Gender-role Attitudes among Egyptian Adolescents

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Using nationally representative survey data, this study explores gender-role attitudes among unmarried adolescents aged 16–19 in Egypt, a society characterized by distinct and often segregated roles for men and women. Adolescents' views about desirable qualities in a spouse as well as more direct indicators of gender-role attitudes are examined, including opinions about whether wives should defer to their husbands, share in household decisionmaking, and have the responsibility for performing domestic tasks. The findings regarding spousal characteristics reflect strong gender differentiation. Girls and boys provide divergent profiles of an ideal spouse, profiles that reflect traditional gender roles. Girls are significantly less likely than boys to favor educational inequality between spouses, however. Neither boys nor girls have egalitarian gender-role attitudes, although girls are significantly more likely to express less traditional attitudes. Multivariate analyses indicate that girls' and boys' attitudes do not vary consistently and significantly by socioeconomic background; in particular, increased schooling does not always promote egalitarian attitudes. The implications of these findings are discussed. (STUDIES IN FAMILY PLANNING 2003; 34[1]: 8–18)

In light of the growing interest in adolescents' lives in developing countries, surprisingly little attention has been paid to gender-role attitudes among young people. In contrast with developed countries, where theorizing about gender socialization has been extensive both among psychologists and sociologists, and where a large empirical literature exists describing the development of gender identity and the acquisition of gender roles in childhood, the research in developing countries is sparse (Stockard 1999). Few large-scale data-collection efforts in developing countries have focused on adolescents at all, and, until very recently, those that have done so tend to be interested in so-called risky behaviors such as drug-taking or unprotected sex rather than in developmental processes (for example, see Morris 1994 and Raymundo

et al. 1999). Although the literature is growing concerning women's empowerment (for example, see Kishor 1995 and Balk 1997) and its impact on demographic outcomes (for example, see Durrant and Sathar 2000 and Kishor 2000), little research other than small-scale psychological studies has been conducted on gender-role development during adolescence.

This study investigates gender-role attitudes among a nationally representative sample of unmarried adolescents in Egypt, a society characterized by distinct roles for men and women (Sayed and El-Zanaty 1993; Kandiyoti 1994). The question considered here is whether young people in contemporary Egypt adhere to the traditional gender compact. As in other Middle Eastern societies, Egyptian males are presumed to be authoritarian in their relations with women, to uphold the segregation of gender roles, to take control of fertility decisions, and to maintain emotional distance from wives and children (Davis and Davis 1989; Kandiyoti 1994). Women are expected to be generally submissive to men and are confined by social norms to roles within the family. Compared with men, they are believed to display more warmth and emotionality (Rugh 1997). Although how these characterizations emerged and are sustained is not discussed here, we are able to assess whether these constructs are reflected in the reported attitudes of contemporary Egyptian adolescents.

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An examination of the gender-role attitudes of young people is important for several reasons, especially for what current views may foretell about later behavior. We can posit that the gender roles adopted by young men and women today will affect adult decisions regarding access to and control over economic resources, particularly as related to investments in children's health and schooling; the physical mobility and the labor-force participation of women; and the reproductive behavior and the family relationships they will eventually form. We are particularly interested in differences in gender-role attitudes among girls and boys, for if attitudes differ substantially between the sexes, such differences may presage conflicts at a later stage of life.

Previous Research

To the extent that data exist on gender-role socialization in the developing world, it is qualitative and has come primarily from two comparative ethnographic projects. One, known as the Harvard Adolescence Project, involved fieldwork at seven sites, although only two of the studies from developing countries—one conducted in Morocco, discussed below, and another in Nigeria—have been published (Davis and Davis 1989). The other project drew on 186 small-scale studies to investigate how societies "locate" the adolescent life stage in their social arrangements (Schlegel and Barry 1991). Although that comparative study examined gender roles, it focused on discovering patterns across societies rather than on detailed analysis of gender-role socialization in any one place, such as we do here for Egypt.

The Harvard project pays more explicit attention to gender-role acquisition during adolescence and includes a rich study of young people's growing into adulthood in a Moroccan town (Davis and Davis 1989). Moroccan adolescents were described as experiencing increasingly differential role socialization, or gender intensification, during this age period. Parents were deeply involved in conveying gender norms through shared participation in domestic tasks and monitoring of their children's mobility. Girls' activities outside the home were increasingly monitored and restricted as they reached adolescence, much more than those of their adolescent male siblings. Furthermore, adolescent girls were expected to assume greater responsibilities in the household while their male counterparts were able to escape much of this responsibility. Ethnographic work in Egypt suggests similar patterns (Hoodfar 1997).

The scant literature on adolescent socialization in developing countries focuses mainly on the roles of family, peers, and the media. Systematic research is lacking

on the ways in which the process and content of formal schooling affect the maturation of girls and boys (Lloyd and Mensch 1999). Indeed, the specific mechanisms through which education exerts its influences on young people are not fully understood. Formal schooling is, nonetheless, a channel through which young people are inculcated with norms and values and exposed to new ideas. The curriculum and textbook content, interpersonal interactions within and outside the classroom (including teacher–student and student–student interactions), extracurricular activities, and formal administrative rules and regulations are obvious vehicles through which messages regarding gender and other social norms are transmitted. Formal schooling may also impart a set of skills related to personal efficacy, problem-solving, and social negotiation (Furnham and Stacey 1991; Wassef 1996).

In addition to exposing adolescents to new ideas, attending school potentially can shift the orientation of a young person from adults to peers. Schooling places adolescents in a peer context for most of the day, reducing the amount of time they spend with adults and increasing "the salience of their involvement with age-mates" (Schlegel 1995: 29). What role peers play in the socialization of developing-world adolescents is unclear, however. Surprisingly, some researchers in the United States have found that peer associations are more likely to be experienced as "extensions of parental relationships rather than as counterforces that introduce youth to anticultural values" (Youniss 1989: 387). Given the centrality of the family in most parts of the developing world, especially in the Middle East, adolescents would be likely to associate with peers whose values closely resemble those of their families.

Female Autonomy

Social scientists are interested in gender-role socialization because it may shed light on the question of how adult autonomy is produced. Recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in women's autonomy partly stimulated by feminist theoretical interests and partly because of its potential association with reproductive behavior and child survival. (See Federici et al. [1993] for a discussion of how demographers became interested in this issue and Mason [1987 and 1993] for a discussion of the theoretical linkages between women's status and demographic change.)

Since the early 1980s, when Dyson and Moore (1983) noted an association between women's autonomy and demographic behavior at the state level in India, the empirical literature on this subject has grown. Although definitions of autonomy vary, researchers have demon-

strated with survey data that the social position of women, as measured by such indicators as physical mobility, decisionmaking authority, and access to resources, is significantly associated with increased contraceptive use, reduced fertility and child mortality, and investments in children's schooling. (For recent studies, see Durrant and Sathar [2000], Hossain et al. [2000], and Kishor [2000]. For a contrary picture, see Morgan et al. [2002] who find no evidence of an association between autonomy and fertility in their analysis of paired Muslim and non-Muslim communities in three Southeast Asian countries and India. Their data show, however, that Muslim women exhibit greater pronatalist behavior.)

When they are available, direct measures have been used to gauge women's empowerment; where such measures are absent, proxies such as the educational level and employment status of women and the age and educational differences between spouses have also been employed (see Uchudi 2000), although the association between the proxies and the more direct measures is not always strong or significant (Balk 1997; Kishor 1999). Since the status of women has been established as a potentially important factor in demographic change in some settings, interest has also developed in exploring the social determinants of women's autonomy (see, for example, Balk 1997).

The Egyptian Context

The literature concerning women's autonomy has a strong positivist slant, usually assuming that the goal of adulthood everywhere is greater independence. When researchers apply a concept such as autonomy to non-Western societies, however, the underlying factor they may be identifying is an ability to mobilize or influence one's social relationships effectively rather than an ability to act independently per se—the more conventional definition of autonomy (see Nawar et al. 1995).

Many observers have pointed to the collective nature of social life in Arab societies and to the central role played by family members in shaping the values and self-conceptions of individuals (Joseph 1994; Rugh 1997). Young people typically live at home until they are married and remain dependent on older family members for financial and emotional support as young adults. One implication of this arrangement is that the adolescent experience in Egypt is less likely to be characterized by rebellion or social distancing from parents than is the case in Western societies (Davis and Davis 1989).

Young Egyptians may experience adolescence more as a time of refining interpersonal skills than as a period in which to achieve separation or autonomy. Joseph

(1993) also develops the idea of "connectivity" to describe the intertwined nature of self and significant others in a young person's emerging sense of identity and agency. This idea is a central construct for both men and women in Middle Eastern societies, although each sex experiences it differently, and it implies that, in Egypt, the important task of adolescent socialization is learning how to mobilize social networks rather than how to become autonomous as a means of achieving personal goals.

Because some of the qualities of female adult role identity described above are also traits associated with children, girls' socialization is likely to follow quite a different path from that of boys. Boys must negotiate a period in adolescence in which they are still subordinate because of their youth, but are beginning to take on the privileges of manhood. This path may create some internal conflicts, but generally implies a continuous increase in autonomy and mobility (Davis and Davis 1989; Kandiyoti 1994). On the other hand, Egyptian girls in adolescence have traditionally experienced an abrupt end to the relative freedom and mobility they enjoyed in childhood (Ibrahim and Wassef 2000). Around the time of puberty, girls are expected to display increasing modesty and to withdraw from some of the public spaces to which they had access as children.

Daily Activity and Leisure

In Egypt, substantial differences are seen in the ways adolescent boys and girls occupy themselves. Whereas for girls puberty leads to a greater restriction on mobility, for boys, the amount of time devoted to work outside the home and to community involvement are expected to increase. Schooling has had a major impact on these patterns, extending the ages when girls are able to be out in public and increasing contact between boys and girls. However, because the Egyptian school year is much shorter than that of most other countries and because double-shift schools are common, even those adolescents who attend school have much unscheduled time available to them (Mensch et al. 2000).

Analysis of time-use data indicates that both boys and girls are expected to help at home during childhood and early adolescence, although higher expectations in this regard are placed on girls. As they age, boys gradually withdraw from domestic responsibilities, which is consistent with the notion of consolidating the adult male's position by his distancing himself from the tasks of children and women.

The activity profile that emerges by late adolescence reflects the expected patterns for Middle Eastern societies: Boys have considerably more free time than do girls, and, in contrast with their sisters, tend to spend that time

outside home engaged in sports or visiting friends. Work roles become segregated gradually, with boys being more likely to participate in paid labor while girls participate in domestic work within the household (Mensch et al. 2000*).

Schooling

Access to education and the amount of schooling completed are believed to be powerful predictors of many subsequent behaviors and attitudes (see, for example, Jejeebhoy 1995). Moreover, differential access to education is thought to be an important indicator of gender inequality in a society. Whereas school enrollment for boys is nearly universal in Egypt, girls have been disadvantaged relative to boys in their likelihood of entering school (95 percent of 10–19-year-old boys in 1997 had attended school, compared with 84 percent of girls). On the other hand, once a girl is enrolled, the probability that she will remain in school is almost equal to that of a boy. To the extent, then, that a gender gap exists in educational attainment among young people in Egypt today, the difference is attributable to girls' not entering school at the same rate as boys. It is not a consequence of a gender difference in the propensity to drop out (Lloyd et al. forthcoming).

Despite the increase in girls' enrollment, traditional values about education still hold sway among parents. Adults do not generally believe that boys should go to school and girls should not; rather, parents give different reasons why their sons and daughters should attend. Parents are much more likely to offer an economic rationale for a son's attendance than they are for a daughter's. Parents believe that daughters are more likely to derive social benefits from schooling in that education makes girls better mothers and helps them "deal better with life." For a substantial proportion of adults, education is thought to improve girls' chances of finding a suitable husband, whereas only a trivial fraction believe that schooling facilitates the process of finding a suitable wife (Mensch et al. 2000*).

Work

Labor-force participation is low among Egyptian women: According to the 2000 Demographic and Health Survey, 17 percent of ever-married women aged 15–49 are currently engaged in some sort of economic activity (El-Zanaty and Way 2001). Moreover, in the period between 1988 and 1998, when two nationally representative labor-market surveys were conducted, a substantial decline occurred in wage employment among young women (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2002). Indeed, during the 1990s a dramatic reduction was seen in female employment. According to national labor-force surveys, the employment rate for all women aged 15–64 declined from 25 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 1995 (Assaad et al. 2000). In part, this decline was due to the failure of the economy to keep pace with population growth. An additional loss of jobs for women has occurred as the protected public industrial sector has declined in importance.

Because of discrimination against women in the private sector resulting from social norms against certain types of female employment and from labor regulations regarding maternity leave and working hours that effectively raise the cost of hiring women, the unemployment rate for young women graduates who are eligible for government jobs is high and has increased substantially in recent years. This finding suggests that, at some level, educated young women are eager to work, or at least eager to work in the public sector, which has attractive benefits (Assaad et al. 2000; Lloyd et al. forthcoming). Yet even if these young women manage to obtain jobs, their attachment to the workplace is not particularly strong. According to in-depth interviews with young female wage workers, the expense of acquiring the various household amenities for a trousseau has caused girls and their families to view a paying job as a vehicle for ensuring a desirable marriage. Once married, most girls expect to quit working for wages not only because the goal of marriage has been achieved but also because they are pressured to produce a child as soon as possible. Long working hours, common in the private sector, are another barrier inhibiting women from continuing to work after they are married (Amin and Al-Bassusi 2002).

Data and Methods

In 1997, under the auspices of the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population, a nationally representative sample survey, known as Adolescence and Social Change in Egypt (ASCE), was conducted among 9,128 adolescent girls and boys aged 10 to 19 and a sample of their parents (El-Tawila 1999). The main survey collected information about education, work roles, and daily activities. In addition, one-fourth of randomly selected adolescents were systematically subsampled for a health module. The 2,323 adolescents in the subsample completed laboratory tests on urine, stool, and blood and were asked questions about their health practices, dietary habits, and attitudes toward reproductive health and gender roles, such as maturational changes and desirable age at marriage. Questions were also asked of those aged 16 and older about their reproductive health knowledge, preferred gender roles within marriage, and the qualities

they considered desirable in a spouse. The analysis presented in this study is restricted to the 660 (weighted n = 674) unmarried adolescents aged 16 to 19 in the health subsample and their parents (or other responsible adult). All results presented below have been weighted according to standard procedures.

Dependent Variables

A variety of measures are examined to assess gender-role attitudes in Egypt: views about spouse selection,[1] whether adolescents think wives should defer to their husbands, how adolescents believe important decisions should be made between husbands and wives, and what they expect with regard to roles and responsibilities in their lives as adults.

The attitudinal questions were straightforward. Respondents were asked to name the most important qualities they would seek in a husband or wife. To assess gender roles directly, respondents were asked a series of questions about whether the wife should defer to a husband's wishes and about sharing household decisions and tasks.

Independent Variables

The effects of several background variables on gender-role attitudes were explored. We included a series of dummy variables to measure the educational attainment of the adolescent respondents. To minimize the risk of reverse causality—that is, the possibility that gender-role attitudes of adolescents affect their educational attainment—we made the highest adolescent education category "above preparatory" rather than "completed secondary," because not all 16–19-year-olds would have had a chance to complete secondary school. On the other hand, all of the 16–19-year-olds in the sample had had the chance to be in the "above preparatory" category, because preparatory school typically is completed by age 14. In other words, the decision to attend school beyond the preparatory level should have been made prior to the survey for all respondents, assuming that no one was more than two years behind grade for his or her age. Indeed, everyone in the sample aged 16–19 who was currently in school had completed preparatory school.[2]

Additional socioeconomic variables that can be considered exogenous to attitude formation of adolescents are also included. Our expectation is that adolescents with better educated and more affluent parents, who live in urban areas (particularly the urban areas of Lower Egypt, which is more economically advanced) and in the urban governorates, are less likely than others to hold traditional attitudes toward gender roles. All of these

variables are categorical, and thus dummy variables were created with the omitted categories specified in the tables. These additional variables are: education of the mother and the father, region of residence, and socioeconomic status as measured with a consumption index. The parental education variables include different categories from those of the adolescent education variable, reflecting the fact that older Egyptians are less likely to have gone to school and, if enrolled, that they are less likely to have completed their schooling. Therefore, "no schooling" is the reference category and "secondary and above" is the highest category. "Missing" categories are included because information on educational attainment was not always available for both parents, and we did not want to eliminate cases with missing information in light of the small size of the sample. The residence variable is divided into the standard regional categories for Egypt: Lower Egypt is the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt is the Nile Valley south of Cairo. The four urban governorates are Alexandria, Cairo, Port Said, and Suez. Socioeconomic status is measured by a household consumption index; a missing category is included again so as not to lose cases for which information is not available. The consumption index includes: (1) conditions of the housing unit; (2) ownership of durable goods; (3) ownership of assets and vehicles; (4) mean monthly expenditure per household member; and (5) mean monthly expenditure on the education of each adolescent. Each of the first three components is weighted on the basis of relative frequencies in each household; the latter two are standardized among all households. The final index sums the five standardized subcomponents and divides the sum into three equal categories.

Results

The appropriate selection of a spouse is considered critically important in Egypt for consolidating the family's social status and for ensuring future compatibility of the couple. The process usually involves parents, older siblings, and other relatives, in addition to the couple. Family discussions often focus on the characteristics of a potential suitor or the general qualities one should look for in a suitable marriage partner. Thus, adolescents grow up in an environment in which they become familiar with prevailing norms concerning the qualities of a "good" husband or wife well before reaching an age at which this is an active concern in their own lives. (Consequently, being reared in such an environment may predispose them to answer a survey question on this topic in terms of family or community expectations.)

Other research in Arab countries has found a clear disjunction between the romantic courtship ideals of adolescent boys and the expectations for choosing a partner as expressed by elders. Elsewhere, research has shown that boys' interest in finding a girl who could "love and understand" them is at sharp odds with the patriarchal gender attitudes they express in terms of their envisioned marital roles (Davis and Davis 1989). Where gender-based differences in attitudes concerning ideal spousal characteristics are great, these differences may presage difficulties in finding a suitable partner and could lead to future conflict within marriage.

Respondents were asked to list the most important qualities that they would search for when choosing a spouse. A fairly close agreement exists among boys and girls concerning aspects of "ascribed" status: Fewer than three percent want a spouse who is related to them, and owning land is rarely mentioned (see Table 1). Most statistically significant gender-based differences are related to "achieved" characteristics. Girls prefer a husband who has a strong character, who is good-natured, who will treat them well, and who is wealthy or has a good job. Boys, in contrast, are more likely to seek a wife who is "virtuous," religious, well mannered, and who comes from a good family. These differences, which do not vary consistently with educational level (results not shown), are paralleled by the different expectations adolescents express regarding decisionmaking roles and responsibilities within marriage: Men are providers; women are nurturers (see below). They are also consistent with the religious and legal obligations of Muslim husbands and wives (Naguib and Lloyd 1994).

Given boys' and girls' divergent profiles of an ideal spouse, that an equal proportion—about one-fourth—

would seek a spouse who loves and understands them is noteworthy, for this attribute is associated more closely with romantic courtship and a companionate style of marriage. The majority of boys and girls interviewed appear to adhere to the traditional view that love should follow and not precede marriage. The most frequently mentioned characteristic by far, for boys and girls, is "polite, well brought-up." The term in Arabic, *mu`adab(a)*, encapsulates a range of attributes relating to norms of proper social interaction in the family and community. That adolescents mention this attribute so frequently suggests the degree to which they have internalized the notion that successful adulthood is achieved by knowing and practicing "polite" social skills.

Interestingly, virtually no difference is found in the proportion of boys and girls wanting an educated spouse. Gender differences emerge, however, regarding whether spouses should have a similar education (not shown). When asked whether a husband and wife should have equal amounts of schooling, boys are more inclined to say they should not: Forty-five percent of boys compared with 28 percent of girls think that a husband should have more education than his wife, a large and significant difference that persists within levels of schooling, although it is not systematically or significantly related to the level of schooling attained.

If girls' attitudes toward education are predictive of future behavior, specifically their inclination to send their own daughters to school, the educational gap between men and women in Egypt is likely to be reduced further (El-Kholy 1997). On the other hand, boys' greater resistance to equitable levels of schooling is a potential source of difficulty for more highly educated women in finding spouses, and it may contribute to conflict within families.

Gender-role Attitudes

Table 2 provides descriptive data concerning gender-role attitudes. The top panel shows the proportion of girls and boys who agree with various statements regarding whether wives should defer to their husbands. A fairly patriarchal view of relations between husband and wife emerges. The vast majority of both boys and girls agree that the wife "must have her husband's permission for everything." A smaller, though still substantial proportion believe that a wife must accept a husband's opinion if she differs with him, that a wife must defer to the husband when it comes to spending "money left over after a household's needs are met," and that a wife must comply with the husband's views about childbearing. Moreover, in contrast to the first statement about wives' needing their husbands' permission for everything, for

Table 1 Percentage of unmarried boys and girls aged 16–19 who mentioned qualities or characteristics they would seek in a future spouse, according to characteristic, Egypt, 1997

Characteristic	Boys	Girls
Polite***	79.8	64.5
Religious*	43.5	35.5
From a good family***	38.5	19.6
Educated	35.2	32.6
Love	22.2	25.4
Good natured***	17.0	33.2
Virtuous*	14.8	8.2
Sensible	10.5	9.6
Treats respondent well***	9.7	18.9
Strong character***	5.4	28.9
Has a good job***	2.8	18.6
Related to respondent	2.3	0.7
Wealthy***	2.0	15.7
Owns land	0.3	1.1
(N) [a]	(351–352)	(279–280)

*Differences between boys and girls significant at p<0.05; ***p<0.001.
[a] A range is given because not all respondents answered every question.

Table 2 Percentage of unmarried boys and girls aged 16–19, by attitudes toward gender roles within marriage, Egypt, 1997

Percentage agreeing that			Boys		Girls
Wife needs husband's permission for everything			91.8		87.5
If a woman differs with her husband, she must accept his opinion***			74.5		56.4
Husband should decide how to spend surplus income***			76.8		48.2
If husband wants children, wife must comply*			50.3		42.3
(N)			(356–368)		(274–288)

	Husband alone		Wife alone		Both husband and wife	
Who should be responsible for decisionmaking concerning [a]	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Household budget***	42.8	19.7	4.9	5.2	52.3	75.1
Whether wife works for pay outside the home***	63.8	28.0	3.2	10.6	33.0	61.3
Whether to have another child***	25.1	8.4	1.4	4.2	73.6	87.4
Sons' education***	27.3	6.2	0.8	1.7	71.9	92.0
Daughters' education***	24.5	6.2	1.6	3.8	73.9	90.0
Contraceptive use*	12.7	7.3	11.6	8.0	75.7	84.7
Health care for children**	8.4	2.1	7.9	8.0	83.7	90.0
Who should [b]						
Be the breadwinner	86.9	83.7	0.3	1.7	12.8	14.5
Buy provisions	23.3	22.3	70.7	66.6	6.0	11.1
Wash clothes***	1.1	0.7	98.6	95.5	0.3	3.8
Cook*	1.4	0.7	97.2	94.8	1.4	4.5
Feed the children**	4.0	0.7	88.8	95.2	7.2	4.1
Bathe the children*	0.0	0.7	97.9	94.1	2.1	5.2
Play with and supervise the children**	7.3	1.5	55.2	63.3	37.5	35.2
Take the children to school*	53.6	41.3	21.4	31.5	25.0	27.2
Help the children with homework***	32.9	16.4	23.1	31.6	43.9	52.0
Take the children to doctor***	59.2	31.0	14.0	17.8	26.8	51.2

Note: *Differences between boys and girls significant at p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
[a] Boys: (N) = 362–369; girls: (N) = 282–289. [b] Boys: (N) = 220–365; girls: (N) = 235–289. A range is given because not all respondents answered every question.

which universal support is found and thus no gender-based difference, girls are significantly less likely to support the other three statements than are boys. In other words, girls are more likely than boys to approve of a mutual exchange of opinions within a marriage and of wives' having some voice in decisions regarding spending and childbearing. For these four statements, no parallel questions were asked in which "wife" was substituted for "husband" and vice versa. For example, no equivalent question was asked about whether a husband needs his wife's permission for everything. This omission might have inadvertently encouraged respondents to confirm existing gender-role norms.[3]

The middle panel of Table 2 shows the proportion of girls and boys who expressed the view that various aspects of decisionmaking should be (a) confined to the husband or wife alone or (b) shared between husband and wife. Girls are uniformly more likely to prefer sharing; gender differences are significant for all seven topics. In particular, the relative unwillingness of boys to share decisions about whether a wife should work outside the home warrants further investigation. As indicated earlier, discrimination against women exists in the labor market, specific labor regulations raise the cost of hiring women, and employment rates of women are low. Whether these phenomena are linked is not clear, how-

ever. Whether more women would choose to work if given the opportunity is also unclear. For some boys, the subject of women's work may have been a source of conflict within their household, and perhaps boys believe that by keeping to themselves the right to decide the matter, these conflicts could be avoided.

In addition to asking adolescents' views concerning the sharing of household decisions, we assessed the degree to which adolescents consider that husbands and wives should share particular household and childrearing tasks—for example, being the breadwinner, doing housekeeping, and caring for the children (see the bottom panel of Table 2). Interestingly, both boys and girls are more willing to accept that family decisions be shared between husband and wife than to share specific tasks and roles. Perhaps sharing some aspects of authority within marriage is more acceptable than actually allotting tasks to men that are traditionally performed by women (or vice versa). Alternatively, adolescence may be a developmental period in which the intensification of gender roles leads to an exaggerated preference for role segregation. Although adult realities may mute these responses in the future, in Egypt many tasks remain strongly differentiated according to sex. Most menial activities that are confined to the home (for example, doing laundry, cooking, and feeding and bathing chil-

dren) are clearly the province of women. Taking children to the doctor or to school and helping with homework either require a certain degree of mobility or some level of academic achievement and thus are not regarded strictly as women's work.

To better understand what accounts for differences among boys and girls regarding gender-role identity, we created three additive indexes from the various components displayed in Table 2. A high score for each index indicates that these activities and decisions should be shared and that a woman does not need to seek her husband's permission nor must she always defer to his opinion.[4] Table 3 presents results from ordinary least squares regression models for each of the three indexes. The possible ranges in each index and the mean scores are shown at the top of the table. For all three indexes,

girls have significantly more egalitarian attitudes than boys have, even for the two indexes for which both sexes have low scores.[5]

Few variables are significant, especially for the "share tasks" and "share decisionmaking" models. Also, the percentage of variation explained for these two models is low and correspondingly the F value, indicating the overall fit, is also low and not significant. Increased schooling does not appear to lead to adolescents' adoption of a more equitable conception of gender roles, at least with regard to married couples' sharing of tasks and of decisionmaking; indeed, in several instances, the coefficients for the education variables are negative. For the model that investigates attitudes about whether wives should defer to husbands, the percentage of variation explained is considerably higher, especially for girls.

Table 3 Ordinary least squares regression models of gender-role attitude scores, unmarried boys and girls aged 16–19, Egypt

Variable	Wife should not defer to husband (0–4)		Spouses should share tasks (0–10)		Spouses should share decisionmaking (0–7)	
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Mean attitude score [a]	1.0	1.6	1.2	1.9	4.5	5.7
Adjusted R^2	0.13	0.23	0.06	0.03	0.05	0.02
F	3.77***	5.31**	2.21	1.40	2.05	1.37
(N)	(379)	(293)	(379)	(293)	(379)	(293)
Index			**Coefficients**			
Adolescent's education						
Did not complete primary (r)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Completed primary	0.01	0.28	–0.32	–0.03	–0.33	0.22
Completed preparatory	0.21	0.68**	–0.44	–0.34	–0.16	–0.08
Preparatory+	0.43**	0.88***	–0.49*	0.04	0.51	0.38
Mother's education						
None (r)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Did not complete primary	0.18	–0.10	0.41	–0.26	0.27	0.17
Completed primary/any preparatory	–0.01	–0.24	–0.27	–0.33	0.08	0.38
Vocational, intermediate+	0.31	0.27	0.20	–0.26	0.40	0.43
Secondary+	–0.44	0.05	0.29	0.17	1.31	–0.03
Missing	–0.12	–0.24	–0.01	–0.00	–0.35	0.30
Father's education						
None (r)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Did not complete primary	0.01	0.06	0.38	0.32	–0.16	0.22
Completed primary/any preparatory	–0.02	0.51*	0.22	–0.27	0.17	0.15
Vocational, intermediate+	0.39	0.07	0.46	0.52	0.05	0.11
Secondary+	0.47*	0.57	0.39	–0.09	–0.00	0.23
Missing	0.06	0.17	0.09	0.21	–0.50	0.04
Residence						
Upper Egypt, rural (r)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Upper Egypt, urban	0.04	0.55	0.42	–0.17	–0.61	0.65
Lower Egypt, rural	–0.13	0.05	0.48*	–0.03	–0.27	0.45
Lower Egypt, urban	0.25	0.70*	0.86**	0.72	0.25	0.35
Urban governorates	0.29	0.48*	0.93***	0.42	0.07	0.44
Socioeconomic status						
Low (r)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Medium	–0.06	–0.25	–0.01	0.63*	0.33	–0.14
High	–0.03	0.11	0.20	0.71*	–0.13	0.29
Missing	–0.34	–0.05	–0.13	0.10	0.22	–0.11
Constant	0.67	0.62	0.84	1.4	4.4	4.8

*Significant at p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. (r) = Reference category.
[a] Differences between boys and girls for all three gender-role attitude scores are significant at p<0.001.

Moreover, the coefficients for the adolescent education variable are larger and more significant for girls, suggesting that boys' attitudes are more entrenched.

Apparently some aspect of the schooling experience encourages girls to challenge normative ideas about gender-segregated roles, although the absence of an education effect for the other models suggests that Egyptian schools are not a particularly progressive or strong force for attitudinal change. Scholars disagree on whether the schooling experience in developing countries has a modernizing effect on gender-role attitudes. Many researchers, observing the remarkably consistent associations found between women's years of formal schooling and delayed age at marriage and reduced fertility, attribute the effect to the increased autonomy that girls acquire through schooling (Jejeebhoy 1995). Yet others have challenged the notion that schooling per se enhances the autonomy of girls, pointing out the traditional gender-role messages conveyed by teachers and textbooks and the fundamentally conservative nature of schooling (Jeffery and Basu 1996). Egyptian school texts contain numerous clear messages about the appropriate roles for women and men in society. Despite recent textbook revisions made to enhance the image of women, the curriculum maintains fairly traditional gender roles (Wassef 1996). Ibrahim and Wassef (2000) note that although the curriculum alludes to principles of equality between the sexes, the underlying discourse asserts these equal rights in different domains; women contribute to society as wives and mothers while men exert their influence in the public domain. A review of history and civics textbooks revealed that "[w]ith few exceptions, women . . . are depicted in supporting roles rather than independent or leadership positions." The authors refer to a quotation from the religion text used in the third year of secondary school: "The upright community is founded upon the collaboration of men and women in the family, and the collaboration of men and men in society."

Discussion

The study suggests that in Egypt, the important task of adolescent socialization, particularly for girls, is learning how to mobilize social networks rather than becoming independent from the older generation. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the conventional view of gender relations is one in which women are generally submissive to men and are confined by social norms to roles within the family. For the most part, the findings support the prevailing view of gender roles in Egypt. By and large, young people appear to conform to traditional notions of what it means to be male and female in a Middle Eastern society. Although girls are significantly less likely than boys to think that a husband should have more education than a wife, the data indicate wide differences by sex in what respondents report they are seeking in an ideal spouse, differences that reflect traditional gender roles that serve well for highly role-segregated marriages, but not for those in which both spouses aspire to work and earn wages. The reality is that only a small fraction of women are employed in Egypt and an even smaller fraction work for pay.

In general, both girls and boys support a traditional division of roles between men and women, although girls are somewhat less conservative than boys. The vast majority of adolescent girls and boys believe that a wife "needs her husband's permission for everything," but girls are significantly less likely than boys to say that a wife must accept her husband's opinion or defer to him about household discretionary spending or concerning decisions about childbearing. Moreover, girls are significantly more likely than boys to prefer sharing of household decisionmaking with their future spouses, perhaps because they feel that they will gain from more egalitarian marriages, whereas boys are concerned about a loss of their authority. As girls enter puberty, they experience an abrupt shift in what is considered appropriate behavior, and at that point, if not earlier, they become aware of the restrictions placed upon them as women. The question remains whether the small gap observed here in the gender-role attitudes of boys and girls will have any effect on women's autonomy in adulthood. Will the slightly more egalitarian attitudes of adolescent girls begin to undermine traditional gender roles later in marriage?

In addition to investigating the gender gap in adolescent socialization, we examined factors that might account for differences in gender-role attitudes. Our models were not successful in explaining differences in gender-role socialization, perhaps because gender-role attitudes are not a function of socioeconomic status and place of residence, but are formed by unmeasured or unmeasurable characteristics of culture or life experience. None of the background variables included here is significantly and consistently related to attitudes. For example, in light of the considerable differences between life in the urban governorates, particularly the large cities of Alexandria and Cairo, and life in the villages of rural Upper Egypt, it is startling that we see no large effects of residence. Education might be a key explanatory factor with regard to the attitudes explored here. Education is not, for either sex, significantly related, however, to attitudes toward spousal characteristics, to attitudes concerning whether a husband should be better educated than his wife, or to attitudes about task shar-

ing or decisionmaking. These findings are consistent with research on the determinants of gender roles among married women in developing countries (Balk 1997; Kishor 1999). Indeed, in a sample of married women in Egypt interviewed for the Demographic and Health Survey, education was not consistently related to two empowerment indexes measuring decisionmaking and freedom of movement (Kishor 1999).

Although education appears to be a central factor in creating opportunities for young people in Egypt, our analyses indicate that it does not always challenge the expression of traditional attitudes for either sex or necessarily encourage wider horizons for girls. Unless economic opportunities expand considerably, girls as well as boys may continue to see value in the traditional arrangements in which women offer men obedience in return for economic support. The constrained economic environment that confronts young Egyptians, coupled with the discrimination faced by young women in the labor market, means that the traditional gender compact that exists in Egypt is unlikely to be seriously challenged for some time.

Notes

1   We have not included analyses of attitudes about the timing of marriage and age differences between spouses because it is not clear that current views about them are an expression of gender-role attitudes. Rather, responses to questions about desirable age of marriage and age differences may reflect the economic status of respondents. The cost of marriage is estimated to have increased dramatically in the last 30 years in Egypt, perhaps because the expectations about what is needed to establish a household have risen. Although no analysis linking the cost of marriage to the timing of it has been undertaken, evidence exists that the expense weighs heavily on the minds of young people and their families (Singerman and Ibrahim 2000).

2   Even with this set of categories, inclusion of adolescents' education may still be problematic in that decisions about school continuation, especially continuation beyond the preparatory level, may be made not only by the parent but also by the adolescent. If the adolescent influences the decision about remaining in school and gender-role attitudes measured at the interview are, in fact, formed earlier in life, variables measuring adolescent educational attainment may be endogenous.

3   For all other gender-role attitudes discussed here, equivalence is ensured by virtue of the structure of the questions asked.

4   Note that the correlations between these three indexes are not large: For both boys and girls, they range from 0.2 to 0.3, suggesting that they are tapping different dimensions.

5   Because the range in the attitude score for the dependent variable, "wife should not defer to husband" is 0–4, the ordinary least squares model may be inappropriate for this particular index. Therefore, we also ran an ordered logit model as well as a standard logit model after collapsing the dependent variable into two

categories, where 0 = "yes" to all four components, signifying complete support of the notion that a wife should defer to her husband (36 percent of boys and 29 percent of girls) and 1 the notion that she should not (64 percent of boys and 71 percent of girls). (See Table 1 for the four components.) The results for the ordered logit model are virtually the same in terms of signs of coefficients and significance; only one variable in one model, "Upper Egypt, urban" for boys, is significant in the logit and not in the ordinary least squares model. The signs of the coefficients are, by and large, the same for the standard logit model; however, three variables, "father's secondary education and above" for boys and the two residence variables for girls are not significant in the logit model but are significant in the ordinary least squares model. In all three models for both sexes, the signs and significance levels are the same for the adolescent education variable.

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