the fact that their father was the owner of the apartment building that we lived in and the two apartment buildings alongside it. Though comfortably upper-middle class, they seemed to feel that they would

not be able to attain the same standard of living as their parents because of a corrupt political environment in Egypt, the economic state of their country, and most of all, their lack of connections with those in positions of power. This belief also translated into a lack of respect[16] for their university counterparts who could afford to be educated at the American University in Cairo[17] rather than one of the free or highly subsidized state universities. Although they didn't seem to think that they would need to migrate to find opportunities as their counterparts from the lower socioeconomic classes[18] were increasingly doing, they still doubted that they would be able to attain higher-level positions in companies without the social connections (*wasta or koosa*) of the elite.

In light of the cultural perception that one cannot get ahead in politics or the job market without *wasta* or being morally corrupt, it is not surprising that numerous graduates pursue salaried employment in the public sector (Assaad 2000). The pursuit of public-sector employment as an ideal and viable strategy emerged from the governmental policy of guaranteeing citizens having at least a secondary education or better with lifetime positions in government or state-owned enterprises (sometimes called *miri* jobs), a policy that existed in Egypt from the 1950s up until its suspension in the 1990s (Amin 2000; Assaad 2000).[19] Though the Employment Guarantee Scheme no longer exists, Egyptians in Cairo continue to hope that the government will rectify the unemployment problem (Amin 2000).

Furthermore, the pursuit of *miri (*public sector) employment is associated with the perception that these positions are less demanding.[20] At the sociocultural level, especially for women from lower-income communities, the pursuit of public-sector employment also reflects norms and beliefs about women's employment, which is seen as

supplemental to men's and primarily a means to attain the necessary material acquisitions for marriage (e.g., china, kitchen appliances, utensils, some furniture) (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004). Egyptian culture still promotes the idea that a woman's roles as wife and mother should be a woman's first priority.[21] As a consequence, many women tend to leave their jobs as soon as they are able.

Once their children have reached school age, educated women are more likely to seek employment outside of the home to supplement family income and to make use of their training (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Assaad 2000; Hoodfar 1997; Sherif 1999). The lack of interest in work outside of the home for lesser educated women may also be influenced by the positions available to them, which are typically jobs that are either too low-paying to be worth the effort (e.g. factory positions located far from their homes) or that potentially place them at risk of sexual harassment (e.g. as a maid or saleswoman in shops). Thus, when women assert that they have no desire to work outside of the home or when they attest to the virtues of being housewives, their preference is most likely informed by an awareness of sociocultural norms that place a higher priority on a woman's maintenance of her purity, modesty and respectability than on the economic status of her household. The preference to be housewives is linked to an awareness of the difficulties in balancing work and household responsibilities (even with a hired helper or assistant), and the greater expense associated with both spouses working outside of the home.

In speaking about the employment issue with Cairenes who seemed to navigate the market economy better than some of their countrymen (i.e., members of the upper middle class), some of my informants expressed respect for the nouveaux-riche because

of their ability to alter their socioeconomic status in a mere generation and to educate their children in the best educational institutions that Egypt has to offer. Professor Baligh, an Egyptologist and professor at the American University in Cairo, noted that the children of the nouveaux-riche in her classes tended to come from families that had gained wealth through creating service-oriented businesses (especially food companies and restaurants in particular) that catered to Egyptians. Her perspective can be juxtaposed with and used to critique the academic literature (Armbrust 1996; Abu-Lughod 2000; Hopkins 1997), which asserts that members of this socioeconomic group often include repatriated migrant workers, relatives of Egyptians working abroad, and those who have been able to benefit from working as middlemen, merchants, brokers, and agents of and for Western economic interests.

It must be emphasized that money is not the only, or even primary, way that Cairenes assess socioeconomic status. Formal education and language are central to membership of the "educated class." As Ibrahim and Ibrahim explain, "It is one of the dilemmas of the country that the people's spoken language finds no real acceptance in formal education, so that a person must necessarily be at least bilingual to belong to the educated class" (9). I would argue that to be a member of the educated class in the 21st century involves being multilingual. During my fieldwork I found that fluency in a foreign language, particularly English, was another way that Cairenes measured socioeconomic status.

DISTRICTS OF CAIRO IN THE STUDY

In Imbaba, one of the more populous *sha'bi* neighborhoods with limited retail services and amenities, my informants tended to come from families that had originated

Figure 2: Apartment in Imbaba, Al Matar Street; Photo: Maurita N. Poole, July 2003.

in Upper Egypt. These migrant families tended to live alongside Cairenes of the middle class who had little income (Raymond 1999). Immediately visible to the eye of a visitor to the neighborhood is the extensive number of roughly poured concrete apartment buildings built along dirt and gravel roads. Some of these dwellings are home to animals (donkeys and cattle) at the entry level, to people in the middle floors, and to chickens and pigeons on the roof. This blend of living space for both livestock and humans is no doubt related to the shortage of land in Cairo, but it can also be linked to the fact that Imbaba was a rural area where a camel market flourished until fairly late in the 20th century (Raymond 1999:370). Windows, with slats but no glass or screens are closed at times to allow residents to watch the latest happenings in the neighborhood. Most weekday mornings, a viewer can see people going to work. During the evenings and weekends of the summer and during major holiday seasons, the streets are filled with crowds of people enjoying wedding celebrations and other festivities in the alleyways and narrow corridors. Otherwise, it is common to find women filling buckets of water and cooking on small kerosene gas stoves in their doorways and dimly lit kitchens.

Life in Imbaba tends to be very communal, particularly for long-time residents; perhaps for this reason, preservation of one's public image, reputation, and self-respect was a high priority for my unmarried female informants as well as for their families, who associated their public personas and reputations with the family's honor. More often than not, women in these neighborhoods tended to be *muhaggabat* (veiled) and some of them

seemed enamored with the idea of becoming *munaqqabat* (veiled with only the eyes showing) after marriage. As stated earlier in this chapter, a young woman's virtue and modesty are considered to be a family matter in Cairene society. In the early 21st century, the veiled young women from Imbaba are in good company, since their counterparts from Mohandessin, Nasr City, and 6th of October also were usually veiled. Similar, too, to their counterparts in their adoption of Islamic dress, the young women of Imbaba primarily differed from middle-class Cairenes from other neighborhoods in their educational level, access to education, and family income.

Figure 3: Ramses Square in Shubra; Photo from:http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/shubra.htm

Compared to Imbaba's residents, those of Shubra are considered a little more prosperous. More industrial in character than Imbaba, this district has been one of Cairo's business and trade centers since the first decades of the twentieth century (Raymond 2000). This district has a still older "aristocratic" heritage. Still, the Cairenes who live there today are generally considered to be a part of the lower middle to lower classes (Raymond 2000). References to the noble nature of Shubra evoke the aristocrats who lived there during the 17th and 18th centuries as well as Muhammad Ali, the founder of modern Egypt, who built a palace there in 1808. Egyptian commoners participated in the life of Shubra in Muhammad Ali's day, and in the successive centuries, as workers in industrial businesses, ceramic shops and textile mills, one of the most famous being a place that the locals call *Al-Mabyada*, which gained its fame for its white linen

(http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/shubra.htm). According to Raymond (2000), the population of Shubra has a "higher level of education (illiteracy rates of one-quarter to one-third, depending on the area) and is more strongly represented in the liberal and service professions (approximately one-fifth) and less strongly in the worker category (less than one-third)" (363).

Shubra continued to attract native Cairene workers and shoppers, rural migrants, and travelers. Throughout the 20th century, locals first reached the district easily vis-à-vis Cairo's tramline, built in 1902; but other modes of transportation, such as long distance taxis that travel to and from other cities, the railway, and the underground metro made the neighborhood, which was also conveniently positioned along the Nile, even more accessible. Internet websites, such as www.touregypt.net and www.wikipedia.com estimate that, today, five million people commute daily into and out of Shubra and that it is the home of three to five million Cairenes, or "more than a quarter of all the population of Cairo." Its character is shaped by its Coptic Christian population, who comprise 40% of its residents, as well as by its historic association with foreigners, whose landmarks and street names dot Shubra's landscape.

Figure 4: Game'et El Duwal El Arabia, Mohandissen; Photo: Wikipedia.com

In contrast to Imbaba and Shubra, Mohandessin is unambiguously defined as a *raqi* neighborhood in the academic literature (Raymond 2000) and by many native Cairenes. However, as a Western resident of this neighborhood during my fieldwork, I became intimate with its various areas and would classify it more accurately as a "blended

neighborhood". It is certainly true that its main thoroughfares and shopping areas are fashionable, a site of constant activity from dawn until dusk, a place for tourists from all over the world, and a destination for locals who want to spend time away from their neighborhoods of origin. Yet, it also has its share of narrow alleyways and streets where the lifestyles of the residents and the condition of the apartment buildings are more akin to those in Shubra than they are to the large, modern high-rise apartments and hotels, such as *Al-Nabila*, on *Game'et el Duwal el Arabia* (The League Avenue of the Arab States). Raymond points out the transitory nature of *Game'et El-Duwal El-Arabia* when he writes, "At its start, which abuts on poor and almost rural neighborhoods, there are somewhat rundown low-income buildings (*sha'biyya*) from the Nasser period, small shacks where food can be bought, and carts that sell sugarcane, the traditional delicacy of the old city. Then the street improves, the buildings become larger and more modern, giving way to a zone displaying luxury and abundance of the consumer society" (370).

Mohandessin literally means "engineers" and is a district that was designed for civil servants, technical specialists and the middle class during the 1950s. Abaza (2006) explains that "it was meant to create a new example, a quarter to house the engineers who were going to build the High Dam, to promote the industries, to provide electricity and the irrigation" (98). She also states that the development, which was supposed to consist of small villas with gardens for various professional classes (*al-zubbat* (officers), *al-i'lamiyyin* (media specialists), *and al-sahafiyyin* (journalists)), was intended to be a space for the emergence of a new middle class. Although ministers of the Nasser regime built some villas, by 2006 high-rise buildings had primarily replaced them. The area is associated with a segment of Cairo's comfortably middle to upper-middle class as well as

with tourists (particularly from the Arab Gulf) who frequent its main shopping area, *Sour Nadi el Zamalek.*

Figure 5: Heliopolis; Photo From: www.localyte.com

Further removed from this sociopolitical drama were residents of the modern, urban planning development of Heliopolis, home of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak. This district, in the northeastern outskirt of the city, is a blend of extravagant villas, luxury apartment buildings, and dwellings for its middle class, working-class and lower income residents. The community, initially designed for Europeans and modeled after a 19th - 20th century European "garden city", has become another of Cairo's mixed residential neighborhoods, known equally for its well-to-do bourgeoisie, middle class, and minority groups. My key informants from this neighborhood tended to be upper middle class residents in their mid-40s and early 50s who were attuned to many of the shifts that had occurred in Cairene society over the last thirty years. Their expression of the Cairene bodily aesthetic was a demonstration of the tension that exists among middle-to-upper class Egyptians regarding the ideal ways to present the self in public spaces.

Figure 6: Street in Ma'adi. www.aucegypt.edu/facstaff/.../NeighborhoodDescriptions.aspx

The remaining research informants in my study resided in the suburban enclave *Ma'adi.* These few participants serve mostly as a point of juxtaposition for my discussions rather than a focal point because they consist of individuals who my lower middle class informants felt were representative of the class

of which they would have liked to be a part. *Ma'adi*, traditionally known for its residential colonial villas, was becoming a residential, workplace and leisure site for Cairenes and foreigners alike. Though still a markedly well to do or *raqi* area, it was not uncommon to find working class Cairenes and Sudanese refugees intermingling with foreigners and the upper echelon along its streets. As my study evolved into a study of beauty matters in the city of Cairo rather than in a particular neighborhood, I traveled from district to district, community to community, meeting people from all walks of life connected by marriage, by riendship cultivated in the workplace or at the university, or by religious affiliation (e.g. Christian Bible-Study groups that the Christians called cell groups) and learned that aesthetic perceptions and practices are passed on by popular media, in families and also via social networks that tend to be more porous than one might imagine. As the women spend time with each other in public spaces (university, office, the streets of Cairo, the marketplace and the mall) and in each other's homes, they formulate their own interpretations of what constitutes beauty and what image is ideal.

CHAPTER TWO:
RACE AND THE AESTHETIC BODY

INTRODUCTION

This review discusses broad interdisciplinary literatures that examine the intersection of race and the body. The body as an aesthetic object and agent, or the body beautiful, in these studies, is viewed symbolically. It is analyzed as a representation of sociocultural values. Because the body is a conduit of meaning within sociocultural communities, it also becomes a site of individual expression modified and manipulated for a host of reasons. For instance, to demonstrate membership in a social group, to mark changes in social status, or to connote and signify ideal beauty. Conceptualizing the body beautiful as a symbol is particularly salient for examinations of race because racial and ethnic subjects are embodied subjects, subjects with literal bodies, whose physical traits and characteristics are used to assess values such as worth and intelligence.

The perspective that this scholarship essentially advances is that the perceived attractiveness of the body is linked with racialized[22] discourses[23], and that these associations have social, political, and economic implications (Reischer 2004). The concept of beauty is elusive. As a phenomenon with both a social and a subjective dimension, it often defies definition. It can perhaps best be explained as what Raymond Williams calls a "structure of feeling," the ensemble of a common set of perceptions, values and conventions that is shared by a specific group (Williams 1977). Its elusiveness, however, does not belie the fact that it is used as a mechanism of social control. Cross-culturally considered a trait that impacts women more than men, the pursuit of beauty can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the pursuit of feminine aesthetic ideals can be damaging by virtue of the fact that the bodily standards and

preferences valorized and promoted are impossible for the majority of women to attain. Women, desiring beauty, engage in time-consuming beautification regimes to alter their body's natural state and to approximate the standards upheld in popular media. On the other hand, regimes of diet, makeup, and dress aimed at approximating this ideal beauty afford women psychological, social, and economic rewards, count heavily with men and other women, and influence women's ability to attain employment, promotions, and higher salaries in the workplace (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 2003; Brand 2000; Hamermesh and Biddle 1994; Wolf 1992).

The notion of beauty is further complicated when ethnicity and race are factored in. Women of color in Western and non-Western settings, unable to meet the hegemonic somatic ideal, are perceived as doubly burdened, since beauty and nonwhite bodies in the postcolonial world are often considered incompatible (Badillo 2001; Bhattacharyya 1992; Bowen 1991). For these women, responses to racialized constructions of beauty range from attempting to approximate "white" beauty through cosmetics and aesthetic surgeries, to cultivating alternative feminine aesthetic ideals that are more inclusive and readily accessible (Nichter 2000; Rubin 2003; Simeon, et al. 2001).

The upcoming sections delve more deeply into the history of the race concept in anthropology. Research about race as a sociocultural construction is then connected to the interdisciplinary research about the body. Because of the voluminous nature of these bodies of scholarship, I provide the most detail about the history of race in anthropology and touch on the key theorists and themes in the scholarship on the body.

FRAMING AND HISTORICIZING RACE IN ANTHROPOLOGY

In 1998, the executive board of the American Anthropological Association adopted an official statement on race[24]. The AAA's decision to declare a position on this much-contested concept was in large part due to what they called the "public confusion about race." The AAA was addressing the resurgence in both academic settings and popular culture of problematic claims about the relationship between racial backgrounds and levels of intelligence, nurturing behavior, and the propensity for criminality (Herrnstein and Murray 1996; Rushton 1995; Rushton 2000). The declaration was supported by a group of biological and sociocultural anthropologists who were contributing to the reduction, if not total elimination, of the use of the notion of race as an analytical concept to explain human biogenetic and evolutionary variations. From their perspective, research in anthropology, biology, and genetics could not substantiate the idea that any human population has been geographically bounded and genetically distinct enough to be classified as a racial group (Cartmill 1998; Caspari 2003; Lieberman, et al. 2003; Templeton 1998). The existing evidence indicated that race explains less than six percent of human variation . Races, then, were no more than ethnic groups linked to "vague, inconsistent, and stereotypical ideal phenotypes" (Cartmill 1998:659).

To combat North American misperceptions and misunderstandings about race, anthropologists have conducted research in three key areas. The first area consists of studies that focus on the definition, relevance and utility of race as a scientific concept about human variation. The second area includes studies that emphasize that race is a sociocultural construction and a "historically contingent product of social practices" (Alcoff 2006; Blum 2002). Finally, the third area comprises studies concerned with the

social reality of racism. My primary concern in this review is to outline the literature on the study of race as a social cultural construction.

Though the majority of anthropologists assumed the demise of the race concept was inevitable, the racial thinking that re-emerged in public life and the academy in the 1990s did have a few supporters in the discipline (Lieberman, et al. 2003). These defenders of the race concept were to be found primarily among biological anthropologists (Cartmill 1998). The rationale for their support of the race concept can be found earlier in the work of Paul Baker. At a crucial moment in the debate over the usefulness of race as a valid analytical concept, Baker had affirmed the value of the concept as a research tool, and proceeded to provide a workable definition of it as the "rough measure of genetic difference in human populations" (Baker 1967:95). For Baker, time and space were the major criteria for finding racial groups, or populations with high levels of genetic distance. Ignoring the evidence that discredited claims of the existence of genetically distinct of racial groups, Baker asserted that two populations that have been far removed from each other as a result of geography and time should have sufficient biological and genetic difference to be considered discrete racial populations. Maintaining that he was building on the fundamental principles of natural selection, he repeatedly posited that the greater difference in physical, biological, and cultural environment should lead to greater genetic difference in populations. In short, he proposed the idea that world populations can be seen as racial groupings because of breeding isolation, time separation, and environmental variation (Baker 1967:99).

By arguing that their conceptualization of race adhered to the fundamental principles of natural selection, biological anthropologists were re-inscribing earlier

formulations of race articulated in the nineteenth century that defined race in terms of both biology and culture. These nineteenth-century debates were initially framed by a Biblical understanding of human origin. Monogenists maintained that the Biblical story of Adam and Eve provided infallible proof that humans have a single origin and constitute one species. Biblical polygenists, by contrast, contended that God created separate and unequal races of human beings before Adam in different ecosystems. They further asserted that the various human species, in addition to their separate origins, also developed distinct and unrelated cultures and civilizations that had evolved at different rates.

The perspectives of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, who were in agreement with the monogenist assertion of the single origin of the human species, serve as the basis for contemporary anthropological understandings of the concept of race. Wallace and Darwin simultaneously developed the theory of evolution. This theory advances the idea that all life is related and descended from a common ancestor; that this life on earth emerged as a result of natural, rather than supernatural, causes (Darwin and Wallace 1971; Gould, et al. 1994; Hamrum and Gould 1983); and that complex creatures evolve from more simplistic ancestors naturally over long periods of time by taking advantage of slight variations or genetic mutations inherited by means of natural selection (Darwin 1871; Wallace and Berry 2002). From an evolutionary perspective, natural selection can be applied to all beings on earth and explains the process by which these organisms' physical characteristics changed.

Though both Darwin and Wallace discovered the idea of natural selection around the same time, Darwin's perspective has retained a stronghold in anthropology in part

because Darwin put forward a theory that dealt only with the natural and not the supernatural (Shanklin 1994). From Darwin's perspective, all organisms on earth, including humans, evolved by means of natural selection without the influence of a deity. Darwin therefore completely divorced his ideas of evolution and natural selection from Christian theology, particularly the idea of Divine Intervention, and abstained from speculating on the rationale for evolution. Wallace, by contrast, addressed questions about the purpose and design of nature by asserting that a Divine Will guided natural selection. As Shanklin explains, "To Wallace, human beings were of a different order of creation than mere beasts, and it followed that humanity had been under the protection of God's will throughout the course of evolution, whereas those animals that lacked souls had been subject to natural selection" (Shanklin 1994:30). Darwin's decision to promote the principles of natural selection without divine intervention is one of his key contributions to the field of anthropology (Banton 1967).

Even as Darwin and Wallace were providing the foundational theoretical framework for debunking notions of the existence of separate human races, their work did not necessarily challenge notions of racial hierarchy. The anthropologist Faye Harrison (1995) sheds light upon this when she maintains that "monogenists and polygenists alike agreed on the natural superiority of whites and the inherent inferiority of blacks, the opposing poles of the global racial hierarchy" (51). This being the case, in the context of the United States, the arguments of polygenists found particular currency in the proslavery movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Traces of their influence could also be found in the field of phrenology and craniometry. In the twentieth century, the work of Carleton Coon continued to exhibit an indebtedness, if not

theoretical affiliation, to the polygenist argument, in expressing a continued desire for finding evidence that supports the idea that there are multiple species of humanity (Caspari 2003).

In the work *The Origin of Races* (1962) Coon contended that there are "five major races of humans" and that they "evolved in a parallel from Homo erectus at five different times and at different rates" (Caspari 2003:105). Claiming that these racial lineages became modern species of men at different time periods, he argued that each group demonstrated different levels of cultural evolution, achievement, or development. Caucasoids and Mongoloids allegedly became sapiens, i.e. "wise and knowing," before Africans. Though his assertions were socially and politically problematic, they, along with the aforementioned monogenists, are significant because they indicate one of the primary ways that biological anthropologists originally understood, and at times still understand, the term race. That is, race, in the biological anthropology literature, is often defined as the internal division or subdivision of the human "species" (Caspari 2003:65).

Herbert Spencer drew upon Darwin's theory of natural selection to argue that societies evolve and increase in complexity through processes that are analogous or comparable to living organisms (Shanklin 1994). Evolution through natural selection, from his perspective, becomes meaningful when making claims about the advancements (rather than the adaptations) of human populations (Gould, et al. 1994). He believed that the fittest members of society, who are identified by their social standing and material wealth, have superior genes. Conversely, the misfits, who are identified by their poverty and marginalization, have inferior genes. Perceived to be a part of the most definitive and progressive scientific thought, Social Darwinism (also called Spencerism) in Western

nations (such as the United States and Britain) merged with legal, business, and scientific philosophies in the 19th century (Baker 1998).

Social Darwinism is taken to an extreme by eugenicists or those who are proponents of using evolution to address societal ills (Baker 1998; Shanklin 1994). Eugenicists contend that society does not need charitable and social welfare programs to aid the marginalized, disenfranchised, and poor. Instead social problems can be improved and eventually eliminated through the selective breeding of individuals with superior genes and the discouragement of breeding by those with inferior genes. In the United States, eugenicists' prejudice and fears of social contamination contributed to their resistance to the immigration of eastern Europeans, and discrimination against African-Americans who, they felt, were the misfits of evolution (Harrison 1995).

Prior to Darwin's theory of natural evolution, the ordering of life on earth was considered to be divinely ordained. During the time of Aristotle, the dominant viewpoint was that "everything was originally created in the state desired by the Creator and although species might deviate from the original design, they did not and could not change their essential form over time" (Shanklin 1994:25). Second, they believed in the idea of the scala naturae, which "was a generally accepted concept in which all natural objects were arranged in an upward progression" (Armelagos 1998:360). According to Armelagos and Goodman (1998), the "Great Chain of Being" used the *scala naturae* to explain difference and to situate groups hierarchically in relation to God (360).

By the eighteenth century, one of the widely accepted views of human variation was indebted to Carol Linnaeus and other naturalists (such as Blumenbach and Buffon) who argued that species were immutable and subject to God's will. Though Linnaeus still

asserted that his taxonomy of life forms was related to the supernatural, his systematic classification and categorization of all living beings set the framework for future scientists who wanted to discuss the race concept in an objective way that did not merely reflect European religious and folk ideas about human diversity(Armelagos 1998) . The taxonomies and classification schemes of Linnaeus and other naturalists assisted scientists in their efforts to ground speculations about human origins and difference in empirical data. However, such classifications also contributed to social Darwinism and the race science of the 19th century.

The study of race as a subject of scientific inquiry involved measuring and quantifying biological differences (Gould 1996). Anthropologists, craniometrists, and phrenologists measured skulls to make claims about the existence of distinct racial characteristics in human anatomy. Their classificatory schemes and the data that they amassed in their empirical studies were used to substantiate folk understandings of races as discrete "types" or "kinds" (Baker 1998; Smedley 1992). Moreover, they provided a scientific basis for biologically deterministic ideas about the relationship between levels of intelligence, character, personality, propensity for criminality, and skull size and shape (Gould 1981).

DEFINING AND DEBATING RACE IN BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In the 1960s, biological anthropologists (Hulse 1962; Laughlin 1966; Newman 1963), aware of the sociopolitical implications related to defining race in terms of species and subspecies, engaged in intense debates about the use of the term race and about methods for studying populations. Their discussions and conclusions were pivotal in changing biological anthropology. Frederick Hulse (1962) described race as an

"evolutionary episode" that refers to a geographically bounded, genetically-differentiated, population though the notion of races as species (or breeding populations) is not completely eliminated in his formulation. In the article, "Race as an Evolutionary Episode" (1962), he outlined many of the key ideas that biological anthropologists seeking to keep the concept of race as a viable analytical concept continue to draw upon. In this view, races are determined by biology, which is assessed in terms of genetics. Phenotype, or the physical expression of one's genetic makeup, is not as meaningful as one's actual genetic makeup, or genotype. Races are determined by the extent to which a given population has been isolated and delimited, because those conditions influence the extent of mating, and hence genetic exchange, between racial groups, which scholars following this line of thinking usually refer to as populations. Hulse made an argument for the need to remain committed to Darwin's original description of the evolutionary process and the concept of races as subspecies. In many ways, the conclusion of his seminal article is a restatement of the theory of evolution through natural selection and modification by descent over long periods of time.

Similarly, William S. Laughlin defines races as groups "between which restricted gene flow has taken place" (Laughlin 1966: 327). In *Race: A Population Concept* (1966), he maintains that a race is simply "a cluster of genetic pathways whose intersections recombine molecular units of inheritance, some of which develop into living organisms that reproduce" (327). Phenotypical variation and the appearance of particular genetic traits are the outcome of membership in an isolated population. The identification of races consequently relies on measuring the genetic difference of populations who have

been geographically isolated from other populations and who therefore have a greater statistical frequency of genes.

Biological anthropologist C. Loring Brace proposed the use of the term clines rather than race to discuss physical variations among humans, the distribution of their individual traits, and the selective pressures that cause gradual changes in genotype and phenotype over a geographical area (Brace 1964). However, scholars found the term "populations" more appealing than clines (Caspari 2003; Washburn 1963). Caspari (2003) asserts that "By emphasizing intraspecific evolutionary processes, populational thinking focuses on variation and the fluidity between populations—on all the processes that reduce or increase variation within and between populations. An emphasis on gene flow and its relationship to other evolutionary forces affecting the distribution of different traits across populations is what population thinking is all about, and it undermined the race concept" (73). However, other scholars (El Haj 2007, Armelagos, Carlson, Van Gerven 1982, Washburn 1963) contend that discussing race in terms of genetics and populations is merely a code for typological race.

Biological anthropologists also critiqued the term race as way of indicating that genes do not act independently of their environment. Their commentaries drew upon the work of Franz Boas (1940), who stated that "the environment determines the extent to which a given trait is influenced by genetic factors" (Cartmill 1999: 657) In addition to demonstrating the link between race and culture, this perspective is pertinent because it suggests that racism as an idea is based on the misconception that differences in culture could be attributed to biological causes.

Since the late twentieth century, scholars have discussed how emphasis on cultural difference has been used to mask and reformulate racializing practices, relations, and ideologies (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Gilroy 1991; Mamdani 2001; Mullings 1993; Mullings 2005; Stoler 1995). These new forms of racial ideologies and racisms have been labeled in numerous ways, such as "color-blind racism" (Bonilla-Silva 2003), "postracism" (Winant 2000), "unmarked racism" (Harrison 2000), "neoracism or cultural racism" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). The commonality in all of them is the explicit avoidance of biodeterminism (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991) and the adoption of "the concept of culture and the 'right to difference'" (Bonilla - Silva and Forman 2000; Harrison 1995; Mullings 2005). In the United States, these ideas are evident in the narrative of color-blindness (Bonilla - Silva and Forman 2000), which argues that socioeconomic inequalities are due to individual or cultural limitations rather than historical structures of inequality. At its worse, such a view even appropriates the language of civil rights and social movements of minority groups to deflect accusations of racialized and/or racist encounters (Mullings 2005).

ETHNICITY IN LIEU OF RACE

Ethnicity is the concept that the majority of anthropologists adopted after race was deconstructed. Whereas the hallmark of the concept of race is the concentration on biological difference, the focus of the concept of ethnicity is differentiation between groups due to culture. The term has been defined as "a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood" (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:19). Differentiation in relation to ethnicity

involves boundary formation in terms of “in-group” and “out-group” without imposing ideas about inherent, naturalized difference based upon biology (Barth 1969).

Because the concepts of race and ethnicity have striking similarities, it is not surprising that many anthropologists who study race do not distinguish between the two terms and often use ethnicity “euphemistically” to refer to race (Harrison 1995). Prejudice due to ethnicity has been constant throughout human history, but racial prejudice did not emerge until groups began to claim that there was a biological justification for prejudice and the exclusion of despised groups (Smedley 1992; Wolf 1982)). The racialization of ethnic groups, then, refers to those moments when differences in ethnic populations are seen as inherently biological (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). It involves the assertion that reviled groups are intrinsically inferior due to their biological differences. In addition, it imposes an additional burden on the allegedly inferior group by precluding their incorporation into the larger society through assimilation or conversion (Gould 1996).

Research with a primordial orientation discusses ethnicity as an identity rooted in either biology or kinship. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) state that primordialist scholarship whittles the discussion of ethnicity down to essential characteristics about individuals and social groups, such as “the physical body, person’s name, history and origins of the group one is born into, one’s nationality or other group affiliation, the language one learns to speak first, the religion one is born into, the culture one is born into, and the geography and topography of the place of birth” (48-49). Those who adopt a primordial approach akin to this one discuss ethnicity as an identity that is fixed or rooted in the unalterable or immutable circumstances of one’s birth (Nagel 2000).

Though also considered primordialist, the work of Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz does not view ethnicity as a given biological essence. In the article, “Primordial, Personal, Sacred, and Civil Ties” (1957), Shils explains the rationale for loyalty, affinity, and group cohesion in modern society in terms of kinship (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Ethnic groups, from his perspective, are social groups bonded to each other by virtue of kinship relations. According to Cornell and Hartmann, in Shils’ perspective, biological connectivity and affinity is expressed and signified in cultural traditions, language, religion, etc. By contrast, in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz argues that people’s attachment to others stems from their sense that they are connected by virtue of primordial ties such as kinship, language, religion, region, etc. (Geertz 1973). He does not suggest that ethnicity, in and of itself, is primordial. Instead, he suggests that ethnic communities perceive and understand the connection of their members as a relationship embedded in unchanging, biologically-based ties. Geertz’s argument that ethnicity is about subjective belief in primordial connection has become a basic tenet of the definition (Cornell and Hartmann 2007).

The theoretical orientations contrasted within the primordial approach have been most significant to the field of anthropology. They emphasize the constructed nature of identity as well as the circumstance where ethnic identity becomes meaningful (Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Fenton 2003). The circumstantial approach (also called instrumentalist) suggests that ethnic groups emerge under conditions where ethnic people have a vested interest in creating and maintaining this form of identity. This perspective can be found in the scholarship of anthropologists such as Abner Cohen (1985) who limited his definition of ethnic groups as immigrants within nation-states who bonded due

to the sociopolitical conditions that prevented or limited their access to formal governmental institutions (Williams 1989).

By contrast, situational approaches to the study of ethnicity argue that identities change according to social situations (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Anthropologist Roland Cohen describes ethnic groups in this manner. Ethnic groups, as he portrays them, include a range of social groups – from nomads and sedentary agriculturalists who only share geographical space, to cultural groups whose land and socioeconomic structures are intertwined (Williams 1998:417). While the collectivities described by Cohen may be joined by circumstances, his analysis of ethnicity is "situational" rather than "circumstantial" because identities can be deployed for a multitude of reasons and altered according to the social context. As the situation changes, the relevant identity will change as well.

Anthropologists such as Abner Cohen, Roland Cohen and John Vincent grappled with the best ways to define ethnicity in relation to race, the existing and newly emerging postcolonial nation-states, and the discipline of anthropology (Williams 1989). The primary claims about ethnicity that have become foundational in anthropology emerged from their research. Ethnic groups are viewed as self-consciously organized entities that are the product of social interaction. Though ethnic group identity can stem from the designation and assignments given to them by others, most often their identity is self-imposed from within the group (Barth 1969). Ethnicity, therefore, differs from race in the way that boundaries are created between the insiders and outsiders. While racial identity is an assigned identity (often signifying the inferiority of the group), ethnic

identity is a volitional identity (Barth 1969; Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Nagel 2000; Vincent 1974; Williams 1989).

Anthropologist Joan Vincent (1974) has stated that the social groups that anthropologists discussed in terms of race and ethnicity would be more aptly described as minority groups. Her perspective about ethnic and minority groups can be linked to Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris' classic text, *Minorities in the New World: Six Case Studies* (1958). In this work, these anthropologists provide five key characteristics to distinguish minority groups from ethnic groups. The distinctive traits of minorities are: (1) membership in a subordinated or marginalized population within a nation-state; (2) distinctive physical or cultural traits that are held in low esteem by the hegemonic society; (3) self-conscious entities bound by the distinctive traits that marginalize them; (4) descendants are identified as members of the group even when they lack obvious cultural or physical traits associated with the group (e.g., Jews or African-Americans who can pass but nonetheless are still considered to be members of that group); (5) endogamy by choice or necessity. Vincent only differs from Wagley and Harris in her perspective about where to situate minority and ethnic studies within the broader literature. While they contend that research on minority groups should be placed within anthropological studies on acculturation, Vincent subsumes ethnicity within research about social stratification. Ethnicity, she explained, relates not to "the demographic composition of a population, but to relative power and prestige among groups sharing a political and economic system" (Williams 1989:420).

Brackette Williams (1989) lucidly connects ethnicity, national identity, and other categories of difference. She argues that ethnicities construct their identity in relation to

cultural systems in nation-states by capitalizing on mythic ideas about purity and impurity. When they construct boundaries that are dependent upon myths about their histories and their relationship to territorial states, they become both nation-builders and race makers. Ethnic groups' concern with descent is intimately tied to an imagined national identity that is based on myths about the purity of blood. Boundary making and concern about inclusion and exclusion, according to Williams, is actually about "material issues that underlie both state formation and class stratification" (434).

Williams further argues that the state appropriates culture and uses it as a mechanism for social control. It is this appropriation that allows for the conflation of race and class in designations about authentic citizenship. Ethnic groups understand that the distinctiveness of their cultures is valued within the nation-state when they are able to make claims about their group's ties to the nation's origins and foundation. Because nation building also involves race making, prominence is given to groups whose "blood courses through the mainstream of civil society, accreting the state foundation that others spill in the soil" (436). Ultimately, Williams agrees with Vincent's definition of ethnicity; she simply adds that it also makes visible identities that are subordinated to nationalist agendas that make claims about imagined homogeneity.

SOCIOCULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF RACE

Because race is ingrained in everyday social thought and associated with science, it is difficult for anthropologists to convince people that race has no basis in science or reality and that it should be considered simply as a folk classification. Folk classifications or taxonomies are defined as "ideologies, distinctions, and selective perceptions that constitute a society's popular imagery and interpretations of the world" (Smedley

1998:27). They are the products of popular beliefs about human differences that emerge from culture, defined in this instance as "the knowledge that people use to generate and interpret social behavior and their worlds" (Spradley and McCurdy 1972). Anthropologists with a sociocultural orientation begin their study of the notion of race by asserting that it is a folk classification. As a folk category and idea popular in social thought, race emerged in the sixteenth century and evolved through the present as a result of the growth in scientific thought, European expansion through conquest, the enslavement of Africans in the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, modernization, and globalization.

The concept of race around the world continues to be seen as both a part of the natural order of things and as a viable social, cultural, and political category of differentiation. The particular way that race is understood and manifests itself in everyday life, however, differs based upon the sociocultural and historical context. As the above-mentioned formulation of the AAA Statement on Race indicates, anthropologists have been pivotal in promoting the idea that race is a sociocultural construction. Viewing race as a sociocultural idea refers to a way of constructing difference between an in-group and out-group that refutes the belief in inherent biological differences that allegedly inform an individual or group's intelligence, ability, capacity for achievement, work ethic, physical attractiveness, class, morality, etc. The significance of race in social, economic, and political terms lies in its classification, separation, or division of human groups into unequal or ranked categories based upon observable biologically-based physical traits. As a result, a wide range of theorists in anthropology and other social sciences would agree with sociologist Howard Winant's

explanation of race as a concept that connotes sociopolitical conflicts and interests as they relate to variation in body types.

The idea of social construction implies, first and foremost, that something is not a biological given. The assertion that race is not a biological given nullifies the concept's validity as an idea that has any basis in objective reality. Scholars still interested in exploring the complexities and nuances related to the concept of race use the idea of social construction to mean that race, or any form of identity, is a social reality produced by social practices and ideologies. Thus, to refer to race as a social construction is to the view it as a conditional concept that is informed by social and historical processes.

The racial construct in the context of the United States, for example, is grounded in classification by descent or ancestry. Many Americans believe that there are distinct races that can be assessed by their genotype (or genetic composition). Individuals can be assigned to a particular race by genetic makeup and the rule of hypodescent (Harris 1963; Smedley 2007), which automatically assigns the children of mixed unions between different ethnic groups to the group with the lower status, which in the United States consists of African-Americans or "black" people. The rule of hypodescent is a social and political device that often manifests itself through concern with the "one-drop rule" or the extent to which an American has African-American ancestry (or what traditionally in laypeople's terms was called "black blood"). The degree of visible African ancestry does not matter; instead, what matters is the individual's genetic make-up and ancestry from a person of African descent. Due to the rigidity of this system, people who have physical traits and characteristics that are associated with European heritage or whiteness but who have a person of African heritage in their families continue to be classified as black. As

Peter Wade aptly explains, the social construction of race in the United States is therefore "a system that uses a biological discourse of reckoning but departs from the biological reality in achieving unambiguous categories." (Wade 1993:29)

Because racial classification in the United States has its roots in the historical institutions of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, the black-white dichotomy is often considered the most salient in determining one's racial identity and social status. This means that minorities -- such as Latinos/Hispanics, Asians, and Arabs -- who may view themselves in terms of ethnicity rather than race, have been placed in ambiguous positions that entail having to choose a racial designation, i.e. whether or not they will be classified as "white" or "black." In addition, immigrants who understand that the racial paradigm of the United States involves a valorization of whiteness over blackness and brownness also may strive to distance themselves from the non-white racial classification in order to gain access to wealth, power, and prestige.

According to multiculturalism research, the idea of hypodescent and the black-white binary is losing its salience (D'Souza 1995; Nakashima 1992; Patterson 2000; Telles and Sue 2009). The growth in intermarriage, according to this perspective, will produce an increased number of descendants from bi-racial or mixed unions who will serve as intermediaries (Krebs 1999; Nakashima 1992; Wilson 1992) that will make the American obsession or concern with blackness and whiteness, as well as forms of discrimination connected to the idea of discrete racial groups, disappear.

The idea that significance of race in the United States will be reduced, however, has not been substantiated. Rather than eliminating American preoccupations with race, traditional understandings of race continue to be inscribed and reinforced within the

social order. Research (Brodkin 1998; Ong, et al. 1996) on model minority groups in the United States indicates that race is also imbricated and intertwined with nationality and class. As the United States attempts to integrate these populations into the nation-state, their racial identity is formulated in relation to the perceived status of their homeland and their wealth (Ong, et al. 1996) (Ong 1996). For example, money lightens wealthy Asians, particularly the Chinese, and lack of wealth darkens them (Ong, et al. 1996).

This whitening of Asians fits within the American immigrant paradigm where certain ethnic groups (e.g. Jews, Irish, and Eastern Europeans) maintain an intermediary status (Barrett and Roediger 1997) before becoming full-fledged white Americans or Caucasians (Brodkin 1998; Domínguez 1986; Ignatiev 1995; Jacobson 1998; Roediger 1991; Saxton 1990). With that said, scholars (Brodkin 1998; Hage 1998; Silverstein 2005) remind us that the whitening, assimilation, and suburbanization of wealthy elite immigrants and minorities has occurred at the same time that members of the African diaspora (African Americans, Africans, West Indians or people of the Caribbean) in urban settings have been subjected to "restrictive housing covenants, labor discrimination, and differential rights of civic participation" (Silverstein 2005:365). The allegedly deracialized exceptions within the racial order of the United States are athletes, wealthy minority and immigrant businessmen, and cultural producers (Hage 1998).

Focus on the importance of mixed populations and groups in between is a hallmark of research about race in Latin American and Caribbean contexts, such as Brazil (Caldwell 2007; Degler 1986; Gravlee and Sweet 2008; Harris 1970; Harris 1973; Hoetink 1967; Hoetink 1971; Sansone 2003; Skidmore 1974; Skidmore 1983; Stam 1997), Colombia (Wade 1993; Wade 1997), and Peru ((Golash-Boza 2010; Nugent

1997). To understand the sociocultural construction of race in these contexts, scholars often emphasize that categorizations of racial difference refer to people who are designated and defined as *morenidade* (“neither black nor white”) (Degler 1986, Skidmore 1993). The implications of being neither black nor white are that there is a concentration on mixture and identification of people in a complex and extensive color categorization system, in contrast to the United States where the term “black” can be used to refer to people of a wide range of complexions, skin tones, or hues.

Numerous studies of the construction of race in Latin American and Caribbean contexts center on debates about the claim that they are multiracial nation-states where relations between different racial groups can be classified as a “racial paradise,” which is a phrase that serves as shorthand to describe a place where people of different racial backgrounds miscegenate, intermarry and live together in harmony (Freyre 1956; Tannenbaum 1947; Vasconcelos and Jaén 1997). Race is defined in terms of phenotype (or physical variation) and a gradual, continuous hierarchy of race and color characterizes the racial system. Because racial identity is influenced by achieved status, wealth, education, occupation, and social affiliations can shift perceptions of physiology and anatomy, particularly concerning skin color and facial features. Consequently, the construction of race in Latin America and the Caribbean has a fluidity and flexibility that historically has not existed in the United States, where racial designations are considered to be more fixed and immutable.

The idea of mixture in Latin American and Caribbean racial constructs extend beyond the physically embodied variation in individuals to encompass the idea or notion of *mestizaje*, an ideology that makes claims about the racial makeup of populations of

Latin American and Caribbean contexts. Mestizaje is an ideology of nation-building that asserts that Latin American and Caribbean countries are populated by homogenous mixed groups that originated from the blending or fusion of European, Indian, and African people, customs, and traditions. According to Peter Wade (2005), the ideology of *mestizaje* is opposed to the idea of Latin American and Caribbean nations as places that consist of racially and culturally diverse groups due to its emphasis on the mixed-nature of social groups. In addition, Wade also asserts that *mestizaje* is misleading in its representation of these contexts as inclusive environments where all members of the nation can equally be described as *mestizo,* since in reality those perceived as phenotypically and culturally black or indigenous are marginalized in favor of whiteness (Wade 2005).

Though a recent study (Golash-Boza 2010) suggests that African-descended Peruvians are not able to alter their racial classification under any circumstances, a key component of explanations of the construction of race in Latin American and Caribbean contexts as a fluid and ambiguous identity is the idea of *blanqueamiento* (whitening). Golash-Baza explains *blanqueamiento* as a social, cultural, and intergenerational process. She explains social whitening as the process by which individual racial identity is altered from a darker one (black or brown) to a lighter one (brown or white) based upon socioeconomic status. Cultural whitening is similar to social whitening; however, she distinguishes the former from the latter as the incorporation or assimilation of populations through a change in their cultural traditions, customs, and habits. Intergenerational whitening, by contrast, involves deliberately striving to produce fairer-skinned children through marriage to fairer-skinned, if not white, partners. Throughout the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries, countries in Latin America, such as Brazil, promoted race mixture and the seeking of lighter –skinned or white partners for the purpose of whitening the population of the nation (Graham, et al. 1990; Skidmore 1983).

SKIN COLOR AND BODY IMAGE FOR WOMEN OF COLOR

Skin color in relation to blackness and whiteness is an important physical attribute and construct that Spears (1992) discussed as both a "form of cultural domination and discursive site where oppositional meanings are generated" (61). Though skin color is often conflated with race, skin color and race are distinct. Scholars (Franklin 1968; Jones 2000; Lowenthal 1973; Marable 1981; Marable and Agard-Jones 2008; Russell, et al. 1992; Spears 1992) who specialize in the study of skin color and colorism contend that this form of prejudice differs from racism in that there is a predilection towards a particular skin tone or complexion. Prejudicial beliefs or assumptions about individuals falling within a particular social group that may be defined as ethnic or racial is colorism. Similar to racism, colorism consists of wide-ranging beliefs about the superiority and inferiority of a particular skin tone. It includes assumptions about the group's intellect, physical attractiveness, work ethic, class, and morality among other things" (Jones 2000: 1497). Distinctions made based on color differ from race because it deals with an internal, rather than external, group dynamic. In addition, color prejudice does not include claims are made about biological or genetic difference.

Research about colorism usually emphasizes the preference and desire for both light skin and attendant features associated with it (Glenn 2009; Hall 1995; Hall 1994; Kerr 2006; Rondilla and Spickard 2007; Russell, et al. 1992; Thompson and Keith 2001)

Hair, eye color, and facial features function along with color in complex ways to shape norms regarding attractiveness, self-concept, and overall body image. The emphasis on skin color, according to these scholars, stems from the fact that it is the physical feature that is "most enduring and difficult to change" (Thompson and Keith 2001:338). Thompson and Keith, quoting Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) remind us that "hair can be straightened with chemicals, eye color can be changed with contact lenses, and a broad nose can be altered with cosmetic surgery. Bleaching skin to a lighter tone, however, seldom meets with success" (337-338).

Gender and colorism are interconnected in many ways. Though skin color impacts the self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy[25] of both men and women, research suggests that the effects are stronger for women than men (Casanova 2004; Nichter 2000; Rubin 2003; Thompson 2001). In early studies, dark-skinned women were seen as occupying the lower rungs of the social ladder, being the least marriageable, having the fewest options for higher education and career advancement, and as being more color conscious than their male counterparts (Parrish 1944; Warner, et al. 1969). Some of these ideas were reinforced throughout the 20th century as research (Russel, et al 1992) indicated that darker skin could be associated with negative body image and self-evaluations among African-Americans who compared themselves with their Euro-American counterparts. However, other studies (Porter and Washington 1979) examining African-Americans within their communities and among their families found that their personal esteem was as high as that of whites.

At the onset of the 21st century, studies conducted among African-American and Latinos in the United States and darker-skinned women in Brazil have discussed positive

self-evaluations and esteem as the result of the development of an alternative feminine aesthetic ideal (Casanova 2004; Nichter 2000; Rubin 2003; Thompson 2001). For some, the alternative aesthetic involves outright disavowal of more Eurocentric, Westernized models. For others, it includes distancing oneself from dominant aesthetic preferences through the adoption of a construction of beauty that includes an assessment of non-physical, internal qualities and attributes in addition to physical traits. Though these women of color have not been completely protected from body dissatisfaction and body image disorders, the construction of alternative beauty models that emphasize both the physical and non-physical has been shown to result in greater body satisfaction for these women than for their Euro-American counterparts (Nichter 2000; Rubin 2003).

The above-mentioned studies affirm feminist research that discusses the detrimental impact of internalizing the bodily standards and preferences valorized and promoted in both popular and commodity culture. Discourses and standards of beauty, as they are expressed globally in commodity culture, involve “rhetoric about feminine ugliness” as well as attractiveness. The rhetoric of ugliness refers to the promotion of the idea that women’s natural bodies require manipulation, alteration, and disciplining to become beautiful. This discourse of women’s natural ugliness is disseminated vis-à-vis campaigns that promote the idea that women need cosmetics and other beauty aids to enhance or modify themselves. This discourse has a particular power or impact in mass, commodity culture, the site where the public often first learns about the latest products that have been created for the cultivation of the body.

Research on aesthetic ideals suggests that beauty constructs are mediated by the family and by other social networks. In these spheres, dominant notions of attractiveness

that are promulgated within the society may be reinforced verbally through actions such as praising, teasing, and shaming. At the same time, these environments may also be locations where women are socialized to reject and resist hegemonic feminine beauty ideals that marginalize, denigrate, and/or exclude them. Research suggests that, rather than a clear-cut, unidirectional formulation of power, women are negotiating racialized beauty ideals, representations, and discourses promulgated in the media, commodity culture, and society at-large (Casanova 2004; Nichter 2000; Rubin 2003; Thompson 2001).

The anthropological record about skin color stratification and beauty, while scant, confirms the findings of the interdisciplinary scholars previously discussed (Barnes 1997; Casanova 2004; Drake 1987; Edmonds 2007; Golash-Boza 2010; Hoetink 1967; Rebhun 2004). Among these works, the most explicit and foundational discussion of beauty and colorism has been espoused in Harry Hoetink's elaboration of the somatic norm image. According to Hoetink, the physical attributes of the elite group in a society sets the tone for aesthetic preferences and body-type ideals among subordinated minority groups (1967). As the aforementioned literature indicates, minority groups demonstrate a preference for the aesthetic ideals of the dominant group. The acceptance and incorporation of the dominant aesthetic preferences is not static. Rather it is uneven and involves a range of perspectives that includes outright incorporation and resistance to the aesthetic ideologies promoted by groups in power. Moreover, in practice, subordinated minority groups also show a valorization of the physical attributes associated with their own cultural communities.

RACE AND THE AESTHETIC BODY

The exploration of race and beauty in anthropology is a part of an interdisciplinary scholarship about the body that has grown considerably in the last few decades. Bryan Turner is regarded as the scholar who initiated renewed interest in the body and embodiment as a subject of inquiry. In *The Body and Society* [2008 (1984)], he critically examines the body as a social and historical reality constantly mediated by human labor and interpreted through culture. At the same time, he does acknowledge the biological dimension of the body, including the phenomena of birth, ageing, sickness/disease (or health), mortality, etc. (Turner 2008). Turner provides a "historical analysis of the spatial organization of bodies and desire in relation to society and reason" (38). In his analysis, he considers key themes that a wide range of theorists to whom he is indebted (such as Marx, Foucault, Marcel Mauss, Norbert Elias, to name a few) consider essential for understanding the body. In terms of the racialized aesthetic body, the themes of interest are the body as: (1) a symbolic representation of the self (2) a site of political contestation, (3) a vehicle for performance, and (4) an entity subject to surveillance and control by the state.

Mary Douglas' seminal work *Natural Symbols* (1970) has been critical to research about the body as a symbol. According to Douglas, the body can be thought of as a text that serves as signifier of the individual's world. Social meanings, inscribed on the body, express core values and are subject to multiple readings (Reischer 2004). Therefore, interpretations of the body shift depending upon the sociocultural communities in which one is embedded.

The need for contextualization of the body comes to the fore most explicitly in cross-cultural contexts. When racialized bodies are viewed through the sociocultural and historical lenses in nation-states with different understandings of black and white bodies, it becomes evident that bodies are ascribed different meanings. African-American feminist theorists (Collins 2000; Collins 2004; Hooks 1981; Lorde 1984) made black women in the United States the focal point of their research in the 1980s to stress that embodiment of all American women was not the same. In *Aint I A Woman, Black Women and Feminism* (1981), hooks describes the contradictions that could be read on black women's bodies during slavery. On the one hand, they were regarded as masculine, subhuman creatures. On the other hand, they were disparaged as sexual temptresses. Though bell hooks grounds her argument and analysis in the African-American experience, her assertions are reinforced by the work of other scholars who argue that "the body has come to signify the moral state of the individual" (Reischer 2004:300; Bordo 1993; Kimmel and Aronson 2008).

Susan Bordo's book, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), is generally situated within the literature that examines the cultural politics of body size in a capitalist context (Banet-Weiser 1999; Becker 1995; Brownell and Wadden 1991; Hesse-Biber 1996; Ritenbaugh 1982). It is also significant as a work that analyzes the body as an expression of core values. When considering beauty matters, scholars (Reischer 2004) assert that "the quality of attractiveness that we find in bodies around us is not insulated from cultural and cognitive processes; attractiveness is that which is found ideologically appealing with an overarching set of values" (300).

Bourdieu has most been one of the most influential theorists in studies that concern the symbolic value of the body. Scholars (Csordas 1990; Gremillion 2005; Lock 1993) most often discuss the importance of Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977), which was influenced by Mauss' (1935) discussion of body techniques. According to Csordas (1990), Bourdieu expands Mauss' conceptualization of habitus to encompass more than a set of practices and to denote "a system of perduring dispositions which is the unconscious, collectively inculcated principle for the generation of structuring of practices and representations" (11). Habitus renders invisible the most fundamental habits and skills, and, therefore, inscribes power, privilege, and status on and within the body.

In Bourdieu's discussion of embodiment, stratification and difference are also naturalized in "doxa," meaning the natural and social worlds that appear evident. The socialization and enculturation of the body also produce particularized bodies with specific aesthetic preferences and tastes. Everyday perceptions and practices are embodied in bodily acts that remain outside people's critical consciousness. Class influences choices about fashion and style as well as perspectives about the ideal body shape and size. Embodied tastes appear "in the seemingly most natural features of the body… which express in countless ways a whole relation to the body, i.e., a way of treating it, caring for it, feeding it, maintaining it" (Gremillion 2005:21).

The representational approach to the body concentrates on the symbolic meanings inscribed on the body; the agential approach concerns the ways that social actors negotiate their environments (Reischer 2004). Both approaches seem to correspond with the symbolic interactionism approaches discussed in sociology, where the self participates in interpreting and creating meaning in everyday life (Turner 2008). For

example, in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman discusses the self-consciously performed behavior of social actors in specific situations. Goffman's analysis and that of anthropologists concerned with social action differ in that he focuses more explicitly on spoiled identity. In examining race and beauty, Goffman's ideas about spoiled identity are salient because perceptions of racialized bodies influence the ways that people represent themselves in everyday life. Such perceptions also disrupt social interactions. By disruption, I am referring to those times when there is a breakdown that leads to discomfort, embarrassment, stigma and potential exclusion. In Goffman's framework, stigma can stem from being perceived as unattractive or as a member of a deviant group.

Feminist scholars Price and Shildrick (1999) have talked about how "the association of the body with gross unthinking physicality marks a further set of linkages – to black people, working class people, to animals, to slaves" (2). Though the manifestation of these ideas changes over time and in geographical space, stereotypes of minorities and the underclass that were formulated during colonial enterprises persist (Williams 1989) . A recent study (Rebhun 2004) about sexuality, gender, and color in Brazil argues that "negative judgments of types of sexual relationships intertwine with hierarchies of color" for women in Caruaru. According to Rebhun (2004), the pattern of stigmatization confirms Goffman's assertion that stigma stems from socially-identified relationships and stereotypes about deviant groups. Concepts of beauty, honor, and propriety co-mingle in racialized and gendered ways as evidenced by the exclusion of women of color more than others (Rebhun 2004:186).

Michel Foucault's perspective has been adopted by those interested in critiquing the state and institutional power (Foucault 1977; Foucault 1978). In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *History of Sexuality* (1978), he examines the ways that institutions (e.g. schools, clinics, prisons) and elites in the West used sophisticated technologies and regimes of discipline, surveillance, and control to subjugate their populations (Peletz 2007:36) Feminists and anthropologists concerned with the body use the concept of biopower not only to challenge ideas about the state but to critically comment on patriarchy (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Butler 1990; Peletz 2007; Price and Shildrick 1999). As Gremillion (2005) explains, "his concepts of biopower and panoptical surveillance are meant to render inextricable self-regulation—which appears as a kind of freedom to control or distinguish the self – and various forms of power/knowledge" (18).

CONCLUSION: RACE AND BEAUTY IN EGYPT

In this chapter, I have reviewed the anthropological literature about the sociocultural construction of race and the body that has salience for my dissertation's examination of race and beauty in contemporary Cairo, Egypt. My work focuses on representations and ideals of beauty as way of understanding the aesthetic dimension of race (Drake 1987). Feminine beauty, in Egypt, is viewed as an external reflection of moral qualities or virtues, such as goodness, piety, dignity, and honor. Therefore, aesthetic and bodily practices involve the cultivation of both physical and ethical dispositions. The scholarship about the cultivation of moral dispositions is of particular interest to my assessment of colorism and racialized aesthetics because it points to the explicit ways that the middle-class Cairene women in my study explain the non-physical dimension of their aesthetic preferences. My ethnographic data supports the research

findings of Mahmood (2005) in her assessment and analysis of women's desire to embody a feminine aesthetic that is heavily dependent upon Islamic ideologies about women's bodies. However, my research is ultimately concerned with examining Cairene perceptions of the physical in my informants' descriptions of beauty as way of demonstrating that there is a sociocultural construction of race in contemporary Egypt. In the next chapter, I discuss the sociocultural construction of race and color in Egypt from the 19th to the 21st century. Building upon the work of Eve Troutt Powell (2004), Anita Fabos (2009), and Omnia El Shakry (2007), I argue that Egyptian national identity is articulated and expressed in relation to minority groups in the nation-state who the majority ethnic groups view as "African" or "black" others.

CHAPTER THREE:
CONSTRUCTING RACE AND COLOR IN CONTEMPORARY EGYPT

INTRODUCTION

Figure 7: Ben Curtis, Associated Press
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/31/international/africa/31egypt.html[26]

On December 30, 2005, Egyptian riot police forcibly removed 3,000 Sudanese refugee protestors who had been camping out in front of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). While the authorities hosed the Sudanese with water canons, local Cairene residents watched with "quiet amusement," making derogatory comments about the "disgusting," "dirty, black, Christian parasites" who had occupied Mustafa Mahmud Square to protest the UNHCR's failure to allot them refugee status, a necessary provision for aid (www.anhri.net/Arab). During the violent removal some twenty-three protesters were killed. This debacle was one of the more embarrassing exposés of the failures of Egyptian authorities and the United Nations to confront the Sudanese refugee problem in Cairo. As one of the most powerful eruptions of strained group interaction between Egyptians and Sudanese, it is also a potent site for the

exploration of the intersection of racial, ethnic, national, and religious identities in contemporary Cairo

The *New York Times* image shows a Sudanese man holding a baby attempting to negotiate with the Egyptian police before the refugees were transported from the middle-class neighborhood of Mohandessin to a desert suburb[27]. To his right, another man with his mouth ajar seems to be in anguish while he is being pressed against the glass window of the bus. This disturbing and dramatic image vividly portrays the ambiguous and complex power relationship between the Sudanese and the Egyptians, and it leads one to question what happened to Gamal Abd al-Nasser's call for the unity of the Nile Valley almost a half a century before. Was this the contemporary face of the Egyptian nationalists' call for the integration of the Sudan into Egypt? Or, as Anita Fabos (2009) cogently asks in her ethnography *Brothers or Others? : Propriety and Gender for Muslim Arab Sudanese Egypt*, are the Sudanese "living as 'brothers in a United Nile Valley,' or are they a besieged ethnic minority subject to an increasingly harsh regime?" (3).

Fabos' work concerns Muslim Arab Sudanese from northern Sudan and not the Southern Sudanese portrayed in figure 7. Nevertheless, the experiences of the Southern Sudanese and darker-skinned people in Cairo serves as way to explore the contours of a broader set of social relations between Cairenes and people of African descent. Though these relations are not uniform, the commonality in them is the Egyptian focus on these groups as darker-skinned others that Cairenes often lump together under the appellation "Sudanese". The meaning of the term Sudanese can be quite confusing. Does its use merely refer to the national group that Egyptians have had the most long-lasting and intimate connection with over the course of their nations' histories? Given its use to

describe a wide range of people of African descent, does it indicate that Egyptians simply cannot tell the difference among these darker-skinned peoples? Or, does the term signify something else about Egyptian understandings of people of African descent, particularly those from sub-Saharan Africa[28]?

In considering the answers to these questions, this chapter engages in the examination of the sociocultural construction of race in contemporary Egypt. To contextualize my discussion, certain things must be established about Egypt and the idea of race at the outset. Egypt is a nation-state where the majority of the population does not use the terminology of race to discuss incidents that would easily be described as racialized if they occurred in the West. Egypt is a place where the concept of race is only beginning to be acknowledged, recognized, and explicitly discussed, and then typically by an elite group of scholars, journalists, and human rights activists.[29] There have never been any laws segregating populations on the basis of their presumed racial identity in Egypt. There have never been any legal prohibitions against miscegenation, or marriage between different ethnic groups. When collecting demographic data, researchers in Egypt generally do not include any questions about racial or ethnic background in their surveys. How, then, can the differential treatment of darker-skinned people and fairer-skinned people in Egypt be explained?

In the upcoming sections of this chapter, I discuss Islamic slavery as a historical process and institution that has shaped how Egyptians perceive men and women of African descent. I examine the ways that Cairenes, Egyptian Nubians, and people of African descent from sub-Saharan Africa and the West explain the social interactions between fairer-skinned and darker-skinned people in contemporary Cairo. Finally, I

consider the role of Egyptian nationalism in the development of the Egyptian sociocultural construction of race.

THE ROLE OF SLAVERY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF RACE

The Qur'an, as the sacred text of Islam, is noted for its simultaneous lack of concern about color or racial prejudice and the attentiveness it has given to the regulation of slavery, an institution that has greatly influenced perceptions of skin color and race in the Islamic world. Scholars (Segal 2001, Lewis 1990, Gordon 1992) state that the slave trade in the Islamic world had its roots in pre-Islamic Arabia and it predated the trans-Atlantic slave trade by more than a thousand years. By the advent of Islam, slavery was considered to be a natural part of the social order in the Arab-Islamic world. As a consequence, when the Prophet Muhammad could not abolish it, he decided to lay a foundation for the humane treatment of the enslaved and to encourage manumission by asserting that freeing slaves was a way for Muslims to make amends for their sins (Gordon 1992).

In contrast to slavery in the West, slaves in the Islamic world were viewed as human and accorded rights by virtue of their humanity. A person's status as a slave was meant to be temporary rather than permanent (Lovejoy 2004). If injured or assaulted by their slave master, slaves could go to a judge to request being sold (Gordon 1992). Slaves who adopted Islam after being enslaved were accorded the same religious rights as any other Muslim (Lovejoy 2004). With stipulations, slaves could marry either another slave or a free person (Ali 2010). In certain contexts, slaves were also allowed to earn wages, live on their own, and to purchase their freedom (Lovejoy 2004, Toledano 1993).

While the Islamic regulation of slavery improved the conditions of slaves, it did not remedy the inhumaneness of the Arab slave trade (Bulcha 2005, Segal 2001). Slaves' journeys from their homes were long and arduous, involving numerous stops where they were generally sold several times before reaching their final owner. Along the way, male captives were castrated and numerous female captives were sexually abused if not forced to prostitute themselves along the slave route (Bulcha 2005, Segal 2001, Hunwick 1993). Slave dealers, particularly those who traded black slaves (jallaba), brought them to market scantily clad and allowed them to be "shamelessly inspected, cheapened and bargained for" (Bulcha 2005:117, Baer 1967). In addition, a slave could be "sold, given away as a gift, hired out, or inherited" like any other piece of property (Gordon 1992:36).

Islam maintained strictures against owning fellow Muslims, but sub-Saharan Africans and darker-skinned ethnic minorities in the Nile Valley region often found that being Muslim did not protect their freedom (Segal 2001, Gordon 1992, Jennings 1995, Powell 2003, Baer 1967, Lewis 1990). This practice has been explained by a range of sociocultural, political, and economic reasons. Murray Gordon (1992), for instance, has claimed that Arab slave traders often justified this behavior by claiming that God had cursed people of African descent because of the transgressions of their ancestor Ham, Noah's youngest son (Genesis 9:20-27) (32). Leon Carl Brown (1968) has pointed out that Arabs felt that people of African descent were submissive to slavery and that they had attributes that are more similar to "dumb" animals than humans (201). Others (Gordon 1992, Lewis 1990) have suggested that traders may have ignored these stipulations to reduce the cost of searching for and importing non-Muslims from other territories. Their evidence is the increase in the enslavement of Africans as European

prohibitions, such as the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, decreased the access to white slaves (Bulcha 2005, Segal 2001, Lewis 1990, Baer 1967). Ultimately, the outcome of this practice was the enslavement of over seventeen million Africans from the sixth to the twentieth centuries in the Arab world as compared to the nine to fourteen million Africans enslaved during the Atlantic slave trade (Bulcha 2005, Segal 2001, Austen 1979, Curtin 1969).

Arab disregard for and discrimination against Africans has its origins in pre-Islamic Arabia, a context where dark skin did not completely preclude darker-skinned men from rising in prominence (e.g. Antara) (Lewis 1990). According to scholars (Lewis 1990, Gordon 1992, Segal 2001), dark skin was equated with low social status in instances where darker-skinned people were enslaved Africans captured during warfare or when they were the offspring of Arab fathers and enslaved African mothers. Though members of the father's lineage, children born of an enslaved mother and free Arab father continued to have a secondary status and suffer from insults as indicated by the pejorative "son/daughter of a Negress" (Lewis 1990. Gordon 1992). Darker skinned poets in early Islamic Arabia, known as the *aghribat al-Arab* (crows of the Arabs), wrote extensively about their experiences with discrimination as a result of their skin color (Lewis 1990). In addition, Arabs also commonly disparaged the Zanj, the agricultural slaves from East Africa who incited a rebellion in Iraq, by claiming that they were inferior in every respect (e.g. intelligence, appearance, morality, et cetera) (Segal 2001, Lewis 1990).

Over the course of the slave trade, the slave population consisted of black and white men and women who worked as domestic servants, women in the harem, agricultural workers, and as military-administrative slaves (*kuls*). Female slaves

outnumbered male slaves by a three to one margin (Baer 1967, Gordon 1992, Marmon 1999, Segal 2001). The majority of slaves of African descent were transported from long distances to be sold to government inspectors, officials, and private citizens in slave markets. Once enslaved, the overwhelming majority of women of African descent were used as nursemaids and domestic servants who attended to all of the needs of the owners and their children. Male captives of African descent worked in the domestic sphere, on military-administrative tasks, or as agricultural slaves (Toledano 1998; Lewis 1990; Segal 2001; Baer 1967). By contrast, female and male captives from Europe were a small minority who served in either the harem or military-administrative offices (Toledano 1993).

The experience of *kuls* supports the scholarly assertion that the "designation of a person as a slave in Islam refers only to that person's origins, not to his or her status later in life" (Toledano 1993:480). As state functionaries, kuls could "gain control over their lives not only through manumission, but also through the use of their own power base to liberate themselves and gain that control" (Toledano 1993:481). That power was exemplified by the Mamluks in Egypt. Rulers of Egypt in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, they became the tax collectors and de facto rulers of Egypt during the Ottoman Empire (Baer 1967, Hatem 1986, Toledano 1998). Though enslaved during the Ottoman Empire, their status was above freeborn Egyptian Muslims (Hatem 1986).

The use of slaves in such a wide-range of roles most likely contributes to the assertion that slavery in the Islamic world was much more benign than in Christendom (Segal 2001, Lewis 1990). The complexity of the master-slave relationship, particularly in regards to men in the military-administrative system (e.g., kul system) and women in

the harem who became future wives has led scholars to question the very definition of slavery itself (Toledano 1993, Patterson 1982, Pipes 1981). From the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, the supply of male slaves for the kul system came from devsirme, or the child levies of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans (Toledano 1993). The devsirme involved taking able-bodied male children, reducing them to slavery, converting them to Islam, and giving them rigorous training in the palace school so that they could take up elite positions in the government such as military commanders, political advisers, and supervisors of elite households and work forces. With the incorporation of freeborn Muslims and freed Turco-Circassian Muslims into the kul system, the system transformed into what Toledano (1993, 1998) calls the mamluk-kul system.

The counterpart to the military-administrative system was the harem (Toledano 1998). Though women of all backgrounds were purchased for both labor and sexual exploitation, women in the harems of wealthy men had the opportunity to become either concubines or wives. Similar to the military-administrative slaves, the most elite women in the harems underwent rigorous training to prepare them to become ladies who were married to elite men throughout the Ottoman Empire. Training enslaved women to become wives had become so common by the late nineteenth century, that Ottoman elites often countered Western calls for the abolition of slavery by asserting that “many female slaves became queen mothers (i.e., mothers of sultans/valide sultans), that the overwhelming majority of the wives of Ottoman "noblemen" were of slave origins, and that slavery was, in fact, a way of choosing one's wife, or lady of the house” (Toledano 1993:493).

For the harems of wealthy men, slave owners often favored white slave girls over black (Bulcha 2005, Baer 1967, Lewis 1971, Gordon 1992, Toledano 1998, Hunwick 1993). Among the darker-skinned women, "the fairer complexioned Abyssinians were shown partiality over their darker-skinned African sisters" (Gordon 1992:98). In Egypt, the white female slaves were married to men of the upper class. Ethiopian women (or *Habashiyyat*), particularly Oromo, Gurage, and Sidama women were made concubines or married middle class men (Bulcha 2005:121). Other African women were required to do the more menial household chores and were found in lower-middle-class households (Bulcha 2005, Baer 1967). Slavery had become so thoroughly enmeshed in everyday life in Egypt in the nineteenth century that middle-class Egyptians felt that "possession of one was essential for respectability among one's neighbors" (Baer 1967:422).

As aforementioned, the result of concubinage and intermarriage between women of the harems and the freeborn populations in the Arab-Islamic world was the development of a mixed population (Lewis 1990, Gordon 1992, Segal 2001, Bulcha 2005). This result also played a key role in stratifying Islamic societies, such as Egypt, along lines of ethnicity and skin color. In the next two chapters, the impact of segregating and classifying slaves in terms of ethnicity, color, and gender on Egyptian representations and perceptions of ideal beauty is discussed in-depth.

Though limited in its scope, agricultural and other forms of non-domestic slavery were also present in the Islamic world (Baer 1967). This form of enslavement was overwhelmingly reserved for men of African descent and the tasks assigned to them were stratified even further according to their ethnic and regional backgrounds (Bulcha 2005). East Africans were used for fishing in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf; they worked

sugar cane, date and coffee plantations in Oman, Yemen, and southern Iraq (Bulcha 2005:119). Slaves imported from sub-Saharan Africa worked in the cotton fields in Egypt and slaves from the Horn of Africa served as guards, soldiers, servants, and clerks throughout the Islamic states in the Middle East (Bulcha 2005, Baer 1967).

Ehud Toledano (1993) discusses slavery and servitude in the nineteenth century Ottoman-Islamic in terms of degrees of servitude in order to avoid mapping rigid categories onto a very complex, highly nuanced system. He positions domestic and agricultural slaves at one end, asserting that the agricultural slaves represent the "most 'slavish' of Ottoman slaves" (Toledano 1993: 483). He positions free-born office holders at the other end of the spectrum. State functionaries of slave origins (i.e. *kul*-type slaves) are placed relatively close to free-born office holders in his framework. Finally, harem women of slave origins are placed further down the continuum in between the kul-type slaves and the domestic/agricultural slaves.

Toledano's classification system explains the opposing perspectives of slavery held by Ottoman-Islamic elites and British abolitionists. From the Islamic perspective, the institution of slavery was a rather benign one where slaves were considered to be an integral part of the family. Ottoman elites often pointed to the kul/harem system to argue that Islamic slavery was not the same as the barbaric, inhumane Western practice. By contrast, the British interpretation of slavery focused on the inhumanity of the slave trade and domestic servitude (Toledano 1993, Baer 1967).

To facilitate the disappearance of slavery, the British encouraged indirect action through its consulate, which was allowed to free any slave who presented him/herself at its door (Baer 1967). Ottoman elites concerned about not only losing the labor of their

domestic servants but also having family secrets aired to the public if their slaves were released protested against this British practice. Under pressure, British consuls changed their official policy about manumission of slaves and focused their attention on the prevention of further importation of slaves (Baer 1967, Toledano 1993).

Islamic slavery, however, did not end once the supply had greatly diminished. It required changes in the attitudes of the elites. Elites who were educated in Europe encouraged their countrymen to manumit their slaves and switch to domestic servants after being exposed to Western Europeans who viewed slavery negatively (Baer 1967, Toledano 1993). Whereas British intervention was previously viewed as an encroachment on Islamic tradition and practices, these elites increasingly began to reconsider the issue in terms of modernity, or the advancement of the society toward Enlightenment. These ideas were not adopted, however, until there was an emergence of a new generation of heads of families who had not spent large sums for the acquisition of slaves (Baer 1967).

By the end of Islamic slavery, the association of black people with slavery and servitude became embedded in Arabic language (Gordon 1992). As Gordon emphasizes, the term mamluk used for white slaves means owned while the term abd, reserved for black slaves from Africa, means slave. The other term used to designate a person of African descent is khadim, or servant, which indicated their perceived social role (Brown 1968). By the nineteenth century, Gordon tells us that *abd* as a social category evolved from a social to an ethnic designation in the Arab-Islamic world (Gordon 1992: 98). In so doing, the idea that blackness and African heritage denoted a person of inferior social status became fixed.

Despite this association of blackness with low social status in the Arab-Islamic world, scholars emphasize that racial and color prejudice was not institutionalized in slavery (Drake 1990, Bulcha 2005, Lewis 1990, Brown 1968, Segal 2001). Religion, rather than color or ethnicity, was "the major factor used to create the 'Other', the object of enslavement" (Bulcha 2005:124, Brown 1968). Brown (1968) argues that the strong prejudice towards black people found in the Arab-Islamic world did not indicate that there was anything "taboo" about them; however, their position and experiences were considered "unlucky". Their misfortune, according to Brown, was due to their lack of kinship ties in societies where "extended family has been the matrix of all human intercourse" (Brown 1968: 192). In the Egyptian context, the population undoubtedly was exposed to Arab-Islamic perspectives about darker skin and the use of the term abd as an ethnic category. However, the use of abd as a term to signify a darker-skinned person never became as widely-used and pervasive as it is in Lebanon, Syria, or the Arab Gulf.

PERCEPTIONS OF RACE AND COLOR IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN CAIRO

Egyptians from various religious, regional, and ethnic backgrounds confidently assert that race is not a problem in their society. The disavowal of the salience of race is a common feature of the ways that Egyptians in Cairo explain exchanges with minorities and people of African descent such as the above-mentioned in incident in Mahmoud Square. My research indicated that these Egyptians view race as a Western issue that concerns unequal relations between minority and majority groups based upon a myriad of factors, including language and religion. Their perspective was well-articulated by an Arabic-language professor at the American University of Cairo (AUC) when she said the following:

> Minorities everywhere have a problem or difficulties. This is linked to their issues of language or religion or both. Nubians in Egypt are dealing with a culture that is dying out instead of something like the Kurds who are dealing with being murdered. They live among us and have the opportunity to be educated, get jobs, housing, et cetera like everybody else. Racism cannot exist when people live next door to you.

An examination of her perspective suggests that there are several components to Egyptian understandings of race relations. Race is perceived as an unequal social relationship between a minority group and a hegemonic group. It involves the denial of particular privileges and the ability to have access to resources (e.g., to be educated and have access to employment and housing). It requires that the subordinated population be segregated from the dominant one. Finally, the suppression of the minority group may include highly volatile and violent interactions, such as murder in the case of the Kurds in Iraq.

Skin color and physical features are not always highlighted in Egyptian explanations of racial discrimination. While they understood that the racial dynamics in the United States involved a minority population designated as “black” and a majority or dominant population labeled “white”, their analysis of race did not necessarily include a discussion of these physical characteristics. In fact, discussions of prejudice based upon skin color arose as a way to counter the notion that there was a sociocultural construction of race in Egypt. As a fair-skinned Egyptian graduate student at Cairo University asserted, “Do not listen to what Egyptians say. The color matters. We do not care what your ethnicity is as long as the color is white.” This student’s assertion did not mean that she felt that race mattered. Like many of my research participants, she emphasized the importance of skin color in Cairo but not necessarily race.

The perspective of Egyptians differed from that of other people of African descent who argue that they consistently experience discrimination based upon their skin color

and racial backgrounds. As Pascale Ghazaleh (2002) explained in a Middle East Report about Southern Sudanese, the general sentiment is that "the darker your skin, the less you are accepted" (4). In this chapter I argue that racial and skin color ideologies can be seen explicitly in Egyptian behavior towards darker-skinned "others". While the upcoming sections about the development of Egyptian social science and nationalism will serve as evidence for my assertion, this section deals with how my research informants of African descent explained Egyptian interactions with darker-skinned people of African descent.

People Like Us

Egyptian Nubians in Cairo reinforced the perspective of the Cairo University graduate student. In an interview with a Nubian on a *felucca* (small boat that sails along the Nile), I had the following exchange:

Me: Do you have problems in Cairo with race?
Abdul: No, no. There is no problem like that here.
Me: Really?!
Abdul: *Ya Salaam*, Really.
Me: On the streets, I have experienced problems and others have told me that they do as well. The comments…people say bad things related to our appearance. Why might that be?
Abdul: Your color. In Aswan, there are more *people like us* (rubs his skin). You wouldn't have a problem like that. Here, they aren't good.

Whether male or female, members of the lower socioeconomic strata or the middle class, Egyptian Nubians in my study differentiated themselves from other Egyptians by highlighting the difference in their skin tone. The expression, "People like us," is particular to Cairene Nubians. It is as shorthand for explaining who they are as a self-aware ethnic group in Cairo's urban milieu.

My research indicates that Nubian youth are highly concerned about how non-Nubian Muslim Egyptians view them as a community. They are also cognizant of the

prejudice and discrimination that they experience in Cairo as a result of their skin color, ethnic and regional background. For example, in the Cairene context, though Nubian occupations vary, non-Nubians generally believe that Nubians work in the service sector. Their occupations in homes and offices as gatekeepers (i.e. domestic servants, administrative assistants) for the local elite and foreigners since at least the 1880s has meant that they often existed in an interstitial space between the well-to-do and the rest of the population (Powell 2003). Their ability to form relationships with foreigners and elites with ease as well as their capacity to develop social networks that ensure not only their employability but also monopoly of certain occupations has been described as symbiotic (Geiser 1986)[30]. By this, Peter Geiser meant that Nubians have created mutually beneficial relationships with Egyptians for their survival. However, they were not fully integrated into Egyptian society and had no desire for assimilation.

The stereotyping of Nubians as servants that I mentioned in the Introduction can be linked, in part, with the non-Nubian Cairenes' interpretation of the term "Nubian." Aleya Rouchdy, a scholar of Nubian and Arabic linguistics, has found that many non-Nubian Egyptians still believe that the word Nubian is derived from a term meaning "slave". In reality, the term Nubian comes from either the word *nab*, which means gold, or from the word *nebed* meaning "people with curly hair" (Rouchdy 1980:334).

Twentieth and twenty-first century Egyptian theater and film also play a role in the perception of Nubians as people of low status. In the 1920s-1930s, the playwright Ya'qub Sanu'a's blackface character *Al-Barbary* popularized the image of Nubians and Sudanese as not only domestic servants but also as foolish, infantilized and childlike beings (Powell 2003)[31]. While the Nubian represented by Sanu'a was merely a comical

buffoon, his representation of darker skinned people as uncivilized, unsophisticated, and immature arguably played a key part in the racialization[32] of the Nubian community by the larger, more politically dominant Egyptian society. In the late twentieth century, Cairenes in lower-income communities still referred to Nubians and Sudanese as al-*barbary* to imply that they were uncivilized (Atiya 1982).

Despite the stereotypical perceptions and representations, my research indicated that colorism and racialization are not major concerns for most Cairene Nubians. Their discussions of the less-than-favorable treatment that they receive are explained in terms of non-Nubian Egyptian ignorance (*jahiliya*), impoliteness (*mish mu'addab*) (Fabos 2009), lack of culture or civilization, or merely as a preference for other looks or behavior. As a result of their internal focus on their own cultural community, they are perceived by non-Nubian Cairenes as a close-knit group that excludes outsiders. However, the Nubian exclusion of outsiders can be seen as a coping mechanism developed to manage and negotiate life in a milieu where they are estranged because of their skin color, regional, and ethnic background. In this regard, they are similar to minority and migrant groups in the Americas, such as American Jews (Wagley and Harris 1958), who have developed various strategies to handle the difficulties of living as either outsiders or semi-insiders in a community.

(G)'alil al-Adab

The migrants most similar to Nubians in their perspective are the Muslim Arab Sudanese. The Muslim Arab Sudanese are the descendants of Arabized Nubians in the Sudan and Arab Sudanese who have intermingled and become a part of Sudan's dominant elite (Fabos 2009:8). In Cairo, they can be divided into two groups. The first

group consists of migrants who arrived in Cairo in the 1940s and who identify themselves in terms of their particular ethnic group in the Sudan. The second group consists of those who migrated to Cairo after the 1950s whose identity was constructed in relation to Sudanese nationalist ideologies that emphasized Islam and Arab ethnicity (Fabos 2009, Sharkey 2003). Among this latter group, there is further division between those whose families became expatriates in the 1940s (*nas al-jaliya*) and those who have been displaced as a result of opposition to the government, fear of persecution, or the war of the 1990s and beyond (*nas al-mu'arada*) (Fabos 2009).

The similarity in perspectives of Nubians and Muslim Arab Sudanese stems from the commonalities that exist between these cultural communities due to shared experiences. Both of these populations are distinguished from other Egyptians in Cairo because of their clothing, speech, and status as migrants. Both of these groups are similar to Egyptians in terms of their religious orientation and their history as people of the Nile Valley region. As a result of the Egyptian authorities' heightened focus on their communities, both the Sudanese and Nubian populations were concerned with defining what it meant to be a part of an ethnic group in the late twentieth century[33] (Fabos 2009, Jennings 1995, Fernea and Fernea 1991, Geiser 1986). In addition, my research indicates that some of their youth are also contemplating the significance of color because of the skin color discrimination (or colorism) that they experience in Cairo.

Skin color is not only an issue that emerges when the Muslim Arab Sudanese relate to Egyptians. Within the Sudanese community, there is a well-developed system for the categorization of skin tones or complexions (Fabos 2009, Deng 1995). Sudanese describe complexions as *abyad* (white), *ahmar* (red), *asfar* (yellow), *akhdar* (green),

azraq (blue), and *aswid* (black). According to Fabos (2009), the average Sudanese male would be described as *akhdar* and the most beautiful skin tone for a Sudanese woman is *asfar (88)*. In contrast to my findings, Fabos (2009) also argues that Muslim Arab Sudanese can be whitened or darkened according to their class position.

Francis Deng (1999) asserts that the wide range of skin color categorizations is related to the Muslim Arab Sudanese desire to show their affinity with Arabs. While my key informants simply explained that to be more Arab meant that one could be considered more Islamic, Deng provides a more complex picture. He suggests that Muslim Arab Sudanese pride and self-esteem becomes embodied in particular skin tones. In the Sudan, the ideal is *asfar* because it is situated between the extremes of white and black. Whiteness associated with foreigners is called *khawaja* in Sudanese Arabic. Whiteness associated with inferior groups (primarily gypsies) is called (*halabi*). Black is connected to groups who are perceived to be inferior because of their religion and enslavement. Because the Sudanese do not have a desire to be associated with any of these groups, they idealize a complexion that is situated in the middle (Deng 1999).

Muslim Arab Sudanese in Cairo explain their negative experiences with Egyptians by utilizing the concept of *adab* (Fabos 2009). It is a term used in Egypt and the Sudan to refer to proper modes of conduct, politeness, and good manners. Drawing on the work of Nordenstam (1968), Fabos interprets the concept to mean "the sum total of conceptions of what one should be and have and do in order to be good in different roles one comes to play in life" (99). To have good morals and proper codes of conduct are qualities highly esteemed in the Sudanese community; in fact, it takes precedence over all other cultural attributes in the Muslim Arab Sudanese community in Cairo. As a notion

tied to Islamic values and to the Mediterranean region's cultural concepts of honor and shame, it serves as the guiding principle for the ways that the Sudanese structure their relationships (Fabos 2009, Peristiany 1966, Pitt-Rivers 1977).

In dealing with Egyptians, who are also primarily Muslim, the Sudanese expect Egyptians to also adhere to the common cultural principle of *adab*. Conflict of all forms (including prejudicial treatment) is understood and explained through this cultural concept. From the Muslim Arab Sudanese perspective, Egyptians are not racist or prejudiced; they lack propriety, manners, hospitality, or respectability (i.e. (*g)alil al-adab, ma fi adab, mu'addab*) (Fabos 2009:100-102). As a consequence, Muslim Arab Sudanese assert that Egyptian discriminatory practices should be conceived as a problem of morality and ethics as well as a failure to adhere to one of the core concepts of Islam.

Self-Imposed Isolation and Culture Shock

Sub-Saharan Africans and members of the African Diaspora tended to describe their interactions with Egyptians as racialized. The informants in my study presented a range of perspectives based upon the extent of their interaction with Egyptians, gender, religious affiliation, capacity to speak the Arabic language, and the length of time they remained in Cairo. People of African descent who traveled to Egypt as tourists stated that they did not experience much discrimination. Their experience of Cairo consisted of staying in upscale hotels, eating at the most expensive restaurants, visiting tourist sites, and having very limited interaction with the local population.

By contrast, the people of African descent discussed in this section can be considered a part of a minority group who resided in Cairo for a minimum of a year and often much longer due to their work as white-collar professionals (diplomats, researchers,

professors, and librarians) or graduate students at the American University in Cairo. These informants lived very elite lifestyles in the most elite neighborhoods of Cairo (i.e. Zamalek, Ma'adi, and Heliopolis). With the exception of the researchers, members of this group tended to have the most segregated experience. It consisted of interacting socially with Egyptians who work in the most elite institutions and live in the most elite neighborhoods. Yet, the majority of them stated that they still experienced moments of disruption where they felt uneasy about the way Egyptians interacted with them.

Interviews with these people often involved a discussion of the ways in which they reconciled the reality of their lives in Egypt. After residing in Cairo for half a year, many of these individuals tended to insulate and isolate themselves from the larger Egyptian population as much as possible. Explanation of their isolation and insulation is somewhat ambiguous. Though race and color are included in the ways that they discussed their discomfort, particularly if they were African-American, these informants also admitted that the rationale for the self-imposed isolation was not solely related to the Egyptian people. In part, it was the city of Cairo itself, i.e. the pollution, overcrowded streets, noise, heat, et cetera. As a professor at the American University in Cairo explained, "Cairo is heaven and hell. It's really a city of extremes and you'll be plagued with highs and lows. Your home, your abode becomes your sanctuary." As a result, it may be that they were experiencing the shock experienced by many migrants as they confront differences in language, cultural norms, and ascribed social identities.

All the Egyptian Sees is Black

The self-imposed isolation of the aforementioned informants must be distinguished from those in my study who stated that their primary reason for not

interacting with Egyptians was due to colorism or racial prejudice. An example of this behavior was found among African and African-American students who resided in the dorms at the American University in Cairo. Because of their negative experiences, they stated that they stopped exploring the city of Cairo. They also reduced their social interactions with Egyptian students at the university. Abena[34], a twenty-five year old Ghanaian graduate student, asserted that she experienced racial discrimination from the first day she arrived in Egypt. In an interview, she expressed the following:

Abena: When I arrived to begin my Master's degree at the American University in Cairo, the head of my department called me into his office. He said that he wanted to explain that black women are called names on the street here. He said that I would be called *Chocolata* (Chocolate), *Samara* (Brown-skinned lady), et cetera and that this should be viewed as a compliment, an acknowledgement of my beautiful skin.

Me: How long have you been here?
Abena: I have been here for a year now.
Me: Can you tell me more about your experience at the university and in Cairo, the city itself?
Abena: I like what I am learning (pause), but I am tired of Egypt. All the time I have to deal with the comments about my skin color. *Ma Iswad da!* (How Black is that!) Or they run up asking me what time it is (*Al saha kam*?). When I look at my watch to tell them the time, they run away laughing. When I leave Zamalek or the university, I have to deal with little children following me in the streets clapping and shouting "*Chocolata*"[35], *soda* (black), or other derogatory things. I don't go outside anymore. I shop for what I need in Zamalek and stay in my room unless I am visiting other Ghanaians who pick me up in their car.

Abena's story can be seen as a part of a larger narrative of people of African descent who express frustration because of the perpetual focus on their skin color by Egyptians in the streets of Cairo. Her sentiments were reaffirmed by Southern Sudanese men and women who asserted that Egyptians did not differentiate among darker skinned people. Francis, a Southern Sudanese male who worked at the American University in Cairo stated, "All

Egyptians see is black skin. They cannot distinguish between us and if you are this color (pointing to himself and then to me), this place can be cruel." His sentiment was reaffirmed by a Southern Sudanese female who worked at the United Nations. Though she enjoyed her job, she felt that Egyptians were very disrespectful. She said, "They don't respect people much. The majority don't care at all. Foreigners, they tease them. If you are of a different nationality, they don't respect you. They are rude. They laugh at people because they think you don't understand. Wherever you find an Egyptian, treat them the same way that they treat you."

Though the Southern Sudanese interviewed in this study were among the elite, their experiences are further complicated by the plight of displaced Sudanese. Displaced Southern Sudanese are hypervisible because of their physical appearance (taller and darker than the majority of people on Cairo's streets) and the places where they congregate (e.g. churches such as Sacred Heart and St. Andrews). They are a part of the most vulnerable population because of their poverty. They can be distinguished from others in Cairo because of their inability to gain access to employment as a result of their status as refugees. When employed, they may also be subjected to resentment and harassment by Cairenes who blame the Sudanese for their frustrations about Egypt's poor economy (Ghazaleh 2002).

The social interactions of the Southern Sudanese and Egyptians fit within the race relations problematic described by the sociologist John Rex (1983). In *Race Relations in Sociological Theory*, he argues that race relations are social relations that are structured by conditions where there is:

> conflict over scarce resources, the existence of unfree, indentured, or slave labour, unusually harsh class exploitation, strict legal intergroup

> distinctions and occupational segregation, differential access to power and prestige, cultural diversity and limited group interaction, and migrant labour as an underclass fulfilling stigmatized roles in a metropolitan setting (Back and Solomos 2000:5).

Since the nineteenth century, nearly all of these structural conditions have been found in Egypt. In the twenty-first century, the experiences of the Sudanese suggest that conditions in Cairo have become organized in such a way that they have produced a racially structured social reality for the Southern Sudanese. The Sudanese exemplify a migrant labor underclass that is often forced to fulfill stigmatized roles in Cairo as evidenced by existing reports that have documented their exploitation by Egyptian elites who fail to pay the Sudanese the wages they earn for working menial jobs in these elites' households (Ghazaleh 2002). As one of the most subordinated populations in Cairo, the Southern Sudanese have very limited access to power and prestige. Their difference limits their interaction with the local population. Moreover, altercations between the Southern Sudanese and Egyptians over economic resources and hate speech have become more prevalent and commonplace (e.g. during my fieldwork, the riots in Sakakini in 2001, Abbassiya 2003, Mustafa Mahmoud Square in 2005) (Ghazaleh 2002, Adam 2004).

Egyptian expression of resentment toward outsiders because of Egypt's failing economy was also experienced by others of African descent. For example, Chika, a twenty-seven year old Nigerian who migrated to Cairo for a graduate program, spoke of an encounter with a frustrated Egyptian during an interview. He said,

> I was attacked by an Egyptian taxi driver the other day. He was trying to overcharge me. He wanted me to pay 10LE ($1.50US) for a ride that would normally cost 2LE ($.30US) so I protested. He then said, 'I am so

> tired of you blacks, you Sudanese coming here and taking our jobs. You're keeping us poor.' In response I said, 'I am not a Sudanese and I work very hard for my money, for my education, and to keep my job. I am not paying 10LE for a ride that costs only 2LE. Because it is late at night, I will give you 3LE and no more.' The driver then reached under the seat of his car and pulled out a knife. I was scared and didn't think being harmed was worth 10LE. I wanted to get out of the car but the guy kept insulting me and saying derogatory things about my skin color. The street was empty except one shopkeeper who pretended not to notice. I was really glad when I was able to get out of the car and find another taxi to take me to my destination.

Cairene price-gouging and exploitation of foreigners, coupled with derogatory comments about blackness, make the experiences of people of African descent difficult and serves as a barrier to their full engagement and integration into Egyptian society. The discrimination and conflict that has arisen because of both perceived and actual scarcity of resources in Cairo has been well analyzed by class-based racial theories that explain race relations in terms of economic competition and group based stratification (Miles 1984, Miles 1988, Cox 1948, Hall et al 1978). Race relations, according to these theorists, are produced by exploitative capitalist practices. Therefore, antagonism between "races" is viewed as nothing more than a conflict between classes.

Robert Miles (1993) has been regarded as the theorist most concerned with migrant groups. He argues that class consciousness is shaped by "economic relations that are hidden within the process of racialization" (Solomos and Back 2000: 8). He suggests that the challenges at the nexus of capitalism and the nation-state are revealed when migrant communities and local populations compete over resources. Within his theoretical framework, capitalism requires human migration to fulfill its need for particular types of human labor. Laborers

in competition with each other are regulated by the nation-state, which sets boundaries that determine which workers legitimately have the right to particular forms of employment. During moments of crisis in the capitalist system, the politicization of group organization becomes racialized as local populations associate migrants with the increase in economic scarcity or deprivation (Solomos and Back 2000).

If it had not already been so, Cairo is increasingly becoming a racialized locale. As indicated by Chika's experience, it is a site where transnational migrants (such as sub-Saharan Africans and Sudanese) are presumed to have access to opportunities and mobility that native Egyptians do not. In this context, suspect African-descended migrants, hypervisible because of their phenotype, are subjected to Egyptian xenophobia and virulent racial and color discrimination (Fabos 2009, Ghazaleh 2002). Racialization, as described by Robert Miles, occurs when Egyptians reduce Africans and the African Diaspora, regardless of their differences, to a monolithic "Sudanese" identity. In addition, it surfaces when Egyptians, concerned over resources, stratify these migrants along ethnic, national, and color lines within the society's broader social structure.

National identity complicates the experience of race and color for people of African descent. Those from the United States and England receive better treatment than those from sub-Saharan African countries and the Sudan. As a result, some West Africans stated that they at times pretended to be African-American to receive better service and/or treatment. These performances depend on limited interaction between Egyptians and African-Americans. They may also rely on Egyptian ignorance of

differences between American and British English. For example, Fela, a Nigerian exchange student, described the following incident:

> One time I was in a shop and was standing in line with some of my friends. All of them were American so people assumed I was American. Then this guy came in and he cut the queue so I stopped him and said, "There is a queue here. All of these people have been waiting. You can't just get in front of me or them." So one of the guys working there came up and said to me, 'He is a pasha[36] and you are just a Sudanese. He gets to go before you.' But then another worker said, 'He is not a Sudanese. He is an American.' After this, everything in the place got quiet and still. The people were backing away saying things like 'you don't want us to get in trouble with the government. George Bush is attacking everywhere. Just let this guy go before the pasha.' I could tell they weren't happy about it.

At this particular historical juncture, Fela benefitted from the Egyptians' fear of the United States' political agendas in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of importance to the discussion of race in this chapter is the way he was able to upend the conventional hierarchy between a person of African descent and an Egyptian through his alignment with a hegemonic foreign power. His inversion of the status hierarchy has even greater salience because it involved the elevation of a 'Sudanese' (a member of a traditionally subordinated group in Egypt) over a 'pasha' (a member of a historically elite caste in Egypt). Without the symbolic power of the United States, the restructuring of status and class positioning of Fela and the Egyptian pasha most likely would not have been possible.

Muslim Arab Sudanese are also aware of the power accorded to people of African descent who can prove that they are connected to a dominant Western nation-state. In Cairo, Muslim Arab Sudanese carry their passports because Egyptian authorities assume that they may be connected with terrorism (Fabos 2009). If they do not have them, they may be harassed and/or arrested. An

interview with Ahmed, a Muslim Arab Sudanese graduate student, revealed that some Northern Sudanese in Cairo also pretend to be African-American when they encounter Egyptian authorities. In the story that he recounted, he was stopped by the Egyptian police on a night when he had forgotten his passport. Concerned that he might be arrested, he decided to pretend that he was an African American. When asked to re-enact his performance of African American identity, he gestured wildly with his hands and utilized expressions that are found mostly in African-American hip-hop music. His stereotypical portrayal of African-Americans is commonly perceived as authentic by many Egyptians in Cairo. Because this characterization has achieved such currency, it leads many Cairenes to misrecognize African-Americans when they actually encounter them. In these instances, African-Americans come to understand the ways that their nationality affords them power and privilege in Egypt.

Michael, an African-American Muslim, argued that the privilege accorded to African-Americans by virtue of their national identity superseded other forms of discrimination they experienced in Egypt. As a forty-something expatriate married to an Egyptian, his exposure to Egyptians on a personal, professional, and social level was greater than that of any of the other participants in my study. Based upon his experiences, he argued that most Egyptians had a preference for whiteness. However, he felt that their preferences and differential treatment of African-Americans could not be interpreted in terms of race. As he put it, "They do not have the power to be racist. It is only under Islam that they have any power. I have encountered racist and discriminatory things in the name of Islam

but what occurs here is not anything like what occurred in the West. Remember that Anwar Sadat was president."

Michael's definition of race draws upon the theoretical perspectives of scholars who discussed race relations in terms of structural conditions and differential access to power and prestige (Banton 1967, Rex 1970, Omi and Winant 1994). He argued that the ideas of race, racialization, and racism were not meaningful in the Egyptian context for the majority of African-American expatriates because they only temporarily become a part of Egypt's social structure. Though he did have moments where Egyptians treated him differently from others, he ultimately felt that, as an American, they had no real power to discriminate against him.

Race, Nationality, Gender, Class

The perspectives of the above-mentioned informants can be juxtaposed with the views of informants who unequivocally explain their experience in terms of the intersection of forms of difference. While race and color were thought to be significant, the few informants who talked about the ways that multiple forms of identity came together to inform their experience were all women in graduate school programs in the United States. The most detailed response came from Lisa, an African-American PhD candidate who was in Cairo conducting ethnographic research among the Southern Sudanese. She said the following:

> I'm the visitor here. Cairo's not my Cairo. Egyptians will never be the Egyptians of my Afrocentric dreams. You gotta take the bad with the good and believe me you'll get a load of the bad: sexual harassment, ambiguous racial harassment, typical patriarch and the Hollywood portrayal of the West feed the former. The average working class and middle-class Egyptian believes that Western/American women are sexually free and as "liberated" as those they see in the movies. That poses problems and many times it has nothing to do with how conservatively you dress. You can be

> in a granny gown and a teenage boy will follow you down the street saying in broken English, "I love you. I love you. I want to fuck you." You'll have to be mentally strong to deal with that and Egyptians have self-hatred against African identity. This is a strange and complex point because Egyptian racial culture does not have the political teeth of American racism or cultural apartheid. But still it's something there, including the belief that African women are sexually exotic for instance. African-American women get this double whammy if you see what I mean.

Her comment draws attention to the impact of the intersectionality of identities for women of African descent in Egypt. Feminist theorists (Crenshaw 1991, Collins 1990) originally used the concept of intersectionality in the West to examine the significance of the interconnection between different forms of identity (i.e. race, class, gender, sexuality, et cetera) in "individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis 2008:74). For African-American women, this conceptual framework initially was intended to provide a way to understand their experience as individuals who existed within an interstitial space in discussions about race and gender. Leading feminist scholar Deborah King (1988), for instance, was concerned with how class, race, and gender marginalized and subordinated poor women and women of color. However, the focus of intersectionality studies expanded beyond that to examine how these forms of identity and difference simultaneously shaped and influenced the social and material realities of women's lives (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Yuval-Davis 1997, Anthias 1998, Collins 2000). In addition, these scholars were concerned with the role of race, class, and gender in the production and transformation of power relations.

Comparing Lisa's situation to that of Michael affords us a chance to carefully consider the nature of difference for women and men of African descent located in Cairo,

Egypt. Immediately it becomes clear that gender completely transforms the experience by exposing the women to patriarchal practices embodied in the sexual harassment that makes women of African descent feel exoticized and vulnerable in a way that men do not. As women, they are exposed to the institutionalization of male control over female mobility and sexuality in the Egyptian context.

Though women are present in the public domain in Egypt, the symbolic segregation of the sexes is still a part of everyday life. African-American women, such as Lisa, who are thrust into this environment attempt to negotiate it by utilizing the strategies of their Egyptian peers (i.e., wear more conservative clothing that could compared to "a granny gown"). Lisa's comments reveal that the conventional symbols of piety and respectability (i.e. veiling and modest dress) do not necessarily protect darker-skinned women from sexual harassment. On the streets of Cairo, women of African descent are still subject to sexual solicitations from Cairene men, even those who would identify themselves as practicing Muslims. While harassment is a fact of life for all women in Egypt, it differs for women of African descent because they are perceived to be more sexually licentious and, as a female Egyptian informant described, "hot- blooded." This sentiment implies that virtues – such as morality, respectability, piety, et cetera –are not accorded to foreign women of African descent (and most likely for foreign women of any hue).

Lisa, the twenty-six year old African-American graduate student who spoke about her experiences in the Egyptian context, was aware of the concept of intersectionality; however, in Cairo, the issue of power as mentioned by Michael came to the fore in a different way. The Egyptian "self-hatred against African identity" and the sexual

harassment were frustrating and potentially traumatizing. Without denying the use of sexual harassment as a mechanism of social control, it seems important to consider how the African-American woman's status, position, and agency influenced her experience and provided her with an agency that other women of African descent often did not have. At a minimum, it is a given that her nationality and class precluded the prejudice and harassment of Cairenes from having the same material consequences as it does for impoverished women of African descent in Cairo. The most obvious comparison would be with the previously discussed Southern Sudanese refugees who are in a highly marginal, subordinated, and vulnerable position in relation to Egyptians as a result of their poverty, refugee status, skin color, nationality, and religious identity. In examining blackness and African heritage in Cairo, therefore, it is important to emphasize that the category of black or African-descended female identity is not uniform.

Not the Place of My Afrocentric Dreams

The passing comment that Lisa makes about "Egyptians not being the Egyptians of my Afrocentric dreams" is critical to understanding the experience of some of the most frustrated people in my study. Though the majority of them are African-American, there were some from West Africa and Ethiopia. Their disillusionment and disenchantment was based upon the strong anti-African sentiment that they found among Egyptians. Lisa hinted at this sentiment when she said, "Egyptians have self-hatred against African identity." According to the research participants with this perspective, Egypt and Egyptians should be viewed as African. By rejecting their African heritage, they are demonstrating their self-hatred.

For those with an Afrocentric perspective, Egyptian comments and representations of Africa are extremely problematic. Not only are Egyptians demonstrating self-hatred, they are also denying the contributions of Africa and Africans to world civilization and global culture. Asefa, an Ethiopian expatriate residing in Egypt with his aunt asserted, argued that he felt that the distancing of Egyptians from Africa was absurd. As he put it, “Egyptians are definitely racist. I am constantly fighting with them on the streets. I find their viewpoints about darker-skinned people and Africans ridiculous. They seem to forget that Egypt is an African nation and that its ancient civilization was created by African people who look like us.”

Afrocentrism is a theoretical orientation, worldview, or ideology that is comprised of range of ideas and stances can be situated under one rubric. Despite the variations, the majority of Afrocentrists agree upon a set of fundamental ideas. First, Afrocentric scholars argue that the hegemonic scholarship in the Western world has a Eurocentric bias (Alkebulan 2007; Asante 1987; Asante 1988; Mazama 2001; Mazama 2003; Winters 1994). Second, they assert that there is a valid African worldview of history that has been suppressed by the Western World (Bernal 1987; Bernal 1996; Clarke 1993; Diop 1974; Karenga, et al. 1986) . Third, their research seeks to provide an African-oriented ideological framework for understanding the world. They generally assert that their goal is not only to educate but also to empower of African-descent (Akbar 1984; Asante 1992; Asante 1983; Early 1994; Roberts 2002; Winters 1994). Finally, many of them hope that this African-orientation will assist people of African descent in their struggles for self-determination (Clarke 1993).

Afrocentrism places people of African descent at the center of its examination of world history. African-descended people in the Afrocentric paradigm are viewed as a monolithic group with a single, unified culture, philosophy, and orientation. As an ideology, it emerged in the United States and the Caribbean in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It gained its greatest currency during the mid-twentieth century due to the African-American civil rights movement and African anticolonial movements. It has been situated within "earlier forms of black nationalist thought, the black aesthetic of the 1970s, black power of the 1960s, and Pan-Africanism in its various forms since the eighteenth century" (Early 1994: 86). Its ultimate purpose has been to provide the African Diaspora with a clearly-articulated cultural history that extends beyond their experience of slavery and oppression. As an academic enterprise, it has attempted to create a unified intellectual tradition for African and African-American Studies programs.

Afrocentric scholarship has been vigilant in its critique of anthropological categorizations of racial groups, particularly in Africa. Afrocentrists (Diop 1974; Clarke 1993) argue that the construction of North Africans as white and sub-Saharan Africans as black in the Western academy is a byproduct of white supremacist and colonial thinking. The research of Cheik Ante Diop (1981) has been particularly influential in the critique of the anthropological classification of North Africans as more closely related to "Caucasoids" of Europe and West Asia. Ethnic groups (such as Nubians, Ethiopians, and Somalis) are often singled out as evidence of the arbitrariness of Western classifications of human populations.

Afrocentrism is most often critiqued for its position on Egypt, which they call Kemet to mean the "land of the blacks". From the Afrocentric perspective, ancient

Egyptian civilization is indebted to Kerma and the civilizations of Nubia (Bernal 1987; Clarke 1993; Diop 1974; Van Sertima 1985; Van Sertima 1991). Ancient Egyptians, according to these scholars, were black. The diversity of the contemporary Egyptian population, therefore, is the result of the intermingling of the ancient Egyptians (i.e. the Nubians not the Copts) and their invaders.

The most widely discussed Afrocentric text is *Black Athena* (1987). In this three-volume text, Martin Bernal argues that Greek civilization is indebted to Egyptian culture for its ancient philosophy and civilization. More significant for Afrocentric theories was his assertion that Socrates, Cleopatra, and the ancient Egyptians were black. He argues that "Greece had been invaded by Africa in the middle of the second millennium, that Greek religion and mystery systems were based on Egyptian prototypes and that what is called Greek philosophy is in fact the secret wisdom of Egyptian lodges of a Masonic type" (Bernal 1996:86). Bernal's perspective and Afrocentrism in general, was widely critiqued in the American academy in the 1990s by scholars who asserted that its hypotheses and arguments are spurious pseudohistory (Berlinerblau 1999; Lefkowitz and Rogers 1996; Snowden 1997).

EGYPTIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE, NATIONALISM, & RACE CONSTRUCTION

The most vocal opponent of Afrocentrism in Egypt in the twenty-first century has been the former Egyptian Chief of Antiquities Zahi Hawass. [37] Hawass' opposition to the idea of Egypt as an African nation can be situated within a genealogy of Egyptian social scientists that have drawn on European anthropological insights about racial difference to make claims about the national and racial identity of modern Egyptians (El Shakry 2007). According to Omnia El Shakry (2007), Egyptian social scientists from the late nineteenth

to mid-twentieth centuries transformed Western anthropological racialist ideas about racial types or stocks (*al-sulatat al-bashariyya*) into discussions about the national particularity and personality of the Egyptian populace. Their formulation relied on the concept of pharaonicism, which is an ideology that strives to demonstrate the biological and cultural continuity between ancient and modern Egyptians. To demonstrate cultural links, they examined ancient and modern Egyptian practices to find shared patterns in rituals, customs, religious practices, et cetera. Finding these commonalities served as the first step to their larger objective of demonstrating the trajectory of Egyptian culture from an ancient civilized past toward a progressive future that was akin to that of Western Europe.

Connecting Egyptian civilization to Europe's involved a multilevel approach. Relying heavily on the cultural diffusion theory of Grafton Elliot Smith, these social scientists first contended that "Egyptian civilization was autochthonous and not imported, and that ancient Egypt (not Greece) was the source of civilization itself (and hence of European civilization)" (El Shakry 2007:64). Second, they used racial classificatory schemes to assert that Egyptians were a part of the "Mediterranean" rather than the "Negro" race. Finally, as a Mediterranean (i.e. European people) descended from people who originated all civilization, they declared that Western history was not only indebted to Egypt but that Western history and Egypt's were one in the same.

The social scientific perspectives were well-received by early Egyptian nationalists who were either invested in a territorially-bound secular nationalism or a pan-Arab nationalism (Jankowski 1991, Baron 1991). According to El Shakry, biological anthropologist 'Abbas' 'Ammar used serological and anthropometric data to

scientifically determine the racial makeup of Egyptians in the northeastern province of Sharqiya. Because of the diversity of the Egyptian populace in Sharqiya, he hoped that he would be able to ascertain the "ethnological uniqueness of Egypt despite its ethnic heterogeneity" (El Shakry 2007:69). The results of the serological research indicated that the people of that province could be perceived as an intermediate racial type between Egyptian and Arabs. Connecting 'Ammar's work to classical Arab and Orientalist historians and genealogists, particularly Ibn Khaldun, his research further supported Egyptian nationalists' claims of putative Arab and Egyptian ancestry, a necessary condition for both the establishment of the modern Egyptian nation-state and the Egyptian construction of race.

Unequal Relations and the Unity of the Nile Valley

Brackette Williams (1989) has pointed out that the process of nation building involves race-making wherein the blood of some citizens is considered to be foundational to the development of the nation-state and the blood of others, though necessary, is dispensable and meant to serve the dominant members of the society. She argues that nationalist ideologies insist that all groups, regardless of their status and positioning, prioritize the agendas of the nation-state and sacrifice for the greater good of all. This process involves a "dialectic of sacrifice and betrayal" that includes an assessment of the contributions and suffering of competing groups. Subordinated groups, she says, "produce competing sets of criteria as they stake their claim to a place in the nation and attempt to keep others from claiming undue place" (Williams 1989:436).

William's commentary is an exegesis of the nation-building. It includes contestations between various ethnic and socioeconomic groups as they strive to build a

collective identity that can be called a nation. Understandings and interpretations of their contributions to the development of the nation-state, later embodied in national myths, depend upon their position and status within the existing social order. The narrative posits that those who sacrifice to share in the nation-building process are allegedly honored and guaranteed membership; those who do not sacrifice, defend, and/or avenge the emerging nation are excluded. Williams astutely suggests that this narrative is problematic for subordinated groups whose sacrifices may not be rewarded in the same manner as that of the dominant or elite within the society.

This line of thought that situates the subordinated and the dominant groups in clear opposition takes on a different cast in the context of Egypt where the bid for national independence involved an attempt to simultaneously oust the British and establish unity with the Sudan. Interpreting Egypt's calls for the unity of the Nile Valley in its various phases is critical to understanding the emergence of the modern construction of racial identity in contemporary Egypt. Its earliest manifestations in the nineteenth century are considered to be foundational to Egyptian understandings of themselves as legitimately superior to the Sudanese as the more "modernized" nation-state along the Nile. At the same time, the Egyptian continued assertion of "brotherhood" with the Sudanese disrupts traditional understanding of racial dynamics (Fabos 2009).

Anita Fabos explains how the Nile Valley Project (i.e. the call for the unification of Egypt and the Sudan) underpins the ambiguous and ambivalent relationship that Egyptians have with the Sudanese. In her work, she argues that one of the defining features of the Egyptian-Sudanese relationship is their simultaneous desire to demonstrate their affinity and to create distance by emphasizing their particularities. Though they are

"brothers along the Nile," their status is not equal. Because of the increasingly large gap in their power differentials, Sudanese continuously oppose Egyptian entreaties for unity, preferring to assert their identity as members of an independent nation-state rather than "being subordinate minorities within Egypt's hegemonic vision" (Fabos 2009:54).

In the most astute and influential discussion of the sociocultural construction of race in the Nile Valley, Eve Troutt Powell provides the historical context for the development of Egyptian-Sudanese relations and the concomitant construction of modern Egyptian racial ideologies. She locates the emergence of the expression of Egyptian and Sudanese difference along racial lines in the writings of Egyptian intellectuals, such as Rifa'a Rafi' Al-Tahtawi , who were sent to the Sudan on civilizing missions during *Turkiyya,* or the Ottoman Egyptian administration of the Sudan from 1821-85. By the mid-nineteenth century, she tells us Egyptians serving as colonial administrators for the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1899-1956) began to construct their racial identity in relation to the "inferior" and "less civilized" Sudanese.[38] In the context of colonialism in the nineteenth century, Egyptian began to perceive the Sudanese as simultaneously younger brothers in need of their elder brother's tutelage, ignorant and superstitious pagans, and "black slaves."

The construction of race in the Egyptian context can be identified by a focus on phenotype, kinship, and ancestry. Egypt constructs itself as a nation whose ancestry is Arab, ancient Egyptian, or Mediterranean and not African. The distancing from Africa is the linchpin of the construction of both their national and racial identity because it concerns finding a way to separate Egypt not only from the continent of Africa itself but from all of the negative things that Africa has signified in the Arab-Islamic world. The

literal and figurative embodiments of Africa, for the Egyptians, are the Sudanese people. In the twenty-first century, the relationship of Egyptians to the Sudanese can be extended to people of African descent, whom Egyptians treat as though they are a monolith. In calling diverse peoples of African descent "Sudanese," it can be argued that Egyptians are using the word Sudanese (*sudaniyin*) in the traditional sense to refer to a darker skinned person of inferior status, an appellation that was once reserved for enslaved non-Muslim populations (Fabos 2009).

CONCLUSION: DISTANCING EGYPT FROM AFRICA

This chapter has explored Egyptian and non-Egyptian African-descended perspectives concerning race and color in contemporary Egypt. Drawing upon the work of Eve Troutt Powell (2003) and Omnia El-Shakry (2007), I have argued that there is a construction of race in twenty-first century Egypt that has become embedded in everyday thought and social life. The Egyptian sociocultural construction of race draws upon ideologies of difference that emerged from the Arab-Islamic enslavement of Africans. These ideologies became a modern construction of race in the context of colonization as the Egyptians are simultaneously attempting to oust the British and colonize the Sudan (Powell 2003). Egyptian social scientists provide the intellectual underpinnings of the modern racial and national ideologies as way of assisting Egyptian nationalists who wanted to construct the idea of a particularized Egyptian identity in relation to both Europe/West and the Arab-Islamic world (El Shakry 2007).The national and racial construct that emerges is the idea of Egypt as pharaonic/ancient, Arab, and Mediterranean but not African (El Shakry 2007).

As a burgeoning modern nation-state, Egypt is heavily invested in the Unity of the Nile Valley project, or the unification of Egypt with the Sudan. The Sudanese are envisioned as their kin, or "brothers along the Nile", who are in need of their tutelage to become modern and civilized. Through the various phases and iterations of the Nile Valley Project, Egypt develops an ambiguous racialized relationship with the Sudan that involves simultaneously drawing the Sudanese near as their kin relations and pushing them away because of Egypt's perception of them as darker-skinned inferior others (Fabos 2009).

In the twenty-first century, the understanding of darker skinned people as an extension of the Sudanese is a characteristic of Egyptian relations with people from Africa and of the African Diaspora. Racialization of Africans and African-descended people occurs in daily life in Cairo as Egyptians label and interact with them as if they were only "Sudanese" (*sudaniyin*) in the traditional rather than the national sense. By this I am referring to a historical definition of Sudanese that emerges in the context of Islamic slavery in the Nile Valley and is used to refer to "enslaved, non-Muslim darker skinned people of inferior status" (Fabos 2009) rather than to citizens of the independent, modern postcolonial nation-state of the Sudan.

Darker-skinned Egyptians, particularly if they are Nubian, are treated as if they are not truly Egyptian in Cairo. They are associated with the people of the Sudan, the national group that Egypt juxtaposes itself against the most in its formulation of its racial identity. In addition, by virtue of their darker-skinned complexions they are equated with sub-Saharan Africa, the region of the world that Egyptians are trying to disassociate themselves with the most. In the upcoming chapter, I discuss how Egyptian identity is

connected to virtues—morality, respectability, piety, et cetera – that are not accorded to internally colonized dark-skinned ‘others’, such as the Nubians, as well as to foreigners of African descent.

The next chapter connects this chapter’s focus on racial and color constructions and the experiences of people of African descent to the perceptions of beauty and ideal womanhood in Egypt. Egyptian standards of beauty and construction of ideal womanhood are intertwined with ideas about respectability. The connection that Egyptians make between aesthetics, morality, and respectability is embodied in the “re-veiling” phenomenon of the last few decades. Egyptian women discuss their decision to veil as a desire to symbolically express their commitment to Islam and to indicate to men in the public sphere that they are *respectable women who should be left alone* (my emphasis) (MacLeod 1991, Mahmood 2005). In that chapter I also examine the contestation over the ideal image for respectable modern women in popular magazines, literature, and film in mid-to-late twentieth century and twenty-first century Egypt.

In considering the issue of color, my research indicates that darker-skinned women are *absent* in Egyptian media representations of ideal beauty and womanhood. As the aforementioned discussion of the experience of people of African descent indicates, whether married or unmarried, symbols of piety and respectability (such as the veil and Islamic dress) do not necessarily protect darker-skinned women from sexual advances in Cairo. Darker-skinned women are still subject to sexual solicitations from Cairene men, even those who would identify themselves as Muslim. In popular media and literature, darker-skinned women (and men) are portrayed as sexually licentious, less intelligent, and as one informant stated, “hot blooded.” At a minimum, these depictions of darker-

skinned people suggests that the sociocultural construction of race and color outlined in this chapter can be seen as a part of a broader narrative or discourse about black bodies in Egyptian popular culture.

CHAPTER FOUR:
REPRESENTATIONS OF IDEAL WOMANHOOD
IN EGYPTIAN NATIONALIST THOUGHT AND POPULAR MEDIA

Introduction

In July of 1934, a caricature of two Egyptian women graced the cover of the Egyptian magazine *Al-Ithnayn*. The caption for the image read, "Beauty of Today, Beauty of the Past." The woman in the center was a fair-skinned bobbed woman who was supposed to be a representation of the ideal modern beauty for the Egyptian middle and upper-middle classes in the early twentieth century. In the image, she stared directly at the viewers and, presumably, the public sphere. She was contrasted with a wheat-colored, veiled Egyptian woman on her left who was supposed to represent the traditional feminine aesthetic ideal. The traditional veiled female figure was faced sideways to show that she upheld the culture's traditional values by engaging the world outside of her home in a more indirect manner. For the editors of *Al-Ithnayn*, the veiled beauty was no longer desirable or progressive. In their magazine, they promoted the idea that the traditional woman needed to be pushed aside for the modern woman who could potentially blend and mingle with foreigners from the Western world (Armbrust 1996).

According to Fadwa El-Guindi (1999), the women's positioning and attire highlight the crucial division between the *baladi* and *ifrangi* in Cairo. As stated in chapter one's description of Cairo's population and communities, *baladi* and *ifrangi* are cultural concepts that speak to the divide between elite and non-elite urban Egyptians in Cairo (El-Guindi 1999a; El-Messiri 1978)[39]. Located at opposite ends of the socioeconomic hierarchy, the *ifrangi*: *baladi* concepts are analogous to the idea of haves: have-nots in American culture (Early 1993). Though wealthy Egyptians are generally called *ifrangi*,

this term historically referred to the foreign elite rulers, i.e. the Turks, Mamluks, French, and British. *Baladi* historically denoted native Egyptians, particularly the Cairene Muslim community (Early 1993; El-Messiri 1978). Yet, the *ifrangi*: *baladi* concept is complicated by the fact that the terms do not inevitably correspond to Egyptians of a particular socioeconomic class. Wealthy Egyptians found in the traditional quarters of Cairo are often referred to as *baladi* and lower-income Cairenes who attempt to emulate Westernized elite and foreigners in terms of their consumption and behavioral practices are called *ifrangi*.

In Egyptian society, *ifrangi* is also juxtaposed with *baladi* in terms of cultural attributes (Early 1993; El-Messiri 1978). *Baladi* are stereotypically resourceful, authentic, religious, and honorable in contrast to the gullible, superficial, nonreligious, and pampered *ifrangi*. Cairenes positively declare that *baladi* are loyal to the country and the traditional values associated with Egypt (El Messiri 1978). My research indicates that members of the middle classes and upper class may also perceive *baladi* negatively as ignorant, low-class, and tasteless Egyptians. Conversely, *baladi* contrast themselves with *ifrangi* who they insist are more aligned with values associated with foreigners (Early 1993; El-Messiri 1978).

The differences in class positioning that the two women may have evoked for an Egyptian viewer in the *Al-Ithnayn* illustration are important. However, the veiled woman in the image most likely is not a *baladi* woman but a veiled upper-middle class or upper-class woman who traditionally wore it as a sign of her elite status. Historically, the veil was a marker of affluence and an indication that one resided in an urban milieu since wearing the veil was impractical and unsuitable for rural peasant women working in the

fields. The face coverings worn by wealthy women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reinforced cultural notions about appropriate relations of familiarity and distance between men and women. Women's veils were worn in the presence of male strangers and removed in the presence of close kin. In elite households in urban settings, face coverings symbolically mirrored the *haramlik* portion of the house because they allowed a woman's identity to remain hidden behind a screen, particularly while she observed the activities of men in reception rooms (Early 1993). Rather than simply being a restrictive form of dress imposed on women, the veil was also a garment that women used to communicate nonverbally. As Arlene MacLeod explains, the veil served "multiple purposes for women – as attraction, as warning, as reminder of kin and social obligations" (540).

Sherifa Zuhur (1992) and Beth Baron (1991) remind us that in the early twentieth century some upper middle class and elite endorsed sex segregation, veiling, and the seclusion of women. Similar to their unveiled counterparts, these women were concerned about the deterioration of the social conditions of pre-colonial Egypt. Rather than fighting for greater access to the public sphere – an arena that they associated with men – they clung to existing conservative cultural prescriptions and religious interpretations about women's roles in society. Because Egyptians lived as colonized people, some of them insisted that Egyptian women did not have specific issues regarding their own social conditions to advocate for. They tended to wholly identify with the masculinist nationalist sentiments that existed in the Egyptian anticolonial nationalist movement (Badran 1995).

In the upcoming sections of this chapter, I discuss secular and Islamist nationalist perspectives about women's status and roles in Egypt in the twentieth century. I connect these nationalist ideologies with women's removal of the veil in the early twentieth century and re-adoption of it during the Islamic resurgence of the late twentieth century. I examine the ways that Islamic dress signifies notions of modernity and embodies cultural precepts about modesty and ideal womanhood. Furthermore, I discuss representations of women in popular media as well as beauty advertisements in fashion magazines and billboards to show the influence of secular and Islamist perspectives about ideal womanhood.

Throughout this examination of representations of ideal womanhood, I strive to show the connections between gender, Egyptian nationalist ideologies, and race. I discuss the Egyptian popular theater act Kishkish Bey and part of the film *Sa'idi fi Gamaa Amrikkiyya* (An Upper Egyptian at the American University in Cairo) to argue that ideal Egyptian womanhood is constructed in relation to Sudanese womanhood. The representations of Sudanese men and women in the theater, literature and film suggest that these forms of media contribute to the modern Egyptian discourse about race and national identity.

Egyptian Nationalism, the Woman Question, and Race

The *Al-Ithnayn* illustration alludes to the key debates among Egyptian nationalists about women's status and modernity (Abu-Lughod 1998b; Badran 1995; Badran 2001; Baron 1991; El-Guindi 1999b; Guindi 1981; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Kandiyoti 1991; Kandiyoti 1996). These debates have been subsumed under the phrase the "Woman Question" (Baron 2005). The "Woman Question" deals with contestations over women's

education and work, seclusion and veiling, marriage and divorce. In the early twentieth century, Egyptian secular nationalists and feminists called for women's increased access to education, unveiling, greater mixing between the sexes, limits to polygyny and reforms regarding men's unilateral right to divorce (Badran 1995; Baron 1991). These nationalists measured the progress and modernity of the nation-state by Egyptian women's position within the society. As a consequence, they advanced nationalist agendas that promoted new societal roles for women that involved greater participation of women in the public sphere.

Their desire for women's increased participation in the public sphere was embodied in the archetype of the "New Woman" (Badran 1995). The "Beauty of Today" can be thought of as a representation of this figure. Her politics are inscribed upon her body as evidenced by her attire, hairstyle, and presumed stance toward the world. Supporters of this female archetype asserted that lack of education and the continuation of traditional attitudes toward women were the reason for women's plight in Egypt. Therefore, they called for the cultivation of women's capabilities as an essential criterion and prerequisite for the development of Egypt as a modern civilization and nation-state (Badran 1995; Baron 2005; El-Shakry 1998; Hoffman-Ladd 1987).

Egyptian magazines and theater commented on the transition in the perceptions of ideal womanhood and lifestyle among upper middle class and elite Egyptian secular nationalists. According to Walter Armbrust (1996), these Egyptians were moving away from traditions, such as veiling, toward a modified Europeanized aesthetic and way of life. Yet, they still wanted to remain "authentically Egyptian" by valorizing aspects of their local traditions that could clearly differentiate them from the rulers that they

despised. The primary subject discussed among them as nationalists was resisting British authorities, who they felt subjected the Egyptian population to innumerable humiliations. As discussed in the previous chapter, these Egyptians also wanted to create an affinity with their European colonizers by distancing themselves from “uncivilized” Africans (mostly embodied in the Sudanese) (El-Shakry 2007; Fábos 2008; Powell 2000; Powell 2001; Powell 2003).

The secular nationalist feminists who were cast as “New Women” expressed support for Egyptian nationalists’ agendas through the development of politically-oriented press for women (Baron 1994; Baron 2005). They actively participated in political demonstrations and other activities of national political parties (e.g. organizing, fundraising, creating charities for working-class and peasant women, et cetera). However, they did not seek the right to vote as their Western counterparts. After Egypt attained its national independence from Britain, liberal secular nationalist feminists hoped that equal rights for women would be granted by their male counterparts.

In contrast to liberal secular nationalists who supported women’s entrée into the public sphere, religiously-oriented conservative nationalists of the early twentieth century critiqued the Western orientation of secular nationalists. They blamed Western influence for the moral degeneration of Egyptian society and argued that secular Egyptians blindly imitated Europeans. These nationalists supported domestic and educational rights for women only insofar as the reforms demonstrated an adherence to local cultural traditions and conservative interpretations of Islam. They drew upon Islamic history to extol women’s domestic roles, veiling, and seclusion (Badran 1995; Baron 1991; Guindi 1981; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Hoffman-Ladd 1987; Zuhur 1992). More specifically, the

lifestyles of the wives and female descendants of the Prophet Muhammad functioned as one of their greatest referents to counter secular representations of ideal modern womanhood (Zuhur 1992).

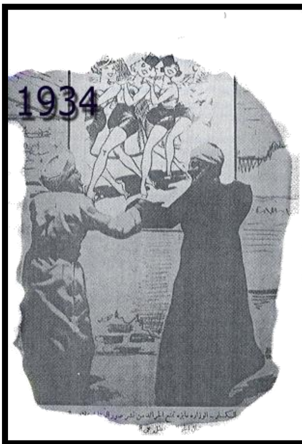
Despite their differences, both secular and religiously-oriented nationalists insisted that women's greatest contribution to the nationalist movement was as homemakers and mothers who instilled moral values. Moral authority, according to Egyptian nationalists, had "greater influence on society from the point of view of the nations' progress and regression than did the influence of governmental systems, laws, and religions" (Baron 1991:282-3). As "mothers of the nation," all women needed to be educated so that they could properly raise their children and instill patriotic virtues (Baron 1991; Baron 2005; Shakry 1998). Uneducated, "backward" mothers were detrimental not only to the family and the status of women, but also to the Egyptian nation itself.

Anticolonial secular nationalist agendas focused on creating "modern" Egyptian mothers who could raise their children according to European pedagogies about childrearing (Shakry 1998). Following European teachings, the management of the household was reconstituted so that women reared children who would be healthy, industrious, and productive citizens. As discourses about mothering became central to the formation of Egyptian national identity, the majority of women, regardless of their political persuasion, remained relegated to the domestic sphere. However, a few elite women like Huda Sha'arawi and Safiyya Zaghlul used this nationalist idea of "mothers of the nation" to gain greater access to society and politics (Baron 2005). Nationalist

thought, therefore, simultaneously constricted women in traditional roles and upheld them as the ultimate embodiment and representation of Egypt as a nation.

Islamist reformers used the idea of "mothers of the nation" to assert that Islam was not antithetical to modernity. For childrearing, these Islamists promoted an indigenous tradition of moral and religious pedagogy geared toward the cultivation of the body, disciplining of the self, and the formation of moral character (Doumato and Starrett 2007; Shakry 1998; Starrett 1996; Starrett 1998). Western rearing practices supplemented the Islamic tradition that operated within the context of the Islamic community (*umma*). Accordingly, Islamic customs and traditions were not to be viewed as backward; they simply produced different types of modern citizens.

Figure 8: Comedians Naguib Al-Rihani and Ali Al-Kassar in Kishkish Bey, Image from Mass Culture and Modernism (Armbrust 1996: 81)



In the world of entertainment, comedians Naguib al-Rihani and Ali Al-Kassar were renowned for their performance of Kishkish Bey, a political satire written by Ali Al-Kassar. Its content was laden with innuendos about the key issues of national and cultural identity that had meaning for the middle class and elite audiences who attended the theatre. Naguib al-Rihani's character Kishkish Bey was a wealthy Upper Egyptian village chief (*umda*) "who regularly made a fool of himself in Cairo" (Powell 2001:31). He was accompanied by his companion Osman 'Abd al-Basit, or *Barbari Masr al-Wahid (* the one and only Nubian of Egypt), who Ali Al-Kassar played in blackface (Powell 2001). Though much of the comedy involved teasing Osman about his dark skin and racial background, Osman also served as the primary figure who vented Egyptian frustrations about British occupation and racism.

As stated above, Egyptian nationalists debated the role that Egyptian women would play in the nationalist movement and the extent to which these women should adopt Western habits, mannerisms, and clothing. In a well-known Kishkish Bey image, Osman Abd al-Basit and Kishkish Bey are standing in front of a poster with images of women in revealing bathing suits. Osman says, "Why does the ministry want to ban pictures of women in bathing suits?" Kishkish replies, "Because the newspapers are putting the cinema out of business!" (Armbrust 1996:81)

Middle-class and elite audiences who viewed this image would have been knowledgeable about nationalist debates about not only the appropriateness of women's adoption of Western attire, but contestations over giving women greater access to the public sphere. Nonetheless, this exchange between Osman and Kishkish about the degeneration of public morality and the immodest dress of Egyptian women is ironic in light of Egyptian nationalists' treatment of Sudanese women and portrayals of the Sudan. Scholars have asserted that Egyptian anticolonial nationalist struggles were literally and metaphorically fought over the bodies of unlawfully enslaved women from the Sudan (Baron 2005; El-Shakry 2007; Fábos 2008; Fabos 1999; Powell 2003). At times, these Sudanese women were brought to either slave markets or to the trials of their enslavers in tattered, ragged, and revealing clothing (Powell 2003). In Egyptian cartoons, the Sudan was often depicted as a "highly sexualized, nearly naked black woman with exaggerated facial and sexual features" who was juxtaposed with "a light-skinned modestly dressed and veiled upper class woman" (Baron 2005:26). By keeping these issues in the forefront, the discussion of gendered morality and national identity between Kishkish and Osman becomes loaded with irony.

Ali Al-Kassar's characterization of Osman is complex. Osman, not Kishkish, is the one who openly discusses controversial and sensitive political sentiments that were of concern to Egyptian nationalists in the early twentieth century. However, his articulation of their concerns is most likely due to the fact that Osman is half-Sudanese and half-Nubian. For both the British and Egyptians, his ethnic and national identities make him a marginal and ambiguous figure in Egyptian society. He, like Bedouins, Syrians, Copts, among others, continuously has to justify his right to national belonging and citizenship (Baron 2005). Discussing Osman's position and role in the Kishkish Bey sketches, Powell (2001) writes,

> Osman the Nubian is always answering for his blackness, he is the one to prove to the other characters and to the audience the truth about nationalism. He is a stalwart Nubian defender of the Egyptian heartland, speaking and signing in a language that all Egyptians could understand, about the meaning and duties and responsibilities of being an Egyptian (Powell 2001:37-38).

Al-Kassar's depiction of Osman is drastically different than late-twentieth and early twenty-first century representations of Egyptian Nubians and Sudanese. In Al-Kassar's skits, Osman is given a voice. He is allowed to defend his ethnic and regional heritage as well as his skin color (Powell 2001). Nonetheless, he is also portrayed as a misfit, a figure of fun in need of an Egyptian's leadership and guidance. In this regard, he embodies the idea of the unity of the Nile Valley (i.e. the political unification of Egypt and the Sudan), a political concept that is not only very important to Egyptian nationalists but is central to the Egyptian construction of race.

By the 1940s and 1950s, Egyptians had begun to shift their attention away from the theatre to film. This period, which has been called the "golden-age of Egyptian cinema" (Shafik 1998) was celebrated because of Egyptian independence from the

British. As the secular nationalists focused on shaping modern Egypt, popular movie stars, such as Leila Murad and Yousef Wahbi (see figure 9), were the cinematic models who provided Egyptians with entertainment that reflected a modern Egypt that was comparable to countries in the Western world. Accordingly, many secular-oriented nationalist women adopted Western fashion to express their desire for modern education and lifestyles. For these women, the veil connoted the relegation of women to the domestic sphere and the limiting women's participation in public life (Hoffman-Ladd 1987). While the veil served as a marker of upper-class status in the late nineteenth century, in the twentieth century it signified backwardness and outmoded traditions to secularly-oriented liberals. This attitude was particularly prevalent after World War II and independence when Egypt pursued a Western-influenced modernization (Armbrust 1996; Baron 2005; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Hale 1996; Jankowski 1991; Kandiyoti 1991; Powell 2003; Singerman, et al. 1996; Tibi 1997).

Figure 9: Egyptian film stars Leila Murad and Yousef Wahbi; Image from www.wikipedia.com

During my fieldwork, Egyptians asserted that the public loved entertainers of this era because of the feeling that they conveyed to the audience. Hawaa, a 40-year old Christian Egyptian woman who worked as a teacher, explained that her love for entertainers of this era was imbued by her parents who often discussed the actors' personality and "spirit." Speaking about the actress Leila Fawzi, she said:

Figure 10: Umm Kulthum, Image from www.wikipedia.com

> This thing about the spirit is extremely important because a woman can be beautiful but if she doesn't have a warm spirit, people will not like her. There was a famous actress named Leila Fawzi. She was *gamila keward bes barda* (beautiful as a flower but cold). She wasn't popular in Egypt despite her beauty because of her coldness. People would say that they could not digest her (*mish hadmha*).

Hawaa contrasted the attractive, modern Leila Fawzi with the highly celebrated and well-loved nationalist singer Umm Kulthum (see figure 10) who more than any other entertainer embodied the revolution and independence movements of the 1950s. Loved for her singing ability, passion, wit, and political activities, Egyptians like Hawaa were enthralled by her though she was not deemed attractive. To emphasize the Egyptian lack of concern with physical appearance, she exclaimed, "Umm Kulthum had the opportunity to marry three times. Three times! And this woman was ugly!! Three times she could've married and I can't even get one. Can you believe this?!"

Islamic Dress and Ideal Womanhood

By the late 1970s, the problems with the secular orientation to the Egyptian modernist project were becoming clear to Egyptians. Recent university graduates found that their educational attainments did not provide the social advancement promised by the nationalist leaders during the Nasser era (Amin 2001). For these members of the rising or "new middle class," the Islamic revival or resurgence provided an alternative that included not only questioning the validity of western modernity but extolling the virtues of Islam. Rather than promoting the idea that Egypt would have a better and more innovative future by moving beyond tradition, these Islamists argued that Egypt would progress by using its Islamic heritage as a blueprint for how they should organize their lives.

While the economic crisis may have been the impetus for participation in the Islamic revival, the Islamic-oriented nationalist and modernist stance that they adopted in its place had roots in nineteenth century Egypt (Baron 1991; Jankowski 1991). According to James Jankowski (1991), early Egyptian nationalism emphasized the distinctiveness of the land and people of Egypt and called for continued loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. With the development of Egyptian social science, Egyptian nationalists promoted the idea that Egypt had been a separate civilization since the pharaonic era (El-Shakry 2007). At the same time, Egyptian nationalists argued that allegiance to the Ottoman Empire served a dual purpose; it simultaneously served as a bulwark against British imperialism and embodied the Islamic *umma* (Baron 1991; Jankowski 1991; Tibi 1997).

The Arab component of Islamic nationalism in Egypt gained currency under Gamal Abdul Nasser when he adopted an Arab nationalist and socialist stance to protect Egypt against western militaristic aggression and economic exploitation (Tibi 1997). According to Galal Amin (2001), his strategic nationalism did not appeal to some Egyptian Islamists and secularists because it did not valorize the greatness of ancient Egyptian and Islamic culture. Their criticism points to a key difference between Egyptian and Arab-Islamic nationalism of the twentieth century. In contrast to other Arab-Islamic contexts, the Islamic-oriented nationalism and conception of modernity in Egypt involves a blend of: (1) Western rationalist, philosophical and scientific ideologies, (2) an acknowledgment of Egypt's Pharaonic civilization, and (3) a call to return to the greatness imbued by its Islamic heritage (Dawisha 2003; Hopwood 2000; Tibi, et al. 1990; Tibi 1997) . At key historical moments, one of these aspects of their notion of

modernity has taken precedence over the others. However, at all times, the drive to blend these different perspectives has always been present .

In postcolonial Egypt, Islamists can be contrasted with secularists in the ways that they understand the nature and appropriate governance of the society. While secularists insist that postcolonial Egypt should restrict religion to a private spiritual domain, the Islamists suggest that the nation-state should be a religious one. More specifically, they argue that the choice that Egyptians need to make is not between a civil and religious state but between an Islamic and un-Islamic state (Hatem 1998). This Islamic state would rely not only on Islamic ideologies but on Islamic law (or *sharia*) for its legislative and judicial systems. In addition, they call for the selective incorporation of Western ideals of bourgeois marriage and modern regimes of power to manage and discipline Egyptian citizens (Abu-Lughod 1998a; Armbrust 1996; Fluehr-Lobban 2006; Hatem 1998).

During the reign of Anwar Sadat (1970 to 1981), the Muslim Brotherhood, i.e. a faction of the Islamic opposition, was accorded a legitimate institutional space within the political arena. As briefly mentioned above, the Islamic opposition provided an Islamist-modernist discourse for the new middle class who were facing social and economic pressure toward the end of the late twentieth century (El-Guindi 1999b; El-Guindi 1981; Hatem 1998; Hoffman-Ladd 1987; Ibrahim 1982; Sherif 1999; Zuhur 1992). A key part of their discourse was arguing that middle-class university-educated women should "adopt an Islamic style of dress as a visual sign of the synthesis of Islam and modernity" (Hatem 1998:92). The ideal womanhood embodied in the twentieth century illustration of the veiled "Beauty of the Past" was revisited once more. A woman's attractiveness

was measured by her indirectness, modesty, and preservation of her beauty for her husband and the inner sanctum of her home.

Unlike *baladi* women and the ideal woman valorized by conservative nationalists of the early-twentieth century, the "New Veiled Woman" maintained a presence in the public sphere. She had gained greater access to education and employment as a result of government reforms that began during Nasser's reign from 1956 to 1970. Her employment outside of the home allowed her to contribute to the economic well-being of her family. Islamic dress (*ziyy al-Islami*), often reduced to the veil (*higab*), served as a sign of her moral virtue, cultural purity, and her support for Islamic modernity in Egypt (Bauer 1985; Guindi 1981; Hoffman-Ladd 1987; MacLeod 1991; Zuhur 1992).

By the late twentieth century, Islamic dress had become a public way for "Newly Veiled Women" to differentiate themselves from Egyptian women in Western attire. Women who adopted this form of dress hoped that it would urge men to treat them with dignity as mandated by Islamic tradition. As a symbolic extension of the secluded space of the home, the veil and Islamic dress was supposed to protect women from the frequent harassment and criticism that women experienced in the streets and on public transportation (Hoffman-Ladd 1987; Zuhur 1992). Though it was initially thought to be an odd and anachronistic practice, their perspective was eventually adopted by the majority of Egyptian women in Cairo and co-opted by Egyptian men in the Islamist movement who asserted that "only in Islam can a woman find her true dignity (Hoffman-Ladd 1987:24).

Scholarly examinations of the adoption of the veil have discussed this act on the part of Egyptian women as a patriarchal bargain, a way of accommodating protest, and as

a renegotiation of gender relations (Hatem 1988; Hatem 1998; Hoodfar 1997; Kandiyoti 1988; MacLeod 1991; Sherif 1999; Werner 1997). These terms all explain a coping strategy that emerges in a context where the normative patriarchal social order of gendered relations has been altered. According to these frameworks, as middle class women in Egypt gained access to education and wage labor, a shift in the material and social relations at the household level ensued. Rather than risk the loss of protection and respectability that the Islamic patriarchal order provided, these scholars suggested that these women opted for a symbolic gesture, i.e. the adoption of the veil, as a way of signifying their commitment to the traditional gendered social relations.

The adoption of the veil is considered to be a compromise adopted in a context where the existing gender ideologies have not changed despite the socioeconomic transformation. Late twentieth century Cairo necessitated women's work outside of the home if middle class families wanted to either achieve or maintain the status and prestige associated with their socioeconomic class (Hoodfar 1997; Kandiyoti 1988; MacLeod 1991; Mule and Barthel 1992; Sherif 1999). Sexual relations in contemporary Cairo must be situated within an environment where many are being denied access to marriage and licit sexual unions by virtue of their social positioning (as youth, impoverished, et cetera) and an economy that consists of high underemployment and unemployment. Twenty-first century Cairene society (and Egyptian society as a whole) differs markedly from previous eras in that it has become increasingly intolerant of same-sex relationships in the private and public sphere[40] and is occurring in a context where the nuclear family has become the ideal and possibly more of the norm. As such, we must use caution in making assumptions about the ways in which power and patriarchy are informing 21st century

sexual relations in urban settings, such as Cairo. Anthropological, sociological, and historical research on gender relationships at the household level (Inhorn 1996, Baron 1991) suggests the existence of more equitable intimate relationships in modern times and the desirability of companionate marriages that are based on “mutual love and respect, sharing of problems, decency of treatment, and the absence of overt forms of male domination” (Inhorn 1996:148). However, it is generally understood that more research is needed to assess how this shift in marital relations is impacting sexual and intimate interactions in licit unions, as well as how exposure to different perspectives about gender relations influences intimacy and sexuality in other domains.

The discussion of this stylistic practice and movement must be understood in relation to Egyptian understandings of women’s bodies. In contemporary Egypt, a woman is thought of as a sexualized being. Although Egypt is one of the more liberal Islamic countries, the importance given to the control of female sexuality cannot be understated. Similar to other Islamic countries (Mernissi 1994; Obermeyer 1979; Obermeyer 2000; Sa'ar 2004; Wikan 1982), sexuality in Egyptian culture and Cairene society is guided by religious doctrines embedded in Islam. The importance of maintaining a respectable or honorable image is heightened for women in Cairene society by virtue of the fact that their bodies and sexuality are not considered their own, but under the purview of their families and society (Amado 2004). In both Christian and Muslim households the expectation is that women will maintain their virginity until marriage, the only social institution that sanctions the expression of licit sexuality. The preservation of virginity for unmarried women is paramount because “women, to a

greater extent than men, are judged by their sexual conduct and the purity of their bodies" (Obermeyer 2000:243).

Islam is often considered to be more permissive of sexual expression and fulfillment as long as it situated within the appropriate social domains. As Middle Eastern scholars (Obermeyer 2000, Dunne 1998, Bouhdiba 1985, Inhorn 1996, Rugh 1982) have claimed, sexuality and erotic pleasure within the institution of marriage is simultaneously considered to be a desirable state, the fulfillment of a religious duty, and as a sacred or divine gift from God. Islamic treatises, from the medieval period to the modern period, "make an explicit link between initiation into sexual enjoyment and learning the duties of believers, and endow legitimate sexual activity with a strong valuation" (Obermeyer 2000: 241).

Though Islamic doctrines calls for mutual consent, reciprocity and shared pleasure, including the belief that "foreplay is an essential part of good sexual practice" (Obermeyer 2000), in practice there has been concern about women's equality and sexual well-being since women: (1) often undergo female genital surgeries when they are young in order to reduce the desire for sex (Yount 2002; Yount 2005b), (2) often remain uninformed about sex until the night of their weddings (Bauer 1985; Rugh 1984), (3) consider sex with their husbands to be a duty that they are unable to refuse (Bauer 1985; Inhorn 1996a; Wikan 1996; Wikkan 1996), (4) are encouraged not to ask for sex directly, and (5) are offered limited protection or recourse against early marriages or rape within or outside of marriage (Amado 2004). Therefore, though Islamic religious doctrines tend to be quite progressive about women's sexual pleasure, the permissiveness regarding sexuality under Islam is undermined by a set of practices, institutions and gender

ideologies in Islamic cultures that privilege men, and patriarchal social hierarchies ((Saadawi 1984; Sabbah 1984).

Islamic religion associates women with "*'awra*, a word that literally means a weak or vulnerable spot and that is used in its plural, '*awrat*, to mean the pudenda of men and women" (Hoffman-Ladd 1987:27). In the Qur'an, the term appears twice (Surah 2:57 and Surah 33:13) to refer to moments where believers are defenseless, vulnerable, and unprotected. In surah 24:31, however, it refers to a woman's private parts as something that should be covered and protected due to shame. According to scholars, interpretations of the extent to which a woman's entire body is '*awra* varies; however, throughout the Arab-Islamic world, this concept can be linked to cultural mandates for sex segregation and the injunction for women to veil (Hoffman-Ladd 1987; Mernissi 1987; Obermeyer 2000; Zuhur 1992).

A woman's capacity to tempt men sexually is considered to be so powerful that it requires supervision and regulation by customs, such as seclusion, veiling, and female genital surgeries (Hoffman-Ladd 1987; Mernissi 1987; Saadawi 1984; Zuhur 1992). These traditions are meant to prevent the possibility of *fitna*, which has been defined as a form of chaos that stems from seduction. In the Islamic framework, a very attractive woman or femme fatale can be dangerous to men because of their ability to incite sexual disorder and rebellion. Drawing on the work of the Muslim feminist Qasim Amin, scholars (Hoffman-Ladd 1987) have pointed out that veiling and sexual seclusion of women indicates that men, not women, are threatened in environments where the sexes mix because they are not able to control their sexual impulses.

Women's power also stems, in part, from *zina,* a term that signifies adornment, ornament, and beauty. A woman's entire body can be subsumed under the term *zina* since it deals with the physical parts of her that are visible (i.e. hands and face) as well as the parts of her that are usually hidden. In Surah 24:30-31, the Qur'an enjoins women to be modest or to preserve their chastity by lowering their gaze and not display their adornment (*zina*). *Zina*, in this case, has been used to discuss a woman's makeup and jewelry in addition to her natural beauty (Hoffman-Ladd 1987:29). Because a woman's *zina* can also cause *fitna*, it is also used to justify the covering of women's bodies, sex segregation, and the restriction of women from public life.

According to Fatima Mernissi (1975), Islamic understandings of women's sexuality have two primary contradictory elements. On the one hand, there is the hegemonic belief that men are more aggressive in their interactions with women. On the other hand, women thought to possess "destructive, all-absorbing power" that has the capacity to distract men from their social and religious responsibilities. Unlike men, women are perceived to be more driven by their emotions (*nafs*) rather than reason (*aql*) and to have bodies that are naturally able to entice and seduce men (Mernissi 1987; Ong and Peletz 1995; Peletz 1994; Zuhur 1992). As a consequence, Islamic thought suggests that, "society can only survive by creating institutions that foster male dominance through sexual segregation and polygamy for believers" (Mernissi 1987:32).

Sexuality conducted outside of the domain of marriage in both Christianity and Islam is condemned as fornication (Dunne 1998). In everyday life in Cairo, it is common for people to ask whether a woman is a *bint* (girl) or *mar'a* (woman) to determine whether a woman has lost her virginity through an illicit sexual union, which is

considered to be inevitable if members of the opposite sex (with the exception of those who are related through kinship or marriage) are allowed to be in close quarters with each other without supervision. These beliefs about women's bodies are fundamental to patriarchal biases within households and the society at-large. As in other Islamic contexts, Egyptian women strive to carefully negotiate the politics of sexuality so that they do not lose their moral standing and respectability.

During my fieldwork, it was evident that young women and men in Cairo who often are *not* engaged in prostitution are challenging restrictive, sociocultural mores and normative values about appropriate sexual practices. While many have adopted a more conservative Islamic stance to show their adherence to supposedly more authentic and traditional values and mores (El-Guindi 1981, MacLeod 1991, Werner 1996), others are finding alternative ways to circumvent familial supervision and religious doctrines that assert that licit sex should occur only within the confines of marriage and between individuals who come from families that are of equal rank within the social hierarchies. Some examples of this negotiation and exploration, if not outright resistance, can be shown vis-à-vis practices such as *zawag urfi* (temporary marriages), premarital dating and sex, as well as exploration of same-sex relationships between young women.

Examinations of sexuality in the region assert that "Islamic societies have accorded prostitution much the same levels of intermittent toleration, regulation, and repression as their Christian counterparts" (Dunne 1998:9). Some studies have even suggested that Islamic societies were more tolerant of same-sex sexual practices until the late twentieth century (Bouhdiba 1985; Dunne 1998). According to these scholars (Dunne 1998), from the medieval period to the modern era, institutional prostitution and

same-sex sexual relations were perceived as a socially-expedient and useful outlets for men who were denied access to women in sex-segregated societies. In Egypt, the politics of illicit sexuality are elaborated in a rich literary tradition and popular film industry in the works of writers and filmmakers, such as Naguib Mahfouz, Alaa Al-Aswaany, Nawaal El-Sadaawi, et cetera. Literary and artistic representations of the expedient illicit sexual relations often involve a power relationship between well-to-do Egyptian men and members of the most vulnerable populations in Cairo (e.g. refugees, servants working in elite households, recent migrants to the urban center, and/or naïve or uneducated women) (Asw*an*i 2006; Ma*hf*u*z 1990; Sa*d*aw*i 1983).

A well-known example of a sexual rite of passage for a young Egyptian man has been depicted in the popular film *Sa'idi fi gama el-Amrikiyya* (An Upper Egyptian at the American University in Cairo). The film is a comedy that relates the story of Khalaf, an Upper Egyptian young man, who is granted a scholarship to study at the American University in Cairo (AUC), the most elite and expensive institution of higher learning in Egypt. When he arrives at the university he attempts to become a part of the community. This community is comprised of very wealthy Egyptians and foreigners who often are highly proficient, if not fluent, in English. For some, that foreign language is the language they use in their quotidian lives. They are in essence Western-oriented subjects whose cosmopolitan ways alienate them from traditional Egyptian culture. This film is very popular because it is often interpreted as a caricature of social and cultural dynamics in contemporary Egypt. The film presents images of the stereotypical Upper Egyptian. This figure is depicted as conservative, unsophisticated, and obsessed with honor. These

images are juxtaposed against the elite cosmopolitan Cairene alienated from Egyptian tradition, and constantly engaged in demonstrating their Western cultural affiliations.

For our discussion of sexual encounters, the key scene is when Khalaf's wealthy friends try to integrate him into the city on his first night by getting him to have sex with a Sudanese prostitute. At the beginning of the sexual encounter, he says, "When I turn the lights off, I can't see you!" Statements such as this one¸ along with the song "Chocolata" (Chocolate) that he sings later in the film, suggest that this woman can be perceived as the ultimate symbol of immodesty and promiscuity. She is juxtaposed with Khalaf's fairer skinned, decent, upstanding, moral, veiled Egyptian female classmate. In addition to being a sexual servant to the main characters, this Sudanese woman also serves as a gendered racialized other who never can meet the ideal, particularly as long as she does not bleach her skin as the lyric "*abyad inte*" (whiten yourself) song Chocolata implores her to do.

Critiques of the film often highlight the Arab-Jewish opposition. However, this scene captures a recurring theme not only in different representations of masculine rites of passage, but also portrayals of the sexual exploits of middle-class and elite Egyptian men with women of African descent who are often vulnerable because of their status as either servants, refugees, or members of subordinated ethnic and national populations (e.g. the character Nur in Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk). Though all of the stereotypical sexual encounters can be disturbing and problematic, I highlight the experience with the Sudanese woman because it is underpinned by a racialized nationalist ideology that emerges out of the Unity in the Nile Valley project and history of sexual enslavement of sub-Saharan Africans.

AESTHETIC STYLES & REPRESENTATIONS IN A CHANGING CAIRO

In 2006, the tension between adopting a Western or Islamist orientation remained in Cairo. However, it differed because the adoption of Islamic dress had become the norm. Popular magazines (i.e. *Sayidaty, al-Gamila, Nisf Al-Dunia*, etc) that follow the Westernized tradition of *al-Ithnayn* and those that promote the more recent Islamic perspective (i.e. *Higab*) reflected and informed the opinions of unmarried university-educated women. For Cairenes, ideas promoted in these magazines are combined with or mediated by a woman's family and social network. These two elements, working in conjunction with each other, inform beauty preferences, particularly notions about complexion, the ideal body-shape and size, style of dress, and behavior. In lower-income communities where "plumpness" or fuller-figures are connected with health, sexual desirability and fertility, young women tended to strive for this ideal (Ghannam 1999, Ghannam 2004). However, increased exposure to a thinner ideal from Western media and more Westernized elite-Egyptians (as well as the infamous Samia Alluba, the exercise and fitness guru who one Egyptian informant labeled the Jane Fonda of Egypt) has led to greater usage of dieting regimes, fitness centers, and weight-loss clinics (Basyouny 2001). The shift in the cultural ideal from plumpness to thinness has been taking place since the 1990s, especially among young, unmarried middle-class women. In elite circles, there is evidence that this new beauty ideal is leading to an increased incidence of eating and body-image disorders among Egyptian women in their 20s (Nasser, et al. 2001).

International magazines from the Western world, such as Elle and Vogue, and those from Egypt and the Arab Gulf such as *Nisf Al-Dunia*, *Sayidaty*, and *Higab* are oriented toward women with a heightened interest in the world of fashion. Because these

magazines can cost from 8 to 10LE (Egyptian pounds), they are inaccessible to many Cairenes from the lower middle to lower income socioeconomic brackets who only purchase them when seeking ideas for a special event, such as a wedding. Despite this fact, young unmarried Cairene women (especially between the ages of 18-25) from lower-middle to upper-middle class families tend to enjoy discussing the images presented in the magazines whenever they are given the opportunity. Because beauty for them is central to their self-identification and distinction (Ghannam 2004), fashion magazines give them an opportunity to explore new and different ways of nurturing, beautifying and caring for their bodies. In contrast to more mature and/or married women, especially those who from lower-middle income communities where women's beauty is considered to be for their husbands alone, these women are expected to be concerned about their looks and ability to attract the attention of men. This cultural expectation definitely played a role in the way they responded to my questions about women in popular magazines. Whereas older informants, particularly married women in their forties and fifties, talked about their lack of interest in beauty and fashion magazines and their interest in social and political affairs, household duties, or their children, single women could become quite animated and absorbed when examining the images and representations of beauty in the magazines.

Anthropologist Susan Ossman (2002) has noted that the praxis of beauty and fashion in Cairo plays upon themes of the Orient, "they mix elements of various origins and rework traditional designs" (7). Challenging the idea that mass media promotes a particularized image of beauty and uniformed look, she suggests that individuals concerned with beauty and fashion simultaneously rely on sociocultural differences to

"disengage from any specific national or local look" (Ossman 2002: 5) and "employ the names of nations or regions to indicate how their faces are not simply reflections of the place where they were born." (Ossman 2002: 5-6) Ossman's points are provocative and worthy of attention, requiring us to consider the factors and cultural values that would make this mix-and-match approach to beauty, fashion and style meaningful for women in Cairo.

The women's negotiation of multiple perspectives and ideologies in the aesthetic realm is encapsulated in the term "gender pluralism" (Peletz 2007, 2009). Peletz's term or phrase in this dissertation is being borrowed to explain various practices that are enacted and accorded legitimacy within gendered social fields and cultural domains. In defining the concept, he states:

> Pluralism in gendered fields or domains, here abbreviated as "gender pluralism," includes pluralistic sensibilities and dispositions regarding bodily practices (adornment, dress, mannerisms) and embodied desires, as well as social roles, sexual relationships, and overall ways of being that bear on or are otherwise linked with local conceptions of femininity, masculinity, androgyny, and so on. (Peletz 2007:44)

In 21st century Cairo, this notion is particularly important because it is a brief way to explain Cairene cultural values and preferences that draw on competing Eastern and Western global aesthetic standards that are expressed in magazines, billboards, television, and film. These multiple forms of media provide representations of beauty that draw on notions of modernity that emerged in the mid-20th century.

WESTERN REPRESENTATIONS OF BEAUTY

Westernized beauty is the dominant model of attractiveness in popular magazines throughout Cairo. From Vogue and Vanity Fair to *Nisf Al-Dunia, al-Gamila,* and *Sayidaty*, the women gracing the covers are the leading models and entertainers in the

Western and Arab world. Their appearance is similar, hair uncovered and styled in the latest fashion, makeup with the latest touches (smoky eyes or glittery), and Western attire. Globally, these images and representations inform women's fashions and their notions of attractiveness. It does not differ in the bustling, cosmopolitan city of Cairo, despite contemporary leanings to Islamic teachings and tradition. Even among Islamic-identified women, there is still an awareness of the most recent Western fashions, since they often don this attire in their homes among their family members and closest female friends.

During my interview with Dean Shahira, I asked her to discuss the appeal of this look for Egyptian women. In her opinion, the look is not appealing in her community of academics. According to her, they strive for a blend of local and global styles occurring in Cairo. She asserts that the Westernized look is meant to convey higher social status or at least one's yearning to be a part of the higher social classes. Yet she notes that even among Westernized elites, the return to traditional rituals, such as the use of the neighborhood *hammam* (Oriental bathhouse) and the night of henna just prior to weddings, is becoming popular. In this regard, the Westernized style and cultural orientation of the upper middle to upper classes is a continuation of 19th-20th century ideals of liberal secular nationalists.

Ghada Fakhry Barsoum, author of the thesis entitled *Jobs for "Wilad Al-Nas": the Job Dilemma of Female Graduates in Egypt* (1999), contends that employers search for individuals who have a proficiency in foreign languages as well as the appropriate style and appearance. The "appropriate" look or what she calls simply the "right appearance" is that of a person from the upper echelon of society (*wilad al-nas)*. The

appearance of *wilad al-nas*, defined by her as members of the "cultivated" class, conveys wealth and refinement. It also indicates an elite disposition that has been ingrained and inculcated since childhood if not birth. Egyptian recruitment agents are highly concerned about an applicant's ability to convey a middle-to-upper middle class background for placement in higher paid positions. According to Barsoum (1999), recruiters discuss "candidates who wear black shoes and white purses, fading or uneven nail colors, torn or loose pairs of stockings, and a hair dyed to blond and left to grow with dark roots contrasted to the blond part dyed earlier. They also mention over-dressing as a major problem in disqualified graduates. As Barsoum explains, the employers were referring to the tendency of Egyptians from lower income communities to choose strong colors like red and yellow and to wear heavy make-up" (66). She argues that the majority of Egyptians do not have access to social environments that impart the correct knowledge and symbolic capital (i.e. the appropriate style of dress, make-up, and ways of being) that are required for work in private companies. Though they may be able to attain formal certifications and degrees, without this awareness they still are not able to gain access to employment, and social mobility is highly unlikely.

The issue for applicants who are not from the upper echelon is also economic. Though Barsoum contends that class shapes opportunities for higher paid employment, her focus on the symbols of wealth that the applicants from the lower economic classes leads her to neglect the political (e.g. *wasta* or *koosa*, or connections) and economic dimensions of employment in contemporary Cairo. My research indicated that many Cairenes from *sha'bi* neighborhoods were aware but that they could not afford the clothing, accessories, and salon treatments to prepare for the interviews in regard to the

make-up and clothing. The younger women in the households to which I had access purchased the most affordable makeup and clothes because this is what was reasonable based on the allowance given to them by the elders in their family. Yet, the younger women were conscious of different styles of clothing worn, ways to distinguish cheaper from more expensive clothing, the various types of cosmetics available. Sparing the money for nice clothing and makeup for the young women who were of marriageable age was considered necessary but it was also difficult for the elders of the household. Thus, rather than asserting that lower income candidates are ignorant of the "appropriate clothing" and "symbols" that reflect upper class status as Barsoum and some middle to upper middle class Egyptians claim,[41] it is important to consider the economic constraints that are keeping lower income candidates from representing themselves better at the employment agencies.

Some Cairenes of the upper echelon ignore the role of appearance in their opportunities for advancement in the workplace. For example, two professors at the American University in Cairo stated that they felt that a woman's attractiveness or looks were insignificant in relation to employment and opportunities in the workplace. Reda, a well-known Egyptian Egyptologist and university professor who has a degree from Yale University, stated that she did not think there was a relationship between physical appearance and socioeconomic status in Egypt. When I gave her examples, she remarked:

> No, I don't think this is true in Egypt. For instance, I go to work daily and I do not wear any makeup. I do not do anything to my hair, and my clothes are quite plain. In the workplace, many people who would be considered quite plain do well. It is not so much about the way that they look that matters as much as their skills and their performance.

Although Dean Shahira agreed with Reda, she did say that she felt that the university was different from the business world. Because Reda had been educated at a very prestigious university in the United States, her qualifications and credentials may have been more important than her looks. Professors, of either sex, with her qualifications are rare commodities in Egypt. Therefore, her plainness and inattention to her appearance may be disregarded because her credentials are highly regarded.

In speaking about this matter with Hanaa, a Cairo University student, and her mentor, *Doctora* Ahlam, they expressed the validity of the idea that attractiveness influences one's chances for employment as well as marriage. *Doctora* Ahlam recounted a story about her daughter's experience at a job fair. Her daughter is a recent university graduate with a marketing degree. Though they are from the upper class and live in a well-to-do neighborhood in Heliopolis, they have chosen to veil. They firmly believe that the adoption of the veil is central to being good Muslim women, and *Doctora* Ahlam lectures on Islam at her neighborhood mosque. During my first visit, she told me that her daughter applied for a marketing position at a job fair and was fortunate to attain the position. Yet, her daughter was amazed at the difference in her experience and the experience of a young woman who is considered to be extremely attractive by Egyptian standards. Her daughter told her that the woman's beauty was the only qualification that was required for her to attain a job at the same marketing firm where she was hired. While her daughter was intensively interviewed, the "Egyptian beauty" was "accepted immediately without further regard for her application. As she put it, "The men did not bother to look at her qualifications, and several male directors were fighting over whether

she should be in their department." Although this is an unusual case, it suggests that the physical attractiveness can play in a role in job attainment.

Egyptian opportunities for social mobility vis-à-vis employment are also tied to local constructions of skin color and race. In the 21st century, a more secular modern (also referred to by Egyptians as Westernized) look and whiteness are privileged assets. Within this community, the veil and darker complexions are often deemed as a sign of low social origin. The capacity to speak foreign languages well is rare within the society and an awareness of the appropriate style of dress is equally important. But, fair skin is also an unstated prerequisite for accessing certain employment opportunities. Employers explicitly state that they are seeking someone who "looks like a foreigner or better actually half -foreigner (*nus-khawagaiyah*)" (Barsoum 1999:67). And Barsoum (1999) clarifies what is meant by foreigner when she writes, "Foreigner here does not refer to Asian or African. It specifically refers to looking like a European or an American." (67) Despite the fact that many elite Egyptians been exposed to Europeans and Americans of different ethnic backgrounds, they continue to associate European and American identity with whiteness.

Association with the expatriate community, even if it is in a marginal way, does not lessen the appeal of white foreigners in the eyes of some Egyptians. Commenting on this phenomenon, Hawaa said, "Egyptians are attracted to foreigners for a variety of reasons. Egyptians like being around foreigners because they believe it increases their value (*qiima*)." This notion of elevating one's status through association with foreigners has been discussed in depth by Fanon (1967), who contends that it was a way for colonized people to demonstrate their humanity to their colonizers. In the postcolonial

context, an Egyptian's mastery of foreigners' languages, especially English, French, and German, and the adoption of stylistic practices that demonstrate a cognizance of both local and global trends is a way of approximating whiteness and indicating that they are culturally on par with their former colonizers as well as the emerging superpowers of the 21st century.

Egyptians, particularly if they are members of the educated classes and are concerned with leveling the playing field in which they live, bestow gifts upon those whom they perceive to be in possession of the things that they lack. Hawaa explained this behavior in the following way:

> When a girl feels ugly, she will have beautiful friends around her. When a person feels poor, they will try to hang around the rich. It is sort of a way of balancing things out. My brother used to try to associate with police and officers in the army because he associated them with power and authority. So he would buy them expensive gifts that he couldn't afford, made of gold, so they would like him. This, using flattery and other techniques are a part of the way that Egyptians relate with those who they believe have more than they do.

Gift giving, in this context, is a way of creating a social relationship with another and forming an alliance with one is perceived to be superior in some respect. The receiver, by virtue of his acceptance of the gift, affords the giver to become a part of their world and to elevate himself to the status of the recipient. Based upon Hawaa's assertions, it seems that the act of gift-giving not only establishes a tangible relationship and tie to another but imbues the giver with a bit of the valued object that the receiver possesses. An intangible, non-material asset such as beauty can also be transferred from the possessor to another through either gift-exchange or close association. In regard to this discussion of feminine aesthetic ideals, it can be assumed that to be white and "cultured" means that a person possesses beauty and virtue, that is, attributes that have been associated with

either Egypt's former colonizers or Arabs in the Nasser era, and rarely identified with North Africans in the contemporary period.

For elite university students at the American University in Cairo, there is a tendency to lean towards more Western fashion. However, for young women who have been influenced by the rise in Islamic fashion, the result can be an eclectic mix of Islamic and Western ideals. According to Dean Shahira, the Dean of Libraries and a cultural anthropologist by training, the message that some of the young women are trying to communicate can be confusing. In our interview, she noted that there are "young girls wearing the *higab* but with shirts and low pants that show their stomachs. They will have tattoos on their backs and stomachs." But for the most part, there is the typical Westernized look or the veiled Islamic dress which generally includes jeans or skirts, long blouses and veils (i.e. *higabs*) similar to what one finds among students at Cairo University area.

THE ISLAMIC MODEL

The Islamic model, which consists of a veiled fair-skinned woman as the ideal, is not a new phenomenon. But its representation in the popular magazine *Higab* is an original concept. Sold in front of the mosque adjacent to the El-Sawy Cultural Center in Zamalek, the purpose of this magazine is to show younger women how they can be fashionably veiled. This magazine promotes an Islamic notion of attractiveness that emphasizes appearance as well as the important values of respectability, modesty, and propriety that younger women strive to attain. Donning the *higab* and more conservative clothing is about finding a way to negotiate public spaces so that one can work or go to university and still have a screen or curtain between them and strange men (MacLeod

1991). But it is also a direct way to communicate their value systems to potential suitors. This is particularly important for young women who have no desire to work outside of the home. Juggling household duties and work is viewed as undesirable, and some women state that working outside of the home masculinizes the women who do it.[42]

In 2006, the male-female interaction seems much more difficult than it was in the late 20th century. At the universities, more and more young women feel pressured to veil. Author Karin Warner discusses three groups of young women at the Alsun Faculty in late 20th century Cairo: (1) the *mutaddayin* (the religious or pious or devout), (2) the *muhaggabat* (the veiled), and (3) the Westernized. She contends that young women in the middle class are choosing the veil as a strategy for attracting potential husbands and for negotiating the social climate that views young people who are aligned with Western values and mores as corrupt or licentious. The issue of morality weighs heavily on the young females, who are supposed to show that they are capable of negotiating mixed-gendered groups while maintaining their moral values. In the mixed-gendered groups, the young people engage in heterosexual relationships and some get involved in sexual relationships. But once the young women have sex with their “boyfriends,” they are considered unacceptable for marriage by many of the young men, are subject to gossip and harassment by their male and female peers, and they are unable to obtain any support from their families since they are acting secretly and against their parents’ wishes.

In this context, the importance of veiling for young women can begin very young. Young women are aware of the need to demonstrate their morality and propriety once they become teenagers. Although teens may not be clear about the reasons for veiling, they will sometimes staunchly defend it and explain that it is a key aspect of their identity

as Muslims and Egyptians. In the Nabil household, for example, the desire to demonstrate understanding of the importance of women's covering their bodies in the appropriate Islamic manner was discussed by Miriam, a thirteen-year old. As I interviewed her older female cousin, Mona, she interrupted to state that she believed wholeheartedly in the need for women to veil, even though her mother did not wear one and felt that it was unnecessary. Both she and Mona were concerned that some Westerners felt that veiling was an indication of backwardness or oppression. They felt it was important to emphasize wearing the veil was a voluntary desire that "they chose of their own free will." Acknowledging their freedom of choice, in twenty-first century Cairo it seems that being unveiled is more difficult for a young Muslim woman.

By contrast, Hanaa openly admitted that she found the veil unappealing but a necessity. Unlike Mona and Miriam, her parents pressured her to veil because of sexual harassment. When she was a teenager, she said that men on buses and trains started to look at her and would try to touch her. Therefore, as a consequence, her mother advised her to wear the higab to avoid harassment. She believed that the higab did not really protect women. She said, "One can still be harassed because the problem is with the men who are doing it." Nevertheless, she still donned the *higab* to demonstrate to her family members that she was not inciting men's interest and, therefore, could not be blamed if she were harassed when she was in public spaces. For her, it was an unfair compromise, though she felt that her parents did not have the right to control the rest of her clothing, which usually consists of jeans and a loose fitting blouse. She said that some people in her community said that her clothing was still not appropriate and that she should be wearing *gallabiyas* or *abeyahs* to cover all of her clothes. That style of dress, however, is

more typical among *baladi* women in *sha'bi* neighborhoods and not the style that the majority of university students were wearing.

In August 2006, Hanaa removed the veil and became ostracized in her community and at the university. Her thesis advisor refused to sign her thesis until she donned the veil again. But she continued to resist. This lasted until the end of the year and she even lost her job and her chance to gain extra income tutoring at a high school in Arabic language. Clearly, Cairo's cultural environment had changed drastically since ethnographers such as Evelyn Early (1993) and Unni Wikan (1980) were there. E-mail correspondence in March 2007 revealed that she re-veiled so that she could attain her Master's degree at Cairo University and so that she could find work. She then more ardently wished to emigrate from Egypt than she did when I had known her in 2006.

In regard to beauty matters, the veil ensures that a woman's looks are a prize to be treasured and appreciated primarily by her husband. As male and female informants often asserted, "In Islam, a woman's beauty is for her husband. If he is pleased with her looks, what others think doesn't matter." Those who take the idea of preserving beauty for one's husband alone extremely seriously decide to wear the *niqab*. This style of dress is still not the norm in Cairo and causes some Egyptians concern about women who choose to do it because of the fanatical behavior of certain extremist religious groups. Because the *niqab* covers the woman's face, revealing only her eyes, *munaqqabat* are completely unidentifiable. Some of my Egyptian informants discussed their anxiety about these women robbing them and stated that this style of dress was becoming more popular among prostitutes. Yet, others argued that it was ideal for women who are trying to live an authentically Islamic lifestyle. Werner's study (1996) indicated that the primary

motivation for young women choosing this more radical, if not extremist, Islamic dress was to distinguish themselves from other young women who are more secular. These women felt that even veiled women were immoral, using the head covering without the face covering as a means to engage in secular practices without detection. In their opinion, a young woman who could adopt the *niqab* was indicating to future spouses and her community that her primary concern was to live a moral life.

Yet, my informants also stated that for certain professions the veiled-look could be a hindrance to the development of a woman's career. When discussing the appearance of Muslim entertainers such as Yusra and talk-show host Hala, a 40-something *muwazzaf* named Ahmed argued that these women needed to be able to provide an appealing image for diverse audiences. Because of the nature of the entertainment industry, some Egyptians feel that it would unreasonable to expect actors to adhere to the mores and standards of the average Egyptian. Many of my informants at that status and income level felt that these entertainers had the freedom and flexibility to do as they pleased. If an actress chose to don the veil, she was upheld for her moral virtue and decision to be affiliated with the average Egyptian more than others because it was believed that there were certain risks involved in her decision.

CONCLUSION

This chapter examined representations of secular and Islamist nationalist perspectives about ideal womanhood in Egyptian popular media. I argued that styles of dress and beauty images of the late twentieth and early twentieth centuries reflect both Islamic and secular nationalist ideologies and notions of modernity. I briefly discuss representations of the Sudanese in Kishkish Bey and the film *Sa'idi fi gama el-Amrikiyya*

(An Upper Egyptian at the American University in Cairo). In these forms of popular media, Egyptians continue to perpetuate a sociocultural construction of race that builds on Egypt's imperialist efforts in the Sudan and understandings of people of African descent (embodied in the Sudanese) that emerged during Islamic slavery.

In concluding this section, I would like to point to a fundamental contradiction that lies at the heart of what it means to be a woman in Egyptian society. Throughout her life, she must manage the tension between wanting to be desirable and appearing to be uninterested in sex (unless it is in all-female or homosocial spaces). As young, unmarried women, there is greater flexibility in regard to expressing an interest in one's physical appearance because physical beauty is considered to be vital to femininity and for forging the appropriate marital alliance. After marriage, however, the cultural expectation is that beauty and sexuality will be for one's husband alone. Because physical attractiveness and sexuality are often considered ancillary to the duties of motherhood and being a good wife, it is during this period that many Egyptian women are said to neglect or ignore their looks (Ghannam 2004). The vital, non-physical aspects of beauty and femininity that make it possible for a woman to marry, namely, respectability, modesty (*hishma*), politeness or propriety (*adab*), and submissiveness or obedience (*ta'a*), are the very values that will lead her to shift her attention away from the physical to the non-physical after marriage[43]. In the next chapter on Egyptian descriptions of the feminine aesthetic ideal, I explore these ideas in more detail. Specifically, I describe three models of physical beauty that emphasize specific skin tones and features. At the same time, I emphasize that to be beautiful and feminine in Egyptian society is also intimately linked

to the cultivation of an ethical and virtuous disposition (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005).

CHAPTER FIVE:
AESTHETIC IDEALS IN CONTEMPORARY CAIRO

INTRODUCTION

Figure 12: “Beautify Your Nose” Billboard; Photo Taken: Maurita N. Poole, December 2005

Figure 11: “Beautify Your Nose in Only One Hour” Billboard; Photo Taken: Maurita N. Poole, December 2005

The billboards above are advertisements for cosmetic surgery that were placed along a main thoroughfare in between the middle-class districts of Mohandessin and El-Agouza by Salma Hospital in December of 2005. Clinics, such as Salma Hospital, encourage the manipulation of Egyptian bodies so that they adhere to a Eurocentric, Westernized formulation of beauty and normality. The growth in hospitals offering aesthetic procedures, such as rhinoplasty, in Egypt suggests that certain segments of the population are advocating and using Western biomedicine to address their concerns not only about their level of attractiveness but about the visibility of their racial difference. As figures 11 and 12 suggest, both men and women have the capacity to reshape their faces in such a way that their features seem less Arab, North African, and Middle Eastern.

Figures 11 and 12 differ from most beauty advertisements in Cairo because of the focus on rhinoplasty, a procedure that has been associated with the promotion of

ethnocentric and patriarchal biases about human beauty (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Chernin 1981; Edmonds 2007; Gilman 1998; Gilman 1999; Kaw 1993; Reischer and Koo 2004; Wolf 1991; Wolf 1992). Cosmetic surgical procedures are controversial because they give credence to aesthetic prejudices by implying that ethnic noses (such as the Jewish, Arab, and Negroid) constitute a race-based physical deformity which precludes these faces from ever being perfectly beautiful (Etcoff 1999; Gilman 1999). Moreover, rhinoplasty indicates that members of minority groups in the West and people in non-Western contexts have internalized the body image produced and promoted by racist ideologies (Gilman 1986; Gilman 1991; Kaw 1993; Rubin 2003).

In the Egyptian context, aesthetic surgeries have been increasingly adopted by upper middle class and upper class Cairenes with a secular Western orientation ((Basyouny 1998; Lidell 2006). Rhinoplasty, liposuction, and eye rejuvenation are the most common procedures for Egyptian women, and reconstructive surgeries are the most common for men. Surgeons who provide these services argue that their objective is to correct deformities and to assist Egyptians in their desire to achieve beauty for themselves. According to these surgeons, the growing popularity of these forms of cosmetic surgery is an indication of the development and modernity of Egyptians as well as their global orientation (Ghannam 2004; Lidell 2006; Sholkamy and Ghannam 2004). However, Egyptian scholars (Basyouny 1998; Ghannam 1997; Ghannam 2004) connect women's concern with modifying their bodies with patriarchal objectification, which promotes the idea that women's value should be measured by their ability to marry and stay in a relationship with a man with a good income.

The aesthetic ideals promoted in advertisements for cosmetic surgeries, such as the ones on the Salma Hospital billboards, are mediated by the perspectives of families and friends who draw on Islamic and Judeo-Christian religious ideologies to shape their aesthetic ideals. Beauty, in the Cairene conception, is more than a physical state of being. Cairenes understand beauty as an ethical disposition based in religious ideologies as well as a set of physical attributes (Armanios 2002; Basyouny 1998; Ghannam 1997; Ghannam 2004; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; Zuhur 1992). For the majority of Egyptians, the aesthetic surgical procedure adopted to address concerns with feminine beauty, chastity, and marriage is female circumcision. Rhinoplasty or liposuction and female genital cutting are related in that they are procedures that attempt to assist Egyptians women as they approximate the aesthetic ideals and the gendered bodily performance of femininity advocated within this specific sociocultural context.

Female circumcision is situated at the crossroads of Egyptian concerns with the attractiveness of the physical body and virtue. By Egyptian traditional standards, female genitalia are more beautiful when there is partial or total removal of parts. A circumcised vulva, like a woman's hairless body, is praised for its smoothness, cleanliness, and appeal to men in contrast to the uncircumcised vulva that women describe as dirty, unhygienic, and repulsive (Gruenbaum 2005; Kennedy 1970; Toubia, et al. 1998; Yount 2002). In addition, Egyptian lore claims that uncircumcised female genitalia have the potential to grow into a penis (Silverman 2004). Altering the natural state of women's genitalia, therefore, constructs an appropriate female identity and contributes to the development of a girl's femininity.

Statistics indicate that 96-97 percent of ever-married Egyptian women are circumcised (El-Zanaty 2006; Yount 2002). Though educated Egyptian women in urban settings tend to not believe that female circumcision is prescribed by religion, they support its continuation because they believe that it is essential for marriage (El-Zanaty 2006; Gruenbaum 2005; Halim 2007; Kennedy 1970; Obermeyer 2005; Yount 2002). Women who are not circumcised are stigmatized, ostracized, and at risk of having marriage proposals cancelled once families discover that the brides-to-be are not circumcised (Gruenbaum 2005; Halim 2007).

The cancellation of marriage is a great concern in the twenty-first century since women remain single for a longer period than previous generations (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Hoodfar 1997; Weinreb 2008). By 2008, the problem was deemed so severe that the Egyptian government financed mass weddings for Egyptian youth[44]. Despite the Mubarak administration's efforts, many Egyptian women expect to remain single well into their 20s, and possibly their 30s. Officially, these women continue to be viewed as "girls" who have not reached full adulthood regardless of their age and social responsibilities. Though they may be university-educated and working outside of the home, they are to present themselves as women who are ignorant about sex and their bodies. The only exception to this rule is in same-sex environments where women are permitted to demonstrate a cognizance of sexuality. In practice, these women often find ways to circumvent social expectations about dating and assume a pseudo-adult status through their economic contributions to the household while remaining virginal in the physical sense (Sa'ar 2004; Werner 1997).

As discussed in the previous chapter, women have the power to dishonor their families through their sexual conduct. Female genital cutting presumably reduces women's sexual impulse and supports attempts to maintain a young woman's virginity and bodily purity, and thereby protects a family's honor. Female circumcision refers to a range of practices, from the practice of removing the tip and layer of skin covering the clitoris to infibulation (Kennedy 1970; Silverman 2004; Toubia, et al. 1998; Yount 2002; Yount and Carrera 2006). Infibulation, or pharaonic circumcision, is thought to be the most extreme form of female genital cutting because it involves removing the clitoris and the entire labia minora and labia majora. Despite the stringency of these precautions, female genital cutting and social surveillance do not always prevent premarital sex, and marriage does not guarantee that women will gain the economic security that the official representation of marriage suggests that they should (Early 1993; Hatem 1987; Hatem 1988; Hoodfar 1997; Ismail 2006; Rugh 1984; Saadawi 1984; Sherif 1999; Singerman 1995; Werner 1997).

Though infibulation is usually associated with Northern Sudanese rather than Egyptians, it is also practiced among Egyptian Nubians (Jennings 1995; Kennedy 1970). The commonality between Egyptian Nubians and Northern Sudanese is their enslavement by Egyptians during the Islamic slave trade. Scholars have stated that slave traders considered female slaves of African descent more valuable and "lucrative if they were infibulated in a way that made them unable to conceive" (Boyle 2002; Mackie 2000; Pedwell 2007). Female genital cutting, therefore, is a practice that also allows us to see how racial and color difference intersects with gender and sexuality in an embodied practice in the Egyptian context.

In the previous chapters, I posited that Egyptians in Cairo have aesthetic ideals that are directly linked to a sociocultural construction of race that was formed in the context of Islamic slavery and solidified by Egyptian nationalists in the context of Egypt's nation-building and colonial project in the Sudan in the late nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. I focused on the ways that racialized nationalist sentiments have been connected to Islamic and secular notions of gender and modernity that were articulated through contestations about women's status and roles in Egyptian society. These debates were most vividly signified in women's styles of dress. While the secular nationalist perspective prevailed in the early twentieth century, it was eclipsed by the Islamic perspective during the Islamic revival of the late twentieth century. In the twenty-first century, these competing notions of nationhood and modernity are represented in women's fashion magazines that depict the dress that conforms to cultural ideals of womanhood. In addition, Egyptian national and cultural identities are characterized in popular film such as *Sa'idi fi gama el-Amrikiyya* that construct Egyptian cultural ideals of womanhood in opposition to racialized and sexualized representations of Sudanese women who are considered ideal for illicit sexual encounters.

This chapter contributes to this discussion by exploring both the physical and nonphysical aspects of Egyptian aesthetic ideals in relation to ideologies of race and skin color. After describing marriage in contemporary Egypt, I discuss the cultivation of an ethical disposition among Egyptian women and men as an embodied aesthetic. I then examine Cairene descriptions of physical beauty and consider how aesthetic preferences differentially influence women's experiences. Finally, I discuss the intersection of

beauty, gender, and constructions of race and color in a mixed (Nubian/non-Nubian) household.

MARRIAGE IN CONTEMPORARY EGYPT

Marriage is one of the most important institutions in Egypt. It is deeply intertwined with setting up a household and childrearing, i.e. two activities that are socially and religiously sanctioned only within the context of marriage. Because marriages are viewed as family alliances, children are perceived as the means by which the family line perpetuates itself. They are considered essential for cementing the relationship between a man and woman and by extension the social and political networks of the couple's extended kin. It is through marriage that men and women create lawful sexual partnerships, reproduce and care for children, and realize adulthood.

In Egyptian households, family members are encouraged to sacrifice their individual needs and desires for the greater good of the social group (Joseph 1994; Joseph 1999; Rugh 1984). Because Egyptians do not view themselves outside of the extended familial structure, finding the appropriate spouse is considered critical not only to young people but to their families (Hoodfar 1997; Rugh 1984; Singerman and Hoodfar 1996). The group mentality and experience fostered in Islamic households in the Middle East have been described in terms of connectivity, which is defined as "psychodynamic processes by which one person comes to see him/herself as part of another" (Joseph 1994:55). In relationships characterized by connectivity, the boundaries between individuals are not always clearly demarcated. People define themselves in relation to others, and complete selfhood is expressed and articulated primarily through interaction with significant others (Joseph 1994). Suad Joseph (1994) contends that it is through this

interaction that "women and men learn the culturally appropriate gender roles, perceptions of masculinity and femininity, and a commitment to patrilineal kinship structures, morality, and idiom-processes mediated through connectivity" (56).

The official cultural ideal of marriage is between the children of brothers (Father's brothers son/daughter) since the central purpose of marriage is the reproduction of the patrilineal descent group (Altuntek 2006; Rugh 1984). Patrilineal marriages are idealized because they ideally extend the family's bonds and ties to patrilineal kin who are supposed to assist men in social, political, and economic arenas. Therefore, bachelorhood, infertility, and sexual relations that do not allow or encourage the continuation of the patrilineal line are stigmatized (Inhorn 1996a; Inhorn 1994).

Anthropological literature conducted in Egypt is replete with discussions of marriage that oppose the patrilineal ideal. Scholars have found that many marriages are conducted between matrilineal relatives because women are able to strengthen their positions within the marriage (Hoodfar 1997; Inhorn 1996a; Rugh 1984; Singerman and Hoodfar 1996). In these marriages, women are more likely to be surrounded by kin with whom they have more loving relationships and social support (Abu-Lughod 1987; Hoodfar 1997; Jennings 1995). In urban contexts, such as Cairo, where Egyptians are far-removed from kin, educated men and women find partners among their colleagues at work or at the university. In lower income neighborhoods, marriages are contracted between neighbors or people whose families are from the same natal village (Hoodfar 1997; Inhorn 1996a; Rugh 1984). Some Egyptians have pursued marriage based on love rather than family interests (Hoodfar 1997; Rugh 1984). However, these "love marriages" are still not the norm. Overall, Egyptians still believe that marriage is a

corporate arrangement and that successful marriages are the result of compatibility and harmony rather than love, a sentiment that cannot be sustained because it is based on solely on physical traits rather than mutual respect and a willingness to fulfill the duties of a husband and wife (Hoodfar 1997).

In Egypt, there is a preference for kin marriages because the economic status and background of the families are known (Hoodfar 1997; Rugh 1984; Singerman, et al. 1996) Fathers of brides and grooms also prefer kin marriages because there is a reduction in the cost of the marriage since the families do not demand as many gifts or a high dowry (*mahr)*(Hoodfar 1997). Finally, families assert that there is less likelihood that there will be domestic abuse in kin marriages since families are able to intervene (Hoodfar 1997; Yount 2005a).

According to sociocultural studies, the most relevant traits for marriageability are: (1) social status and class, which are measured by income, educational level, employment, and family background; (2) beauty or attractiveness, and (3) morality (Hoodfar 1997; Inhorn 1996a; Jennings 1995; Rugh 1984; Singerman and Hoodfar 1996). The most important of these characteristics for men is income and/or employment potential. Andrea Rugh (1984) once wrote that a man's wealth is so vital to the union that deficiencies (e.g. bad temperament, unattractiveness) of a man who possess it are tolerated. This sentiment is related to the fact that Islamic law stipulates that men are to shoulder all of the financial responsibilities for their families and maintain a woman according to the class to which she is accustomed (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Hoodfar 1997; Sherif 1999). In exchange for economic security and protection, a wife is under the complete authority of her husband. A man can unilaterally end his marriage without the

consent of his wife and can marry as many as four wives under the condition that he can provide for and treat all of them equally. Furthermore, a man is able to restrict his wife's mobility, which generally refers to his ability to prevent her from working outside of the home.

By contrast, a woman's physical attractiveness has historically been considered the key factor in whether or not she received suitable marriage proposals (Hoodfar 1997; Inhorn 1996b; Rugh 1984) . In general, among the urban poor and working class, the physical ideal is slightly plump, fertile, and fair-skinned (Ghannam 1997; Ghannam 2004). Among the middle and upper classes, the ideal is slender and fair-skinned (Basyouny 1998). Because women tend to marry in their early twenties, a women who was still unmarried by the age of 25 is often considered unfortunate since her greatest asset, i.e. her physical appearance, is thought to be diminished. Ethnographies state that if a female is considered to be a great beauty, her other physical faults will be excused (Inhorn 1996; Rugh 1984**).** More recent scholarship indicates that while appearance continues to be important, its significance is considered in relation to other factors, particularly in Egypt's current economic climate (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004).

Though traditional attitudes about men and women's natures and their role expectations in the household remain, women's work outside of the home has become a necessity (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Sherif 1999; Singerman and Hoodfar 1996). Structural adjustment programs instituted in the 1990s, such as exchange rate devaluation and reduction in tariff and import restrictions, improved the Egyptian economy in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. However, these economic reforms did little to

address high levels of unemployment, housing shortages, rising rent prices, and inflation (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; El-Kogali 2001; Sherif 1999).

Instead of alleviating economic pressure at the household level, economic liberalization raised standard of living expectations among Egyptians and increased their consumerism (Abaza 2006; Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Hoodfar 1997; Jennings 1995). At a minimum, newly married couples of the lower income and middle classes now anticipate setting up independent households with durable goods (e.g. refrigerators) that the previous generation considered a luxury. By contrast, upper-middle class Cairenes insist upon an entire lifestyle that includes educating children in prestigious foreign private schools, buying foreign cars, and having the ability to travel (Sherif 1999). Marital harmony in this changing economic environment, therefore, has been impacted by increasing cost of living expenses and consumerism.

Cultivating an Ethical Disposition: The Non-Physical in the Cairene Aesthetic

While morality has always been central to Egyptian assessments of ideal womanhood and feminine beauty, the concern with cultivating an ethical aesthetic has taken on a different tone since the Islamic revival of the late twentieth century. The view that a woman's virtue is a moral imperative has been scrutinized and reinterpreted in such a way that a woman's beauty is not measured by her physical attributes alone. Instead, Cairenes in my study stated that a woman's beauty was not only determined by her physical traits, but by her ability to convey Islamic virtues such as modesty (*hishma*), politeness or propriety (*adab*), and submissiveness or obedience (*ta'a*).

These ideas must be considered in a context where increasing numbers of Egyptian women are working outside of the home. Middle and upper class women who

work outside the home must guard against being perceived as masculine as indicated by their unwillingness to respect their husband's authority in the home (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Hoodfar 1997; MacLeod 1991). As Behira Sherif (1999) has noted, upper middle class Egyptian men are concerned that their women's femininity and inherent differences from men as articulated by classical Islamic ideologies will disappear if the sexes intermingle in the public sphere. This notion is also supported by women, such as Hawaa, a middle class professional, who stated that Egyptians are attempting to guard against their women becoming as masculine as Western women, especially Americans who "are always wearing pants, don't have on a lot of makeup, and wear ugly shoes with low heels or no heels at all." By contrast, other Cairenes in my study stated that a manly or masculine woman (*mustagila*) is determined not so much by exposure to the opposite sex as much as by their speech and mannerisms. As Hanaa, a graduate student at Cairo University, explained, "Many Egyptian women are always yelling at each other and hardening their voices when they are speaking (especially if they are threatening or trying to intimidate others)."

The archetype of masculinized women in Egyptian culture is the *m'allima* (female master). A *m'allima* is a female merchant from *baladi* neighborhoods who sell goods or run shops and cafes. Because they are "respected and feared by all, they remain untouched by innuendos of loose morals reserved for some women in public spaces. A *m'allima* talks sternly, even roughly, with customers and curses as if she were a man" (Early 1991:5). A *m'allima's* behavioral practices and mannerisms can be juxtaposed with Egyptian women who focused on portraying themselves in a more explicitly feminine way in order to emphasize their difference from men.

My observations indicated that very feminine women were concerned about being ladylike as indicated by the ways that they affected shyness and modesty by softening their speech, and not making direct eye contact in the presence of men. These behaviors are considered to be key feminine Islamic virtues and essential for the achievement of piety (Mahmood 2005). Though discussed as indications of inherent differences between men and women, Egyptians, such as Hanaa, viewed these women's behaviors disapprovingly and labeled them as "false, an act." Though many of these women were veiled, their style of communication with the opposite sex, often coquettish in nature, was perceived to be impious. Moreover, they support discussions among Egyptian men and women about the presence of Muslims who adhere to Islamic practice in form and style without cultivating the Islamic virtues that are connected with the ideal Islamic aesthetic (Hirschkind 2006; Lidell 2006; Mahmood 2001; Mahmood 2005; Werner 1997).

Recent scholarship focuses on the relationship between aesthetics, bodily performance and the cultivation of ethical dispositions among Egyptians (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2001; Mahmood 2005). These Egyptian men and women are concerned with "organizing their daily lives according to the Islamic standards of virtuous conduct in a world increasingly ordered by secular rationality that is inimical to the sustenance of these virtues" (Mahmood 2005:56). Mahmood (2005) argues that the feminine aesthetic cultivated by these Egyptians is that of docility, which does not emerge passively but through a focused struggle to physically embody a disposition that adheres to the Islamic virtues of piety and modesty. Egyptian women, therefore, do not inevitably possess the virtues of shyness, obedience, submissiveness, politeness, and modesty that are

associated with Islamic femininity; they rigorously train themselves to acquire these desired attributes.

Similarly, Egyptian men rely on cassette tapes and other religious practices to cultivate an ethical disposition and to adhere to a masculine aesthetic. They do these through clothing styles and bodily practices, such as adopting Islamic dress (e.g. long white robes-*gallabiya*), wearing perfumes and oils to improve their scent, to cleanse, and to striving to adhere to the ethical virtues of humility (*khushu*), fear (*khauf*), regret (*nadam*), repentence (*tauba*), and tranquility (*itmi' nan* or *sakina*) (Hirschkind 2006). In so doing, they hope to inculcate the affective and moral dispositions that will help them to maintain right or proper conduct.

Though most Cairenes are not embedded in the piety movement to the same extent as the Egyptians in Mahmood and Hirschkind's study, the influence of the Islamic Revival and the behaviors and ideologies of members of piety movements have definitely had an impact on how middle-class Egyptians structure their daily lives. As discussed in the previous chapter, adopting Islamic dress has been the most notable strategy utilized by women who are frustrated as they attempt to reconcile the contradiction between a religious/legal model that expects men to be the sole providers and women to remain in the domestic sphere in an economy that necessitates women's work in the public sphere (El-Guindi 1999b; Guindi 1981; MacLeod 1991; Mule and Barthel 1992; Sherif 1999; Zuhur 1992). Another strategy is the formation of small religious groups. These groups give women the chance to question and discuss issues that are part of the larger religious debate about women's status in Egypt. In addition, it "broadcasts the respectability and

devoutness of the attendees, both within their families and the neighborhood" (Sherif 1999:12)

THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION OF AESTHETIC IDEALS

While discussing the importance of the cultivation of an ethical disposition central to the Egyptian aesthetic, my research informants also identified the following attributes as the feminine aesthetic standard for middle-class and upper class Cairenes: white skin; straight, soft, thick, long hair; oval face; large, wide eyes; long eyelashes; small nose and mouth; white teeth; healthy, clear complexion (rosy cheeks); smooth, soft skin; small waist; hour-glass figure; and thin legs and arms with no muscular definition. These female attributes are complemented by a masculine aesthetic standard that consists of the following physical traits: white skin; straight, soft, thick, well-groomed, cut and often black hair. For some of my key informants, they desired a muscular man with a broad chest like Sherrin's neighbors Mahmoud who the women called "The Marlboro Man" because he came outside every morning in a tank top to smoke a cigarette before going to work. For others, like Hawaa, the desirability was the thin, intellectual look of her co-worker. Overall, the majority of these women stated that a man's physical appearance were not as significant as his character traits, which included traits such as generosity and kindness (linked to being non-abusive), humor, and intelligence.

Closer scrutiny of Cairene feminine aesthetic ideals suggests that there perceptions of beauty are more varied than this general description. In Chart 1 below, I describe the traits preferred by Cairenes. I then identify models of beauty that both Cairene Nubians and non-Nubians juxtapose with their own. In the 21st century, non-Nubian Egyptians in Cairo often compare their feminine aesthetic ideals and

beautification practices as being either “Turkish” or “European”. By “Turkish” the Cairenes are referring to the physical attributes of the Mamluks discussed in chapter three. By “European” Cairenes are referring to what they perceive as a generic ideal for people who come from Western countries, such as France, England, Germany, and the United States.

Nubians in my study are primarily first-generation Cairenes who migrated from the village of Gharb Aswan (Jennings 1995). Their aesthetic preferences are in flux as a result of their increased exposure to non-Nubians. When considering aesthetic preferences for this group, I found that the issue of skin color and beauty is meaningful primarily for unmarried, Nubian women in their early 20s rather than for their older counterparts, who often come to the city of Cairo to join their husbands. As young women studying at the university or seeking economic opportunities in the public and private sectors, these Nubians found that their ethnic and regional background, skin color, hair texture, facial features, style of dress, comportment, and personality were more salient than they had ever been. By extension, they felt, more than their older counterparts did, that it was important to consider how they wanted to represent themselves in relation to non-Nubians and what perspective they would adopt to understand their ethnic and cultural background. For example, Cairene Nubian youth struggled over questions of assimilation and intermarriage with non-Nubians. Therefore, their beauty ideals provide insight into the ways that Egyptian Nubians in Cairo are interpreting their social worlds and deciding how to construct their identities in communities where they are minorities rather than members of the dominant Arab-Egyptian Islamic group.

It is important to mention that my description of Cairene beauty preferences in Chart 1 does not include the ways in which Cairene Nubians and non-Nubians juxtapose themselves with other people of African descent who reside in Cairo, such as Ethiopians, Eritreans, Sudanese, Somali, Nigerians, Ghanaians, etc, In describing their aesthetic preferences, the tendency is for Cairenes, both Nubian and non-Nubian, to mention Europeans and Turkish and to exclude discussion of Africans and other darker-skinned peoples. Nubians in Cairo do not differ from non-Nubian Arab Muslim Egyptians in the ways in which they interpret and understand much of Egyptian culture, internalize and resist the feminine aesthetic ideals, and talk about their beauty ideals and practices. Yet, I contend that Nubian aesthetic ideals and practices differ from those of non-Nubians because they must negotiate the beauty complex as members of a group that is marginalized as a result of ethnic and regional background, as well as their complexions and physical features.

While the younger Nubian women that I interviewed were concerned about weight, the preference was still for a fuller, plump (*malyana*) figure rather than a thin one. This body size remained the ideal even among Nubian women attaining a university-education. With increased education and income, non-Nubian Cairene women in my study were more likely to consult nutritionists or utilize the services of weight-loss clinics. Ideal body sizes and shapes for non-Nubian middle-class Cairenes vary and can include a preference for women who would fit a fuller-figured woman that I label the "Turkish" model of beauty.[45]

FIGURE 13: CHART OF CAIRENE FEMININE AESTHETIC IDEALS

MODELS OF BEAUTY	SKIN COLOR	HAIR TEXTURE, COLOR, & LENGTH	NOSE	EYES	BODY SIZE AND SHAPE
NON-NUBIAN EGYPTIAN	WHITE OR WHEAT-COLORED	STRAIGHT, THICK, DARK, LONG	SMALL, STRAIGHT	LARGE, BROWN OR COLORED	THIN (UPPER-MIDDLE / ELITE); PLUMP (LOWER-MIDDLE /LOWER INCOME)
NUBIAN EGYPTIAN	WHITE, WHEAT, OR BROWN, HEALTHY	STRAIGHT, THICK, DARK, LONG	SMALL, STRAIGHT	LARGE BROWN	PLUMP/ THINNER FOR THOSE IN EARLY 20S
TURKISH	FAIR SKIN/WHITE	STRAIGHT, BLONDE, THICK, LONG	SMALL, STRAIGHT	COLORED	PLUMP
EUROPEAN	FAIR SKIN/WHITE	STRAIGHT, BLONDE, THICK, LONG OR STYLISHLY SHORT	SMALL, STRAIGHT	BROWN OR COLORED	THIN

Egyptians describe a person's complexion as *iswid/soda* (black skin), dark skin or brown skin as (*samar/samra*), wheat-colored skin (*qamhii*), or white skin (*abyad/beda*). The categories are fixed but interpretations of an individual's complexion can be fluid; moreover, brown skin (*bashra samra*) and black skin (*bashra soda*) are not considered to be the same thing in contemporary Cairo. For example, to be polite, people call richly brown-skinned people, *samara*; yet, these same individuals, when upset and intending to

insult, could easily use the term black (*soda*). *Samara* can also refer to women who have an olive complexion that is usually associated with people in the Arab world and in the Mediterranean. The terms are meant to identify a person's complexion, but assessment of an individual's skin color is also linked to other physical attributes such as hair texture and facial features.

Samara can be contrasted with the idea of whiteness (*abyad, beda*) and blackness (*sud/iswid*). My research informants demonstrated that all of these complexions could be problematized and stigmatized in Cairene culture and society. Cairenes of Arab descent are sometimes disdainfully referred to as "dirty whites." As discussed in chapter three, darker-skinned sub-Saharan Africans, referred to as *as-sud* or blacks, are subject to insults and expletives in the streets of Cairo because of their physical traits. Nevertheless, the general perception of whiteness in Cairo is that it is an attribute of those with higher social status and prestige. Blackness is a trait that can be linked with the disenfranchised, oppressed people. Taken to its extreme, some Cairenes assert that blackness can be equated with primitiveness, underdevelopment, and a lack of "civilization."

As discussed in chapter three, dark skin or fair skin are traits that are linked with the Turkish, British, or French rulers from the fifteen centuries onward or with the Sudanese rather than with the native Egyptian population. In this chapter, The Fair & Lovely and Brown-Skinned standards discussed below are a categorical way of assessing fluid, subjective, non-definitive perspectives about the ideal feminine aesthetic as well as the meaning or significance of skin color and beauty in the everyday lives of Cairene women and men. Darker-skinned men are subject to insults based upon their skin color, hair texture, et cetera. However, the significance given to their physical traits are

mitigated by the fact that their value is primarily based upon their character and work in the public sphere.

FAIR & LOVELY IDEAL

Figure 14: Fair and Lovely Advertisement at Murad Pharmacy
Photo Taken: Maurita N. Poole; December 2005

I'm sorry. If a woman is brown-skinned (samra/samara), people will tell a man that he should forget about her. –Hawaa, key informant

White skin or fair complexion (*bashra beda*) is often assumed to be the standard of beauty for Cairenes. White skin is a privileged attribute in Cairo, but its desirability is not uncontested in Egyptian culture. White skin can be considered a negative attribute. More often than not, this occurs when the complexion of the individual is pale and chalky *zayy il-lift* (like turnips). Fatan explained the preference in relation to the Hollywood actors Nicole Kidman and Catherine Zeta-Jones. According to her, Egyptians like fair skinned women who look like Zeta-Jones and have thick, dark brown or black hair and small, symmetrical facial features. Kidman, she felt, would be less than ideal for most Egyptians because the paleness of her skin made her appear to be like "marble." The association of skin color with status, power, privilege, and prestige was deeply embedded in non-Nubian Cairene households and social networks. As discussed in the previous

chapters, Egyptians have been influenced by ideologies about skin color and race from Islamic slavery and colonialism. Within the middle class, there are variations based upon whether one has a greater affinity with Islamic or secularist modernist perspectives. Though contestations about Islam and secularism abound, there is generally a consensus about fair-skin/whiteness and the desire to distance oneself from African identity and blackness.

The feminine aesthetic ideals of non-Nubian Cairene women were also influenced by the men with whom they communicate, who often are in their families, the workplace, and neighborhoods. When briefly interviewing Hawaa and her male colleague, Mohsen, at a café, he emphatically asserted, "For marriage, appearance is not the number one priority. It is viewed after morality, family background, etc" Yet, in describing a beautiful woman, his perspective did not vary much from that of other non-Nubian Cairenes. His preferences were "big eyes, white skin, brown (hazel) or blue eyes or green eyes, long hair, soft (*naim*); sometimes it can be brown or more olive skin, hour-glass figure." He later added, "For marriage, a woman may be 10-15 pounds overweight but no more." The weight constraints, he explained, were to allow for weight gain that people believed would result from aging and bearing children.

Other Cairenes in my study contested the idea that fair skin was the ideal in Egypt. Instead of the fair-skinned woman, they suggested that the Cairene ideal is the wheat-colored woman who they define as classically Egyptian. A woman of this hue, for people who prefer this complexion, is the authentic Egyptian woman of Lower Egypt. Like all Egyptians, wheat-colored women and men are the product of the diverse ancestry of Egyptian ancestors, which include Africans, Arabs, Turks, and Europeans. The wheat-

colored woman is slightly lighter than the *samra* but not as fair-skinned as a woman who would be referred to as "*beda*". Professor Baligh stated the following:

> When I was growing up, the girls who really fared well, who you might say were popular were not the fairest. They were of a medium skin tone and looked classically Egyptian. But they just had all of their features in the right place ya know. People really found them to be the most beautiful.

Because wheat-colored Egyptians are the norm in Cairo, the assessment of their beauty may be least related to their complexions and physical features. Hawaa contended that a person's personality plays a role in aesthetic evaluations. This idea was reinforced by Professor Baligh when she asserted the following:

> Well the personality of course is important too. I knew one girl who was really fair, she was the ideal but she had a very bad personality. I found that she did not go very far. She did marry well. She married up but her marriage is horrible because of her personality. I wouldn't say that she has done better than anyone else.

In the statements above, both Hawaa and Professor Baligh bring us back to the fair-skinned ideal that is often the standard by which the others measure themselves. This woman may be able to marry well, to alter her status because of her appearance. For them, this type of woman is still not the ideal because she lacks the warmth and kind personality that they believe is vital to true feminine beauty.

Finally, beautification practices such as bleaching the skin, similar to the promotion of lightening eye color with contacts and surgeries, and dyeing the hair blonde indicate that the aesthetic ideal preferred "corresponds with conventional markers of racial identity" (Kaw 1993:75). Magazine advertisements and billboards throughout the city of Cairo promote whitening and reinforce the Fair & Lovely ideal. As discussed in an upcoming section in this chapter, the impact of colorism and Egyptian racial constructs is

most readily seen in the marriage area where it is common for people to refuse a potential bride or suitor on the basis of her or his skin-color alone.

Samara: Brown-Skinned Beauties

The idea and concept of *samra/samara* (brownness) is used by Cairenes to identify attractive women with dark brown hues (e.g. Nubians, some Sa'idis, and some darker brown non-Nubian Cairenes) as well as women with sun-tanned fair skin or golden brown complexions. Of particular importance to our understanding of the experience of *samara*, or brown-skinned women in Cairo, is the realization that the valorization of the beauty of brown complexions is accompanied by a repugnance or disdain for blackness. A male Egyptian informant succinctly explained the meaning of color categories in Egyptian society in the following way:

> The Egyptian skin, which is a healthy sun-tanned color is the source of beauty of the Egyptian woman. It is called '*samra*' which is really dark skin, the tanned Egyptian color. The white skin may not be a compliment, because its origin may be foreign, like Turkish or European visitors. Those who support it may harbor their own prejudice as a sign of superiority looking down at the color of the peasants (*fellahin*). There is a confusing element here. You must distinguish between '*samra*' and black (*soda*), like Afro-Americans, big difference in the Egyptian mind. As proof, the Egyptians have grown to 70 million, only because of '*samra*', '*samara*'.

This idea of the *samara* as an archetypal Egyptian woman and representative of the nation is significant. Brown-skinned women, of various ethnic and regional backgrounds, have gravitated towards the idea of *samara* as a means of describing themselves as authentic brown-skinned beauties from Egypt. However, this notion is ambiguous, varying not only between genders but between individuals. Perceptions of skin color are connected with socioeconomic status and the ways in which men and women present themselves in the public sphere.

In Nubian households, such as the Mumineens', there was a tendency to interact primarily with relatives and kinsmen in close proximity or with other Nubians in Cairo from their natal villages. They explained their socializing patterns as a means of preserving their family's public image, reputation, and self-respect, which they believed was interwoven with their family's honor. In regard to beauty, I observed Nubian women being variously treated as exotic beauties, potential brides, and objects of ridicule because of their complexions and backgrounds as Upper Egyptians and Nubians. The subjective nature of Cairene notions of beauty is revealed on a daily basis for Nubians as they interacted with non-Nubian men and women who perceive them to be 'Other': not quite Egyptian enough because of their ethnic background and, at times, not quite aesthetically pleasing because of their complexions. In the markets, despite the difference between the vendors' backgrounds and their own, Nubian women also attracted positive attention from men from diverse backgrounds and used it to their advantage in bargaining for items.[46] Esmat, a key informant, cautioned me to distinguish between flirting and the expression of men who were seriously interested in these women as future wives. As she put it, "If they make them upset, they will immediately call them 'black'."

Sommar, a Nubian informant, explained that "men generally prefer fair-skinned or white women, but someone of a similar background or complexion might not mind having a brown-skinned companion." Among the Nubians in my study, she is one who has the potential to be upwardly mobile because of her education and exposure to difference through association with foreigners and diverse groups of Egyptians in her neighborhood and at the University of Cairo, where she is a student. As a young girl, she was exposed to foreign tourists who would visit her natal village in Upper Egypt and to

researchers who came to *Gharb Aswan* to document Nubian culture and heritage (Jennings 1995). Her feminine aesthetic ideals and beauty practices are informed by the interrelationship of ideas and practice that have come from: (1) Nubians from her village in Upper Egypt, (2) her awareness of the ideals and practices of Cairenes from various ethnic and regional backgrounds who reside in her Cairo neighborhood of Imbaba and (3) the latest beautification and clothing styles among young women at Cairo University. In her natal village of Gharb Aswan, where Sommar was one considered to be one of the most beautiful younger women, she exuded a confidence that was rare among her counterparts. Her status as one of the upper echelon, her experience in the city, her facility at blending the cultural values of the Nubian and Cairene communities, and her adherence to the tenets of Islam made her one of the first choices among young Nubian men.

Despite the interest of the men in her village, Sommar confided that she wanted to complete her education at the university and that she was interested in a young non-Nubian, Upper Egyptian who also lived in Cairo. She liked him more than the others because of his ambition as evidenced by his study of computers, a field that she felt might actually be able to get them not only out of Cairo but also to a place beyond the Arab Gulf. These factors, coupled with the fact that he was, as Sommar put it partially in English and partially in Arabic, "*asmar* (brown) like me," made him her ideal.

Sommar, like Esmat, asserted that fairer-skinned Egyptian men could also use their complexions as a means of differentiating themselves from their darker-skinned counterparts. To ensure that her future spouse never felt superior to her because of his skin tone, she insisted that he should be "brown" not white. Proud of her Nubian heritage

and her brown skin, she still applied skin-bleaching cream every night regardless of the events that were taking place the following day. Thus, I would argue that living in the city of Cairo had impacted her self-esteem, especially when she moved farther away from her close friends and family in the *hara*.

By contrast, Amira, fairer than she, a wheat-colored (*qamhii*) complexion as the Egyptians call it, could blend with non-Nubian Egyptians in Cairo. Her confidence in her complexion led her to refuse suitors, Nubian or otherwise, of a darker hue and express an interest in young non-Nubian Cairene men who she hoped would be willing to marry her, remove her from the village, and possibly to neighborhoods in Cairo where there were fewer Nubians. She also bleached her skin, particularly before weddings and other social events where members of the opposite sex would see her. These various strategies, from the alteration of physical appearance through the use of particular beautification products that supposedly reduce young Nubian women's stigma by making their appearance more acceptable to the fairer-skinned Cairenes, as well as the attempt to flee one's cultural community are well-known and well-documented strategies of darker-skinned minorities in environments where skin color and race influence experience and access to resources.

The experiences and behavioral practices of Nubian women in Cairo differed from their female Nubian counterparts in the Upper Egyptian village of Gharb Aswan. The aesthetic practices of Nubian women in the village consisted of maintaining cleanliness and doing basic hygenic practices (bathing twice a day)[47], washing face and hands when they came home from the market or a neighbors, *halawa* for hair removal, having their hair done at the salon on a weekly or bi-weekly basis). Makeup was not worn on a daily basis; instead, it was for special occasions, such as weddings. If they

were married, beauty had become a secondary consideration to motherhood, and when it was discussed, it was primarily in relation to maintaining the interest of their husbands.

Nubian men in the village stated that, for the most part, they were seeking nice, pious young ladies who would be faithful, maintain the household, and bear healthy children. In terms of physical appearance, they preferred "long hair, soft and straight (*naim*), healthy complexion *(bashra sahiha*), large eyes, and small nose." The only difference, which I never heard among Nubians and non-Nubians in Cairo, was their desire to be with women with round faces like the moon (*zayy al-amar*) rather than oval. [48] Aware of the desirability of this attribute, some of the young women in the village talked about their interest in having round faces and slender bodies. Accomplishing a slimmer figure, which for them ideally would mean weighing from 145-160 pounds for a 5'5" woman, was attempted but they were at a loss as to how they could keep the roundness and fullness of their faces as the pounds shed. Other than concerns about weight, ability to convey modesty and respectability, the Nubian women in the village did not express as much body dissatisfaction. In addition, rarely did they talk about the importance of skin color or complexion. Darker skinned women were just as likely to be married as their slightly fairer counterparts. Men admired women for a variety of reasons: their astuteness or cleverness, kindness, humor, ability to manage the household, et cetera.

Figure 15: Hennaed hands, one of the main Nubian beautification practices in the village; Photo Taken: Maurita N. Poole, July 2003

Sommar's beautification practices and style of dress changed when she visited Gharb Aswan as well. While she rarely left home without foundation, lipstick, and eye makeup when she was in Cairo, in the village she kept her cosmetics to a minimum. The villagers believed in wearing what they called "natural" products (e.g. henna and kohl; see figure 15) and jewelry, especially gold (Jennings 1988) to enhance their beauty but very little else. In discussing their decisions, they asserted that makeup was not good for the body and that it was anti-Islamic because they believed that makeup, more than other forms of adornment, were examples of a woman drawing attention to her beauty or charms (*zina*). Cosmetics, ideally, were to be worn to please one's husband alone. Single women's beauty and attraction were to be measured by their modesty, piety, and submissiveness, i.e. characteristics that they perceived to be ideal for marriage.

Figure 16: Ahlam and her third son Mido; Photo Taken: Maurita N. Poole, July 2003

Younger married Cairene Nubian women engaged non-Nubian Cairenes differently than single Cairene Nubians. As married women, their concern was how to be honorable and respected ladies. These women's adaptation to the city varied; some, like Ahlam (see figure 16), desperately longed for the village. While life in Cairo granted her accesss to more amenities and resources, she did not think of it as fondly as life in the Nubian village where she said she had more space, better food, cleaner air, closeness to the Nile, and much more time to spend with friends as well as kinsmen.

Ahlam also missed the mobility that she had in the village. In Cairo, she rarely left Embaba and was not aware of most things beyond the market, her apartment, and that

of her relatives unless she heard about it from her husband, relatives and children. She spent the morning cooking and cleaning the house, getting her sons ready for school, and in the evening they had dinner at one of the aunt's homes, talked about their day, joked and gossipped, and watched television. When her husband Hosni was present, she put his needs and desires first and foremost, ensured his comfort, and followed his wishes. Most importantly, she tried to observe the tenets of Islam by praying daily, seeking and listening to the advice of her elders, and generally was very respectful, modest, subdued, yet amiable and friendly. As she described it, she lived the traditional Nubian ideal life for women.

By contrast, other Nubian married women, like Samaa, had not been fortunate to marry well. Separated from husband and refused a divorce or support by him, she worked in a low paying job in a garment factory. Often she left home early in the morning to get the bus to work, and she arrived in the evenings so late that she could not spend much time with her extended kin or her children. Though she spent time with the other family members as much as she could during her off days, her two sons and daughter were cared for throughout the day by their grandparents and aunts. Resources for her children were few, but the extended family offered support. Because she was forced to rely on the assistance of her parents and extended family members to navigate the competitive urban milieu of Cairo, she was often frustrated, stressed, and yearned to return to Gharb Aswan where she felt life would be better.

The beauty constructs and Cairene feminine aesthetic ideals affected Samaa and Ahlam differently than their younger counterparts. As mothers and as women who were married, their focus had shifted away from the self and the physical to their husbands

and children, to ways to maintain and improve the status of their nuclear families and households, and ways to teach the cultural values, customs, and traditions of the Nubians to the next generation. Guarded and protective around non-Nubian Cairenes, whom they perceived to be ignorant and concerned only with money, their aesthetic practices were more akin to their female Nubian counterparts in Gharb Aswan. Makeup was not worn on a daily basis; instead, it was for special occassions such as weddings.

Furthermore*, sittat* differed from older married women in their fifties and above (*al-sittat al-kabeera*). *Al-Sittat al-kabeera*, more mature in age, hardly ever wore makeup, even at the weddings (see figure 17). Often in their black traditional robes (*abeyahs*), in the village of Gharb Aswan, these women contended that make-up was anti-Islamic; therefore, kohl and henna were the only acceptable or natural enhancers of beauty. Gold, if possessed, was not worn as frequently as it might have been during their younger years

Figure 17: *Al-Sittat al-kabeera*. In this picture are three women from Anne Jennings 1995 study, a daughter, and granddaughter. Photo Taken: Maurita N. Poole, Date: July 2003

or was put on for special occasions. Their everyday focus was on the preservation and promotion of the family by helping to advise and guide the younger generations.

The stories of these women, as well as the other members of their nuclear and extended family, are quintessential Nubian stories. Migration has been a hallmark of Nubian culture for the last few centuries because of the non-arable land, which they were not able to survive on, and the flooding of their villages by the raising of the Aswan Dam in 1903, 1933, and 1963 (Jennings 2009, Geiser 1986, Fernea 1991). In addition, when entering the cities of Cairo and Alexandria, they not only have to manage the problems of rural migrants but of encountering people who view them as outsiders because of their ethnic background and physical appearance. With education and exposure, many *fellahin* and *Sa'idis* can blend with Cairenes in ways that Nubians never truly can. Though Nubians attain the education, the higher paying jobs, and move into wealthier neighborhoods, they continue to be concerned with being stigmatized because of their skin color and physical features, of having to deal with the association of their people with servitude and slavery, even if no one in their family has ever experienced or been scarred by the institution. In that regard, Egyptian, particularly Cairene, constructs about skin color and ethnicity intermingle with notion about class, region, language, and modernity to inform the daily lives of the Nubian in the 21st century.

A Mixed Cairene Household

In this section, I highlight the experiences of a Cairene woman of mixed descent, the child of a bi-ethnic Upper Egyptian father and a Cairene mother whose kin are from the Delta, to whom I will refer as Aziza. In 2005-2006, Aziza was a graduate student in the Religion Department at Cairo University, a university that has a long and rich history

and tradition in Egypt. This university, founded in 1908 by Protestant missionaries, was created to provide Egyptians with an institution of higher learning that could counter the Islamic religious teaching of Al-Azhar, one of Egypt's and the world's oldest universities. Aziza studies Islam carefully in order to understand her status as a woman in an Egypt, the position of Muslims in the West, and to consider how she will practice her religion if she is given the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree in the United States or England.

Aziza's negotiation of Cairene beauty constructs is underpinned by an awareness of the marginality that members of her family face because of their bi-ethnic, bi-regional heritage. The strategies that she adopts change often, shifting from complete disregard for maintaining her physical self in the hope of being acknowledged for her intellect to succumbing to her communities' standards for young, unmarried women in order to increase her flexibility and mobility through marriage. At twenty-four years old, she is highly concerned about her options for marriage. Though she has received proposals from Nubians, she refused their offers because she did not want her children to be as stigmatized and ostracized as her darker skinned Nubian and Upper Egyptian kin.

Aziza's father is a child of an Upper Egyptian woman and a Nubian man, and her mother is a first-generation Cairene woman who is a descendant of Egyptians from the Delta or Lower Egypt. Her parents are educators who have primarily lived in lower middle income communities in Cairo. During the first few years of their marriage, Aziza's parents resided in a newly built apartment in *Madinat Sittah Uktobar* (Sixth of October City), a district in the Giza Governorate of Cairo that was named after the day that Egypt achieved military success at the start of the 1973 Yom Kippur War as well as

Egypt's Armed Forces Day. Established in 1979 by Anwar Sadat, Sixth of October City is one of the new cities or more suburban communities developed on the outskirts of Cairo to deal with overpopulation. The city provided lower middle income Cairenes with an opportunity for better housing and living conditions, as well as a chance to be a part of a newly developing "cosmopolitan city" that would host students of diverse nationalities in the area's seven private universities.

Opposites in nearly every respect, Aziza's parents' backgrounds and differing perspectives seemed to matter little for the first eighteen years of their marriage. During that time, Aziza's mother had four daughters and two sons and managed the household while working as a teacher outside of the home. Her father worked as a teacher and had several opportunities to work as an educational consultant overseas. In the late 1990s, her father decided to marry an Ethiopian woman while he was working abroad in Ethiopia. Aziza, a 15-year old secondary school student at the time, recalls her mother's frustration and the rift that this caused in their household.

Aziza's mother's aggravation is not surprising; many Muslim Cairene women often fear a second marriage since it will impact household resources and, often, the social interaction between the husband and the first wife. However, Aziza's description of her mother's irritation, which apparently remains until this day, is revealing because it is articulated in racialized terms. That is, she repeatedly asks: "*Why did your father marry this black woman?"* The expression of her resentment in this manner and her calling her co-wife *soda* (or black woman) rather than by her name, are meant to be insulting. As the mother articulates her frustration, and as Aziza repeats it, the issue is not that he has decided to have a second wife, but that he has selected a "black woman," a woman who

in her estimation is inferior by virtue of her physical appearance, the most notable characteristic of which is her complexion.

While Aziza never suggested that her mother expressed vexation at her father directly, or that she ever insulted her father by calling him “black”, it is possible that her father was reminded of the difference in their complexions (rather than region, class, or ethnicity) during moments of disharmony and antagonism. To be called “a black”, whether male or female, is a form of betrayal in marriages between darker and fairer-skinned Cairenes. Hence, Nubians, Arab Muslim Sudanese who had resided in Cairo for their entire lives, and other darker-skinned Egyptians were hesitant and highly concerned about marrying someone of a lighter complexion. By choosing to marry a woman without his first wife’s consent, Aziza’s father committed one of the greatest forms of betrayal imaginable to a married Muslim woman. Her vexation is articulated in one of the few ways that a Cairene can express the utmost disrespect and animosity towards a darker skinned person within their society. In short, Cairene notions of hierarchy and beliefs about the appropriate ordering of individuals and groups is summed up in the racial epithet that she uses for her co-wife, and possibly for her husband as well.

The continual hostile references to her stepmother marked Aziza in indelible ways, and motivated her to refuse darker-skinned suitors. Aziza liked and admired her stepmother, and was often frustrated with her mother’s attitude towards her and the world, which concentrated on attracting the opposite sex through beauty, charm, femininity and pretending to be of a socioeconomic class that was higher than the one to which they truly belonged. Yet, the experiences of her family members enforced the idea

that marriage to a darker-skinned person would be undesirable. During our first meeting and interview, she said the following:

> My father left my mother for my stepmother who is a black woman. In my family, there is a lot of mixing. My father's mother was married to a black man, a Nubian. I will tell you that what Egyptians say is not true. If you want to understand them, you must look at the history. I think it is because of the rule by the Turks who were white and the British who were white that make us think that we are not good the way we are, that we have to be white to be good. This has been a problem for some of my cousins who are dark. One is brown like, another is really dark. The oldest because of her dark skin only got married recently at age 29. She has money, education, is a good person but because of ideas of beauty in Egypt she could not find anyone to marry. The one that she got is not so good. She had to take him. He is here and she is here (places hands side by side, palms flat in the air to show that he is beneath her). Don't listen to what Egyptians say about dark skin men either. The books will say this only matters for a woman. This is not true. People don't want to marry dark men either. They only do it when they feel they have to, that they don't have any other choice.

Children of these unions, especially if they visibly have features associated with people of African-descent [(wide flat) noses, curlier or kinkier hair, darker skin], feel their difference and observe on a daily basis the privileges that their fairer-skinned siblings receive outside of the home, and at times in the home, because of their physical appearance. For it is at the household level, in familial interactions, that they first learn sociocultural hierarchies in Cairene society. As they age and consider their opportunities for marriage, they are often exposed to prejudicial treatment because of their appearance, often grudgingly accept a mate if they are unable to blend, even when they possess greater wealth and education than their future spouse and his/her kinsmen.

Marriage, as the fulcrum around which notions of skin color, race, and gender emerge, allows us to see how physical appearance influences opportunities for marriage in the Egyptian context. Though Aziza's comment suggests that the experiences of men and women are parallel, women's attractiveness differentially impacts their marriageability since physical appearance influences their ability to attract suitors, how they actualize themselves as women, and gain access to structures of power. As discussed in chapters three and four, darker skinned women have always had access to men of power through harems and prostitution. However, they continue to be viewed by the majority of Egyptians in Cairo as unsuitable or less-than-ideal as wives. The existence of this perspective suggests that they have less access to privileges and resources that are accorded to women as a result of their marital status or relation to men in a conjugal way.

While kinship historically assured marriageability, this certainty has been threatened by the rise of individuals in cities reared in communities far removed from kin (Altuntek 2006; Hatem 1988; Hoodfar 1997; Rugh 1984; Weinreb 2008; Zuhur 1992) . Perceptions of skin color, race, and ethnicity emerge when individuals refuse suitors out of fear that their social position will be jeopardized (Atiya 1982). As one of my key informants stated, "I am being pursued by a wealthy man but I am not sure since he is so dark." Furthermore, as my fieldwork indicated, the significance of phenotype also arises when people use phenotype as a measure of morality (e.g. more "African" phenotypically, more sexually licentious).

An analysis of the selection of marital partners further illuminates the importance of skin color, ethnicity, and race because it shows how historical relations of power and material structures coalesce. As one of the primary mechanisms for social mobility

among women, marriage selection is a way that existing social hierarchies remain in place. A review of marriage advertisements on Arab networking websites on the Internet demonstrates the significance of whiteness for women[49]. White skin has been such a desirable trait for marriage partners that women of only average looks in the advertisements in the early twentieth century also emphasized the fairness of their skin (Abu-Lughod 1961).

As darker skinned men increasingly select women who fit this cultural ideal of beauty (fair-skinned), darker-skinned women in my study expressed their anxiety about their inability to find suitable partners for marriage. For university-educated women, living in Cairo not only physically separates them from their kinsmen in their natal villages but also widens the gap between them and male kin because of their education and worldview. Moreover, my informants asserted that a marriage between women with more education than their husbands would not be feasible because he would not be able to garner the respect needed for him to maintain his authority in the household.

The construction and production of racial and color ideologies in Egypt are formalized, in part, in the marriage market. Because the desirability of a female partner has traditionally been articulated in terms of beauty, the significance of skin color and particular features among Egyptians has greater implications for darker-skinned women who do not fit the dominant feminine aesthetic ideals. Darker-skinned Arab-Muslim and Nubian Egyptian women in Cairo increasingly complain about the difficulties they are having in finding marriage partners. As their kinsmen search for love-marriages or express their desire to marry "white" or "wheat-colored women", darker-skinned women in my study asserted that they are concerned that they might not be able to marry at all.

These women confirmed Aziza's assertions by stating that they are encouraged to accept the first man who expresses interest, even if he would normally be considered inferior to them in educational and social status. Therefore, I reiterate the point that within the context of the marriage, an institution highly intertwined with patriarchy, perceptions of blackness and African-ness are most meaningful when inscribed upon female bodies.

CONCLUSION

Marriage between different ethnic groups in Egypt is not stigmatized in the same manner as it is in cross-cultural settings with a history of deep or strong ethnic divides, such as the United States. Nonetheless, colorism and racial constructs in Cairene society often limits the pairing of a darker skinned person and fairer skinned. Darker skinned Cairenes, especially those from Nubian and Upper Egyptian households, are concerned that marriage to a fairer skinned partner could result in tension between the couple, a sense of superiority on the part of the fairer skinned spouse who could draw on the culture's valorization of whiteness. At the same time, several fairer skinned Cairene women in my study admitted that complexion would be a factor when considering the proposal of a darker skinned suitor. Publicly admitting that skin color would be the rationale for denying a suitor is less prevalent for fairer skinned Cairenes from the elite, cultivated classes; however, in private circles, I was often told that joking and teasing occurs when a fair skinned person is known to be seriously considering a darker-skinned man or woman for marriage. The perceptions and behavioral patterns of bi-ethnic pairings (Nubian Upper Egyptian and Non-Nubian Delta) that are considered to be opposite in terms of phenotype is, therefore, emphasized to allow us to consider the way colorism and notions of difference inform everyday experience at the household level.

In the next chapter, I explore the significance of the regional divisions in Egypt and the implications of the stereotypes for understandings of the construction of the Egyptian nation. I attempt to link the tensions between Upper and Lower Egyptians and Cairene cosmopolitan strivers to Cairo's external 'Others', i.e. sub-Saharan Africans refugees and "immigrants with ambivalent legal status" (Singerman and Amar 2006:11). These three distinct communities-- rural women and men who have migrated to Cairo to gain access to resources, university-educated Cairene women yearning for migration because they have either failed to meet cultural expectations or feel that they have no space/place within Cairo's sociocultural milieu, and sub-Saharan Africans seeking aid from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) headquarters--most explicitly embody "Otherness" in contemporary Cairo. Moreover, these groups highlight the challenges and complexities of being racialized and gendered subjects in 21st century Egypt.

CHAPTER SIX:
REGIONAL DIFFERENCE & GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Figure 18: Mobinil Image, Game'et El-Duwal El Arabia,
Photo: Maurita N. Poole, November 2005

In November of 2005, Mobinil (the first Egyptian mobile phone operator) advertised its telecommunication services on a prominent billboard on *Game'et El-Duwal El-Arabia*, one of the busiest thoroughfares in Mohandiseen. The billboard concerned the company's reliable coverage throughout Egypt and asserted that it was the ideal service provider for those seeking connections across regions. The image itself portrayed a woman whose face was divided in half. The left side of her face was that of a young, wheat-colored Egyptian peasant woman surrounded by the rich, fertile land of the Delta (or Lower Egypt) in traditional dress speaking into a cell phone. The right side of her face was that of a young peasant woman surrounded by the arid land of Upper Egypt in traditional dress listening to the Lower Egyptian woman. The use of these women in traditional attire evokes twentieth-century Egyptian nationalist representations of peasant women as the authentic representation of the Egyptian nation (Badran 1995; Baron 2005; Rifaey 2001). At the same time, the image serves as a visual representation of regional

differences mapped onto female peasants' bodies, i.e. the people in the society who historically have had the least access to education and technology in the Egyptian nation-state (Blackman 2000; Hopkins and Saad 2004; Miller 2006; Mitchell 1990).

It is not surprising that it is the Delta peasant who holds the phone and speaks in the Mobinil image. Though Egyptian peasants of both regions can be juxtaposed with the people of urban centers, their status is not parallel. Upper Egypt has been dominated by Lower Egypt since ancient Egyptian pharaoh Menes unified the southern and northern regions in the fourth millennium (El-Aswad 2004; Hopkins and Saad 2004; Miller 2004). Since the Nasser era, scholars have attributed the underdevelopment of Upper Egypt to its harsh dry climate (El-Aswad 2004; Hopkins and Saad 2004). Even when national projects, such as the Aswan High Dam enterprise in the 1960s, have been established in their region, Upper Egyptians have not been the primary benefactors (Fahim 1983; Fernea, et al. 1991; Fernea and Kennedy 1966; Geiser 1973; Jennings 1995; Miller 2004; Miller 2006; Zohry 2002). As a consequence, the inhabitants of Upper Egypt comparatively have had less access to education, healthcare, industry, and sanitation. To sustain their livelihood, Upper Egyptian men migrate to metropolitan cities in Lower Egypt (such as Cairo and Alexandria) where they are often subject to discrimination due to their regional background (Fahim 1983; Geiser 1973; Geiser 1981; Geiser 1986; Jennings 1995; Miller 2004; Miller 2006).

The prejudicial treatment that Upper Egyptians experience can also be associated with their connection with Northern Sudan and the concomitant ideas that Egyptians have about the Sudanese (see chapter three) (El-Shakry 2007; Fábos 2008; Fabos 1999; Powell 2000; Powell 2003; Sedgwick 2004). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

these notions were promulgated and supported by both Egyptian and Western social scientists who defined Upper Egyptians in racialized and racist terms (El-Shakry 2007; Mitchell 1990). Specifically, they described Upper Egyptians as a race that is a mixture of Egyptian and "African Negro" that is controlled by their senses (Mitchell 1990). The men were depicted as individuals who were so hypersexual that they copulated with donkeys, fornicated and committed adultery despite Islamic strictures. By contrast, the women were portrayed as unchaste, subordinate, abused subjects who could be considered unattractive by their thirties (Mitchell 1990). Finally, the Upper Egyptians were notorious for their violent tendencies and village vendettas (Blackman 2000; El-Aswad 2004; Hopkins and Saad 2004; Mitchell 1990).

In the twenty-first century, Egyptians do not explicitly talk about Upper Egyptians in racialized terms. Yet, Cairenes do talk about Upper Egyptians (*Sa'aida*) as if they are unchangeable, timeless 'internal others' (Miller 2006). The most common stereotypical discourse concerning Upper Egyptians reiterates some of the ideas of the social scientists of the previous centuries. Specifically, urban Egyptian caricatures of them portray them as peasants who are "religiously and socially conservative, a little prone to violence, and perhaps occasionally dim" (Bedsted 2003; Hopkins 2003; Hopkins and Saad 2004; Miller 2006). To counter these negative characterizations, many Upper Egyptians have begun to shun the appellation peasant (*fellah/fellahin*) in favor of tribe (*qabila/qaba'il*) (Nielsen 2004). In urban centers, they also organize around their regional identity and emphasize their superiority of their morals and values, such as honor (*sharaf),* respect for the elderly (*ihtiram al-kibar*), courage(*shahama*), and their strong capacity to endure hardship, and

migrate to find the necessary resources and employment to sustain themselves(Miller 2004; Miller 2006).

Ironically, Lower Egyptians characterize Upper Egyptians as people who are bewildered and lost whenever they venture outside of their natal villages(Amin 2000; Bedsted 2003; El-Aswad 2004) However, scholarship about Upper Egyptians and migration stresses the fact Upper Egyptian men are not only more accustomed but more likely to migrate to both the metropolitan centers as well as abroad because of the dire ecological and economic circumstances of their region (El-Aswad 2004; Zohry 2002). Since the mid-twentieth century, they have become a part of two million Egyptian men, or almost 10% of the Egyptian labor force, who migrate to the Arab Gulf (Ghoneim 2011). These migrants include both skilled and unskilled laborers who work in construction and private sector companies in countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Oman. They work for a fixed period of time to earn income for marriage, the purchase of land or a home, and/or to maintain a wife and children (Dalen, et al. 2005a; Hoodfar 1997).

Transnational migration to the Arab Gulf is associated with men; however, women are also affected by the process. Research indicates that the men who migrate are supported by networks of women as well as men that are very adept at formulating strategies to take advantage of economic opportunities in Egypt as well as abroad (El-Aswad 2004; Geiser 1981; Geiser 1986; Hoodfar 1997; Hopkins and Saad 2004; Jennings 1995; Miller 2004; Miller 2006). Because of the nature of the work, rarely do these women travel with their husbands or male kin. Instead, they become temporary heads of households that rely on remittances to cover daily expenses, educate children, and pay for

healthcare (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Hoodfar 1997; Jennings 1995; Sherif 1999). Furthermore, these women also use remittances to create and manage household businesses, buy real estate or land, and accumulate assets (Dalen, et al. 2005a; Dalen, et al. 2005b; El-Aswad 2004; Hoodfar 1997).

Highly-educated Upper Egyptians migrate for further education and white-collar employment (Dalen, et al. 2005a; Ghoneim 2011; Sell 1988; Zohry 2002; Zohry 2003). Though the majority of these Egyptians intend to return home when they leave, about 72 percent of men and 28 percent of the women do not return to Egypt because of the high rate of unemployment (Nasser 2011). In the early twenty-first century, the total number of these Egyptians is less than one million. They reside in five main countries: the United States (around 40 percent), Canada (14 percent), and Italy, Australia, and Greece (Ghoneim 2011). The remaining Egyptians emigrate to Western European countries, such as the Netherlands, France, UK, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Spain (Ghoneim 2011).

Recent research (Dalen, et al. 2005b; Nasser 2011) focuses on the transnational migration of Egyptian women with higher education. The majority (58.1%) of them travel for family reunification or to marry a compatriot since Egyptian culture does not usually support women traveling alone. The remaining 42% of these Egyptian women migrate primarily to continue their higher education. The destination countries for these independent women travelers in order are the United States, Canada, Australia, and then European countries (Greece, Italy, and United Kingdom). In terms of demographics, Egyptian women traveling independently are generally between the ages of 15-24, followed by women between the ages of 25-39. Prior to their departure, they have

previous work experience as well as university educations. They also state that they hope to return to Egypt if economic conditions improve (Nasser 2011).

During my fieldwork, I encountered women in undergraduate or graduate programs at the university or working while waiting for a suitor who promised that he would return to marry them. Over the course of my fieldwork, however, many of them became frustrated and distraught when these potential husbands ceased to communicate with them as time passed. While the scholarship often concerns married Egyptian women or women traveling for educational purposes, it does not examine the experiences of women of marital age who wait for a male migrant to return. Similarly, it does not discuss transnational migration as a practice that Egyptian women yearn for, particularly when they feel constrained by cultural ideologies that emphasizes that a woman's self-realization emerges primarily (if not exclusively) from marriage and motherhood. Finally, it has yet to depict the ways that Egyptian women independently pursue engagement with international communities in Cairo and abroad.

Cairene women who long for independent permanent emigration and who migrate for employment are rare. These women push against cultural norms and expectations for women with higher education as well as ideologies that encourage women to identify with the domestic sphere as wives and mothers (see chapter four). This process is further complicated when the women pursuing the migration are non-elite. In the upcoming sections, I examine the life and strategies of a lower-middle class Cairene woman descended from a mixed household (i.e. marriage between an Upper Egyptian and Lower Egyptian) who pursued and achieved independent emigration to Quebec. I compare her experience with an upper-middle class Cairene woman descended from

Lower Egyptians who longs to engage the international communities in Cairo and abroad but whose household will not support transnational migration for a woman. Her use of technology (i.e. the Internet) to engage the global world and the other woman's actual engagement with foreigners in Cairo are discussed in relation to existing scholarship about globalization, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism.

As the first woman connects to elite Egyptians and foreign cosmopolitans who can assist her in the emigration process, she fashions herself according to middle-class Cairene perceptions of ideal womanhood (i.e. virtuous yet modern). She attends places of worship where she believes she can gain access to resources, connections, and networks that can help her to realize her goal of transnational migration. Finally, she beautifies herself according to Cairene feminine aesthetic ideals (see chapter five) in the hope that she can convert her physical capital into the cultural and social capital that is necessary for the negotiation of the various phases of the emigration process.
By contrast, the second woman draws on Cairene notions of ideal womanhood and beauty to represent herself in virtual space.

In discussing these women's mobility and engagement with the global world, the obvious differences are the over twenty-year age gap and the fact that one of them is actually physically mobile while the other is anchored in place as she engages the global world. In the chapter, I argue that the common thread in these women's global engagement is their adherence to the Cairene feminine aesthetic preferences. Specifically, these women negotiate gender dynamics in physical and virtual space by emphasizing their morality and virtue. In addition, the Egyptian construction of race emerges in their social interactions as they strive to distance themselves from darker-skinned Upper

Egyptian relatives and any signifiers that connect them to the African continent rather than to Europe or the Arab-Islamic world.

HAWAA: INDEPENDENT EMIGRATION

My first case study concerns a 44-year old Cairene woman who I call Hawaa. I classify her as a cosmopolitan striver, or an individual who longs to become a citizen capable of living at home in the world (Park and Abelmann 2004). Her cosmopolitan status is not evidenced by her socioeconomic status, which is lower middle-class. Rather, her status, as a cosmopolitan striver, is signified by her active pursuit of social mobility through continuous engagement or interaction with upper-middle class to elite Cairenes and foreigners. My interpretation of her life draws upon research that discusses cosmopolitan striving in the global order as a reflection of discrepant cosmopolitanism (Park and Abelmann 2004). In this work, the authors contend that learning a foreign language, particularly English in the 21st century, is both a local and global sign that demonstrates that nationalist leanings are not incongruent with a cosmopolitan orientation. Therefore, the commitment to learning a foreign language from the Western world can be associated with class position, namely, the maintenance of a middle-to-elite socioeconomic status, or the longing for mobility into a higher socioeconomic class.

Hawaa was raised in Shubra, a former aristocratic but currently working-class district of Cairo. A very densely-populated suburb of Cairo, Shubra is one of the areas of the city where Muslims and Christians live side-by-side and practice each other's religious traditions with sufficient zeal to make it difficult to determine the religious background of the participants (Habib 1006). The living conditions of its inhabitants

vary, ranging from slums with poorly constructed housing, very little light, no sanitation and no paved streets to dwellings like the one inhabited by Hawaa and her extended family, which consisted of a five-story apartment building with plenty of light, sizable rooms, indoor plumbing, et cetera.

Hawaa is descended from a mixed household. Her mother was a fair-skinned woman originally from Cairo who married an Upper Egyptian who Hawaa described as a "darker skinned Christian man from a small town in Upper Egypt called Esna." When Hawaa was nine years old, her mother passed away. Therefore, she and her siblings (an older sister and brother) were cared for by her father and matrilineal kin, who educated them in a Christian school where she was instructed in French.

Hawaa often spoke of how proud she was of her Egyptian and Christian heritage. She enjoyed showing foreigners Cairo and what she called the "true Egypt". Islamic Egypt is the culture created by "Arabs," a negative appellation when uttered by her. As she explained in ethnocentric terms, "Arabs are nothing more than ignorant, dirty whites. They are not Egyptian." She also said that many Egyptians (especially Christians) find it offensive if someone calls them Arab. To be Arab, according to her, signifies that one is a part of the conquering class that killed the native Egyptians during the Era of Martyrs (*asr al-shuhada'*) she extends beyond the third century to include the period after the Arabs arrived in the seventh century (Frankfurter 1994). In her family, it is a source of pride that her ancestors were able to maintain their religion instead of converting to Islam. For her, the continued practice of Christianity in her family also signifies their previously high socioeconomic status since they paid the religious taxes (*dhimma*) instead of converting to Islam or being killed by the sword.

Hawaa stated that the behavior of the Arabs is also part of the reason that she believes many Egyptians have a disdain for darker skin. According to her, "Arabs initially were short, dark skinned people with kinky or curly hair". Then the French came and they were more benevolent conquerors and beloved because they subdued the Arabs. She described the French as "tall, slender, and white, with soft straight hair (*naim*)". In the twenty-first century, she stated that the people of Mansoura are believed to be descended from those Egyptians who mixed with the French, and they have a reputation of being more sophisticated as well as more lascivious than other Egyptians. She described them as tall, thin, white, with long soft hair, blonde, colored eyes (blue, light brown, green), with small noses.

Hawaa described the Shubra of her childhood as a place of great diversity and change that included "truly refined 'ladies' the likes of which could not be seen in the present day." This Cairo of the 1960s, as she described it, was filled with "inhabitants who were really 'civilized,' who appreciated diverse ideas." In her community, she was exposed to people from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds; she found their ideas, their discussions of music and politics, about what it meant to be an Egyptian and a member of a religious group (whether Jewish, Christian, or otherwise) interesting. Therefore, her natural curiosity and interest in others was well fed in the homes of her extended family members, in school, as well as at the stores of some of the merchants who owned stores close to her father's photography shop.

As a young woman in her early twenties, she felt that she was average in terms of looks and at times she felt very unattractive. Her medium-sized figure, like an hour-glass, and relatively fair skin made her a subject of interest among the young men in her

neighborhood as well as at the university; yet none of the eligible Christian men pursued her or considered a serious courtship with her. During her third year at Cairo University, she dated and fell in love with a Muslim student on campus. Though she described them as a closely-connected and compatible couple, her fear of her family members' reactions towards a Muslim suitor caused her to terminate the relationship. In her words, "As a Christian family, this marriage would have been unthinkable. My family would have disowned me. I would've had to give up my religion and this was something that I could not do." Her conflicted perspective (i.e. simultaneously open and encompassing and closed and defensive) was facilitated by members of her family who taught her to be open to diversity, yet who often expressed frustration about their position as members of a religious minority in Egypt. It also can be explained by a concern that her Muslim boyfriend would not truly honor her religion.

Hawaa's fears about the problems that might ensue in a marriage to a Muslim man were based upon her perception of the differences between Muslim and Christian marriages and lifestyles, as well as what the sacrifices she would have to make if the marriage ensued. If married to a Muslim man, she believed that she would have to abide by the rules of his religion. Though she might be allowed to practice Christianity freely, she felt that she might also be subject to practices to which she and her family were unaccustomed, such as accepting a co-wife or being asked to adopt a style of dress that he presumed to be more modest than her close-fitting Western attire. As an Egyptian Christian, she would not be able to divorce, and would have to endure whatever challenges her Muslim husband brought to her. Without the support of her family, she

would also be extremely vulnerable. As pragmatic about marriage as she was a romantic, she opted not to continue her relationship with the young Muslim man.

As the above-statements about the Era of Martyrs may indicate, her decision was also informed by her knowledge of the centuries-old persecution of Egyptian Christians by the Egyptian government, as well as the subtle and overt discrimination that they received on a daily basis in the city of Cairo. By the time she entered the university, Cairenes were indebted to a Nasser era that encouraged them to think of themselves in terms of their national identity, as much as their religious identities (Ghali 1978). Nevertheless, there had also been an increase in the popularity of conservative Islamic groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (see brief discussion of Islamic Revival in chapters four and five) (El-Guindi 1981; Hatem 1998; Ibrahim 1982). Beyond that, debates about how the national consciousness should be shaped abounded; Egyptian identity, conflated with Arabism, which Christians viewed as intimately linked with Muslim identity, and later conservative Islam, left Christians such as Hawaa and the members of her household skeptical and wary about joining their families with those of their Cairene Muslim counterparts.

When I met Hawaa in 2006, she was very active in her church. Her search for God and participation in the Christian church, which had always been a key part of her life, had become more central and critical as she attempted to understand her inability to find a suitable marriage partner. She seemed conflicted at times, asserting at times that her education and exposure made her ill-suited for Egyptians. While in more positive moments, she was open to marriage to men of any religious or national background. Friends and members of her church suggested that she marry anyone who expressed

interest, but she was determined to find a companion who might understand her as a person, and not view her as desperate or inferior because of her age. Her determination increased her ostracism among some of the men and women in the Egyptian Christian church she attended; their behaviors, criticism, and refusal to communicate with her affected her, but she asserted that marriage without considering compatibility would be worse than living as a single woman.

A few months before we met, she had been involved with a British engineer who was based in Cairo. This foreign man had been, in many ways, her ideal: well-to-do, intelligent, a good communicator, and unconcerned about her ability to bear children. To her dismay, this foreign beau expected them to have a sexual relationship outside of marriage. Discussing her dating experience and their separation, she said:

> I refused him intimacy. No respectable Egyptian woman would do otherwise. But he did not seem to respect me or understand the importance of me maintaining my virginity. I tried to discuss marriage with him, but he dumped me after I brought it up. Can you believe it?! He just did not seem to respect me, or my culture.

Hawaa's statement is consistent with Egyptian conceptions of ideal womanhood and reveals the centrality of respectability and reputation for Egyptian women (see chapter five). These values and mores, adhered to by the middle class, shape and influence cultural ideals of propriety and morality, licit sexuality within the domain or sphere of marriage, and serve to uphold the patriarchal structures in Egyptian society. Though single Cairene men and women are pushing the boundaries of this ideology through secret dating and illicit premarital sexual relations, the display of respectability continues to be of the utmost importance. The maintenance of reputation and the veneer of respectability ensured Hawaa's mobility in Cairo and future emigration. Without

respectability and good reputation in her community, Hawaa would have been stigmatized and completely ostracized and devoid of the assistance that she sought to address her daily challenges and struggle to travel abroad.

From Hawaa's perspective, the issues of respectability and reputation are ideologies defined by Christianity (Armanios 2002). Yet, closer scrutiny of her experience and perception indicates that these highly gendered and classed concepts are equally affected by the status of Cairene Christians as minorities in a highly sex-segregated Islamic society as well as their postcolonial condition. Hawaa's statement evokes and echoes that of Cairene Muslim women in my study who were extremely concerned about maintaining the honor (*sharaf*) and reputations of their families. As noted in previous chapters, in Cairo, these women's bodies, whether they are Christian or Muslim, are subject to religious discourses and notions about sexual modesty that oblige women to be continuously concerned about the possibility of moral corruption. Fear of gossip, disrepute and shame are powerful tools of surveillance, leading women, such as Hawaa, who are very active in the public sphere to be continuously guarded and protective of their reputations as "respectable and virtuous women."

As a woman in her 40s seeking a respectable existence, Hawaa described herself as bound, unable to move to the next phase of life without marriage or migration from Egypt to a cultural context where the boundaries and strictures would not be as rigid. Hawaa believed the emigrating would allow her to achieve full womanhood not predicated on marital and reproductive status. In Cairo, not only did she work outside of the home, but her income was also central to the maintenance of her household. She lived with her brother, the primary male relative left in her life after the death of her father. He

continued his father's photography business, but the increasing cost of living meant that Hawaa's skills as a highly proficient speaker of English and French, as well as Arabic, were called upon to supplement the household income by teaching Arabic to foreigners or English and French to Egyptians. In many months, her income from her work as a language teacher to expatriates from the United States and Canada, as well as her side jobs as an editor or marketing specialist, was more than that her brother's earnings. Yet, her extended family and he considered him to be her protector and guardian; he considered it his right and duty to protect her virginity until married into a respectable Christian family.

Hawaa comes from a family that hoped to be a part of the elite class in Cairene society. Generally speaking, elite Christian women in her social circle are well-educated. They are former professionals from the upper middle to elite classes who are highly fluent in at least one foreign language as well as Arabic. These women reside in the Westernized enclaves of Cairo such as Zamalek, sections of Mohandiseen, and Ma'adi. Once married, if they have young children, they may not have a job. Work is often done part-time or not at all since their domestic duties and rearing of children are their first priority. To remain abreast of the happenings in Cairene society, they spend days shopping, doing club activities, church affiliated activities, etc In dress and adornment, they look like their counterparts in the Western world: hair is uncovered and they wear similar clothing. In addition, they go to the more upscale salons in Cairo, with French stylists and often international clientele, on a weekly basis for waxing, threading, hair styling, etc (Ossman 2004). For some of them, beautification is intertwined with health

practices, and may include weekly massage as well, times spent in the gym, and/or at a diet clinic or with a nutritionist.

Hawaa differed from these upper-middle class women because of her income level and profession as a language teacher. Her take-home pay, or monthly income, was enough to cover expenses for a middle-class woman living with her family, about 1500 LE per month ($250 per month), but not sufficient for the community in which she wanted participate; to interact with her wealthier Christian counterparts, she needed the help of her family. However, since her family was not wealthy, she did not spend as much time as she would have liked with these people and felt that she was never seriously considered as an option for marriage by the men who she met and interacted with in the workplace and at her church.

In these social settings, she stated that she felt invisible and as though she had very little in common with the others. Though nearly all of the Egyptian participants were in their 40s, she described them as wealthy businesspeople. The leader, an Egyptian Canadian (or Canadian Egyptian), i.e. a person who had lived in Canada for a while but was originally from Egypt, had recently returned to her native country. She, like the other women, was married, had children and used the group for networking. Hawaa felt that they spent too much time talking about the global economy or as she put it, “the economy and markets and things I don’t understand, that I haven’t even heard of before.” Though this group seemed ideal for a woman interested in emigration, they were annoyed by her inquiries and eventually began to mistreat her. The leader, particularly, felt that Hawaa should not try to migrate to Canada since she was not well-to-do. Rejected by these elite Cairene women who were annoyed that she was trying to

gain access to some of the material privileges that they take for granted, she decided to focus her energy on the expatriate Christian community.

With further inquiry, it seemed that the Cairenes were concerned that Hawaa would end up abroad without adequate funds or social support. The idea of the American dream was not a part of their culture. Thus, migrating to another country to build wealth and to create a new existence seemed irrational, particularly for a single woman. Stories in Cairo abounded about Egyptians who were overseas, employed in low paying positions, and unable to maneuver in societies that were far-removed from Egyptian culture and society. Financially-strained in the West, these people, who willingly gave Hawaa advice about immigration processes, asked her not to expect to stay with them or to receive much help from them once she moved. Having never lived abroad, she could not fully understand their predicaments, but felt that emigration would be an ideal alternative to further ostracism and isolation in Cairo. The strategy that she devised for preparation for emigration seemed simple: spend as much time as possible with foreigners, further develop foreign language proficiency, learn foreign women's ways of cultivating themselves (style of dress, mannerisms and speech patterns, beautification practices, etc). Any observer could see how persistent and tenacious she was in her pursuit of knowledge about foreign countries and people. She networked and adopted the style and attributes of those who had the lifestyles and assets she wanted for herself. More important, she asked them for their assistance (i.e. connections and financial) as she applied for visas and when she needed to travel to Syria to expedite her interview with the immigration office for emigration to Quebec.

According to Hawaa, maintaining a "feminine" or at least a non-masculine appearance was considered essential. As a result, she, like the majority of the women in this study, felt that makeup (e.g., foundation, mascara, eyeliner, and lipstick) was an essential part of adornment. Leaving the house without it made them feel "unladylike." In Hawaa's case, as a Christian, hair could be and should be uncovered, cut in a style that she perceived to be in alignment with the trends in Cairo, and often based on global trends, which could be determined by perusal of European magazines, comparison with the foreign women around her, and the knowledge of one's hairdresser.

Though fair-skinned by Egyptian standards, Hawaa applied skin bleaching cream every evening. However, the brand she used was more expensive, and supposedly would not have the damaging effects of the cheaper versions. Her social network's negative appraisal of darker-skin, brown-skinned women (*samara*), also played a role in the way that her family dealt with their father's Upper Egyptian background. She did not describe her father to me until after I had known her for six months. In her home and at her sister's home, there were pictures of her mother, her maternal grandmother and grandfather, but no pictures of her father or his relatives. Both she and her sister emphasized their Cairene Egyptian heritage and their Christianity, but they said little about their connection to Upper Egyptians.

This practice of hiding the pictures of darker-skinned relatives also happened in the homes of other Cairenes whom I visited. They would tell me about them but focused on the images of the fairer-skinned kin, especially if they could demonstrate a tie or connect with someone of Turkish descent, a way of claiming a link with the elite in previous generations. Considering the tendency of Cairenes to make fun of and ridicule

Upper Egyptians, it reasonable to assume that those seeking upward mobility would not have found any benefit in acknowledging Upper Egyptian kin of any complexion.

The association of skin color with status pervaded Hawaa's household and social network. Dark-brown women were sometimes deemed attractive, particularly if their style of dress, use of makeup, comportment, and demeanor indicated that they were of a higher socioeconomic status. As discussed in chapter three, this can be attributed to the histories of slavery in the Islamic world and colonialism. In addition, I would argue that Cairenes from the lower-to-middle classes who are attuned to global representations of beauty and class have a preference for whiteness and European culture because of its association with power. In striving to move beyond their existing social position, they therefore strive to link and connect themselves with those in power by emulating them, as much as they possibly can with their limited resources, in behavior and practices.

Hawaa was aware of the gap between the Cairene ideal and the average Egyptian woman. Discussing the difference between the physical ideal and the average Egyptian, or Cairene, woman, she stated:

> An average Egyptian woman is about 5'2" or 5'3", wears a size 7 or 7 1/2, has a waist of 42-46 inches, and is *qamhii* (wheat-colored). For marriage, the most important factors are: money (equated with class), religion, education, family background, and then the physical appearance or looks.

Yet, Hawaa was transitioning, attempting to utilize Christianity or her spiritual values to inform her notions of beauty as well as life in general. For example, one day she brought me a photo of a beauty queen (*malika al-gamal*), a young, fair-skinned woman, dark-haired, and thin woman in a floor-length dress. Rather than describing her as ideal, she asked me to describe a beautiful woman. She then said,

> Beauty is not limited to the realm of the aesthetic; everyone is beautiful. God created all people to be beautiful. The extent of a person's beauty comes from within rather than something external or the shaping of the external appearance.

While I would argue that her emphasis on religion and non-physical attributes in her description is central to the Cairene feminine aesthetic ideal (see chapter five), it is important to add that her perspective can be associated with aging as well. She often stated that she believed that she was beginning to "*lose her beauty*"; thus, her emphasis on her spiritual practice in contrast to Egyptian women in piety movements (Mahmood 2005) may also be discussed as a way that she deals with the harshness of aging in a city and a household where an older, unmarried woman could be considered a burden.

Hawaa's age and status as an unmarried woman influenced her perceptions of beauty and the ways in which physical appearance, in conjunction with other factors, impacted life experience. Her description of social relationships and friendships among Cairenes was harsh. She felt that people only wanted to friendships with people in the same age and category. If a person did not fit neatly into a category, then they she stated that they were stigmatized, ostracized, and excluded from social groups. "Egyptians", she said, "do not like to deal with people who are struggling. They avoid them. If you are not similar to them, a copy of them, then they do not want to be bothered. They want you to go home, to stay home." She contended that beauty perceptions and feminine aesthetic ideals were deeply intertwined with women's social relationships (e.g. friendships) and stage in life. Explaining her perspective, she stated the following:

> Women want good jobs, good neighbors, and children, time with family and life as a mom on Friday. Their husbands want good company, good friends, air-conditioned cars, nice homes taken care of by their wives, and big bellies. By the time you are 30-something, you should have a family; if not then stay at home. At 27, a woman is generally seeking a better

> career while her mother or someone is at home to cook and clean; she has a small car. She is preparing for marriage. But 25 is the best time for women. Everyone wants to be around them because they are beautiful, young; people think they have a nice body and that they are smart and they have friends. If they have a job, they are doing really well and just having a good time and waiting to get married. There is no area for the older woman who is not married.
> Of course there are very posh people with really good names; they finish college, get married at the same time as their friends, get children at the same time, and get divorced at the same time. Earlier divorced women had a hard time, but now they have groups and social stuff. They don't lose their confidence so easily. Other women leave the country, go in secrecy. No one notices.
> I know a woman, she quietly said I am going to Canada, don't want to attract people. She goes to make herself beautiful, to make herself young….The moment she makes herself young, she… Ya 'Aini !... she is worth something again.

The above-statements expressed by Hawaa encapsulate her interpretation of her experience and the significance of beauty, age, and gender in Cairene society. In her social world, the space and place for women who live differently than the norm, either by choice or due to circumstances beyond their control (inability to marry, unemployment, health problems, etc) are not only disregarded or neglected, but encouraged to hide themselves away from the world.

Hawaa's words indicate the ideals promoted in Cairene society. With particular ages or stages in life, women are expected to behave in a particular manner. These women, along with their close friends and associates, prefer to go through these phases of life at the same time. Thus, early 20s is about attaining material goods (cars, clothes, etc); the mid-20s until 30s are about preparing for marriage, and beyond that, focusing on being good wives and mothers. If a woman is unable to realize her goals, then she can become further isolated from her community.

Yet, Hawaa's age most likely also allowed her greater freedom than younger women. She is distinct among women in my study because she was a woman constantly in motion. In contrast to other informants, whose daily life involved very circumscribed movement in the city (from home to the market to the university and back), Hawaa's daily activities took her all over the city of Cairo. Her sense of community was often in flux, shifting as she searched for people and places where she could fit and feel at home. Her physical home, the apartment that she shared with her brother in Shubra, was one of the least welcoming environments for her. It provided her with a space to settle at the end of the day, to contemplate her life, but did not give her a way to address the sense of confinement that she felt in the city of Cairo.

Furthermore, she was distinguished from the younger, single informants in my study because she had limited interest in the wealthy districts that were further removed from the center of the city, such as Heliopolis, or the ever-mentioned City Stars Mall in Nasr City. With Hawaa, I traveled throughout the city of Cairo. We went to movies, concerts, cafes, church, etc always in districts far-removed from her home. Her favorite areas of town were the American University in Cairo in Midan Tahrir and *'Asr Dubara* Church; Zamalek at a café or bookstore; church members' home to study the Bible; Ma'adi at the International church or a restaurant or at the office for work; Mohandiseen at the hairdresser's, with the nutritionist, shopping or lounging in a café. These areas of town were *raqi* areas that had been fashionable or trendy for at least the last 20 years; though the sections near the American University in Cairo were in decline, they were commonly used by people working at or near the university during the week.

Her behavior, the interest in beauty and the denial of its significance are characteristic of almost all of my informants in their 40s regardless of their marital status. Reconciling Hawaa's obsession with makeup, skin bleaching creams, and French manicures with her discussion of women's experiences and beautification practices helped me to move beyond a literal discussion of beauty to see the ways that beauty practices play a role in cosmopolitan striving and the migration process. The significance of physical appearance for a woman from the lower middle-class attempting to become a part of the elite cosmopolitan community is striking, and it involves transforming the body, mannerisms, thought, and speech.

According to Hawaa, the elite, alone are excluded from Cairene gendered rules of behavior, able to reproduce and maintain the sociocultural norms or disrupt them as they choose. Because of their economic position, she felt that they had the capacity to move beyond the confines of Cairene social environs, even taking time to live abroad as necessary, to allow for transformation and re-emergence in Cairene society in a new state. This perception of the lives of elite women, as well as her social isolation, served as the impetus for her cosmopolitan yearning and desire for emigration.

NUNA: ACCESSING THE GLOBAL WORLD THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The second case study concerns a 20-year old woman whom I call Nuna who lives in Mohandiseen with her family. She is the third child and only daughter in an upper-middle class family that has five children. Her parents are natives of Cairo who have been married for twenty-five years. They moved to Mohandiseen in the 1970s when her father's family became owners of two six-story apartment buildings on Game'et El-Duwal El-Arabia. Her father is the manager of a technology store. By contrast, her

mother is an educated housewife who has never had a job and whose primary interests are cooking and raising her children, which she does with the assistance of two Nubian servants. The mother's closest relationships are with her relatives, particularly her female in-laws who live next door.

Nuna chose to become a *muhaggaba* of her own free will during her first year of high school because of her exposure to an older female cousin who she greatly admired. In her household, a woman's education is considered essential because of women's roles as wives and mothers. However, women are not supposed to work outside of the home. During my fieldwork, she was attending college at Ain Shams University and attempting to decide whether she should remain in the Women's College or transfer to the Alsun Faculty so that she could further her foreign language studies. Each day that she attended school, she was escorted by one of her four brothers or her father to her bus stop to campus and was expected to be home within two hours of finishing her classes. With the exception of the trips to other regions of Egypt with her university and the annual trips to her family's summer home in Alexandria, Nuna had not traveled.

The Nubians servants are the primary Upper Egyptians that Nuna has exposure to, and the difference in status precluded a friendship between the Nubian women who lived on the lower level of the apartment building. Nuna and her brothers described the Nubian servants as "ignorant *Sa'aida*" and shared their favorite *Sa'idi* jokes with me. Despite their jokes, they felt that there were some "modern" Upper Egyptians in Cairo who are socially adept and intelligent. Yet, the servants differed not because of skin color but because they were from a village that the children believed was very "primitive".

Nuna expressed a desire to know the world and secretly hoped that her father would give her permission to work outside of the home after she completed her university degree. She independently studied books about foreign cultures and, with the help of tutors, had gained proficiency in English, French, and German. Although her favorite pastimes is drawing and doing graphic design, she had visited few art studios, galleries, or museums in Cairo. She learned techniques for drawing by downloading books from the Internet or requesting that her male kin purchase the texts for her. At times, she entered art contests that allowed her to scan and upload her images or to send them in the mail.

Nuna and her brothers' ages range from 16 to 22 years of age. Despite the fact that their family seemed to be well-to-do, she and her brothers expressed frustration about their future opportunities for social and economic success. The oldest was married and worked with the father at the technology store. The second oldest was studying at the university. Nuna's youngest brother was studying for his high school examinations. As Nuna's closest sibling, he was privy to Nuna's secret desire to travel to foreign countries in the Western world. They also studied foreign languages together since he dreamed of working in an embassy. Nonetheless, they believed that they did not have enough of the "right connections" to help him to achieve his desire.

Nuna stated that her dream was to become a fashion designer or graphic designer; therefore, she spent most of her time sketching pictures of women in clothing that she designed.

The styles of dress she designed were not of women in Islamic clothing. Instead, they often consisted of women in dresses with low necklines, lots of cleavage, lace and

fishnet, and/or slits on the side of the dresses up to the women's hips). When asked about it, she stated that they were outfits to be worn under an *abeyah*, long robes worn by Muslim women. Her greatest concern was that she had not learned to draw different body types properly because she was not supposed to view images of naked women. However, her desire to improve her drawing techniques led her to download an e-book with images of the naked female form.

Nuna was similar to most of the informants in my study in regard to her beautification practices and aesthetic ideals (i.e. fair skin, long straight black hair, "medium size" (i.e., described as 5'5" around 140 pounds), and ability to be "modern in an Egyptian way"—comfortably blending global trends with supposedly authentic Egyptian customs, values, mores and ways of life). The most attractive women, according to Nuna, are blonde with blue or green eyes. Though the Lebanese singer Nancy Agram was very popular, Nuna considered the Lebanese singer Elissar Khoury to be more aesthetically pleasing.

Her aesthetic ideals were influenced by popular media, but also by her family members and friends at the university. Through her social network, magazines, television, and the Internet, she remained abreast of the latest trends for young Islamic women. Among her friends at the university, the most pervasive topic of discussions is weight. Weight gain is one of the greatest sources of stress for them and they all were on diets. They were not clear about how much weight they wanted to lose, they simply explained that they wanted it off. In discussing it, they seemed ashamed of their size as indicated by the loss of excitement, eye contact, sighing, or staring at the floor when they discussed it. Their mothers and female kin reinforced the idea that being "thin" was

essential for marriage. Though the young women rarely exercised, they drank weight loss teas from pharmacies, went to see nutritionists, consulted experts at weight loss clinics, or tried home remedies (e.g. drinking apple cider vinegar), et cetera.

The young women also stated that it is important to wear makeup when leaving the house. It should include a very light foundation that helped the skin to appear "white and smooth", lipstick, mascara, and eyeliner. However, Nuna and her friends felt that women's makeup should not be as heavy as the women's makeup on television or in the monthly *Gamila*, *Sayidaty*, and *Nisf El-Dunia* magazines that I shared with them. As they explained, that form of makeup would only be for popular magazines, entertainers, and possibly for some women at a wedding celebration. According to them, the only girls who wear heavy make-up are young girls in their teens who want to appear grown-up and who do not come from households where their female kin teach them how to wear it appropriately.

In the twenty-first century, Nuna and her friends concentrate part of their energies on creating a virtual existence on the Internet. Wearing makeup, being attractive according to Islamic standards (i.e. modest as well as physically attractive), and being in style (*fi la moda*) is important for taking pictures for the photographs that they upload online on social media websites. On websites where her interaction is a local and global Islamic community, she discussed Islamic politics. One of the most important moments during my fieldwork was participating in discussions about the Danish political cartoon controversy. However, Nuna also uploads images of herself unveiled playing the guitar, hanging out with both males and females at City Stars Mall in Nasr City, et cetera on Facebook and websites where she will most likely interact more with people from the

Western world. Though an outsider would not know it, the men in the pictures are her brothers or male cousins.

To understand her aesthetic ideal and that of her friends, I manipulated images of women in a 3-D art and animation program called Poser 6. However, in discussing images the images that I manipulated with her friends, they suggested that there might be variations in preferences in skin color, eye color, hair length and style. However, none of them felt that it made sense to manipulate the nose since as her friend Mona explained "everyone wants a small nose without a large bridge; it *has* to be small." While men could get away with the nose of a crow (*ghurab*), Nuna felt that women like her, were unfortunate. Therefore, she manipulates her photographs with Adobe Photoshop to emphasize the beauty of her eyes and hopefully shift attention away from the rest of her face.

Among her friends, Nuna is highly respected for how well she has cultivated Islamic virtues. Though she has never been on a date or had a boyfriend, she often emailed and talked to her friends on the phone about dating. Specifically, she suggests that they do not do it since so many of them end up in compromising situations (e.g. premarital sex, men spreading rumors and gossip about them that mars their reputation, et cetera) (Werner 1997). Some she admits are very desperate to marry and to "escape their homes." She explained that they were not fascinated with romance, love, and marriage as much as they were ready to start a new life. As Nuna explained, "For young women in Egypt, we don't get out with careers. Boys can travel, have a career, get an education and go somewhere else. But we can't. The only way we can go anywhere is if we marry. Then we can start our own households and have more control over the way that we live."

MIGRATION, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Hawaa and Nuna's stories can be connected to a broad interdisciplinary literature about globalization that has been highly contested for at least the last fifteen years. Studies of globalization examine the changing dynamics in social, economic, cultural, and demographic processes that have occurred since the late twentieth century. The term globalization, while loaded, has been discussed as intensified global economic, political, and cultural flows and connections (Appadurai 1996; Appadurai 2001). Much of the early scholarship asserted that globalization was leading to homogenization (Barber 1996; Ritzer 2006). However, further scrutiny suggested that instead of homogeneity and uniformity, the rapid transport of goods and services, people, and ideas increased diversification (Clarke, et al. 2005). This diversification stemmed from the ways that local populations utilized the products and interpreted the ideas, images (or signs and symbols) that had been introduced into their cultural milieu. Despite the lack of consensus about the impact of globalization or even the extent to which the changes in capitalism could be considered a new phenomenon, it seemed evident that the old imperialist centers were in decline and that new sites of power had emerged and were expanding.

Of particular importance to the examinations of the shifts in global capital and world markets, mass media, rapid travel, and modern communications were questions about its impact on cultural groups. Much of the early research asserted that globalization spelled the demise of the nation-state and potentially the fixed subjects of anthropological inquiry (Appadurai 1996; Featherstone 1990; Hannerz 1996). These scholarly inquiries examined elite, transnational cosmopolitans, i.e. the people who could

most readily avail themselves of the flexible forms of production that emerged in late capitalism. However, their approach has been critiqued by scholars who emphasize the importance of being attuned to the class stratification that delimits the possibility of mobility and circulation within global systems of production (Clarke and Thomas 2006; Ferguson 1999; Friedman 1994; Ong 1999; Ong, et al. 1996; Ong and Nonini 1997; Trouillot 2003). Of particular importance to these researchers is contextualizing analyses of globalization and mobility within structures of power and situated cultural processes. In other words, they suggest that scholarship must be aware of the sites where mobility is being restricted and where inequalities are being reproduced (and at times intensified).

While the above-mentioned scholars stress the fact focus on the mobility of cosmopolitan elites renders invisible the parts of humanity (e.g. the poor, women, et cetera) that remain fixed, other research concerns the best ways to define who among the mobile can be classified as cosmopolitan. Whereas the professional managerial classes of transnational migrants were conceived as cosmopolitan in the traditional sense, displaced populations and migrants who are forced to travel are often discussed as transnational migrants. Therefore, they are excluded from the earliest formulations of cosmopolitanism.

The exclusion of non-elite migrants centered on the extent to which the concepts of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism could be reduced to a universal and traditional Eurocentric or Western definition. Traditionally, the term cosmopolitan defined an elite (often intellectual) who longed to be “a citizen of the world,’ and connected in a fundamental way to those outside family groups and conventional nation-state polities.

However, cosmopolitan does not necessarily preclude the possibility of local connections and nationalist sentiments. As Vertovec and Cohen (2003) have noted,

> For some contemporary writers on the topic, cosmopolitanism refers to a vision of global democracy and world citizenship; for others it points to the possibilities of shaping new transnational frameworks for making links between social movements. Yet others invoke cosmopolitanism to advocate a non-communitarian, post-identity politics of overlapping interests and heterogeneous or hybrid publics in order to challenge conventional notions of belonging, identity and citizenship. And still others use cosmopolitanism descriptively to address certain socio-cultural processes or individual behaviors, values or dispositions manifesting a capacity to engage cultural multiplicity." (1)

In its various iterations, the concept of cosmopolitanism is associated with a moral and political stance or standpoint that places individuals rather than nation, tribes, or social groups as the primary object of moral concern (Appiah 2006; Beck 1997; Beck 2006; Beck, et al. 2003; Vertovec and Cohen 2002).

Nuna and Hawaa can be considered examples of Cairene women who have a desire for global engagement. However, they are not cosmopolitan in the traditional sense. Nuna is cosmopolitan as defined by researchers who argue that cosmopolitanism refers to an "impulse to knowledge that is shared with others, a striving to transcend partiality that is itself partial, but no more so than the similar cognitive strivings of many diverse peoples" (Robbins 1992). In this way, the cosmopolitan consciousness, disposition and behavioral practices of non-elites and those who are immobile emerge through their exposure to other cultures outside of their home or as they become aligned with elites (e.g. servants traveling or working with elites) can be considered a legitimate avenue to cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, in this framework, is viewed pluralistically as cosmopolitanisms, and has been called everyday cosmopolitanism,

cosmopolitanism from below, or a discrepant cosmopolitanism (Park and Abelmann 2004; Robbins 1992).

In the case of Hawaa, affecting a cosmopolitan disposition is a strategic part of her pursuit of emigration. She understands that the state of Egypt maintains an enormous amount of control, which makes transnational travel and migration difficult without the necessary connections and resources (or social, economic, and cultural capital). As noted above, I consider her behavior to be that of a cosmopolitan striver as discussed in Park and Abelmann's formulation. They define cosmopolitan striving as the process by which non-elite individuals attempt to gain access to socioeconomic mobility through attaining skills that are traditionally associated with the upper class, including the pursuit of experience with diverse groups of people. Whether the impetus for a cosmopolitan perspective is economic pressure, increased and exacerbated by transformations in the global market, it is a strategy used to move beyond restrictive, patriarchal frameworks within households and the society at-large. I call their perspectives and behavioral practices cosmopolitan because they include a desire to have a cognizance of the larger world. Insofar as a particular aesthetic look and knowledge of foreign languages is needed for access to better socioeconomic opportunities in Cairo and abroad, I consider the pursuit of primarily Western languages (i.e. English and French) and knowledge of the United States, Canada, or Western European nations to be a strategic choice linked to Cairene perceptions of national and racial hierarchies in the contemporary global world.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed globalization, transnational migration and the Cairene aesthetic. I began my discussion of regional difference and women's global engagement

with a Mobinil image that serves as a visual representation of regional differences mapped onto women's bodies. Although the women in the image are peasants, it does give us the opportunity to consider how globalization has informed Cairene women's lives. On the one hand, changes in global capital since the late twentieth century have placed many of them in a position where they head households while Egyptian men seek economic opportunities overseas to maintain the households. More significant for my discussion of Cairene women attempting to engage the world through independent emigration or the use of technology, global technologies and flows of capital, ideas, and movement have altered what and how Egyptians envisions their lives.

Technology, similar to language, is one of the ways that groups demonstrate advancement in their culture. In the contemporary Cairene context, Upper Egyptians (*Sa'aida*) are a stigmatized group that is often viewed as less technologically, industrially, and culturally developed (El-Aswad 2004; Hopkins and Saad 2004; Miller 2004; Miller 2006; Mitchell 1990). Women and men descended from *Sa'aida* continue to be subject to discrimination due to their family heritage even after attaining university educations. Altering their speech patterns in Arabic is a means of approximating closeness to northern Egyptians (Miller 2005). During my fieldwork, I also found that descendants of *Sa'aida* striving for upward mobility, when feasible, develop proficiency in French or English and, in certain circumstances, they use it as their primary language of communication. Changing speech patterns and language usage implies that an individual becomes less stigmatized, and closer to "civilization," to the degree that he or she attains mastery of the ruling group's dialect or language (Fanon 1991). In the Egyptian context, women's language learning is also accompanied by valorizing

whiteness, Eurocentric features (e.g. small noses), and beautification practices (e.g. bleaching skin) that symbolically connects them to the Mediterranean and Europe rather than to the continent of Africa.

The women who are the focus of the case studies are drastically different in age as well as in the strategies that they use for moving beyond gendered constraints imposed in an increasingly more-conservative Islamic society. For Hawaa, attempting to alter her lifestyle in a way that is usually done by men is a last resort, and most likely, achievable primarily because of her age. As a woman in her forties, she has the physical mobility of many Cairene men though the way she negotiates Cairene society continues to differ due to her socioeconomic status, gender, and religious background. By contrast, as an upper-middle class woman who is 20 years of age, Nuna's life is more heavily circumscribed by her kin who accompany her almost everywhere to ensure that she does not tarnish the respectability of the family. Nuna is usually very complicit, even as she engages the global community on the Internet, a space and place where she has the potential to visually construct her identity as she sees fit.

In this chapter, I have argued that the commonality between Nuna and Hawaa is their faithfulness to Cairene secular and religious constructions of ideal womanhood and feminine beauty. In both of their cases, they valorize whiteness and distance themselves from Upper Egyptian identity, the region that Egyptians in Cairo associate with Sudan and anti-modernity. At the heart of my discussion of these women's experiences is an attempt to understand the ways that women resist and subvert the gendered and class-based trajectories expected of them. Moreover, it is to consider how these women's

practices are underpinned by Cairene ideologies of race, skin color, and regional difference.

CONCLUSION
RACE: HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

In February of 2003, the women's magazine *Nisf al-Dunia*[50] featured an article about the debut of Egyptian entertainer Ahmed Helmy as a comedic actor in the film *Mido Meshakel* (Mido the Troublemaker). It focused on his personal history and desire to develop a fan-base separate from his wife's, the famous and well-beloved Egyptian dramatic actress Mona Zaki. The exposé is striking, not for the discussion of Helmy's entrée into the entertainment world but for the large image of Helmy in blackface. Helmy faces the viewer with his mouth agape and arms raised above his head. He wears beaded jewelry around his neck and a multicolored, feathered headdress over a braided wig to suggest that he is a member of a sub-Saharan African tribe in traditional dress. To many viewers, the image may conjure up stereotypical racist and colonial representations of African-descended people as "savage primitives." However, my research revealed that Egyptians in Cairo did not perceive the blackface image in the magazine or the performance in the movie as evidence for the salience of race in Egyptian society.

Scholarship about blackface performance discusses this theatrical genre as a situated practice that has been popular in various locales around the world (e.g. United States, Ghana, Cuba, et cetera) (Cole 1996; Koropeckyj and Romanchuk 2003; Lane 1998; Lott 1991; Lott 1992; Mahar 1985; Riach 1973; Rogin 1994). However, the interpretation, as well as the content and form, vary by cultural context and the historical period. For example, in the United States and Cuba, blackface is usually interpreted as a popular form of cultural expression in the nineteenth century that involved whites darkening themselves to express their anxieties about shifting racial, class, and power relations (Lane 1998; Lott 1991; Lott 1992). Although interpretations of blackface by the

local populace in these countries may vary; it is generally understood that the practice can be associated with social groups classified in terms of race and class. By contrast, blackface minstrelsy in Ghana takes place in itinerant shows called "concert parties" that represented the lifestyles of elite coastal Ghanaians to farmers living in the Gold Coast in the twentieth century (i.e. 1920s-1960s) (Cole 1996). Although the performances emerged in a context where whites dominated blacks and an ideology about white supremacy was pervasive, dark-skinned Ghanaians independently chose to adopt blackface and do not interpret blackface performances as racial. Instead, Ghanaians perceive this theatrical genre as a performative practice akin to puberty rites, annual festivals, and religious rituals that involve the use of body painting (Cole 1996)

Similar to Ghanaians, Egyptians of all hues describe this image as simply comedic and a representation of the multiple ways that Helmy, as a popular Egyptian actor, disguised himself for the sake of humor. However, none of them could explain what made it funny. Some of them even suggested that the stereotypical representation of a 21st century "African" cultural festival involving Africans in grass-skirts and beating on drums could be perceived as authentic and therefore not indicative of anything racial. Acknowledging the fact that Mido Meshakel is intended to be an Egyptian satirical comedy, I would like suggest that this humor must be situated within a wider racialized system of representation in contemporary Egypt.

In this chapter, I provide a brief synopsis of the film with reference to scenes that are caricatures of Egyptian sociocultural ideas about racial and national difference. The blackface performance in the film is discussed in relation to other scenes in the movie that concern cultural performances that are associated with white Europeans. The film is

used as segue into the dissertation's broader concern with perceptions, visual representations, and the embodiment of racial and nationalist discourses in contemporary Egypt.

SYNOPSIS OF THE FILM

Mido Meshakel's protagonist is Mido, a twenty-something Cairene man who is the "problem child" of a doctor. He attends a vocational school to learn how to install and repair electrical equipment. During his spare time, he also works as a satellite dish technician. Although his job is supposed to provide income, he consistently gets into trouble for his negligence (e.g. breaks expensive equipment at work). As a result, his job costs both his employer and father an exorbitant amount of money.

For most of the film, Mido pines for a young lady named Hoda, his close friend Ramzy's sister. She is an elite fair-skinned young lady who is obsessed with horror as expressed by her paintings of morbid scenes (i.e. murder, dead bodies, et cetera). Though Mido attempts to express his affection for her by buying gifts and catering to her whims, she does not return his romantic feelings. At the same time, he disregards the interest of Leila, a fellow-student at the vocational institute. Leila is a middle class wheat-colored young woman who works in trades that are traditionally associated with men (e.g. fixes cars, learning how to repair electronics, et cetera). In the film, she assists Mido with his lessons in class and during moments of crisis.

The most noteworthy crisis that Leila helps Mido to manage is a plot to bomb an African Cultural Center that is the site of a satellite dish that Mido installed. After being observed for a few weeks, Mido is kidnapped by people who claim to be government officials working for the Intelligence Bureau. They state that they need him to participate

in a dangerous covert operation that "serves the interests of the Egyptian government." They take him to their headquarters where people are being tortured. They provide him with special clothing and instruct him not to speak to anyone about them, particularly his family members. At their headquarters, Mido undergoes special training where he does poorly at all of it. His role in the mission is to help them to dismantle the satellite dish that he formerly installed because it provides the African Cultural Center with access to information and programs that are "against the interest of Egypt."

The day that the satellite dish will be bombed is an important day because there is a cultural festival at the African Cultural Center. The festival includes a nondescript group of "Africans" wearing grass skirts, beating drums, and singing about Africa. Mido and Leila disguise themselves by darkening themselves with black paint and wearing "African traditional" dress. They join the African performers to sing a song concerning what is happening to Mido while the "Africans" serve as the backup to Mido's latest drama.

The song's refrain "*Afrikkiya*" (Africa) is interspersed with the Africans making guttural sounds and chanting gibberish (e.g. ah-kah-ah-kah eh and oh oooh) while the characters Leila and Mido expound on what will happen to Mido if he does not resolve his problem. Leila and Mido cooperate with each other by having Leila sing while Mido prevents the bomb from exploding. Mido then reports the culprits (i.e., the corrupt officials) to the local authorities so that they can be arrested. At the end of the film, Mido's father and a seemingly important African couple in contemporary African dress arrive to learn what has happened. His father and the African couple commend Mido for

his actions. Finally, Mido declares his love for Leila as she stands before him still "blackened" and wearing "primitive" attire.

Blackface minstrelsy in the Egyptian context emerged in the early twentieth century in theaters where it served as a way for Egyptian nationalists to articulate their viewpoints and feelings about key issues of concern as they struggled for independence from British colonial rule (see chapter four) (Powell 1995; Powell 2001). In these theatrical performances, fair-skinned Egyptian actors in blackface commented on the most salient nationalist debates about the Egyptian struggle for independence. The central themes addressed in these blackface performances were: (1) strategies to oust the British, (2) the development of an independent Egyptian national identity, and (3) the position of women. Although not perceived as authentically Egyptian, the black figures, most often Egyptian Nubian or Northern Sudanese characters, functioned as a mouthpiece for Egyptian nationalists' frustrations with colonial subjugation (Powell 2001). After liberation from colonial rule, Egyptian nationalists hoped that the Sudanese would be incorporated into the new Egyptian polity as second-class citizens guided and led by their more modernized kinsmen from the urban centers of Egypt (El-Shakry 2007; Fábos 2008; Powell 2003).

Blackface performance emphasized a central idea in the Egyptian construction of race, i.e., the notion darker-skinned Africans (particularly the Sudanese and Egyptian Nubians) are lesser developed and can benefit from Egyptian leadership (Fábos 2008; Powell 2003). The emergence of the modern race concept in Egypt, thus, emerged within a triangulated colonial context that involved colonized Egypt attempting to colonize the Sudan (El-Shakry 2007; Fábos 2008; Powell 2003). This form of colonization and

racialization differs from other sociocultural contexts in that Egyptians perceived themselves to be intimately linked to the Sudanese, the darker-skinned people who they hoped to rule. As “brothers along the Nile”, the Egyptians argued that their imperialist efforts should be seen as natural because of Egypt and the Sudan’s similarities in religion, language, and other cultural traditions. The subjugated Sudanese, in the Egyptian context, are therefore alternately described as kin and other (El Shakry 2007, Fabos 2008, Powell 2003).

The *Mido Meshakel* scene with the African cultural performance adheres most explicitly to the above-mentioned aspects of the Egyptian construction of race. In the scene, the Egyptians, even in disguise, are differentiated from the Sudanese and sub-Saharan Africans. The Egyptians are the voice, i.e. lead singers, of the African performance. They shape and control the themes and ideas expressed in the song while the other Africans follow-suit. Racial and class hierarchies supersede gender since even Leila, as the counterpart to Mido, is allowed to be the lead when Mido is occupied with a more pressing matter (i.e. the bomb).

Acknowledging this fact, Leila and Mido, while both “darkened,” are not parallel. These darker-skinned figures both have the potential to be threatening. However, though subjugated, the sub-Saharan male remains a relatively independent entity. By contrast, the darker-skinned female’s value, like that of her fairer-skinned counterparts, is connected to her association to the male. These ideas become apparent at the end of the film when the Mido and an African male converse with each other while the women do not. Leila’s respectability is reinforced by Mido’s declaration of love and the assumed committed married relationship that will ensue. Marriage will ensure the maintenance of

her social respectability through the social control of her sexuality despite her very active life in traditionally male-dominated arenas in the public sphere. Moreover, marriage to Mido will afford her the opportunity to become feminized as a wife and mother, the most idealized female archetype within Egyptian society and culture (Baron 1991; Baron 2005; El-Shakry 1998).

The film's African cultural performance is supported by a scene that involves an exchange between Mido and an Egyptian Nubian. This scene occurs immediately before Mido arrives at the African Cultural Center to disengage the bomb. Mido is greeted by a Nubian security guard in uniform who rushes to notify him that the director of the African Center has been looking for him. The Nubian emphasizes that Mido needs to go to the director immediately. However, Mido takes his time, poking fun of the guard's attempt to apply pressure by stating that he just needs "five minutes, no… three minutes, no…". The guard is noticeably flustered and has difficulties speaking Arabic language as indicated by his use of feminine pronouns and verb forms when talking to Mido.

The portrayal of the Nubian points to a second element of the Egyptian racial discourse. This aspect of the racial discourse involves the treatment of Egyptian Nubians and Upper Egyptians as internal others. These internal others, most often darker-skinned, are perceived to be more closely related to the Sudan, the nation-state that is the intermediary between Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa (El-Aswad 2004). Among the internal others, Egyptian Nubians alone are most often described as "good and faithful servants" in contrast to the unruly, uncivilized, uneducated, and violent Upper Egyptian peasant (Mitchell 1990; Powell 1995).

In my dissertation, I extend Powell's argument about Egyptian Nubians and the Sudanese to other people of African descent from sub-Saharan Africa and the African Diaspora since in everyday interactions Egyptians do not necessarily differentiate between members of these groups. The majority of sub-Saharan Africans and people of the African Diaspora from the West in my study have been called "Sudanese" in moments where Egyptians in Cairo have wanted to assert their superior status. During these times, I argue that Egyptians are utilizing a racial rather than an ethnic or national classification that involves using the term Sudanese (*sudaniyin*) as it was used in reference to enslaved non-Muslim populations, i.e. to label a darker skinned person of inferior status (Fábos 2008).

In making this claim of the use of the term Sudanese as a racial label, I am cognizant of scholarship that challenges us to consider the material and sociocultural conditions that make racial patterns of thought and systems of representation pertinent and active (Drake 1987; Fluehr-Lobban, et al. 2004; Hall 1980; Powell 2003; Smedley 1992; Smedley 1998). This notion is particularly important in the Egyptian context where overtly racist representations of people of African-descent, such as blackface, are not the norm. However, I do think that the re-emergence of this imagery in 2003 in a comedy is significant in light of shifts in the Egyptian political economy and global representations of Muslims and North Africa and the Middle East.

At the onset of the twenty-first century, contestations over Egyptian identity and the nation-state intensified as the Egyptian economy suffered. As mentioned in chapter three, by 2002, Cairenes had already begun to vent their fears and frustrations about their ability to sustain their livelihood on displaced Sudanese and Somali refugees in racialized

terms (Ghazaleh 2002). These internal problems were exacerbated by the decrease in opportunities for transnational migration as a result of the September 11th and the "War on Terror" (Elliott 2006; Ghoneim 2011; Starrett 2009; Zohry 2002). Therefore, I would like to suggest that Helmy and Abdelwahab's blackface performance as well as the supporting scenes parallel minstrelsy traditions in Egypt, the United States and Cuba during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in that this genre of popular entertainment surfaces at a time when Egyptians are struggling with changes in the configuration of social and ethnic relations within their country as well as abroad.

My perspective counters other arguments about race in the Nile Valley Region. Researchers (Drake 1987; Fluehr-Lobban, et al. 2004) of racial dynamics contend that ethnic and physical differences have been acknowledged in this region since ancient times but that the differentiation was not used to make claims about moral, social, and intellectual capacity of individuals as it was used in the Western world. In dynastic Egypt, the most important signifiers of social status were posture, deportment, hair, and clothing rather than pseudo-scientific notions about individuals based upon phenotype and genotype. To further support their arguments, these scholars draw attention to intermarriage between Egyptians and outsiders and the full inclusion of children from these unions into Egyptian society as evidence of a fairly egalitarian society to assert that racism has never been prevalent.

The area where the concept of race in studies of Egypt as it has been understood in terms of the western binary of "black" and "white" is in the field of Egyptology. The primary issue of debate has been the appropriate racial classification for the inhabitants of ancient Egypt and Sudan (or the Nile Valley). Western scholars have been fascinated by

the fact that a complex and long-standing empire that predated classical Greek society could originate in Africa (Fluehr-Lobban, et al. 2004). Orientalists explained this phenomenon by separating Egypt from "Black" Africa and placing it in the Near East. According to Fluehr-Lobban and Rhodes, when Orientalists later learned about the ancient kingdoms of Napata and Meroe in the upper Nile Valley, they separated the northern Sudan from sub-Saharan Africans as well. By doing so, they were able to classify ancient Egypt as an "Arab-Semite" or "Caucasian" civilization. The more African (read "black") kingdoms of Napata and Meroe because of their location in the Sudan were viewed as the result of twelfth century Egyptian colonialism and "the desire of "Blacks" to copy civilization from their northerners with the superior civilization (Fluehr-Lobban, et al. 2004).

Fluehr-Lobban (2004) shifts attention away from this debate about the racial make-up of ancient Egyptians by suggesting that scholars begin to develop a "continuous critical discourse leading to a construction of race in both ancient and modern Nile Valley studies" (Fluehr-Lobban 2004:136). She contends that studies of race in the Nile Valley must distinguish between racialism, which she defines as a form of awareness that physical difference is significant that does not include the ranking of individuals and groups based upon phenotypic differences, and racism, which relies on segmenting populations hierarchically into superior and inferior groups. Racialism is considered to be more of a consciousness and strategy that has been adopted by groups to allow them to demarcate and differentiate themselves from others who are perceived as outsiders (Banton 1967; Banton 1978).

Fluehr-Lobban (2004) argues that the attribution of particular characteristics and conduct based on these physical differences in the Egyptian context did not inevitably lead to racial prejudice. According to this scholar, there is little evidence from texts and images of antiquity that darker skinned peoples were considered to be of lower rank than their lighter counterparts or that a darker complexion would necessarily link an individual with a "slave race." What has been found instead is the existence of "hostile references to enemies or conquered 'others,' (Fluehr-Lobban 2004:139), which she classifies as ethnocentrism rather than a form of racism that perceives an entire people as inferior based upon their physical appearance.

The relatively late emergence of these racializing practices in Egypt as well as throughout North Africa and the Middle East has been attributed to the egalitarian ethos of Islam. Islam cautions against prejudice based upon biological attributes and phenotype. Slaves in the Arab Islamic world were from many nations and of various hues, all supposedly equal in their ability to alter their social status through military achievement, adoption and incorporation into a Muslim family, the marriage of a slave woman and free man, birth to a free man and a slave woman, or through the slave's purchase of his or her freedom. In practice, there remained differentiation based upon physical appearance in Egypt as well as throughout the Islamic world (Lewis 1971; Marmon 1999). Although there was a religious ban on the enslavement of Muslims, Arab slave raiders would often ignore this mandate when they came into contact with darker skinned people. Children born of an enslaved mother and free Arab father were considered members of their father's lineage but they continued to have a secondary status and suffer from insults. Centuries of Arab conquest and participation in slave

trading led to the association of only darker skinned people with slavery, servitude, and low status in the Arab-Islamic world (Hatem 1986; Marmon 1999; Segal 2001; Toledano 1998a; Willis 1985).

Formulations, such as the above-mentioned, when maintained to assert that darker skinned people, regardless of their ethnicity, are a distinctive, biologically discrete racial group are indication of a racialized consciousness. Recent historical research (El-Shakry 2007; Fábos 2008; Powell 2003) has relied on archival evidence to show that Egyptian nationalists and social scientists within the British colonial context developed a complex racial construct whose purpose was to demonstrate that Egyptians had non-Negroid racial origins and that their genetic makeup indicated that they were an intermediate racial type whose origins were between Arab and Egyptian. Egyptian social scientists, such as Salama Musa and Taha Husayn, also asserted that ancient Egyptian civilization was closely related to Hellenic-Mediterranean civilization (El Shakry 2007). In other words, Egyptian intellectuals and nationalists constructed the idea of Egypt as a nation that encompassed people who genetically and culturally serve as a gateway or corridor to both Europe and the Arab worlds.

Contemporary Egyptian's cultural positioning in relation to Europe is depicted in the film at Mido's sister's wedding. For his sister's wedding, Mido hires opera singers and an orchestra to show his love interest Hoda and his friend Ramzy that he comes from a genteel family. The opera, in contrast to the open-air African cultural performance, is performed indoors in an elegant room with an audience wearing Western evening wear. The singers perform *La Traviata* to an audience that finds it interesting but inaccessible because they do not understand the words or the cultural context in which it originated.

Although the opera music is unappealing, the Westernized Egyptians refuse to admit that they dislike it. The exception is Mido's father, who openly expresses his infuriation with the musical performance. In response to his father's threats, Mido appeals to Leila to save his sister's celebration. Leila hesitates but finally agrees to sing Egyptian songs to which the audience can connect. In so doing, she enlivens the audience and makes Mido's sister very happy with her wedding reception.

The above-mentioned scenes of Mido and his friends as elite secular Egyptians can be viewed as a demonstration of the writer's desire to reaffirm explicitly Egyptian national and racial identity that distances Egyptians from stigmatized signifiers of darker-skinned African-descended peoples. At the same time, the wedding scene suggests that the writer also wants to critique secular–oriented Egyptians who adopt Westernized cultural practices that they neither enjoy nor understand. As Mido's sister's wedding suggests, blind imitation or emulation of European cultural traditions and practices are not ideal as indicated by the bland response of the guests. The film suggests that the more ideal way to be an elite Egyptian is to adopt Western traditions that are beneficial, such as technological knowledge and ways to industrialize the country, while maintaining Egyptian cultural traditions (Armbrust 1996).

SOCIOCULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE IN EGYPT

In chapter three, the dissertation discusses the Egyptian sociocultural construction of race that I summarize in this section. The Egyptian racial construction can be identified by a focus on phenotype, kinship, and ancestry. The modern idea of race in Egypt emerges with colonialism and nationalist discourses—it is at these key moments that the Egyptian construction of race presents itself most readily. However, it is not a

sustained discourse and it is not as explicit as categorization by religion, class, and gender.

The construction of race draws upon the Arab enslavement of Africans and colonization by the Turkish, French, and British to place identities seen as "African" in a subordinate position to identities seen as Arab, Turkish, or European. It may be that the British colonial perspective would not have been as easily digestible if the Arab enslavement of Africans had not already occurred. "Black" people are viewed as African, which is equated with being primitive, unclean, lazy, and uncivilized (Drake 1987; Fábos 2008; Powell 2003). For indigenous darker-skinned Nubians and Upper Egyptians, these ideas are usually articulated in relation to the idea that they are naturally more suited for servitude (Atiya 1982; Jennings 1995). At key moments of conflict, especially with the Sudanese, these negative traits become essentialized, naturalized, and biologized (Fabos 2008, Powell 2003, observations during fieldwork).

Egyptian ideas of race and ethnicity in the 21st century have been informed by colonialism and Egyptian nationalism. Eve Troutt Powell argues that modern conceptions of race in Egypt emerged during the colonial period. Analyzing images of Sudanese and Nubians in various forms of media, e.g. newspapers, short stories, novels, memoirs, plays and songs, she shows the dualistic nature of Egyptian colonial identity as “colonized colonizers”. Moreover, she argues that Egyptian nationalists, who had been educated in Europe by Muhammad Ali, effectively use print media to construct their imperialist objective as natural and necessary for the benefit of the Sudanese. From the perspective of these Egyptian nationalists, slavery and Egyptian’s colonial expansionist project are cast as civilizing missions rather than unjust, exploitative institutions.

Powell expands Benedict Anderson's argument about imagined communities by applying it to a situation where "colonized and colonizer are not so physically, religiously, culturally, or linguistically distinct" (Powell 1995:18). She also states that as Egyptian nationalists "mapped out the desired global position for Egyptians, the Sudan was intended as the natural backyard, racially close yet inferior, culturally tailor-made for Egyptian authority" (Powell 1995:19). Her analysis of race relations in the Nile Valley Region from the perspective of Egyptians frames racialized discourses and stereotypical representations of Sudanese and Nubians that can still be found in Egyptian popular media in the twenty-first century. More significant, for this discussion of race is the fact that the Sudanese were often described as kinsmen. The importance of the family idiom in Egyptian culture becomes evident during this period as Egyptians begin to refer to their relationship with the Sudanese as that of "Brothers Along the Nile." Egypt, as the elder brother, was therefore obligated to assist the Sudan in its advancement toward modernity.

The Egyptian nationalists of the 19th century's impact on understandings of ethnic relations between Egyptians, Nubians, and Sudanese continued to resonate in the late 20th to 21st centuries. Anita Fabos' (2008), in *"Brothers" or Others?: Propriety and Gender for Muslim Sudanese in Egypt,* examines the relationship of Egyptians and Northern or Arab Muslim Sudanese during the mid-to-late 1990s. She describes the ambivalent relationship that Arab Muslim Sudanese have with Egyptians. On the one hand, Egyptians and Sudanese both acknowledge their affinities and ties as a result of commonalities in religion, culture, and language. Up until the late twentieth century, these commonalities meant that Arab Muslim Sudanese in Cairo were awarded a special

status that involved being accorded rights to residence, education, and employment opportunities almost equivalent to those of native Egyptians. On the other hand, at the onset of the 21st century, Sudanese have increasingly had more negative experiences with Egyptians as a result of the elimination of their special status and the concomitant emergence of greater legal restrictions because of the Egyptian government's association of Muslim Arab Sudanese with terrorism (Fabos 2009:4). As the social, political, and economic terrain of Egypt has changed, Sudanese have increasingly begun to openly challenge Egypt's public assertion of brotherhood and emphasize the history of exploitation and unequal power relations between Egypt and Sudan. In addition, the tension between Egyptians and Sudanese has been reflected in Egyptian racial stereotyping of Sudanese in daily interactions and in popular media.

Finally, Arab nationalism has been pivotal in Egypt's formulation of its modern subjectivity. As an ideology strongly supported by Gamal Abdel Nasser, Arab nationalism advanced the idea that Egyptians were a part of a larger community that encompassed all presumed speakers of classical Arabic (or its modern counterpart) (Armbrust 2000). Though few Egyptians or anyone in the Arab world speaks this form of Arabic, it was a central though unfulfilled goal of many governments in the Arabic-speaking world during the 1950s and 1960s. Leaders such as Nasser believed that by aiming for Arab solidarity, diverse peoples of North Africa and the Middle East would be able to counter Western encroachment and imperialism.

In regard to this discussion of identity, Arab nationalism is meaningful because it claimed that all members of the society could be unified through a common ancestry that was based on a disregard for ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences. Egyptians, as

Arabs, were part of a larger Arab nation that resided from the Persian Gulf to the West. The collapsing of all difference under Arab-Islamic identity, however, required the purging of all forms of difference through cultural assimilation. For Egyptian Christians and Nubians, the denial of their difference is perceived as an insidious form of ethnocentrism and discrimination that precluded their ability to critique the Egyptian nation-state openly at key historical moments, such as the inundation of Nubia and displacement of 100,000 Nubians due to the raising of the Aswan Dam in 1963.

DISSERTATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH

My dissertation contributes to this scholarship by examining perceptions and representations of ideal womanhood, a construct that is intimately linked with marriage and ideals of beauty. One of the key domains of Egyptian social life where discrimination based upon skin color, race, and ethnicity, can be found is the marriage arena. Marriage, as an institution in Egypt, is intricately bound with public responsibility and rights (Abu-Lughod 1961; Abu-Lughod 1998a; Ali 2010; Amado 2004; Amin and Al-Bassusi 2004; Bowen and Early 1993; Hoodfar 1997; Rugh 1984). It is the only means for Egyptians to have access to licit sexual relations and for young men and women to be perceived as fully adult within the society. Generally speaking, the societal ideals mirror the ideals of Islamic societies in that "sons are expected to be educated, to marry, and to assume steady employment; daughters are expected to become mothers and increasingly-given economic hardships- to work outside the home as well. Actions do not reflect upon the individual alone; they reflect on the entire family" (Bowen and Early1993:77).

In the marriage market, the desirability of a female partner has traditionally been articulated in terms of beauty (Inhorn 1996b; Rugh 1984). Therefore, I argue that there

are implications for darker-skinned women who do not fit the dominant feminine aesthetic ideals. Darker-skinned Arab-Muslim and Nubian Egyptian women in Cairo increasingly complain about the difficulties they are having in finding marriage partners. As their kinsmen search for love-marriages or express their desire to marry "white" or "wheat-colored women", darker-skinned women in my study asserted that they are remaining single for longer periods than the previous generation. When they do marry, my informants stated that they are encouraged to accept the first man who expresses interest, even if he would normally be considered inferior to them in educational and social status. Because womanhood within Egyptian's patriarchal structure is determined by a woman's ability to marry and to bear children, women who are not able to accomplish this or who are less likely to realize this expectation because of their phenotype (in this case, their darker-skinned bodies) are inevitably more likely to be socially marginalized. They have less access to privileges and resources that are accorded to women as a result of their marital status or relation to men in a conjugal way.

With that said, a woman's beauty alone is not enough to determine whether or not a woman (or man) will be considered ideal for marriage. Physical beauty can draw attention and incite attraction, but determining who to align oneself with in marriage is usually a family matter in Egypt. Marriage is corporate arrangement that involves aligning families (Rugh 1982). Women, more than men, have the greatest power to shame the family by virtue of their behavior, which is measured mostly in terms of sexual misconduct. Therefore, in discussing marriage, my research informants highlighted non-physical attributes as central in their assessment of beauty. Phrases from men, such as "Beauty fades," became cliché. Women often remarked, "Beauty is for one's husband

alone." Therefore, beauty is a phenomenon constructed simultaneously as a physical as well as non-physical trait when a woman is single or going through a courtship. Furthermore, beauty becomes constructed more explicitly in a non-physical and moral way after marriage.

The physical aspect of a woman's beauty draws attention but the overall Egyptian assessment of beauty is related to ideals of femininity and womanhood that are shaped by moral, religious, social and spiritual notions (e.g. ideas about piety and propriety). To address the non-physical dimension of beauty, I rely on scholarship about Islamic revivalism and piety movements that explain in-depth that feminine beauty is also about the cultivation of ethical traits, such as modesty (*hishma*), and politeness or propriety (*adab*)(Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2001; Mahmood 2005; Zuhur 1992). For more conservative people, submissiveness or obedience (*ta'a*) may also be considered an essential characteristic in their beauty preferences (Haddad, et al. 1991; Lapidus 1997; Mahmood 2005; Zuhur 1992).

In considering the issue of race, whether married or not married, symbols of piety and respectability (such as the veil and Islamic dress) do not necessarily protect darker-skinned women. From interviews and conversations with darker-skinned Muslim women in Cairo (i.e., Nubians, Somalis, and Northern Sudanese Muslims), I learned that being veiled did not preclude sexual advances. Darker-skinned women on the streets of Cairo are still subject to sexual solicitations from Cairene men, even those who would identify themselves as Muslim. Darker-skinned women (and men), who are often simply labeled as Sudanese, are talked to and represented in popular media as sexually licentious, less intelligent, and as one informant described as "hot blooded." But, for my purposes, what

this implies is that being Muslim and attempting to express one's piety and respectability in traditionally symbolic Islamic ways does not necessarily work for many darker-skinned women in Cairo. In addition, being Egyptian, a national identity, then can be read or linked or connected to virtues—morality, respectability, piety, et cetera – that are not accorded to internal dark-skinned others and foreign women of any hue or complexion.

CONCLUSION

My research examines the concept of race in Egypt where there is no vocabulary for talking about racial incidents. In 21st century Egypt, race is not acknowledged, or recognized, or explicitly discussed in everyday life. Egyptians from various ethnic and religious groups, and of different hues, confidently assert that society is not racist. Race, from their perspective, is outsourced and perceived as an American concern that deals primarily with social relations between groups labeled as black or white. It has not been codified in the legal system. There have never been any laws segregating populations on the basis of their presumed racial identity, as was done in the United States and South Africa. There have never been any legal prohibitions against miscegenation, or marriage between different ethnic groups. When collecting demographic data, surveys in Egypt do not include any questions about ethnic or racial ancestry, heritage, or background. Yet, racial hierarchies persist despite the denial of the significance of race.

Race in contemporary Egypt is nebulous. In many ways, it is a notion that is hidden in plain sight. In each of the substantive chapters and this conclusion, I begin my examination of race with an image, or visual text, from popular magazines, newspaper articles, and billboards. The images are meant to depict some of the complex ways that Egyptians perceive and portray social (i.e. racial, gendered, classed, et cetera) hierarchies.

My discussion and interpretations of the images focus on how Egyptians in my study talk about what is ideal and what is not, what is laughable and what is not, who should be included and who should be excluded in representations of Egyptian identity. In short, the images, as idealized representations, are meant to provide us with a way to understand the tacit, unspoken ideologies about racial, gendered, and national difference that exists within Egyptian society.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Stuart Hall states that the term discourses refers to talk, forms of knowledge, and conduct associated with particular topics, social activities, or institutional sites in a society Hall, Stuart, and Open University. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage in association with the Open University.

[2] In this dissertation, ethnicity, which deals with cultural groups, is not considered to be synonymous with or conflated with a race, a term that implies that the groups within the society are stratified and unequally ranked based upon biophysical traits. During my research, I found that members of these groups would identify themselves by their ethnic group when communicating with other Egyptians and when they were in areas of the country where their groups dominate and where they are far removed from the capital. The children and grandchildren of members of ethnic groups who are born and raised in Cairo have similar speech patterns and lifestyles to other native-born Cairenes; yet, they maintain certain behavioral patterns and aspects of their ethnic community (e.g. foods eaten in the household or traditional garb that is worn when they are in their neighborhood or at home).

[3] Janet Abu Lughod separates these social groups into rural and traditional urban and juxtaposes them with "modern" or industrial urban Cairenes. Both the rural and traditional urban can be called *baladi*. However, the rural from Upper Egypt can simultaneously be *baladi* and *Sa'idi*.

[4] *Nubiyyin* means Nubian.

[5] *al-Barbary*, or the barbarian, is meant to be understood in the traditional sense. By this I mean, an uncultivated person, generally of foreign origin, who does not have the same languages and customs as natives to a country. As a result, the individual's language skills may be flawed and they may be considered inarticulate; in the Egyptian context, this inarticulateness is often viewed as comical. Though the subject has yet to be researched or explored in depth in Cairene or Egyptian culture, I would like to propose that the notion of the barbarian, or the uncivilized, is deeply intertwined with Cairene ideals of modernity and cosmopolitanism. Because Egyptian modernity involves a desire to maintain an "authentically" Egyptian identity while having fluency with the highest aspects of foreign cultures, especially those in the West (Armbrust 1996), it includes a continuous juxtaposition with that which is deemed undesirable, boorish and uncouth, low-brow, "uncivilized" (*ghair madinniya*). In the Cairene case, the undesirable is often linked with and transposed onto darker skinned Others, i.e. those who seem to be closer to groups who originally come from sub-Saharan Africa (Drake 1991).

[6] Hall's theoretical framework is deeply indebted to Michel Foucault's discussions of discourse, power, and knowledge, Ferdinand de Saussure's work on language and representation, and Roland Barthes work on semiotics.

[7] Representation in this dissertation concerns the production of meaning through language, which is defined as a signifying practice and system of representation.

[8] Signification is defined as the production of meaning through representation and social practices (Hall 1997).

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[9] Regimes of representation, or representational paradigms, are defined as the collection of images and practices that construct a vision of people and events within a particular culture at a specific historical moment.
[10] Though my key informants are primarily unmarried, I do not perceive this to be a limitation or weakness in this study since my concern was the relationship between beauty and skin color or race. In the Egyptian context, the people most concerned with beauty are unmarried women interested in marriage. They frequently talk about their bodies and beautification practices and strive to modify their appearance more than others because they want to attract a spouse. By contrast, women who are married are concerned with pleasing their husbands and often with either having children or caring for their existing children.
[11] For further information about marriage in Egypt, see Rugh 1982 or Inhorn 1960. The documentary film *Marriage Egyptian Style* by Reem Saad also vividly illustrates and explains the marriage process in contemporary Egypt.
[12] This blend occurs most often among Muslim women since Christian women tend to have on western clothing. Nevertheless, during my fieldwork, I was informed that a few Christians from lower-income neighborhoods also veil because it is the style of clothing that predominates in their communities.
[13] This name is a pseudonym. With the exception of the members of the Hegazi family in chapter four, all of the names in the dissertation will be pseudonyms. In their case, I use the names that they are called in their communities and that were given to them in the primary ethnography about their lives and experiences in their natal village of *Gharb Aswan* (Jennings 1995).
[14] My use of the term caste can be explained by Oliver Cox's description of the concept. He draws on A.L. Kroeber (1931) to define caste as "an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank of social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions." (Cox 1959:5) Cox emphasizes the importance of occupation and functional specialization in distinguishing a caste from a socioeconomic class. In the Egyptian context, the term caste is often used to refer to the Mamluks because they were Turkish and Circassian slaves who were primarily relegated to the military in Egypt. Due to their occupational specialization, they were able to take control of the Egyptian government from the 13th-16th centuries. Descendants of Mamluks and Turkish Ottoman rulers are identified as *wilad al-nas* in 20th-21st century Egypt (Barsoum 2004).
[15] I make a distinction between neighborhoods and communities because there may be people in a neighborhood, such as migrants, who feel good that they can find people from their home community (for example, other Upper Egyptians or Northern (Arab Muslim) Sudanese or Nubians) in the neighborhood. But these people may not feel any particular affinity for the neighborhood itself.
[16] Lack of respect was reflected in their commentary about the students at American University of Cairo (AUC) who they described as "really stupid people who were only there because their families had lots of money." My experiences with students and professors at AUC contradict their perspectives.
[17] The American University in Cairo (AUC) is a private institution. The tuition for AUC for Egyptians is $528US or 2494LE (Egyptian Pounds) per credit hour. For Egyptians,

the cost of tuition is very expensive. By contrast, the tuition for Egyptians for Cairo University for the year is $1000US or 4723LE; it covers all course-related expenses but not housing. For Americans to participate in a study abroad program for a year at the American University in Cairo, the cost is $15,800.

[18] The idea of migration as a means to improve one's economic status in the lower socioeconomic class is highly gendered with men expressing more of an interest to go abroad for work than their female counterparts. Women generally asked about migration in order to assist their brothers and male relatives, as well as young men who they hoped to marry. By contrast, women from the lower middle class participants with undergraduate or graduate degrees expressed an interest in migrating so that they would have the opportunity to use their skills, improve their education, attain money to assist their families, and/or be an environment where they had greater flexibility and opportunities to live as single adults who may not ever marry.

[19] Amin (2000) states the *miri* jobs were pursued and considered to be prestigious prior to the 1950s. He recounts the story of his father, a teacher in the Sharia Law School at the beginning of the First World War (1914-1918), to demonstrate that the stability and security of governmental positions were considered an asset prior to the latter end of the twentieth century. What makes the 1950s distinctive is that there was greater acceptance and belief in the superiority of governmental positions because of the policy of guaranteed life-time employment to those with secondary education as well as due to the fact that the nationalization of the majority of industries in Egypt during Nasser's regime meant that the majority of employment opportunities were governmental ones.

[20] Casual employment often refers to unsteady or unstable positions, possibly seasonal work, that an individual engages in on a temporary basis to earn income. In the Egyptian market, three out of four workers in the private sector tend to be casual laborers.

[21] In Cairo, the desire to leave the workplace may also be due to the stigma that is attached to working outside of the home for many of these women whose families originate from more conservative regions of the country, such as Upper Egypt. In addition, because working outside of the home makes child care more difficult, women with younger children (between the ages of 0-6 years of age) are less likely to pursue or have salaried work (Assaad et al 2000).

[22] Racialization refers to processes of the discursive production of racial identities. It signifies the extension of dehumanizing and racial meanings to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group (Omi and Winant 1986).

[23] Discourse is defined as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—i.e. a way of representing — a particular kind of knowledge about a topic." (Hall 1996:201) Hall, drawing on Foucault, tells us that discourse concerns the production of knowledge and meaning. In discussing racialized discourses, I am referring to a set of statements about the inherent capacities of groups due to their biological/genetic makeup that emerged in the 19th century as a result of European conquest, slavery, and colonialism.

[24] "American Anthropological Association Statement on 'Race'," American Anthropological Association, accessed May 27, 2011, http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm.

[25] According to Thompson and Keith (2001), self-esteem and self-concept are deals with how individuals feel about themselves. It evaluates personal perceptions of value and moral worth. Self-efficacy concerns an individual's perception about their ability to control their own fate.
[26]Abeer Allam and Michael Slackman, "23 Sudanese Die as Egypt Clears Migrants' Camp," *New York Times*, December 31, 2005, accessed on June 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/31/international/africa/31egypt.html.
[27] At the time of the event, there was speculation about the refugees being taken to the neighborhood of 6th of October. Though some of them may have been taken there, Human Rights Reports suggest that about 650 were imprisoned for at least two months (http://stacey258.wordpress.com/ and http://rsdwatch.wordpress.com/).
[28] In discussing Egyptian relationships with people of African descent, I consider Egyptians to be a group of people who are simultaneously North African and Middle Eastern. For clarity, in this chapter, I use African only when referring to people from sub-Saharan Africa and the Sudan.
[29] This discussion of conflict in terms of race occurs can be found on the Internet primarily on websites that deal with human rights. Two of the most detailed are Arab Human Rights Watch and Cairo Institute of Human Rights Studies (see links below). A more commonly expressed sentiment among middle-class and upper class Cairenes can be found in the blog entitled, "No More Refugees in Mustafa Mahmoud Square." It consists of a local Egyptian male expressing his mixed emotions about the presence of the Sudanese refugees in Mohandesin. [Websites: http://www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Printable/Articles/110.aspx); http://www.anhri.net/en/focus/2005/pr1231-3.shtml; (http://egyptianchronicles.blogspot.com/2005/12/no-more-refugees-in-mustafa-mahmoud.html].
[30] Since 1903, the agricultural land in most Nubian villages has been uncultivable because of the elevation of the High Dam in Aswan. Nubian migrants traveled to the urban centers and sent remittances home to their relatives. Over time, they created a mutually beneficial relationship with the foreigners and many of the foreign-born elites who needed the help of local citizens who they could trust (Jennings 1995).
[31] Given that these performances were done by fair-skinned Egyptians who donned blackface, it would be see if they had any correlation with blackface minstrelsy in the United States.
[32] Racialization is defined as the process through which categories of identity and difference (e.g. class, ethnicity, kinship or affinity) are naturalized and biologized (Silverstein 2005, Omi and Winant 1994, Miles 1989, Wodak and Reisgl 1999). These identities and forms of difference are represented, categorized, and ascribed meaning based on real or fictitious somatic features.
[33] The Egyptian authorities were concerned about the communities for different reasons. In the 1960s, Nubian villages were inundated as a part of Egypt's larger effort of modernization and subsequently they became the focus of assimilation programs. Their community was also the subject of a major research project at the American University in Cairo. The flooding of their villages resulted in the loss of cultural artifacts and a major relocation of Egyptian Nubians (Fernea 1963). By contrast, Northern Sudanese became

suspect because of opposition movements in the Sudan and the perceived growth in terrorists within their community (Fabos 2009).

[34] The names used throughout this chapter are pseudonyms.

[35] *Chocolata* is a popular song from the film *Sa'idi fi gama el-Amrikiyya* (An Upper Egyptian at the American University in Cairo) that describes black women as burnt sweet potatoes and asserts that they should bleach themselves. Cairene youth chant the refrain of this song when they encounter darker-skinned people, usually women.

[36] Pasha is a Turkish term that historically referred to elite who served as a military or civil officer in Egypt.

[37] "Tutankhamun was not Black," American Free Press, accessed June 15, 2011, accessed on June 15, 2011, http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iB6u3XEMp9IrJfl-kH6FHNgZCg_A. .

[38] The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was a political arrangement where the British and Egyptian governments partnered in their colonization of the Sudan.

[39] Though *baladi* is a concept that is used to refer to the Egyptian masses, historically it was a term assigned only to Egyptians in Cairo. Egyptians in the villages were traditionally referred to as the peasantry (*fallahin*) (El-Messiri 1978). In the Introduction, I discuss *baladi* and *ifrangi* as socioeconomic groups in Cairo. However, Evelyn Early (1993) and Sawsan El-Messiri (1978) have provided detailed descriptions of these groups in their sociological and anthropological texts.

[40] Researchers who study sexuality suggest that the intolerance has emerged with the adoption of colonial notions about appropriate sexual relationships (Dunne…). Whether the introduction of a Western colonial perspective is the primary reason or it is a blend of Western and Islamic ideologies is subject to debate and in need of greater exploration and research by scholars of the Middle East and North Africa.

[41] A common discourse among middle-to elite Egyptians is that the majority of Egyptians from *sha'abi* neighborhoods are ignorant (*jahilly*) and "uncivilized." They will often assert that this is the problem with members of these classes rather than looking at the structures that shape their behavior and experiences. While it is true that women and men from these communities may not receive secondary educations and may even be illiterate, I have found them to be quite articulate, inquisitive, and insightful when I have been among them.

[42] This notion is more dominant among the lower and lower middle classes. It may be that they are not interested in working outside of the home because of the types of jobs they get when they are working outside of the home (i.e. housekeepers, cooks, cleaning women in offices, factory workers, secretaries if very fortunate.) The hours are long. The transportation to get to jobs that are far away from their communities is overcrowded and uncomfortable. The wages are low and if they are housekeepers or working in shops, they may be preyed upon sexually by the men who are their bosses. Thus, working outside of the home is not ideal. In addition, after marriage they would still have to maintain their households and have to bear the brunt of raising their children while working outside the home. Thus, their perspective on this differs from the more well-to-do who may find a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment from their jobs, which take place in offices that have much nicer surroundings, better pay, and possibly more women. Moreover, the well

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to do may have servants to help them with the housework- a cleaning lady who comes in a few times a week and who may also cook meals.

[43] This neglect of the body and physical beauty seems to occur most often for women who are rarely in public spaces. Women who work outside of the home often continue to cultivate their beauty and strive to maintain their physical appearance because of their social interactions in the workplace. In this regard, it seems that a woman's looks remain significant as long as she continues to have social interactions with individuals outside of her family. As one middle-class woman in my study suggested, the maintenance of one's physical appearance and attractiveness is not solely about men but is also associated with a woman remaining her self-respect (*ihtiram bi nafsaha*).

[44] (http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/02/16/world/20080217EGYPT_index.html)

[45] The use of weight loss clinics to reach the thinner aesthetic ideal among middle-class women in Cairo has been well documented by Iman Farid Basyuny's ethnography *Just a Gaze*.

[46] Many of these men were fairer skinned Egyptians from Cairo or other parts of Egypt (e.g. *fellahin* from the Delta).

[47] I am referring to bathing the entire body twice a day. Before prayer, if the women prayed when the call to prayer was made, ablutions involved cleaning sections of the body but not taking a full bath.

[48] Egyptians in Cairo utter this phrase as well but it is not meant to literally convey a round face. Instead, Cairenes discussed it in terms of the brightness of a woman's energy, a light that she gives off, or the fairness of her complexion.

[49] Two examples of these types of websites are http://www.qiran.com/; http://www.arabmatchmaking.com/).

[50] *Nisf El-Dunia* is a women's magazine with a wide-range of articles on national and global politics, entertainment, and culture.