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# Developmental Idealism and Family Life in Egypt

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# “The Great Family Transformation”

- Pre-1950s view of family change in Northwest European Societies

Extended

→ Nuclear

Young age at marriage

→ Old Age at Marriage

Parental Authority

→ Youthful Autonomy

- Belief that these changes were the products of industrialization, urbanization, increases in economic productivity, educational expansion
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# Correcting the Record

- 1960s – 1970s: scholars began to uncover that many distinctive features of NW European families observed in the 1800s & 1900s predated noted societal changes
  - The ‘great family transformation’ was a *myth*
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# The origins of *myths* about historical family change

- Long list of Western family scholars who have tackled this question
  - In many respects, reliable portrayals of many dimensions of family life in societies under study
  - Thornton argues that myths were created because scholars of the era were guided by the 'developmental paradigm' and the method of 'reading history sideways'
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# The Developmental Paradigm

- Social change is uniform, necessary, & directional
  - All societies follow the same trajectory of change & pass through the same stages of development
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# The Method of Reading History Sideways

- Does not follow a particular population over time
  - Seeks to understand a society's past by studying contemporary circumstances of another society believed to be at an earlier stage of 'development'
  - Extract descriptions of societal change from data collected for multiple societies at a point in time
  - Major contrasts have been between family systems within Northwest Europe and its diasporas and between NW Europe and the *rest of the world*
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# NW Europe vs. “Elsewhere”

## Northwest Europe

- Less family centered and more individualistic
- Nuclear households
- Later, less universal marriage
- More youthful autonomy, affection and couple autonomy in mate selection
- The absence of practices associated with a low status of women

## “Elsewhere”

- Family centered and high family solidarity
  - Extended households
  - Early, universal marriage
  - High parental authority, arranged marriages, little opportunity for affection before marriage
  - Practices associated with a low status of women
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# The birth of developmental dichotomies

- “Less”                      versus                      “More” developed
  - “Traditional”            versus                      “Modern”
  - “Backward”              versus                      “Advanced”
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- This language remains common among scholars, policy-makers, & ordinary people
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## Main thesis...

- Thornton argues that the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and (sometimes erroneous) conclusions about family life gave birth to an ideational schema that has been a driving force behind family change.
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# Developmental Idealism

- Four normative, motivational propositions, the *acceptance* or *rejection* of which guide various behaviors & relationships
    - ❑ Modern society is good and attainable
    - ❑ Modern family is good and attainable
    - ❑ Modern family is a cause and effect of modern society
    - ❑ Individuals are free and equal, and social relationships are based on consent
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# Mechanisms of Dissemination

- Travelers, colonialism, missionaries
  - Educational institutions
  - Mass media
  - Urbanization
  - International organizations
  - Development programs (family planning)
  - Social and revolutionary movements
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## *PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE UN ICPD*

### **Actions**

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5.4. When formulating socio-economic **development** policies, special consideration should be given to increasing the earning power of all adult members of economically deprived families, including the elderly and women who work in the home, and to enabling children to be educated rather than compelled to work...

5.5. Governments should take effective action to **eliminate all forms of coercion and discrimination** in policies and practices. **Measures should be adopted and enforced to eliminate child marriages and female genital mutilation.** Assistance should be provided to persons with disabilities in the exercise of their family and reproductive rights and responsibilities.

5.6. Governments should maintain and further develop mechanisms to document changes and undertake studies on family composition and structure, especially on the prevalence of one-person households, and single-parent and multigenerational families.

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# Campaigns about Family Planning, Family Life, and the Family-Society Link

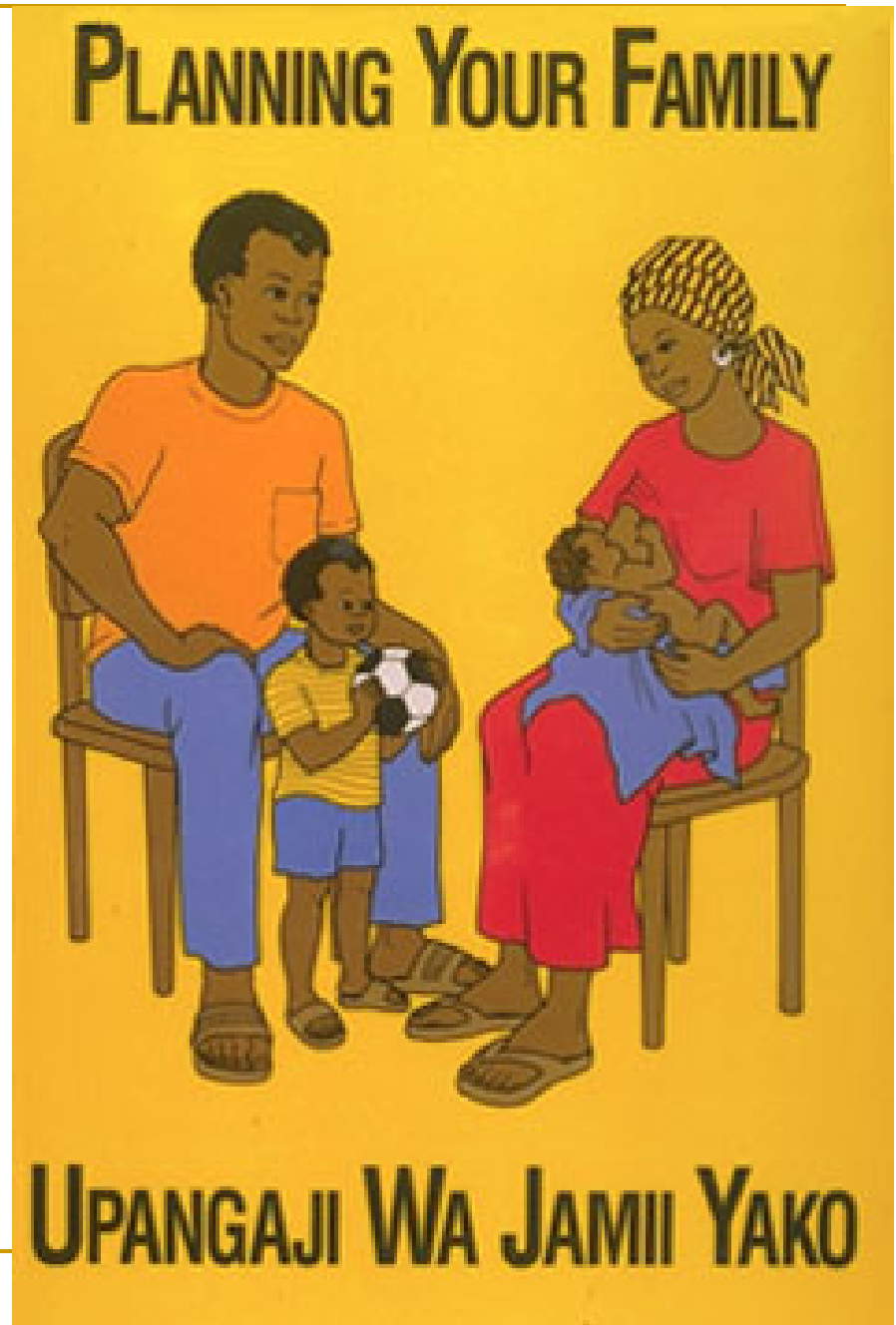
**Country:** Africa

**Media Format:** Flipchart

**Title:** *Planning your family*

**Original Title:** Upangaji wa jamii yako

**Producers:** Johns Hopkins University  
Center for Communication Programs  
(JHU/CCP)



# Youthful autonomy...

**Date:** 1996

**Country:** Bolivia

**Media Type:** Novelty Item

**Media Format:** Clothing

**Languages:** Spanish

**English Title:** [Caring for ourselves is our decision. Reproductive health is in your hands...close to you]

**Original Title:** Cuidarnos es nuestra decisión : La salud reproductiva esta en tus manos...muy cerca de ti.

**Producers:** (JHU/PCS)

**Contact:** Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP) Latin America Division



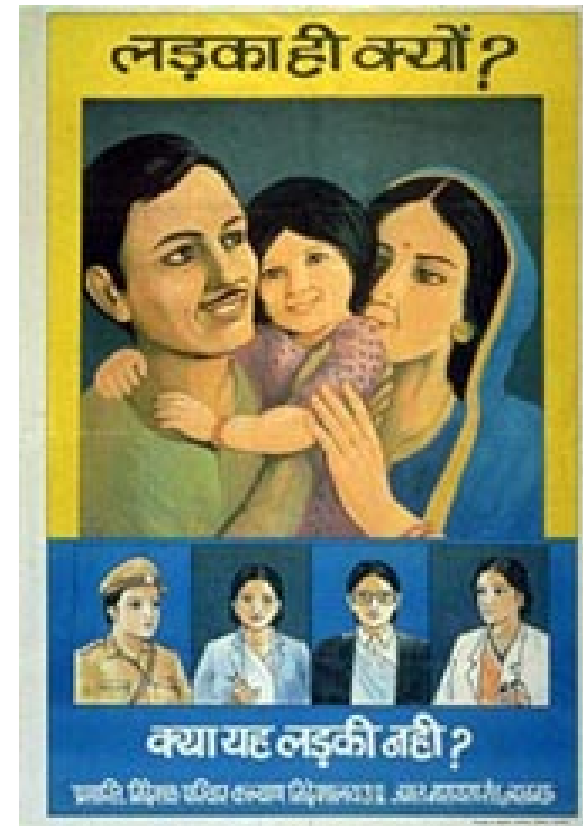
# Gender equality in family

**Country:** Nepal

**Media Format:** Poster

**Title:** [A family without favoritism and violence is the base of peace and prosperity]

**Producers:** SAATHI



**Country:** India

**Media Format:** Poster

**Title:** [Why only a boy? Are these not girls?]

**Producers:** India Directorate of Family Welfare

# Planned Family and Progress

**Country:** Kenya

**Media Type:** Novelty Item

**Media Format:** Sticker

**Title:** For Health and Progress:  
Plan your family [sticker]

**Producers:** Kenya Ministry of Health

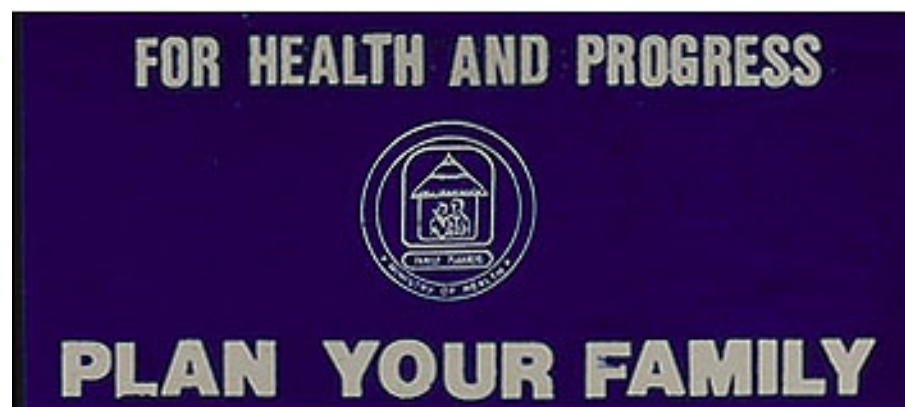
**Country:** Nigeria

**Media Type:** Novelty Item

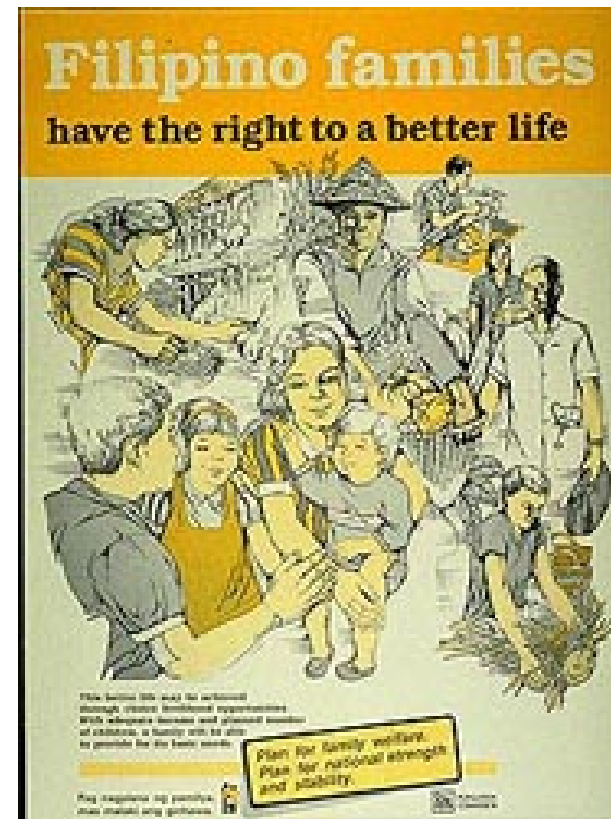
**Media Format:** Sticker

**Title:** Family planning : Safe :  
Inexpensive : For a better life

**Producers:** Nigeria Federal  
Ministry of Health







**Country:** Philippines

**Media Format:** Poster

**Title:** Filipino families have the right to better opportunities : Develop the countryside : Develop the families

**Title:** Filipino families have the right to a better life : Plan for family welfare. Plan for national strength and stability **Producers:** Philippine Commission on Population (POPCOM)



**Country:** Ghana

**Media Type:** Novelty Item

**Media Format:** Sticker

**Title:** Family Planning Helps National Development [sticker]

**Producers:**

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## Preliminary Research:

- Nepal and Argentina
  - Series of workshops on family ties and ideational change in the Middle East (soon-to-be edited volume)
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# Preliminary research: edited volume

## I. Introduction

1. Yount, Kathryn. "Orientations to the Study of Family Change, Ideational Forces Considered."
2. Joseph, Suad. "Familism and Critical Arab Family Studies."\*

## II. Transnationalism, Nationalism, and New Family Ideals

1. Fay, Mary Ann. "International Feminism and the Women's Movement in Egypt, 1904-1923 A Reappraisal of Categories and Legacies"\*
2. Bier, Laura. "From Birth Control to Family Planning: Population, Gender, and the Politics of Reproduction in Egypt"
3. Hoodfar, Homa. "Family law and family planning policy in pre- and post-revolutionary Iran"\*
4. Charrad, Mounira. "Family Law and Ideological Debates in Post-colonial Tunisia"

## III. Changing ideals and impacts on family life

1. Sholkamy, Hania. "Rationales for Kin Marriages in Rural Upper Egypt."
2. El Tawila, Sahar, Barbara Ibrahim, and Hind Wassef. "Social Change and Parent-Adolescent Dynamics in Egypt."
3. Yount, Kathryn M. reprint: "Family Power and Gender Preference in Minya, Egypt."\*
4. Cuno, Kenneth. "Divorce and the Fate of the Family in 19th and 20th Century Egypt"\*
5. Abbasi, Jalal. "The Family and Social Change in Post-revolutionary Iran"\*
6. Labidi, Lilia. "From Sexual Submission to Voluntary Commitment: The Transformation of Family Ties in Contemporary Tunisia."\*

## IV. Concluding Remarks

Yount, Kathryn and Hoda Rashad. Continuity and Change in Family Life in the Middle East

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# Study objectives

- Adapt framework of developmental idealism and expand qualitative and quantitative instruments piloted elsewhere to explore
    - the salience of the four propositions of developmental idealism among men and women of different ages and educational attainments, and
    - associations between adherence to these ideals and various dimensions of family demography.
      - gender relations
      - intergenerational relations
      - age at marriage; mate selection
      - Fertility-related behavior
  - Field sites: Argentina, China, Egypt, United States
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# Why Egypt?

- History of French and British colonialism
  - Ethnically and religiously diverse
  - Interesting recent history of expansion and contraction of civil society
  - Site of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development
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# Year 1: Focus Groups

**Table 1. Focus Group Participants**

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Schooling</u>	<u>Age Group</u>		
		15-24	25-44	45-54
Men	Low	6-8	6-8	6-8
	High	6-8	6-8	6-8
Women	Low	6-8	6-8	6-8
	High	6-8	6-8	6-8

Explicit sequence of questions:

1. Social groups to which you belong
2. Types of families
3. Pictures
4. More structured comparisons between modern, traditional, foreign, Arab, Egyptian family types

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# Year 2: Survey

- Age-stratified sample of persons 15-54 years.
  - Drawn from household listings from 1 rural & 1 urban district in Ismailia governorate (June '03)
  - HH listings provide data on age, relationship to head, marital status, gender, education, & recent occupation & paid work for all members.
  - Initial sample of 836 age-eligible individuals (418 per district), of which 90% will complete the survey, distributed as ~250 individuals in each of 3 age groups (15–24, 25–44, 45–54).
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# Structured Questionnaire

- Comparable to those administered in Nepal & Argentina
  - Prepared in *Egyptian colloquial Arabic*
  - Items in DI module will capture
    - perceived traits of ‘developed’ vs ‘undeveloped’ societies
    - perceived traits of ‘modern’ & ‘traditional’ families
    - relationship between societal ‘development’ & attributes of ‘modern’ vs ‘traditional’ families.
  - Forms will permit recording of other data, including:
    - Educational and occupational history
    - History of participation in local organizations by type
    - Economic resources
    - Structural support networks, social integration, relational content
    - Exposure to media and channels of communication
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# FG1 & 2: Salience of developmental ideals

- Characteristics of groups
  - First asked about kinds of social groups to which people belong,
    - FG1 and FG2 mentioned "family" first.
  - Second asked about types of families
    - FG1 mentioned "innate" ("nuclear" and "extended") -- as well as "chosen" (those at work, church/mosque, school, NGOs, clubs...)
    - FG2 had more difficulty describing family types; moderator more leading; more focus on SE conditions of families.
    - FG1 and 2 did not mention "traditional" / "modern" to describe family types at this stage.
  - Third, asked to describe photos of families from magazines
    - FG1 and FG2 immediately used "traditional" and "modern";
    - Made specific assertions about each family's SE level, urban vs. rural residence... "modern" not always good...
  - Fourth, asked about specific attributes of "Traditional" "Modern" "Arab" and "Foreign or agnabi"
    - General tendency to equate modern & foreign; traditional & Arab
    - Some variation across FG1 and FG2
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## FG1 & 2: Salience of developmental ideals

- Vignettes about link between “society” and “family”
    - FG1 and FG2 making some spontaneous links between societal change and family change - more analysis needed to see if causal...
    - FG1 thinks change not possible with "older generations" but with "younger generations".
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# FG1: “A traditional family...”

- **SES:** “A family with simple means...” “This is a rural family...the socioeconomic status of the family is low...” “And the size of the family is large...God knows if they are educated...”
- **Extended:** “There are family pictures of the grandfather and the father in the background. That is evidence of a sense of belonging to the extended family.”
- **Bond:** “I see they are a family that has close ties with one another. There is love between them. This is evident. But I am not sure whether the father treats the four children equally...”
- **Gender roles:** “The man occupies a big space of the picture...there is dominance of the husband...the husband looks like he is in complete charge...The man in this family looks like he is the one who makes the decisions...” “The woman...is resigned...is satisfied with her condition. She has no idea that there is something better...She does not want to develop herself. She feels that she is doing better compared to other people and she is grateful.”



## FG2: “You feel that they are backward...”

- **SES:** “This is a modest family with simple means...” “A very simple family.” “Their income is probably not much...”
- **Family size:** “This is a traditional family because the number of children are 4...”
- **Bond:** “It looks like there is love between the family members...” “We can say there is a stronger family bond in the traditional family” “Because of the poverty in the traditional family, there are a lot of problems. There are also a lot of children...but in times of crises, family members become close to one another.”
- **Backward/ignorant:** “You feel that they are a bit backward. Probably the father will encourage the son to farm with him instead of waiting for a job...” “The traditional family is a bit ignorant...” “They ... look like an ignorant family... Education you know is everything...”



# FG1: “...a very modern family”

- **SES:** “Their socioeconomic level is very high...” “The educational level ... is also high...this shows from the books they are carrying...” “...and so are their...cultural levels”
- **Health:** “They look healthy...” “There is also the hygiene”
- **Family structure:** “The age gap between the three children is reasonable. The father and mother look like they got married when they were young...” “That difference does not always exist. Sometimes in developed families ... You could find one of the children in college and the other is a small child...”
- **Materialism over religion:** “The way of dressing is modern” “I admire their sense of fashion, but they do not look that they are religiously committed...”
- **Gender equality:** “The mother...takes care of herself and enjoys equal rights” “The husband is in the back...” “You feel there is participation... there is no discrimination between the children.” “I feel there is more intelligence in the modern Egyptian family. The woman...enjoys a good position and there is gender equality...”
- **Freedom:** “The economic condition has an impact. The higher it is the more freedom and comfort there is...”



## FG2: “A modern family...”

- **SES:** “A wealthy family” “A rich family”
- **Educated/lax on religious values:** “They are educated and advanced...” “They are educated and perhaps lax about religious values.” “the modern family probably does not observe even the basic religious practices like praying...” “The modern family is more focused on their finances and materialistic life”
- **“Good” neighborhood:** [They] “live in a good neighborhood”
- **Independence/negative:** “In the modern family everyone does what he wants. If the children want to go out, they will because they can afford to” “nobody tries to solve the problems in the modern family.” “Individuals from a modern family care more for their friends.” “Everyone is on his own in the modern family (like an island)”



# FG1: “...extended family...Arab family”

- **Debate on family structure:** “They are extended...they are three brothers. The brothers are married and live all in one place...” “It is a family, not three married brothers...it is a father, mother, and their children...”
- **Religion:** “...a Gulf family...this is a family from an Arab country...They are fully dressed...” “The way they dress...They are committed to Islamic dress code...”
- **Similar to traditional but:** “The Arab family is similar to the traditional Egyptian family but the Arab family is of a higher economic level. The appearance...of the Arab family is...more religious...”
- “It is possible that the educational level of Arab families is higher than ours. They travel abroad and get more education than the Egyptians. Their educational level and their linguistic skills are very high. It is only their clothes...”
- **Gender roles:** “...it is not clear whether the wife is educated and has a good position...the clothes that the woman is wearing do not tell us about the social class of the woman...the woman can go to college dressed like this...”





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# “They look like Bedouins...Arabs”

- “They look like Bedouins” “Arabs” “...from the Gulf, probably from Saudi Arabia or the Emirates.”
- “The Arab family is not very different from the traditional family in Egypt...The Arab family is religious” “The Arab family has strong religious and moral values...”
- “I feel like the Arab family is a lot behind in catching up with new ideas and ways of thought.”



# FG1: “This time it is a foreign family...”

- **SES:** “The socio-economic level of the family is good.”
- **Family structure debated:** “This is an extended family: grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, their daughters and sister and their grand-daughter”
- **Sexual relations/childbirth outside marriage:** “The child is the girl’s...maybe the child has a father and maybe not.” “The child has a father but maybe the child’s parents are not married...”
- “We assume that the child belongs to this one because the other woman is too old to have a child and the third one looks too young...she looks like she is 14 years old...”
- **Liberal:** “This is a foreign liberal family.” “What gave you the impression that they are liberal?” “Foreigners in general are that way...the ones I know wear whatever they want...we have restrictions that they do not...”
- “There is a resemblance. All foreigners look alike. Many of them are blond.”



## FG2: “This is a “foreign” family...”

- **Foreign = European = modern:** “This is a foreign family” [because of their] “general appearance” “their clothes” “an international family” “A European family” “I feel like the modern family is like a copy of the foreign family”
- **Civilized/advanced:** “They are also civilized *mutahadira*” an “advanced family”
- **Civilized family from civilized society:** “Their clothes and appearance indicate that they come from advanced countries...it is also a matter of their nationality and their cultures” “They are not the same nationality or culture as ours. They look like they are very organized in their lives...”
- **Freedom in behavior and thinking:** “There is too much freedom in the foreign family. It is normal in a foreign family for the daughters to spend the night outside the home and to be involved in a relationship with a guy” “But in the modern family, everyone has his own way of thinking.”



# FG1: family typologies

	Traditional	Modern	Foreign	Arab
Age at marriage	16-20	25-30	20-28 (open)	16-20
Love before marriage	No	Yes, mostly	Yes	No
Parental involvement in marriage	100%	No, 50%	None, informed	
Marriage between relatives	Frequent	Very rare	No	Frequent
Celibacy acceptable?	Men, not women (dissent)	Normal	Very acceptable	Men, not women
Divorce?	Very few	More	High	Rare
Relations before marriage acceptable?	None	Platonic romantic	Everything	Dissent
Children without marriage acceptable?	No	No	Yes	No
Marriage between same sex acceptable?	No	No	More debated...rights	No
Status of the woman?	Low	High, equal to husband	Similar to "modern"	Similar to "traditional"
Who does the housework?	Husband does nothing (hides work)	Share equally Hire a maid	Husband helps wife Husband & wife equal	Husband does nothing Hire a maid
Main provider?	Man/husband	Husband and wife	Husband and wife	Man
Work outside the home?				Polygamy is common
Number of children?	5-7, sometimes 12	2-3	0-2	A lot 10-12 b/c of polygamy
Parental control over children?	50-99%	30%	Not at all	To a large extent (girls>boys)

Group: Group tended to equate Traditional with Arab (except on economics); and Modern with Foreign; some scaling of Modern and Foreign; exception for sexual relationships

# FG2: Family typologies

	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Modern</b>	<b>Foreign</b>	<b>Arab</b>
<b>Age at marriage</b>	16-21	30-35	25-30	16-20
<b>Love before marriage</b>	No, arranged Cousin	G can wed younger M Love most important Financial interests	Love, casual, temporary/divorce Business interests	No love, rigid traditions
<b>Parental involvement in marriage</b>	Big, 90-100%	Does not exist, 5-7%	No involvement, everyone independent	Very big, 90%, like trad
<b>Marriage between relatives</b>	Yes, before more common	Sometimes, for financial interests	No, 3-5%	Yes, 50-60%
<b>Celibacy acceptable?</b>	No, esp. if woman	Does not care about this pt.	Yes, normal	No, the father decides
<b>Divorce?</b>	Yes orphi not possible	More in modern relation without parents knowing	A lot day, "3 pills after breakfast"	Very rare; similar to traditional
<b>Children without marriage acceptable?</b>	Not allowed, cant deny, 3%	20-50%, I saw kissing in street	A lot, no limit	Few cases, when people make mistakes
<b>Marriage between same sex acceptable?</b>	No	No	Maybe	No
<b>Status of the woman?</b>	Not very big, can be good Inferior	She is treated better Same as husband	At ease, not complicated If problem, get divorced	Treated with honor Same as traditional
<b>Who does the housework?</b>	Rare, nothing, degrading for husband to do	Husband does simple things	They help each other Cooperation	Husband does simple things
<b>Main provider?</b>	Father, elder brother	Father, not all cases	Self-reliance, everyone supports himself	Father
<b>Work outside the home?</b>	Both, wife not after daylight	Same as traditional	Work all the time normal	Rare for woman to work
<b>Number of children?</b>	5-10 if rural, in past not now Like boys more than girls	2-3	0-2	3-5
<b>Parental control over children?</b>	High, 90% Father final say	Father guides, persuades Son final say Treat son/daughter same More freedom	Children decide, independent Same for boy/girl	

Group: Tended to "scale" families on attributes: Traditional = Arab; then Modern; then Foreign; exception again sexual relationships

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## Next steps...

- Complete focus group comparisons of family types
  - Compare focus groups on society types (more/less developed)
  - Piloting structured instruments with focus group participants
  - Internet surveys across field sites - experiments with question design
  - Survey – link adherence to developmental ideals and demographic behavior?
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# Thanks to...

- Collaborators

- Egypt developmental idealism research team (esp. Sohair Mehanna, Hoda Rashad)
- Developmental idealism country coordinators and research group...

- Funders

- Sloan work-family research network
- MARIAL Center
- National Institutes of Health

- The theoretical underpinnings of this research are based on the work of Arland Thornton (2001, 2005). His contributions to this presentation are valued.
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# Questions?

