The Construction of Women's Sexual Selfhood in Contemporary Egypt

By
Rowan Youssef

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Critical Gender Studies.

Supervisor: Professor Hannah Loney

Second Reader: Professor Adriana Qubaiova

Vienna, Austria

2023

Abstract

In the 1960s, sociologists John Gagnon and Bill Simon proposed that sexual behavior is profoundly social. Building on this theory, Gagnon and Simon argued that the social construction of sexuality occurs through what they called “sexual scripts”. Drawing upon this theoretical framework, this qualitative study argues that the social construction of sexual selfhood of Egyptian women can be examined through three main thematic categories of analysis: tracing sexual themes in upbringing, negotiating the boundaries covering and uncovering of the female body, and finally scripting sexual experiences. In-depths interviews were conducted with ten Egyptian women aged 25-35 who are either from Cairo or Alexandria, the biggest urban areas of the country. The results demonstrate how the construction process of women’s sexual selfhood operates within stringent sociocultural mechanisms of control. To attain agency over their own sexuality and female bodies, women have to constantly learn to navigate and negotiate the normative sexual scripts of subjugation that are enforced on them. The findings of the study contribute to the scholarly works of women's sexuality and sexual selfhood in the Egyptian context though emphasizing the significance of examining the intricacies of the wider sociocultural frameworks for a comprehensive understanding of the process of constructing women’s sexual selfhood. Additionally, it opens up a plethora of inquiries and arguments for further research within the same context or in other similar settings.

Keywords: sexual scripts, social constructionism, sexual selfhood, Egyptian women, sexuality

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 23,407 words

Entire manuscript: 25,987 words

Signed: Rowan Youssef

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the extraordinary individuals who have played a pivotal role in my completion of this master's thesis. First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to my family, especially my mother, Salwa. Her constant support and encouragement have been an unwavering source of motivation. To my dear best friends, Neda, Amy, Hadeel, and Ramy, words cannot express my gratitude for your unconditional love, understanding, and infinite laughter. Your presence has been a constant reminder that I am not alone on this journey of life. A special thanks to Yara, who introduced me to the fascinating field of Gender Studies 7 years ago, I am forever grateful.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Hannah Loney. Your guidance, patience, and support have been invaluable throughout this research journey. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have worked with you.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Professor Adriana Qubaiova for reigniting my love for research. Your knowledge and inspiration have had a profound impact on my academic journey.

This thesis would not have been complete without my interlocutors, the courageous women who dedicated their time and energy to assist me with my research. I deeply appreciate your honesty, openness, and trust in me, especially during these uncertain times.

To the remarkable individuals, professors and colleagues, with whom I had the privilege of sharing space, exchanging ideas, and engaging in feminist discourse. You have had a profound influence on shaping who I am today, and I am forever grateful for this experience. Lastly, to the wonderful people I have encountered during my time in Vienna, I am grateful for you have made this city feel like home. Your kindness and friendship have made my time here truly unforgettable, and I deeply cherish you.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Feminists have been, and still are engaged not only in thinking through what happens to bodies that are 'female' but also in what ways our bodies actively construct and 'write' ourselves" (Brook, 1999, p.2).

The study of sex and sexuality has radically evolved in the past century (Seidman, 2003). From perceiving sexuality as a fact of nature that is intrinsic to our biology, moving to more socially grounded approaches away from essentializing where the influence of sociality on sex and sexual identity is recognized.

As a woman who grew up and lived most of her life in Egypt, socially grounded theories of sexuality urged me to question how the process of constructing sexuality with respect to social subjectivity operates in my context. I further considered how had I been socialized, especially in my earlier years, in a different context, how would my sexual identity be shaped differently and to what extent have I already internalized the normative sexual scripts from my sociocultural background. These questions led me to further ponder upon the Egyptian female body as a product of its sociocultural environment and how that product came to be.

Considering the fact that the body communicates and acts for and from the social structures it is part of (Douglas, 2002), it is difficult to imagine the existence of a female body that is beyond culture (Brook, 1999). Judith Butler suggests the body is perceived as a system that simultaneously produces and is produced by social meanings (Kimmel, 2007). While focusing on the female body as a focal point of constructing one's sexuality, it is necessary to not abstract these bodies out of their lived experiences that "classify, discipline, invade, discuss and situate them within time and space," (Brook, 1999, p. 6).

In this thesis, I use a feminist qualitative approach to argue that the upbringing, negotiating boundaries of dress and experiences of sex, and the sexual all come together to

construct the sexual selfhood of Egyptian women, through applying a social constructionist framework. The research questions that I am aiming to address through my work revolve around how sexual selfhood is constructed and navigated amid the stringent socio-cultural hegemonic discourses of restricting and controlling the female body. How do sexual scripts evolve through a woman's life, particularly through teenage to adult years? And what are the factors influencing this process? How can the concept of 'sex' and 'sexuality' vary subjectively in the Egyptian context? and how the perception of one's body and selfhood affect consensual sexual practices and sexual pleasure?

In this introductory chapter, I will provide the necessary theoretical framework and background in order to contextualize my research. To geographically situate my work, I will start by providing an overview of the socio-cultural background in Egypt focusing on women's status and prevalent gender dynamics. I will then address the emergence of "Egyptian Family Values" as a public discourse to police female bodies. In the literature review section, I will discuss the main academic works that addressed women's sexuality and sexual selfhood in Egypt. I will then introduce the theoretical framework of my research, social constructionism, which I am applying throughout this thesis. Next, I will present the qualitative methodology used to conduct the research including my positionality, interlocutors and limitations. Finally, I will provide an outline of the thesis chapters.

1.1 Socio-cultural Context in Egypt

1.1.1 Egypt as a Woman

Egypt is home to a mixture of Arab and North African cultures. Its contemporary sexual culture has been influenced by various elements, such as its recent history, sociopolitical dynamics, social stratification, media, and notably, religious beliefs. Egypt is a

predominantly Muslim country with 90%[1] of the population officially Muslims and 9% Coptic Christians. Consequently, religion has significantly influenced social practices and traditions in modern Egyptian society.

Another important factor shaping sex and sexuality culture in Egypt is social class in relation to geographic location. Social class is determined through wealth and family background combined with place of origin. This greatly affects access to opportunities and social interactions, among many other factors. On the one hand, rural areas tend to be more conservative, religious and adhere to strict binary gender roles including upper class individuals. On the other hand, urban cities such as Cairo (the capital) and Alexandria tend to be more diversified with more flexible social dynamics. Egyptians residing in the country's urban space, particularly Cairo, are class-conscious and aware of the social and economic ranking system (Macleaod, 1991; Tadros, 1994).

Honor -or *Sharaf* in Arabic- is a central notion in Egyptian culture. It dictates social practices, traditions, individual and collective behaviors (Baron, 2006). A man's honor is mostly determined by the behaviors of the women in his family i.e., mother, sister, daughter, wife, sometimes even cousin. A woman's honor is intrinsically linked to her body and what she does to it is what determines her honorability and moral standing. Going to extreme lengths to protect one's honor is the cultural norm. Consequently, the notion of honor is used to justify all forms of physical control that society practices over women's bodies. Such practices include honor killings, female gentile mutilation and virginity tests. Furthermore, honor has been elevated to a nationalist notion where Egypt is itself viewed as a woman that possesses an honor that needs to be protected and defended (Baron, 2005, 2006).

[1] Due to data restrictions, there are no exact statistics. The mentioned estimates were included in a US produced report on religious freedom in Egypt. Report can be found here: https://rb.gy/ynguy

There is a variation of laws and policies in place to regulate reproductive health and rights in the country. Egypt has laws criminalizing induced abortion and female genital mutilation (FGM), regulating minimum age of marriage and maternity leave for women. However, it is important to note that there is a gap between regulations and their implementation and practice in Egyptian society. This gap is due to traditional gender norms, financial constraints and strong religious and cultural influences (DeJong et al., 2015, p. 31). For instance, although FGM has been criminalized since 2008, the first conviction for the procedure was not until January 2015 with a seven-year gap between the criminalization and the conviction (Sadek, 2021).

Egypt has been in political and economic turmoil in the past 12 years, since the 2011 uprisings. This has led to a myriad of growing socio-cultural challenges, intolerances and emerging phenomena, such as Egyptian family values discourse. In contrast, scholars have observed a positive correlation between stability and development in nations and societal inclinations towards accepting practices that might have been deemed unfamiliar before (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). This explains how amidst the country's turbulences, the sociocultural domain has been growing more intolerant.

1.1.2 Moral Panics and the Emergence of "Egyptian Family Values"

The emergence of the "Egyptian family values" started in 2018 when Egyptian actress Rania Youssef was charged with public obscenity (fah'esha), debauchery, and outrage of modesty (khadsh elh'aya') -among others- for wearing a see-through dress that exposed her legs at the Cairo Film Festival. Youssef was interrogated and was set to appear in court after facing up to 5 years in prison. The story made every news outlet and was all over social and televised media. Commentators, including the 2 lawyers who filed the lawsuit against Youssef, accused her of violating Egyptian family values and morality codes, undermining the public and endangering Egyptian women's reputation. Facing a lawsuit and public anger

and humiliation, Youssef issued a public apology stating that she never meant to 'provoke' people and that her choice of attire was inappropriate however, she completely believes and abides by the Egyptian morals and ethical codes. The case was closed by the prosecution a few months after (Gender Wiki, 2020).

In 2020, Haneen Hossam, Mawada Aladham and 3 other women were sentenced to 2 (3 for Hossam) years in prison and a fine of 300,000 EGP each in a case that became publicly known as 'The TikTok Girls'. Hossam, Eladham and the rest gained popularity and a following on TikTok for posting short videos of them lip-syncing and dancing to famous songs. The TikTok Girls were convicted of criminal charges similar to Youssef, of public indecency, obscenity and violating Egyptian family values. Prosecutors, the state and the media largely adopted the narrative of the young women as a threat to the Egyptian family values and moral codes and that this court ruling demonstrates the judicial system's avid concern, protection and reclamation of Egyptian values (EFHR, 2020).

Youssef and the TikTok Girls were not the only victims of such laws. These are some of many women on a long list of the state's crackdown on personal rights and spaces. Needless to say, that all -with the exception of one- defendants in family values violation cases were women. Additionally, it is important to note that all the mentioned cases started off by lawyers voluntarily filing complaints against said women pleading to the state to intervene and protect the 'Egyptian society' from moral degradation.

Looking closely at the above cases, we can conclude that the wide promotion of "Egyptian family values and moral codes" is a project to reinstate control and close surveillance of female bodies. It is also important to note that the law does not state the particularities of the "Egyptian family values and ethical code", which leaves the judgement of what constitutes as a violation and what does not completely up to the interpretation of the

community, state and the court which are all inherently and systemically patriarchal institutions that usually favor imposing restrictions and surveillance of personal freedoms.

Additionally, Egyptian family values can be theorized as a project to reclaim the dominance of the Egyptian man over female bodies that fall outside the realm of his direct control, i.e: women family members. Meanwhile the state employs moral panics to tighten their control over the private sphere and personal rights and freedoms of bodies (Allouche, 2017). It is also important to note the legal occasions where the Egyptian family values are used. It is only employed in cases that contest a woman's own right to her physical body and impose a form of communal and state unified control to claim that right for themselves.

1.2 Literature review

Egypt's modern history of gender and sexuality has been thoroughly explored by scholars producing a diverse body of research that aimed to comprehend the intricacies and nuances of the Egyptian society while considering the aforementioned turbulences within the sociopolitical landscape. For instance, Sherry Gadelrab in her book, *Medicine and Morality in Egypt: Gender and Sexuality in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*, explores religion as a primary source in constructing sexual knowledge. Muslims have retreated to religious laws for information about a myriad of sex-related topics from regulating personal hygiene and ablution to body modifications and criminal laws of adultery, same-sex relationships and other sex and sexuality related rules (Gadelrab, 2016). This indicates the importance of the religious institution in shaping the sexual practices of individuals.

Another significant scholarly contribution in this field is Hanan Hammad's historical investigation where she explains how sexual and body politics has always been a 'field of interaction among local communities, police and the state's court'. Hammad's research mainly examines legal cases in the past century where female bodies, their sexualities and morality were in question. She addresses the importance of analyzing the interactions

between the community, the state and women themselves in understanding how their bodies are policed through a system that relies on the interconnectedness of community, power and patriarchal state dynamics. Looking at the discourse of "Egyptian family values" that has been adapted by the state and the community alike, Hammad's findings still apply in modern Egypt (Hammad, 2016). Female sexuality and the female body remain the primary object of enforced subjugation whether on a community level or a state level.

A central notion to the formation of female sexuality and bodies in the Egyptian context is honor, or *sharaf* in Arabic. Inherently embedded within the intricate systems of sociocultural regulation that is enforced on female bodies, the concept of sharaf is a multifaceted notion operating within various levels of control. In "Constructing Egyptian Honor", Beth Baron explores how 'family honor' was elevated by nationalists to become a communal notion that needs to be protected and defended by the entire nation. Honor codes, including family honor, always resided in female bodies and women's conduct and nationalists succeeded in appropriating that to mobilize the nation for their own purposes and evoke that sense of protection that already lies within them and thus Egypt was seen as the woman whose honor needs to be protected and defended. Baron explains how practices pertaining to defending and maintaining honor exhibit major differences that oscillate between cultures focusing either on protecting women or policing them. Egypt leans towards the latter as she explained thoroughly (Baron, 2005). Baron produced supplementary research "Women, Honor and State Evidence from Egypt" which focuses on these honor practices, also known as honor crimes. The research investigates the state's interventions in honor crimes as a part of the nationalist project that is controlling female sexuality. Baron argues that by having laws in place governing these crimes, the state was not aiming to abolish, or challenge, family honor but rather intended to be the guardian of such a notion. Furthermore, challenging crimes of honor can be dangerous because it evokes the fear of out-of-control

female promiscuity which is the pillar of the nation's honor so it can be translated as an attack on cultural traditions, religious practices and state control (Baron, 2006).

In spite of the historical scope of these scholarly works, they offer valuable insight in understanding the multi-faceted factors that have shaped, and continue to shape, the socio-cultural landscape. Religion, state and communal institutional control, and the notion of honor are all crucial factors to further understand construction and regulation of gender and sexuality in modern day Egypt.

In order to examine the construction of the category 'women', Lucie Ryzova looks at women's textual; and visual presence in the public discourse in "On the Production and the Consumption of the Female Body in Modern Egypt". Ryzova explores the conceptualization of female bodies in Egypt between two modes of representation; the first is the female body which possesses the sexual self that is not meant for public consumption. The second is woman as a social being and a potential mother of the future generation of nation builders. Consequently, these two modes exist in relation to each other and are an illustration of the gender relations and struggles of women in modern Egypt. Women's sexual identity was seen to be aggressive and threatening. They must be anchored in male disciplinary order and powers in order to possess and safely be able to consume this rogue sexuality (Ryzova, 2005). The enforcement of this masculine disciplinary order extends beyond community boundaries, encompassing state and national levels as well. Jihan Zakarriya addressed the role of the state in systematically producing and maintaining cultural discourses of humiliation and inferiorization in order to silence and oppress women and the opposition. This culture has been fostered through propagandic media advancing female shame narratives that condemn and stigmatize female sexuality and public presence (Zakarriyah, 2019).

The mentioned scholarly work all reiterated the centrality of the female body in public struggles pertaining to all forms of cultural ideals, religion included, that have influenced the

emerging public discourses. Sarah Mourad argues that public controversies about the female bodies -whether its visibility or appearance- are indicative of more significant issues concerning national identity and political participation and how sexuality interplays with both (Mourad, 2013). The association of sexuality and national identity can be traced similarly in constructing the notion of Egyptian honor on a national level and encapsulating it in female bodies to create the identity category that is 'Egyptian woman'.

The controversies surrounding the visibility and appearance of the female body have contributed to gendering the public space which led to the increased alienation of women. Sexual violence, particularly harassment, which has been described as an endemic of the Egyptian streets, is a clear indication. In her analysis of street harassment in Cairo "Gendered Contestations", Nadia Ilahi explains how men and women experience public space differently in Cairo as sexual harassment acts to shape women's understanding of space and personal safety. Ilahi adds that the functions of street harassment, whether it being social control or communicating, work to produce an environment of sexual terrorism which accomplishes an informal ghettoization of women to the private sphere. In the entanglements of harassment with race, gender and class, male domination and privilege in the public space can be clearly observed (Ilahi, 2009). The influence this form of social control has on women's sexual selfhoods will be observed further in this study.

The body of literature produced on sex and sexuality in Egypt does not comprehensively encapsulate the multifacetedness of women's sexual selfhood particularly with regards to their contextual forms of social conditioning and control. the emotional and physical trauma caused by social conditioning becomes attached to intimacy and sexual experiences of Egyptian women (Saba, 2021). "Patriarchal household", as Sadia Saba mentions, influence women's sexual autonomy and desires where they prioritize virginity and purity above consent, desire or pleasure in their sexual experiences (Saba, 2021, p. 35). This

indicates the intricate interplay of virginity, pleasure and consent as experienced by Egyptian women. Building on Saba's work, I additionally emphasize the role of sexual shame in the entanglement of virginity, desire and pleasure.

The body of literature on gender and sexuality in Egypt is crucial to contextualize the construction of women's sexuality in Egypt in its wider framework. There is a clear gap in the literature when it comes to investigating the sexuality and sexual identity of women that centralizes the experience of Egyptian women. Additionally, all research conducted on the topic of Egyptian women's sexuality focused on certain practices rather than sexual identity as a whole. More specifically, there has not been qualitative studies applying social constructionist approaches to investigate the sexuality of women in the contemporary Egyptian context. In my thesis, I aim to fill this gap by focusing on the process of social construction itself rather than aspects of sexuality and sexual identity. Additionally, in her paper, Sarah Mourad highlighted the importance of investigating Arab female bodies, beyond the orientalist gaze which as an Egyptian woman and researcher, I am attempting to achieve in this study (Mourad, 2013).

1.3 Theoretical Framework

> "We must learn to see that sexuality is something which society produces in complex ways. It is a result of diverse social practices that give meaning to human activities, to struggles between those who have power to define and regulate, and those who resist. Sexuality is not a given, it is a product of negotiation, struggle" (Jeffrey Weeks in Seidman, 2003, p. 27).

Up until the early twentieth century, a significant body of writing considered sexuality to be of a primarily biological basis (Seidman, 2003). In the late nineteenth century, the field of sexology emerged as the scientific approach adapted to further explore sexuality. Sexology naturalizes the component of sexuality in individuals where sexual drive is the core force in

human behavior (Seidman, 2003). Additionally, sexologists viewed heterosexuality to be the natural human instinct that is innate to individuals in contrast to homosexuality that is a congenital inversion. Sexology was seen as guided by facts not beliefs that can be contested, developed and reviewed (Seidman, 2003). It wasn't until the early twentieth century when the claims made by sexology were challenged by Sigmund Freud's theories of psychology and sexuality, later referred to as psychoanalysis, where he argued that there was a sexual element to all non-sexual activities. Freud's theories established a connection between sexual behavior and the social which laid the foundation for Sexuality Studies as a field of research (Gagnon, 1975). Alfred Kinsey further expanded on the social component of sexuality without completely eliminating the biological (Kimmel, 2007; Seidman, 2003).

In the 1960s, Bill Simon and John Gagnon proposed their theory of sexual scripting which was became a breakthrough in the field of Sexuality Studies. Their theory states that sex -sexual behavior- is profoundly social and sexual identity that is constructed through sex is central to our identities (Simon and Gagnon, 2003). This is in contrast with the belief that sexualities are biologically driven urges. Gagnon and Simon's theory is grounded in social constructionism which refers to the culturally significant ideas often termed 'broad meaning systems' that can be used to understand the world and its experiences (Burr and Dick, 2017). Social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus.

Simon and Gagnon believed in the absolute social constructionism of sexuality and built on it their scripting theory where they state that the social construction occurs through what they called "sexual scripts". Scripts are a metaphor for conceptualizing the production of behavior within social life (Simon and Gagnon, 1986). Thus, "sexual scripts" refers to the normative cultural contexts that give sex its meaning as a social construct (Kimmel, 2007). The learning of these sexual scripts, roles and identities is a lifelong process which encompasses various elements that are unrelated to sexual experiences into sexuality

particularly following puberty (Simon and Gagnon, 1986). This indicates the significance of puberty in acquiring sexual scripts. Consequently, in the interviews guide, I included questions about women's menarche and how they were socialized into that phase of womanhood.

Simon and Gagnon further distinguished three different levels of sexual scripts: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts and intrapsychic scripts (Sakaluk et al., 2013; Simon and Gagnon, 1986). Cultural scenarios are the guiding frameworks that shape the collective life through providing wider structures for understanding and navigating societal dynamics. They possess a coercive power that is exerted on individuals' behaviors (Simon and Gagnon, 1986). Considering cultural scenarios solely as a predictive aspect of individual's behavior without looking into the other two levels rarely yields accurate responses. this is because these scenarios are broad and generic in a sense that cannot be consistently applied to all contexts (Simon and Gagnon, 1986). While cultural scenarios operate on the level of the collective, "interpersonal scripts" are the normative patterns of social interaction where identities orient to these normative behavioral patterns. Finally, "intrapsychic scripts" refers to the internal dialogue that accompanies social behavior reflecting internalized cultural expectations (Kimmel, 2007; Simon and Gagnon, 1986). Hence, intrapsychic scripts significantly contribute to the construction of the self (Simon and Gagnon, 1986). The relevance of the three levels in not equal in all social contexts or similar for all individuals (Simon and Gagnon, 1986). The three levels of scripting are intertwined so that each level shapes the conceptualization of the other however, it does not provide a discursive comprehension of the other (Simon and Gagnon, 2003). Simon and Gagnon considered this influential relationship between the scripting levels to be dichotomous since it complicates the process of studying sex (2003).

The context of our sociality is shaped by our subjectivity in terms of the hierarchies of gender, class, race, sexuality, religion, etc. Therefore, the notion of intersectionality can be used here to conceptualize one's position within the social structure. Intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, to refer to the notion of subjectivity that is produced by "mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality" (Nash, 2008, p.2). The notion is particularly useful to articulate the lived experiences of marginalized groups and move away from feminist hierarchy and hegemony (Nash, 2008). I will be using intersectionality throughout this study to refer to the different forms of social control and subjective positions of my interlocutors.

The key concept in this study, which is the "Sexual Self" is constituted of both sexual subjectivity and identity along with sociocultural variables (Kimmel, 2007). Sexual subjectivity is defined as the "person's sense of herself as a sexual being and their ability to identify their own desires" (Plante, 2006). Sexual identity on the other hand is defined as the ways individuals operate in the social sexual sphere and see themselves as sexual beings" (Plante, 2006).

Simon and Gagnon's theories were developed more than six decades ago in the United States; however, I believe that the adaptability of their approach facilitates its travel through time and space. Simon and Gagnon's theories set broad guidelines in studying sex and sexuality without assuming predictive elements that are bound to a certain social context or time. Being grounded in social constructionism, entails that "sexual conduct and the sexual self are fully social and are embedded in wider patterns of sociality" (Jackson, 2007, p. 5). This allows for the contextual adaptation of their approach that can be applied with considering the investigation of that "sociality" of the desired region, site, time and demographic of study. In this study I am applying Simon and Gagnon US originated theories in the context of modern urban Egypt. Nonetheless, the social aspect of their theory serves to

facilitate its mobility so it can be applied to the Egyptian society with investigating the sociocultural framework in which the study is situated in.

Additionally, it is also important to consider how the sexual scripting theory situates sexuality in relation to gender. Simon and Gagnon suggest that the sexual self is constructed based on the prior construction of a gendered self where thy distinctively identify gender and sexuality (Jackson, 2007). Their explanation did not consider the category "gender" to be fixed which allows their theory to be applied with different contextual conceptualizations of gender. For instance, the category of women in the US, where their theories emerged, is different to the category women in Egypt where I am conducting this research. However, their theory allows for its adaptability to Egyptian women since it is not specifically established on the basis of a fixed gender criteria.

Using the theory of sexual scripts in the modern Egyptian urban context to investigate women's sexual selfhood has provided a comprehensive model to further understand women's sexual identities and how they came to be constructed. This is because Simon and Gagnon's theories recognize that our sexual selves are produced within unequivocally unjust local, national and global social orders (Jackson, 2007). This demonstrates the universality of their approach and allows for its mobility across time and space.

1.4 Methodology

My research and its findings are centered on experiences as lived and told by my interlocutors. I have conducted a qualitative research study through interviewing a target group of Egyptian self-identified women who are from and currently live in the urban cities of Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria). They have middle-class backgrounds and have obtained higher education degrees (university graduates). Another criterion is no previous pregnancy experiences, whether carried to term or not. The politics of childbearing and reproduction –

both biological and social- is complicated and would require a separate study on its own to contextualize female body politics in light of biological and/or social reproduction.

The women interviewed age between 25 to 35 – born between 1988 and 1997 – because one of the aims of the study is examining how sexual scripts unfold through the adulthood of young women. Additionally, since I am 30 and within that age range as well, I expected that there will be an established sense of familiarity and shared experience that will make it easier for the interviewee to open up to me and share their stories. I conducted in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 10 women in person, most of whom I have an existing connection with through my social circles. Due to the high sensitivity of the topic, conducting interviews with women who I have an established connection and trust with has proven to be integral to obtaining coherent and accurate information. Also, the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, and additional notes were taken when necessary.

1.4.1 Positionality

Being a 30-year-old Egyptian woman, born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt as a Muslim in a traditional nuclear family household, situates me within the same category of analysis of my interlocutors. The common background, language, cultural context and shared experience means that I am an insider within this community of women which is an advantage that enables me to better understand and relate to them. However, I was concerned that this insider status might be jeopardized with my positionality as a researcher; where I am asking the questions, collecting data and analyzing it to produce results (Sultana, 2007, p.378). Hence, it was important to maintain open and clear communication with my interlocutors all throughout the process. I explained to them the motives and justification of my research and how it is as equally personal to me as it is to them which established a common understanding of shared experience, empathy and transparency. Additionally, I kept in contact with the ten

women and updated them throughout the writing and analysis phase in order to ensure their satisfaction with the portrayal of their experiences in this study.

Another challenge with conducting research with participants who I have personal relationships with was the entanglement of the personal and the academic. Thus, it is crucial to be reflexive of my own work and the information obtained from the interviews that is analyzed and theorized. I have constantly asked myself the question of "How can it be ensured that what is written about the research subject coincides with how the research subject would portray themselves?" (Nencel, 2014, p.82). I have kept my interlocutors updated throughout the writing process as well through sending them the parts of my chapters that featured them and ensuring that they were pleased with how they are represented.

1.4.2 Limitations

Conducting research in Egypt is challenging and not a safe activity. Researchers, particularly ones affiliated with western academic institutions, face a lot of security threats which impose restrictions on their research and scholarly work. Although my topic is not directly of a political nature nor does it hold any explicit criticism to the state, it is considered a highly stigmatized and sensitive topic in the Egyptian context as it goes against social and religious norms. The subjugation of academic freedom and Egyptian scholars -even abroad- and the restrictions policing research have contributed to the research gap in several fields including critical political, social theory and of course gender studies in Egypt. Thus, conducting research in such critical fields is an activity that is deemed to be dangerous (Saliba, 2020, p. 141).

To minimize the risks, I did not announce my research topic anywhere and did not discuss it on social media. Since I did not have to recruit interviewees, it was not an inconvenience. I only informed my close circle of friends, and the women I interviewed of my exact research topic. I used secure and encrypted messaging applications to communicate

anything related to my research. I practiced extreme caution with storing and transferring information, especially while going in and out of the country which I had to do several times in order to complete my research.

Another limitation was the religion proportion. 90% of the country identifies as Muslim, as least in governmental documentation, and the remaining 10% is majority Coptic Christians. Ideally, I wanted my research sample to mimic these percentages so 9 women would be of Muslim background and 1 would be Coptic Christian. However, I did not manage to find a woman with Coptic Christian background that was willing to be interviewed. Due to the mentioned security concerns, I mainly depended on friends and friends of friends, so I was not able to pursue this further. Thus, the 10 interviewed women all have Muslim backgrounds. All the women I interviewed currently do not wear the hijab. Although, four of them used to wear it in the past, which will be explored further in this study.

It is important to note that due to the topic of the study, there might have been sampling biases. For instance, it was found that less religious individuals tend to be more willing to participate in research related to sex and sexuality (Miller, 2021). I tried to diminish this sampling bias through selecting people with as different religious views as possible.

1.4.3 Interlocutors

I have conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with 10 women, most of which I have established friendships with from before except for one of the women. I did not know Asmaa, who I met through another friend -also an interlocutor-, before the day of the interview. After explaining my research and interview process to Asmaa, she agreed to be interviewed on the first day I met her. Although the interview went smoothly, it was clear to me that she was not giving detailed answers and only gave short concise answers to most questions. In addition, the interview was 30 minutes long which is the shortest in comparison to the other nine I have conducted. This could be indeed because Asmaa did not know me prior to the interview so

even though she agreed to sit with me for the interview, she did not feel fully comfortable to share details about such intimate topics.

The women interviewed are all originally either from Cairo or Alexandria, however, at the time of the interviews, all of them were residing in Cairo. Migration to Cairo is a growing phenomenon for Egyptian women who are looking for better opportunities in the labor market and hope to find it in Egypt's massive capital. Implicitly, there is also of course the independence from the family home that moving to Cairo would provide a rare opportunity for which would not otherwise be attained.

All the women interviewed come from Muslim families. However, all of them expressed very different views and beliefs when it comes to religion. Additionally, in their stories, their backgrounds and how their families dealt with religion was not uniform in any way. For instance, I interviewed Amina (25) who spoke about how traditionally religious her mother is, yet she never imposed any religious practices on her 3 children and would only advise them gently. As for Amina, she identifies with the faith of Islam however she does not feel that she is pious or fully practicing. Yasmeen (25) was the only respondent who clearly stated her lack of religious beliefs.

On the other hand, Hend (32) and Rawya (30) are two sisters who grew up in the same household. They were both born in the UK and lived there until the ages of 10 and 8 respectively when their father decided to move the family back to his hometown of Alexandria, Egypt. His decision was mainly motivated by fear that his daughters might grow up to be too 'westernised' and lose the religion that he and his wife worked hard to instill in them. Thus, religion was an integral part of the sisters' upbringing. As for Sara (27), she described her household as conservative rather than religious. Sara grew up in Cairo and still lives in her family home, with her parents and 2 brothers.

1.5 Chapters Outline

I will present my thesis in three main chapters in addition to this first introductory chapter. The following chapter titled "Tracing the Sexual in a Non-sexual Upbringing" demonstrates how familial and environmental upbringing of female bodies play a crucial role in the construction of the sexual self. In this chapter I will argue that the supposed non-sexual upbringing of Egyptian women – particularly my interlocutors who were born between 1988 and 1997 – that strictly censors any form of sexual knowledge but has in fact come to epitomize the 'sexual' that it strongly attempts to censor and has contributed strongly to producing the female sexed body. The objective of such upbringing is to (re)construct the bodies of women in accordance with the socio-culturally appropriate scripts of sexuality and sexual behavior (Kimmel, 2007).

In the second main chapter titled "Negotiating the Boundaries of Covering and Uncovering", I use Deniz Kandiyoti's conceptualization of the patriarchal bargain to analyze the experiences of my interlocutors with the ongoing process of bargaining or negotiating the boundaries of covering and uncovering their bodies as navigated differently by each of them. How, discursively, the hegemonic narratives carried from one's upbringing play into the desire to cover or uncover one's body will also be addressed. Additionally, I will argue that this process of negotiating boundaries strongly influences sexual subjectivity and identity.

The third and final chapter "Scripting Experiences of Sex and the Sexual" will discuss how the narratives of upbringing and negotiating boundaries affected women's sexual practices and experiences and how sexual shame is rooted in women's sexual selfhood. In this chapter, I will argue that experience is crucial to de/re/construct the normative sexual scripts that have been already rooted in and about the self and how this process of de/re/construction allows for more sexual agency. Finally in the conclusion section, I will present my main arguments and study findings in order to respond to my main research

question that investigates the construction of the sexual selfhood of women in contemporary Egypt through the three main themes of analysis (chapters).

Chapter 2: Tracing the Sexual in a Non-Sexual Upbringing

At the beginning of the interviews, I wanted to explore the earliest memories my interlocutors had of their pubescent and menstruating bodies by asking if and how their parents – or parental figures – inducted them into the world of menstruation and puberty. The answers my interlocutors gave to this question usually helped in setting the atmosphere and direction of the rest of the conversation. The other questions in this section inquired about early knowledge that they received related to the topics of sex and/or sexuality, exposure to popular narratives surrounding the female body, and the sociocultural definition of 'honor'. Since questions in this section address discourses formed during their upbringing, particularly through adolescence and teenage years but sometimes also childhood, this chapter is centred on familial relations and dynamics which reaffirms how the family plays a crucial –if not the most crucial– role in the making of the sexual self (Seidman, 2003). It is also important to consider how the use of a gender binary framework in upbringing when it comes to the production of didactic production normative sexual scripts of sexual scripts further emphasizing normative femininities and masculinities (Sakaluk et al., 2013).

Through my analysis in this chapter, I will argue that the supposed non-sexual upbringing of Egyptian women – particularly those who were born between 1988 and 1997 – that strictly censors any form of sexual knowledge but has in fact come to epitomise the 'sexual' that it strongly attempts to censor and has contributed strongly to producing the female sexed body. The objective of such upbringing is to (re)construct the bodies of women in accordance with socio-culturally appropriate scripts of sexuality and sexual behavior (Kimmel, 2007). In this context, a form of social sexual morality is strongly enforced and upheld where the mere existence of sexual knowledge and/or desires can threaten one's overall morality. Thus, these cultural scenarios of sexuality have been systematically curated to reproduce female bodies that are not just sexually illiterate, but additionally drive their entire morality and value from

their preserved sexual 'honor' as socially identified. I elaborate further upon the mechanisms through which this process occurs within the body of this chapter.

2.1 Memories of my First Menstruation

The women interviewed all, unanimously, reported that their menarche was a pivotal turning point in their lives, where the rules of the world around them had started changing. Nonetheless, very little information was communicated to them about why suddenly they were considered adult 'women' now and should start behaving accordingly. According to Amina (25), the event of her first period was happily received by her mother:

> My mum didn't do anything, she laughed and said, 'my daughter is all grown up!' that's it. She then sat me down, gave me sanitary pads and without getting into details told me 'This means that you're an adult now.' Mind you I did not understand what was happening. I was very young; in fourth grade, I think.

For Amina, her experience with her first period equated menstruation for her with adulthood or more accurately, womanhood. Even though she was around 10 years old, she was told and eventually treated as if her "days of being a child were behind her" as she said. However, Amina did not understand the correlation between her first period and being told she was becoming an adult.

The transition from childhood to adulthood or 'womanhood' had different implications depending on the narratives endorsed by the parents -or parental figures- at the time of menarche. For instance, Hend (32) and Rawya (30); two biological sisters who grew up in the same household, had the common understanding of menarche from a religious perspective. They were both born in the United Kingdom and lived there until the ages of 10 and 8 respectively when their father decided to move the family back to his hometown of Alexandria, Egypt. His decision was mainly motivated by fear that his daughters might grow up to be too

'westernized' and lose the religion that he and his wife worked hard to instill in them. This was indicated in the fact that for both Hend and Rawya, menstruation was mainly perceived as an indicator that it was time for them to wear the hijab, their religious obligation when becoming of age. As Rawya remembers, "my period was mainly linked to when I was going to wear the hijab, that was the mark. That's basically all it is. I didn't think about what implications it has or what it meant. Period means puberty means hijab. And I was very excited for it." Rawya started wearing the hijab the very next day after she got her period. This reflects Rawya and Hend's understanding of their first periods in light of their religious duties, which was the hijab in that case. This also is an indication of the religious discourse adapted by their parents in their relation to their female bodies.

Contrary to the sisters' anticipation in terms to wear the hijab was Karima's fear. Karima (25) grew up mainly in her maternal grandparents' house. Her parents split up at a young age and her mum had to work abroad to provide for her daughter. From her early childhood, Karima remembered observing several other girls in her extended family being forced to wear the hijab after getting their period. Thus, when Karima spotted her first period, she decided to hide it from her grandmother out of fear that she would force her to wear the hijab as well. However, by not telling her grandmother about it, Karima did not know what kind of period hygiene products to use or how, and her grandmother ended up seeing her blood-stained underwear in the wash. Karima recalled, "at first, I told her 'I don't know maybe it's a cut or something', but then she asked me to check the underwear I was wearing then and when she found blood there too, she knew it was my period." For Karima, Hend and Rawya, their menarches were anticipated with both excitement and fear. Rather than a physical event first, it was mainly perceived as a religious and social marker to assume certain roles and duties that were expected and prescribed to their newly menstruating bodies.

Hend and Rawya both had similar pleasant experiences with telling their family about their first periods, in which their mother and father celebrated their daughters' first menstruation with cake. It is important to note that their father's involvement and open communication related to his daughters' menarche is very uncommon in the Egyptian context. It is normally expected to not speak of menstruation openly particularly in the presence of men, including those in the household i.e., fathers, brothers and sons. Furthermore, it is encouraged to hide one's discomfort, pain and even period products away from common spaces. This "culture of concealment" that surrounds menstruation, a phrase coined by Karen Houppert (1999), explains how menstrual stigma shapes women's experience of menstruation to manipulate them into menstrual shame and secrecy, often through narratives involving menstrual hygiene products.

This culture of concealment can be observed in Amal's (28) words, when she recalled that her earliest memories of menstruating were riddled with embarrassment and shame: "instead of throwing away used sanitary pads, I would collect them in a plastic bag and then put it away in a drawer or a cupboard in my bedroom. I thought if I threw them in the bin, my brother or father might have seen them, and I would be very embarrassed." Furthermore, Amal's mother used to monitor her consumption of sanitary pads, as she said, "If she would think that I had finished an entire pack quickly, she would tell me that I need to be more careful because these are expensive products and that I shouldn't just change one because I bled some." Hearing her mother saying that made her much more conscious of the fact that she was "bleeding" and consuming products and wasting money accordingly. This further deepened her feelings of shame and embarrassment, along with guilt. It is important to note, that Amal's mother's comments did not stem from the difficulty of obtaining sanitary pads. Amal rather explained it as a need to control her consumption and thus dictating her bodily needs. For Amal's teenage self, this also translated into her bodily, and consequently, self-worth. "I am

not even worthy of using the so-called expensive products even when I am bleeding and in need for them," she said.

For the women I spoke to, their first periods felt very personal: personal to them, and personal to their bodies. However, their lived experience implied otherwise. Sara (27) remembers running to her mum when she spotted blood in her underwear for the first time. Sara's mum calmly directed her to where the sanitary pads were stored, without elaborating further. To her surprise, at the next family gathering, Sara noticed that her first period had been family news when her male cousin refrained from greeting her with a hug and a kiss on the cheek – a traditional greeting among family members in Egypt – and exclaimed, "Not anymore, you've become an adult now[2]." Sara continued: "All my family got the news that I got my period while I was still clueless with no idea what this even is." The reaction of Sara's cousin when he refused to physically greet her demonstrates how menstruation is implicitly imbued with social and physical implications that sexualize the female body.

Similarly, Yasmeen (25) spoke with frustration when she remembered her mother calling her family and friends to tell them about her daughter's first period. She said: "It made me feel horrible. I hated it. I don't want anyone to talk about my body. I always hated this thing about my mum. Her friends are always involved when it comes to my body." Yasmeen's exasperation is rooted in the centralization of her body as a topic of discussion within her mother's social circles. This shows the early entrance stage where the female body moves out of the semi-private discourse of the self and family.

The experiences of the female body in the public space further reinforces that transition of the body into the realm of public discourse. Mona (28) was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. She marks going into puberty by how her experience of being in the street significantly

[2] In Egypt, cousins are considered "strange men" that a woman can potentially marry. Therefore, in a lot of families, cousins of the opposite sexes are not encouraged to physically interact.

changed. She says, “I didn’t understand, why were people suddenly looking at me like this? Why was I hearing these comments in the street? Why all these stares? What changed? Oh, it’s my body!” Mona conceptualized her puberty by her body becoming a sight of the public’s scrutinizing gaze and her existence in the public sphere became loaded with discomfort and confusion.

Through examining the earlier experiences of the women’s menarches, we can observe how this event served as the earliest segue through which their female body went from the private to a more public and open discourse within the socio-cultural context. This sexual script paves the way for further socio-cultural subjugation enforced on the female body.

2.2 Early Knowledge of Sex and Sexuality

When I included a question that enquires about the early knowledge received about sex and sexuality, particularly from parents or parental figures, I was not expecting elaborative responses from my interlocutors. This is perhaps due to the prevalent culture of silence surrounding such topics in the Egyptian modern context with respect to intersections of class, gender, religion and social values. Additionally, this expectation was partially a projection of my own personal experience where while growing up; up to this point, there has never been a discussion of any related topic to sex or sexuality within my family. Nonetheless, I decided to include that question just in case my expectation would happen to conclude inaccurate. Indeed, my experience did not apply to all the women I interviewed as several of them have narrated accounts of being exposed – sometimes unintentionally – to information about said topics directly from their parents and/or familial figures.

It is also important to add that in Egypt, a mother is expected to talk to her daughter about her sexual role towards her husband only before the consummation of the marriage. Two of my interlocutors, Asma and Rawya, who have been married, narrated similar experiences where both their mothers had asked to confirm that they were aware of what goes on between

‘a husband and his wife’ and the wives’ sexual duties. In the two cases, the mothers did not elaborate further as both Asma and Rawya jokingly changed the subject, the mothers respond with saying “you probably have more information than me.” The subject was not mentioned again. Traditionally, fathers or father figures (male caregivers) do not tend engage in conversations about sex or sexuality. Amal’s experience, however, was very different. She recalls, with verbal and facial angst, her father’s statements that were usually made out of context about how men only think about ‘*gens*’ (sex in Arabic) “all day, that’s all what they want”. He further explained to her the difference between men and women in his opinion: “A man has a cucumber that can be easily washed. However, a woman is a container, whatever gets inside remains inside.” Amal’s fathers use of words within this context is striking, particularly when in its original language. In the first instance, he had started by using the Arabic word for sex ‘gens’, which is rarely heard or used in Egypt and usually replaced with its English synonym. In addition, he developed an anthropomorphic metaphor of a ‘cucumber’ and a ‘container’ to refer to vaginal heterosexual intercourse. The metaphor of the container is not foreign to women’s bodies. As childbearing bodies, through different cultures, women’s bodies were referred to as ‘containers’ of the seed that is a man’s semen that leads to pregnancy. Thus, placing the heterosexual man as creator and the female body as a tool in his creation (Uusikylä, 1998). Amal’s father took the metaphor beyond a reproductive instinct to refer to heterosexual desire and sexual dynamics, where a woman’s body is the sexed container of the man’s pleasure, his semen. The clear division of sexual labour reflects how heterosexuality is utilised to reaffirm the gender binary and roles (Seidman, 2003). There, the heterosexual identity in this context is maintaining the social order by upholding the binary. Furthermore, this demonstrates how women’s bodies have been -and continue to be- passive recipients for men's drive of acquiring knowledge and preoccupation with structure and significance

(Dimulescu, 2015). Amal's father statement is latently reinforcing his heterosexual patriarchal control which emphasizes the sexual scripts of inferiorization.

For Amina, there was never a direct conversation about sex in her house, but her mother automatically assumed that she already learned about it, she explained,

> When I was a teenager, she just started casually joking about the fact that I already know. For example, when my sister –who is married and 9 years older than me– would be saying something of sexual relevance, they would then jokingly say "Amina probably knows more than us!" They were not wrong though, they assumed that I found out from other sources, and I did.

Amina's mother did not question the sources that her daughter had acquired her knowledge from and whether that knowledge is accurate or not. She also did not question what Amina had learned and the implications that knowledge would have on her based on its source and degree of accuracy and reliance.

A quote repeated in two separate interviews that I had was: "There's a good word and a bad word for everything. And the bad word for love is sex." This statement was quoted to me by sisters Hend and Rawya when asked about the early knowledge they received from their parents about sex or sexuality. They both clearly remembered their mother saying this and it being a core idea that they carried into their early adult womanhood. The belief that sex was broadly synonymized with the word 'bad' or 'ugly' was underlying in several of the conducted interviews and frequently brought up whether directly or indirectly. Similarly, Naomi Wolf discusses how in the context of the US, particularly before 1960, calling a woman good or bad corresponded to whether this woman is "non-sexual" or "sexual" respectively (Wolf, 2008). This perspective of a good-bad binary reflects the conflicted and complex relationship between

my interlocutors, their sexed bodies and sex as an act where that act becomes a primary determinant in how a woman is perceived by herself and society.

2.3 Popular Narratives Surrounding the Female Body

To further explore the construction of sexual identity of women in the context of Egypt, it is necessary to explore the popular and mainstreamed narratives pertaining to the female body. I asked my interlocutors about the most memorable and/or reoccurring statements about their own bodies or the female body in general that they have repeatedly heard throughout growing up, particularly during adolescence. I inquired about the narratives they were exposed to at home or school but also other prevalent cultural narratives that they were made aware of either through family or social circles or through encounters and lived experience. The ten women have all mentioned how their bodies were constantly being commented on for different reasons such as weight, body hair and/or size of certain body parts. Two main themes could be traced in the accounts of my interviewees; different forms of body shaming that started with their menarches, sometimes earlier, and narratives of urging covering-up and enforced modesty. These two themes usually happened in tandem, as it will be further explored below.

Yasmeen and Amina have similar experiences regarding the type of comments they were receiving about their bodies regularly. As Yasmeen narrates, right after puberty her mother started closely regulating her eating habits. “I was not allowed to eat certain foods like pasta, rice or bread out of the fear that I will gain more weight. She would point at women on tv who she thinks are ‘obese’ and says ‘see, if I hadn’t stopped you from eating, you would’ve been like her.” Yasmeen believes that the reason of her mother’s behavior was mainly because she was perceived to be “bigger” that her peers at that age. “I had big thighs and a butt, I always had that, and it was not normal for a girl my age to have big thighs.” Research data has proved how powerful caregiver eating messages are on later eating behavior and body image (Oliveira et al., 2019).

As for Amina, for as long as she can remember -and up till now- her body, particularly her breast and behind, have been a topic of discussion in her family. she explains: "big boobs, big butt, fat. My dad would also joke about it a lot and make crude comments. 'You have thighs, you have *teez*[3].' Of course, I do, and I do not see the problem with it." Amina further expressed her discomfort with her father's comments particularly when they were made in the presence of her extended family, "He would point at me and tell my uncles, aunts and cousins while laughing 'Look how big her '*emkaneyat'* are getting.'" In Arabic, emkaneyat literally translates to options or possibilities (plural). However, in dialectal Egyptian Arabic it is commonly used to refer to women's sexualized body parts, i.e: her breast or behind, as an indication of said woman's sexual function and ability or lack thereof. The frequent comments and jokes of Amina's father caused her not just embarrassment but over time she also formed a negative perception of her body, particularly her 'sexualized body parts'. Karima's experience happened to be similar to Amina's; "they kept telling me how big my butt is. How I should cover it. They would make me change my clothes all time and I was still a kid back then. I hated having a butt, all the comments and the criticism so I thought it must be something really bad to have" she said. Both Amina and Karima formed negative perspectives about their bodies very early on, during adolescence. Their formed views were a result of their socialization that led them to develop feelings of shame and embarrassment of their developing bodies that were constantly being sexualized at a young age. As Amina put it "well, if it's bad, then I need to cover it." In this context the urge to cover up stemmed from the early sexualization of certain body parts that deemed covering it as the answer to the problem. These scripts of sexual selfhood emphasize the regulation of one's female body whether in Yasmeen's case through her eating habits or through covering up in Amina's case.

[3] teez: ass/arse in Egyptian Arabic, considered inappropriate (Lisaan Masry, Egyptian Arabic dictionary)

When asked, Sara started listing behaviors and rules she was told a woman must adhere to, she explained, "women must dress modestly, they shouldn't wear short or tight clothes. Women who die their hair unusual colours are *sharameet*[4], women who have piercings are *sharameet*. There're always restrictions on what a woman must and must not do." The word *"sharmota"* -or its plural *"sharameet"*- carries derogatory, misogynistic and abusive cultural and linguistic connotations to it. It is usually directed at women and is considered one of the worst insults in colloquial Arabic (al-Tayib & al-Tayib, 1964). A *sharmota* is a woman shunned by her society as a result of her shameful actions. However, it is not unusual to hear it being used in contexts that are not necessarily directly related to its original significance, prostitution in its sexual reference. In this context, a *sharmota* or a prostitute is a woman who behaves in non-normative ways as classified by social scenarios, which is in Sara's statement were piercings or unusual hair colours in reference to her deviance off the appropriate image of the modal Egyptian woman. Normativity is of course constantly extendable and changing according to various political, economic, social and religious factors.

Another important aspect to take into consideration here was the mediums where the narratives were/are circulated, particularly one that was mentioned by all the women interviewed, which is the street as a gendered space. For them, the street was a primary site where they experienced their bodies being heavily sexualized and criticized at a young age. Moreover, their existence in the streets echoed and reaffirmed the narratives that they had been exposed to at the home, school or within their social circles. In her study, Elizabeth Averda Kissling states that the multiple functions of street harassment – which range from

[4] Plural of *Sharmota*: When an ox or a calf was killed, part of the rump was sliced up into strips and hung to dry on a line above the reach of any cat, usually in the shade. This was called *sharmut*. The offensive word *sharmota* meaning prostitute is derived from it (al-Tayib & al-Tayib, 1964).

complimenting women to claiming social control – all "work together to produce an environment of sexual terrorism" (1991). On that note, Amina spoke about how the harassment she faced in the streets of Alexandria, where she grew up, was not just sexual but also verbal abuse. She said, "I was a chubby kid, I remember one day someone told me 'Is this your arm or a chicken thigh?' I was already being constantly told that I was fat at home and these kinds of comments just confirmed it." Asmaa told a similar experience where she would usually hear comments about how unfeminine her body is from family and the street alike, she explained, "they would tell me that I need to eat and gain weight or else no one would marry me then I would hear similar comments in the streets, so I started thinking that everyone agrees that something is wrong with me." Additionally, such encounters hugely contribute to shaping women's sense of spatiality and physical awareness in public (Ilahi, 2009).

2.4 Honor 'El-Sharaf'

'*Sharaf*' in Arabic directly translates to 'honor' in English. However, the word honor fails to adequately encapsulate the notion of *Sharaf* as understood in the Egyptian -and wider Arab- sociocultural context. While linguistically *Sharaf* can be used to refer to several concepts such as, honesty, dignity, respect, glory and nobility; when associated with female bodies *'sharaf al-bint'* or honor of the girl, the term then carries specific connotations. *Sharaf* is a collective notion that is defined -and redefined- through its own collectiveness (Baron, 2006). The honor of the collective -in this context the family- is determined mainly based on the behavior of its women. Behavior breaches differ from premarital physical loss of virginity through sexual relations or any activity, extramarital affairs to conduct deemed inappropriate by society or the patriarch from the family. A multitude of factors affect deeming whether an action is considered an infringement of sharaf or not such as socioeconomic status, education, religion and geographic location (rural vs urban). For instance, scholars note that crimes

pertaining to honor in Egypt were more common in Upper Egypt than Lower Egypt (Baron, 2006).

By asking my interlocutors about how they were introduced to the concept of '*sharaf al-bint'* through their upbringing and through analysing their responses, in this section I aim to prove that sharaf is a pillar notion in women's understanding of their own sexuality and sexed bodies. In addition, I discuss several accounts of my interlocutors reflecting on their initial conceptualization of sharaf and the process where they were socialized into it as a collective notion.

When asked about *'sharaf al-bint'*, some of the experiences narrated by my interviewees did not explicitly include the words 'sharaf' or 'virginity' or 'sex', however, the notion was still encapsulated in context and referred to in different ways. Rawya explains, "*Sharaf* is that a boy does not lay his hands on me or tell me something inappropriate. That is according to my parents of course. I remember the first time when my boyfriend then hugged me, I went home sobbing and I literally wanted to burn the clothes that I was wearing." Rawya's emotional reaction stemmed from the threat that the physical interaction she had with a man posited a threat on her *sharaf* and hence entire value system. This is indicated in her wanting to burn her clothes that were touched by him in a reference to her attempting to redeem her *sharaf* which she felt was tainted by his touch.

Similar to Rawya, Amina started explaining how she was told that sharaf is that no one is to lay their hands on your body, especially your private parts, i.e.: breast, vagina, behind. However, Amina exclaims how hypocritical she believes these warnings were, "When I would run to tell them that someone has touched my boobs or vagina, they would tell me that I was imagining or making things up. They keep warning you "no one should ever come near you" but then when someone does, they do nothing about it." With angst and hints of anger, Amina continued to narrate the particular incidents she was referring to; as a child she was sexually

assaulted by the Bawab[5]'s son, a teenager at the time. Amina ran crying to his mum who punished him and gave him a beating. When she went to tell her mother about what happened, Amina remembers her unconcerned reaction, "well, his mum punished him already" she said. Amina found the warnings she received to preserve her sharaf and then her mother's reaction when her body was violated -and hence according to her mother's beliefs her sharaf as well- to be paradoxical to say the least. She continued "it's not like they got angry and went crazy on them[6]." Amina saw that paradox as a form of indirect control where you are instructed to preserve your sharaf through not consenting to be touched -among other instructions-, however, the sharaf in question becomes circumstantial when the act occurs non-consensually like in the case of sexual assault. This further demonstrates the intricate interplay of sharaf and consent on the subjectivity of the female body and the process of constructing its sexual identity. While sharaf primarily pertains to the female body, the parameters of the notion are (re)defined by the collective social power that does not take women's consent and agency into consideration. In fact, consent here would be the main perquisite of losing a women's sharaf. As Beth Baron explains, Egyptian nationalists have appropriated the widespread notion of family honor to create a wider sense of national honor through rendering the nation state as a woman and the nation community as the family. National honor has thus been utilized to elevate and mobilize the nation. This has further capitalized on the importance of a women's sharaf not just to the family but rather to the nation community and state (2006). This was also observed in the accounts of my interlocutors when they described how the notion of Sharaf was essentialized in their identity and female bodies.

[5] Bawab: derived from the word door 'bab' and it refers to a kind of doorman that is common in Egypt. He typically resides with his family in a residential building to guard it and look after it. (https://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/14/world/cairo-journal-beware-the-bawabs-the-know-it-alls-at-the-gate.html)

[6] Them: the perpetrators of harassment

Amal spoke about how she was told that her sharaf resides in her reputation, but to her it occupied her femininity as well, she said "If I ever have sex, no not even have sex, if I ever tap into that feminine personality of me where I actually feel myself as a woman, I would be disappointing my older brother. If I am to live my life the way I really want to, I would be humiliating his honor as well as my mother's." How Amal has correlated her femininity, even when not in relevance to sex, to her family's honor shows how the notion of sharaf transcends women's sexual practices and sexual selfhood to become a pillar in their social existence.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how the supposed non-sexual upbringing of Egyptian women that theoretically censors all forms of sexual knowledge, does in fact involve aspects of the 'sexual' that produce the female sexed body. Starting with menstruation as a crucial turning point for the female body where it goes from the private to a more public and open discourse socio-culturally. Additionally, when exploring the popular narratives pertaining to the female body, most interviewees accounts happened to coincide at certain themes, such as sexual comments about their own bodies starting at a young age and strong urging towards covering up. It is also important to observe how the notion of honor -or sharaf- which mainly pertains to women's bodies, is integral to the national Egyptian identity and consequently family. Furthermore, sharaf also posits control over all aspects of the interviewed women's lives and not just their sexual practices.

Moreover, when looking at the above aspects of upbringing, we can conclude that it mainly aims is to (re)construct the bodies of women in accordance with the socio-culturally appropriate scripts of sexuality and sexual selfhood (Kimmel, 2007).

Chapter 3: Negotiating the Boundaries of Covering and Uncovering

Issues pertaining to women's dress have always taken up space in Egyptian public discourse. As explored in the first chapter, on several occasions female bodies have been at the forefront of social, legal and religious discourses especially when entangled with the newly emerging category of "Egyptian family values". Through this process, it is also very interesting to observe the interplay of these entangled discourses and how women navigate them on a daily basis. To explore this intricate socio-cultural process of negotiating boundaries, it is useful to use Deniz Kandiyoti's insightful conceptualization of 'the patriarchal bargain' and its practice in the context of North Africa and the Muslim Middle East. Kandiyoti explains how in communities under male dominance, or what she refers to as the *classic patriarchy*, women adapt to the system and navigate it through strategizing within their societal constraints and intersectionality. This can be observed in different and even contrasting forms such as women resisting the system or internalizing the patriarchal ideologies themselves (1988). When it comes to addressing the rules of dress, most of the women I interviewed have experienced both phases of internalization of and resistance to the system. This process of bargaining or negotiating the boundaries of covering and uncovering their bodies was navigated differently by each of my interlocutors, as it will be demonstrated through this chapter.

The effect of the process of negotiating boundaries -*or patriarchal bargains*- surpasses women's rational choices to shape primary aspects of their gendered subjectivity since it infiltrates the course of their early socialization and carries on to their adult socio-cultural interactions (Kandiyoti, 1988). This gendered subjectivity, or to be more precise, the female body subjectivity, consequently influences the construction of sexual selfhood of these women. In this context, investigating the inevitable interaction of the patriarchal bargain and the boundaries of dress can give us insight into an important aspect of the process of

constructing sexual selfhood. Thus, in this chapter, I aim to explore how the construction of women's sexual selfhood in Egypt can be shaped by their negotiations of the boundaries of covering and uncovering their own female body. Additionally, I argue that this process of negotiating boundaries and how women navigate it differently ended up being a formative experience of their sexual identity and perceived sexuality.

In order to examine this negotiation process, it is first important to situate it within the societal structures of control that dictate these boundaries. The codes of dress for women are constantly defined and redefined according to rules and structures inscribed through the control of female bodies. While social control operates on a multitude of dimensions and spheres, the female body remains a primary subject of its dominance (Honkatukia and Keskinen, 2018). In their work on the social control imposed on the bodies and dress of girls, Paivi Honkatukia and Suvi Keskinen identify a perspective of differences on social control exercised in families, communities and societies with regards to the intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, class and age. Although their research mainly addresses the context of Muslim and nonwestern minorities in European countries, their analysis of social control can be applied to a variety of other contexts including Egypt. The four forms of social control as identified by them are: formal and informal institutional control, normative control in close relationships and internalized control (2018). Through exploring and analyzing the experiences of the women in this chapter, these four forms of social control will be observed. It is important to note that these forms of social control cannot be understood as four separate spheres or in a vacuum. They occur adjacently and are experienced differently depending on cultural meanings, societal structure and contexts of inequality. Additionally, intersectionality is central to understanding social control (2018).

The interview questions on this topic were divided into two main parts. The first was directed to all ten of my interviewees and addressed the women's familial and societal dress

codes along with their reactionary coping mechanisms and/or resistance. In this section, the term "covering up", which I use in various contexts, refers to dressing modestly and covering as much skin as possible without covering the hair. The second part of the questions was only posed to the women who had experiences with wearing the hijab. None of the women I interviewed currently wears the hijab, however, four of them previously did at different stages of their lives. Because it is very difficult to capture their entire hijab journeys and the significance it holds to them in just one section in this chapter, I only focus my analysis their hijab in relation to their feelings of sexuality, their sexual body and sexual selfhood.

3.1 The Boundaries of Dress

Over the course of the past 100 years in Egypt, the changing political landscape and emerging social movements have strongly influenced cultural and social behaviors and practices including women's dress. The shift in dress choices can be linked to the spread of custom veiling in the early 1900s to more western-influenced attire during and post colonialism, followed by the resurgence of the veil but with religious nuances in the mid 1970s (Seymour-Jorn, 2002; Elguindi, 1999; Odeh, 1993). Big urban cities, such as Cairo and Alexandria, witnessed the extensive spread of modest attire that was influenced by the hijab, encompassing loose-fitted clothes covering the body, and, in the case of wearing the hijab, the hair (Herrera, 2001). Arlene Elowe Macleod studies how class interacts with gender in Cairo to produce gender dynamics of inequality that are fueled by issues of poverty and socioeconomic class struggles (Tadros, 1994). When situated in a religious framework as well, we can see an increasing imposition of patriarchal authority and the consequent subjugation of female bodies.

All my interviewees responded with a clear 'yes' when asked if they had any rules and/or restrictions regarding their clothing while growing up. The reasons behind these restrictions varied from family -and/or extended family-, religion, the streets, traditions and

sometimes a combination of the mentioned. Furthermore, many times a clear explanation was not given by the parent (or parental figure) as to why these rules were in place and must be followed. As Sara explained: "At some point my dad started saying 'you can't wear this, go change, this is too short, this is too tight.' I was still in primary school before puberty even and I did not understand what was going on." Sara grew very conscious of her clothes and developed what she called "an exaggerated urge to coverup at all times." Referring to the perspectives of social control, this exaggerated urge that Sara described indicates her internalization of the normative control of her father where she started policing her own body. Sara added that for her father, these restrictions did not stem from religious reasonings as he is not very religious himself, although she remains unsure of the rationale behind his rules at the time. It could be assumed that his restrictions stemmed from wanting to protect his daughter: he could have been thinking that if she modified the way she dresses, it would eliminate the risk of undesirable male attention that would project premature sexual signification on her body.

Comparatively, the absence of a father -or father figure- did not necessarily imply the lack of restrictions or other forms of social control because often, another family member would assume that role of control. For instance, Karima said that the rules her grandmother -as her main caretaker at the time- set for her were absolutely for social reasonings: "It was always because of the neighbors, the people in the streets and the community. If I am wearing a sleeveless top, they would tell me to wear a jacket and take it off when I leave the neighborhood or arrive at my destination." In Karima's experience, the interplay of informal institutional control operating through normative control in close relationships, her grandmother in this case, can be clearly observed. In this context, the informal institution in question is the community experienced in the street, a gendered communal space (Ilahi, 2009), where the dangers of not adhering to this assumed control include sexual harassment,

insults and/or reputation damage among other community members. These occurrences contribute to the production of an environment of sexual terrorism that women have to navigate in the urban space (Ilahi, 2009). Additionally, and as Honkatukia and Keskinen mention, the strength of informal institutional control depends on the existing formal institutional control such as the dominant discourses circulating in Egyptian society – some of which was discussed in the previous chapter such as heavily sexualizing certain female body parts and public verbal abuse and body shaming (2018). Since these dominant discourses are centered around the sexualization and stigmatization of the female body, it makes for a stronger informal institutional control. Furthermore, this demonstrates how women are constantly urged -so much that it becomes habitual, as in Sara's case- to modify their behavior, including movements and daily actions, in public so as not to draw unwanted male attention (Ilahi, 2009).

The rules and restrictions of clothes were usually enforced by either one of the parents (or a parental figure) or sometimes both parents together. The dynamics of the interactions of the regulation process itself sometimes occurred differently when the views of the mother and the father did not align, thus creating two norms with the family. These dynamics exhibit another form of social control within societal structures and another example of the patriarchal bargain in action. Sara remembered how her mother encouraged her to make her own choices when it comes to what she wanted to wear, despite her father's restrictions. Her mother's encouragements allowed Sara more agency over her father's normative control. As Sara explained, she did not gain this agency through conflicts or outright rebellion, instead she learned to navigate her father's boundaries through a long process of gradual negotiation (Honkatukia and Keskinen, 2018). This led to ongoing negotiations of setting and resetting boundaries. In this situation, Sara along with her mother were involved in the negotiation process through different forms of resistance. The mother's passive resistance is her

strategizing in this paradigm of an ongoing patriarchal bargain that is shaped by existing constraints and forms of control.

The approach adopted by parents -or parental figures or guardians- to enforce regulations exhibited variations in the stories of my interlocutors. Amal spoke about how the rules her mother imposed were an extension of the rules imposed on her by her husband, Amal's father and Amal's brother. She remembered a conversation she had with her mother where she said, "A woman can wear whatever she wants." Amal's father overheard his wife and started a fight with her, "What do you mean a woman can wear whatever she wants? Do you take me for a *khawal*[7]? Am I a *khawal* to you?". For Amal's father how his wife and daughter dress, and specifically how he manages to enforce strict control over it, is a direct reflection of his domineering masculinity. Consequently, he perceived the freedom of dress of women in his household as an attack on his masculine identity as the patriarch of the household. He constructed and maintained this masculinity by subjugating the femininity -represented by the female bodies- of Amal and her mother. The conversation led me to ask Amal about what she thought her father and brother were trying to control with their restrictions, to which she responded, "I cannot show any signs of femininity of my body so I cannot wear tight clothes for example." Amal statement reflects Soad Joseph's findings on brother-sister relationship dynamics in Lebanon. Joseph explains how brothers construct their masculinities by feminizing their sisters and consequently policing that produced feminization (1994). Amal's brother, who partook in regulating his sister's practices -particularly those pertaining to her femininity and gender identity- utilized his role to emphasis his masculine identity as a co-patriarch of the household.

[7] The term khawal refers to effeminate young male dancers who cross-dressed and adopted the mannerisms of women dancers. They existed in Egypt until the 19th century. In dialectal Egyptian Arabic, the term offensively refers to their passive sexual role in anal sex. It is used as an insult to a man's masculinity (Fortier, 2019).

Afterwards, it was not surprising to Amal when her mother imposed the very same restrictions under which she was suffering, “It is all part of a rotten system that is cultural, religious and even political.” She is well aware of how she has internalized these different forms of social control and has been practicing them for years on her own body, even in different contexts. As she explained:

> I was living in Mexico for a while last year and I remember being so excited before going there because I thought I would be able to dress the way I wanted without all the fear and guilt. But I could not do it. It was like I was my father or brother telling myself that I can’t go out in the street dressed like this.

Despite being in a different environment where she theoretically had more space to express herself through dress, and despite her awareness of the internalized voice that constrained her, Amal was still unable to break free from the grip of her family's social control and the overall formal and informal institutional control that she had experienced. This example demonstrates how sedimented these experiences can be in one’s selfhood.

Contrary to Amal’s experience is Asmaa’s, who was always criticized by her family members -extended family included- for not being ‘feminine enough’. She explained: “I have always prioritized comfort when it comes to clothes and thus leaned towards men’s clothes because they tend to be bigger in size. I would always hear comments such as “why aren’t you dressing more like a girl?”” Although both Amal and Asmaa made very different choices in terms of their dress expression, their experiences represent two extremes of the continuum that is policing female bodies and regulating their sexuality. This reaffirms what is referred to by scholars as “the decency continuum” that women are required to balance on where they should not completely hide their sexuality nor reveal too much of it (Honkatukia, 1999). This balance is in place to showcase hints of protected and promised sexuality that is only allowed to unravel under certain socially acceptable circumstances, i.e.: marriage which will be

further explored in the next chapter. Additionally, this balance can also be observed, implicitly, in forms of multiple visual and cultural representation. For instance, downtown Cairo - the capital with a population of roughly 20 million people - is a popular shopping area for clothes, particularly for lower middle-class Egyptians. Among these hundreds of shops, two stand out: the first sell modest clothing mainly for women wearing the hijab, and the second are lingerie stores. The shops are located alongside each other, with huge storefronts displaying long modest dresses and headscarves and also unusual looking underwear. The juxtaposition of the public versus private presents the two socially acceptable modes of female sexuality, the obligation of covering up and the promise of sexual access (Ryzova, 2005).

In the stories of Sara, Karima and Amal their mothers played a crucial role in the negotiation process whether as an ally or an enforcer of the rules. In Mona's experience, however, she spoke about both her parents as a unified "they" without one playing a distinctively different role than the other. When Mona had her menarche, her parents started paying attention to the way she dressed, especially around their own family: "I wouldn't say my parents are conservative, at least not as conservative as their siblings. This is why they would always make sure I am dressed appropriately when they are around so they would not make any comments," Mona said. Her parents are 'moderately religious' according to her description. However, their restrictions on Mona's dress were mainly for reasons pertaining to their familial background, in which they were subjected to normative control that they then enforced on their daughters. Towards her late teen years, Mona started rebelling against these restrictions in her own way of bargaining with the patriarchy: "When I was younger, I didn't have any problems with all these rules. Everyone at my school dressed similarly and my family too. But then, I would watch TV[8] and see people wearing all kinds of different styles

[8] Mona was referring to American TV, which is very popular in Egypt and Arab countries (Amin, 1999).

and I wanted to dress the same!". Mona had relatively smooth negotiations with her family, she said. She mainly referred it to the fact that she was the youngest of 3 children, with an older brother and sister. This meant that her parents had already gone through the process of negotiating where the boundaries should be set with her older sister who had worn the hijab at a young age and decided to take it off 3 years later. By the time Mona started rebelling her parents were more understanding of the parameters of the process. There was less of a struggle from their side, which made for smooth negotiations with consensual outcomes.

In most cases, restrictions pertaining to women's clothes started to be imposed when they experienced their menarches since this is seen as the starting point of sexing the female body. However, Nadia recalls having restrictions in terms of what she could and could not wear for as long as she could remember. Even as a child, she was constantly told that she could not dress like other girls her age because of her weight, "it was always that I need to cover up because my body is bigger, it shouldn't be seen. I realize now that they feared that people will sexualize my body even though I was still a child," she said. Nadia was also instructed to cover up in her home because she has a brother, and therefore should dress appropriately in his presence. The existence of Nadia's female body, whether in public or in the private sphere, was associated with - or even conditioned by - the restrictions imposed on it to control it. At this young age, Nadia internalized the social control that her body was constantly subjected to, which also reflected on the kind of childhood that she had: "I did not engage in any activity that would involve moving my body because I was too worried about how it would look or what people would say. I did not run or play. To this day, I still hate running," said Nadia in distress. Nadia's way of negotiating the boundaries was that she grew to impose control on her own body and police it at a very young age, so that it conformed to the appropriate forms in which a female body should be presented and socialized.

Looking closely at the experiences of the six women, it is important to situate them within the wider gendered and sexualized existing power relations in Egyptian society. Forms of social control and their corresponding patriarchal bargains can only be properly understood and analyzed within their intersectional contexts. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the different forms of agency, whether active or passive, that are shaped by the different circumstances and power structures. Through analyzing these entire processes, we can observe the cruciality of them in the social production of the sexed female body and the sociality of a certain archetype of Egyptian woman.

3.2 A Hijab Journey

The hijab, also referred to as the Muslim veil or headcover, is a major topic of controversy when it comes to its religious and social practice. Even though, the hijab is not exclusively a Muslim practice, nowadays, it is largely associated with the Muslim identity. Just like any other social phenomena turned practice, the sociality of the hijab in Egypt has depended on multiple individual and social factors other than the level of religiosity, such as demography, socioeconomic status, politics, class, age, and family structure among others. As observed in the experiences above and also in the previous chapter, the social production of female bodies heavily involves embedding the urge and need to cover up the female figure, as well as essentializing it as a perquisite for the presence of women in the public, and sometimes even private, sphere. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the hijab is a dominant practice in Egypt (Al-Kazi and Gonzalez, 2018).

Egypt's history of the hijab is intertwined with its changing political scene and social movements that have strongly influenced the practice. With the British occupation in the late 19th century, progressive nationalist movements emerged and unveiled women were seen as representing modernity and secularism (Zuhur, 1992). However, in the mid-1970s and with the rise of political Islam, embodied in the Muslim Brotherhood group gaining traction, the

hijab started spreading widely as a symbol of that movement (Elguindi, 1999). In 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate won the presidential elections and had a very short one-year term before he was overthrown by the military. As Lama Abu-Odeh explains, attempting to understand Egyptian women's relationships with their bodies, particularly from the 1970s onwards, is a complicated process because female bodies have been a key site for the unfolding of the sociocultural struggles of postcolonial societies. Most notably in this regard is the clash between the post-colonial construction of female bodies versus the traditional construction of female bodies, which were represented in the anti-hijab movement in the early 1920s and the Islamist movement and spread of hijab in the 1970s (Odeh, 1993).

The hijab is a large topic that has generated a significant body of literature from different perspectives and in different contexts. Many western scholars have referred to the hijab merely as an outdated practice and tool of the patriarchy to oppress women. Therefore, I believe it is important to highlight the agency and individual motivations -rather than only social context - of women who willingly decide to wear the hijab. As Arlene Macleod explained, Egyptian women are not victims of oppressive cultural practices, they are rather "resourceful in manipulating their situations" where they struggle in their own ways (Tadros on Macleod, 1994). Although I have never worn the hijab, I have known women who have found joy and fulfillment in the practice. My mother decided to wear the hijab in her mid-thirties. Growing up in a rather traditional more than religious family, she was never forced or urged in any way to wear it. When she came to her decision, it was utterly an act of spirituality and religious piety. Thus, I would like to emphasize that representing the hijab as an oppressive practice is not at all my intention. My attempt is to investigate the practice in its social milieu and how it can be utilized in the context of the classic patriarchy to further enforce stringency and subjugate female bodies. From an Islamic doctrine perspective, the hijab has triggered theological debates among scholars and Muslims. Being situated in the

context of the nation state, these debates and interpretations are influenced by state politics and cultural normativity, which endorse women's inferiority and subordination (Tadros, 1994).

It is crucial to carefully examine the context and situate the practice of the hijab in its social, religious and cultural background instead of retreating to absolutist claims that might be loaded with orientalist and colonial discourses. I realize that it is indeed very difficult to capture the entirety of my interlocutors' hijab experiences in this subsection, which I do not intend to do. Therefore, I will mainly focus on certain aspects that have significantly influenced the process of constructing the sexual selfhood of these women.

Four of the women interviewed previously wore the hijab and had taken it off. The circumstances of their decision to start wearing it in the first place varied with the exception of the involvement of religious and familial factors. All four women started wearing it in their early to mid-adolescence. Sisters Hend and Rawya both started wearing the hijab as soon as they had their menarche. Although their parents did not directly ask them to or force them to put it on, they both had the prior understanding that they were to wear the hijab as soon as they got their periods because it is what was required from them religiously when coming of age. That understanding developed over their childhood and adolescence through their religious upbringing, which was fostered by their parents but also through attending religious classes, being surrounded by likeminded peers and reading. Rawya started questioning the hijab when she went to university, but her parents would often talk to her about the social rewards of wearing the hijab "because you are doing these good things, you're going to find a good husband who will want to marry you," they said. Rawya's parents' rationale can be understood in contrast to Zuhur's (1992) argument that some people, veiled women too, believe that Egyptian men tend to view unveiled women as more available, accessible and sexually attractive and thus would not be interested in choosing them as their future wives.

This belief exemplifies how women's dress carry heavy sexual implications since it is utilized as a test or an indicator of her honor and reputation (Odeh, 1993). This perspective further situates the hijab within the power structure of gendered dynamics in Egypt and it also explains why Egyptian women tend to view the hijab in gendered terms.

After 9 years of wearing it, Rawya decided she wanted to take it off. This decision led to difficult conversations with her parents, especially because they were always strict and very particular about their daughters committing to a modest dress code that included the hijab. Expectedly, negotiating changing normativities and navigating forms of social control can lead to conflicts and tension within one's self and in social relations (Honkatukia and Keskinen, 2018). After almost 10 years of taking the hijab off, I asked Rawya what has changed in how she sees her body to which she said: "How I see myself has completely changed but not because of the hijab perse, but because over the years I have learned to stand up for myself more and demand what I want." The process of bargaining that Rawya has gone through and the new boundaries that she has managed to set for her own body have clearly influenced her perception of her own selfhood. Her conclusion reaffirms the cruciality of the patriarchal bargaining process and negotiating of normativities in the construction of one's selfhood, including the sexual. Rawya's sense of achieved agency did not just necessarily pertain to the hijab but overall to being able to de/re/set the boundaries that were in place for her and her body to follow.

Comparatively, Rawya's sister had a different dilemma when it came to the hijab. In her early twenties, Hend was struggling with her sexuality, particularly in conjunction with her religiosity and beliefs. Ideologically, the hijab is to be worn in the presence of unfamiliar men, i.e., any man who is not the father, son, brother, uncle, nephew, husband or father in-law of the woman in question. Hend started questioning the validity of her hijab in accordance with her sexuality: "So, I am supposed to cover up in front of men. But what if I am attracted

to women, am I supposed to cover up in front of them too? If so, should I cover up in front of all women? Or only the ones that I am attracted to?" she said. It is important to note that the hijab is practiced within the heteronormative parameters of the Egyptian sociocultural context and religious doctrine. Therefore, it can be viewed as a tool to strengthen the (re)production of normative heterosexual female bodies in accordance with socio-culturally appropriate scripts of sexuality identity and selfhood. Subsequently, Hend's questions her to take the decision to take the hijab off. She explained: "There is comfort in being covered and feeling protected in a way. But I was grappling with my sexuality at the time, so it did not make sense for me to keep wearing it. I could no longer relate to it." Hend's sense of her private body and its sexual character did not align with the image of her public, veiled and regulated body. Eventually, she took her hijab off one year after her sister. By that point, her parents were much more understanding and accepting than their initial experience with Rawya. Hend's hijab experience was very much influenced by her non-heteronormative sexuality. Her sexual inquiry and therefore subjectivity at the time were shaped by her practice of the hijab as an overt act of religiosity; how she felt the two did not coincide at the time.

It is also important to understand the hijab in terms of gender, since the practice is situated within the very gendered dynamics and intricate power relations of Egyptian society. In a 2015 study to investigate the meaning of the hijab for Egyptian women, 74% of the research sample of one hundred Egyptian women, saw the hijab in gendered terms. Whether wearing the hijab or not, the women explained how they view the hijab as a tool for men to further control female bodies (Jackson and Monk-Turner, 2015). Similarly, when I asked Hend how she felt about the hijab now as someone who used to wear it for years, she said:

> Part of me has always been envious of the care-free attitude of men. The way they hold their bodies that is not laden with expectations. I resent the idea of my body always seen

> as a sexual object. I resent being told to cover up for the purpose of preventing the arousal of men who roam freely without restrictions while I have to cater to their gaze.

Hend's reflection on the hijab and covering up in general conceptualizes them in contrast to the relatively restriction free presence of the male body in public space and how it influences women's mobility. Her response further reiterates the discursive construction of gendered behaviors through the dichotomous adaptations of gender divisions as dictated by sociocultural contexts (Ilahi, 2009).

In a 2018 study that surveyed 300 Egyptian women wearing the hijab, 40% admitted that they were asked or forced to wear the hijab (Al-Kazi and Gonzalez, 2018). Similarly, Amina started wearing the hijab at the age of 16 when her father pressured her into it. Amina's sister, who is 9 years older than her, had already been wearing it for a while at that time so the father asked both Amina's mother and sister to urge her to wear it as well. He did so because he was concerned that if he died while Amina was not wearing the hijab, "he would be eternally damned and go to hell". Out of fear of brining eternal retribution to her father, she eventually wore it. At the time of our interview, Amina was not wearing the hijab for only one month after wearing it for nearly 8 years. She had been delaying taking it off for a long time to avoid having to have a confrontational conversation with her father. However, she eventually took it off after telling her sister and mother. This was facilitated by the fact that Amina does not live with her family and lives alone in another city. "When I told my sister I was taking it off, she told me "you never wanted to wear it in the first place. You only did it for our dad,"" Amina said. Although it had only been one month, I was curious to know if she already felt any different about herself. "I don't feel very different after taking it off. In fact, I feel more myself than ever. It was not my decision to wear it in the first place and it never felt right for me somehow." Amina explained.

Nadia had been wearing the hijab for 12 years before she made the decision to take it off at the age of 26. Similar to the sisters, Nadia wore it out of religious conviction without any pressure from her mother or stepfather. The hijab was a part of her identity that she found comfort in, especially in public spaces. The hijab can be seen as a shield from the inconveniences of women's public exposure, particularly in overcrowded cities such as Cairo and Alexandria. Additionally, it is important to note that a lot of women resort to wearing the hijab because they believe it might protect them from sexual harassment while moving in urban spaces such as public transport or local markets (Al-Kazi and Gonzalez, 2018).

Even though there are similarities in their background in terms of social background, religion and regulated upbringings, Amina, Rawya, Hend and Nadia had very different journeys with their hijab in terms of initial motivation, reflection, doubts and timeline. Their experiences are nonetheless very individual and are best analysed within their individual context rather than as a collective. Also, it is important to note that in Egypt, the hijab has connotations that are not just religious but also social, socioeconomic and cultural. These factors should be taken into consideration when looking at the patriarchal negotiation process that precedes taking off the hijab. Abu Odeh argues that the rhetoric of the hijab originally aims to construct a monolithic female sexuality, which was not achieved (1993). This can be observed in the experiences of these 4 women where the practice of the hijab has influenced their bodies and sexual selfhood differently.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the sexual selfhood of Egyptian women is partially constructed through their engagement in the patriarchal bargain and negotiation of boundaries that are established for their female bodies to abide by. Rather than looking at the gendered forms of social control, I believe a better analysis takes into consideration the multi-dimensional forms of social control that are represented in: formal and informal institutional control, normative control in close relationships and internalized control (Honkatukia and Keskinen, 2018). These forms are exerted on female bodies while simultaneously situating it within the intersectional societal structures (gender, sexuality, religion, age, social background, etc) in which they operate. It was also interesting to examine the agents involved in processes of negotiations, i.e., mother, father or both and sometimes extended family members. This aspect demonstrated the social control internalized by mothers and daughters alike. I also explored the process of changing normativities, the conflicts and tensions that arise accordingly, and how it is navigated differently in different contexts and with different results.

It is also crucial to examine the social practice of wearing the hijab in Egypt with regards to the (re)production of the sexed female body that is meant to be consumed in private while constantly being regulated and disciplined in public. Additionally, it is important to look at the performative aspect of the practice of hijab in Egypt the hijab: it is not only an Islamic dress, but it also serves other purposes such as protection from sexual harassment.

Through analysing the experiences of four of my interlocutors who previously wore the hijab, it was evident how the process of negotiating boundaries has strongly shaped their sexual subjectivity and consequently selfhood. Furthermore, it is also crucial to examine the different forms of agency that were contextually produced and was exercised in various ways in the different stories. For instance, for Amina, it was selecting the

decision that aligned most favorably with her circumstances and current beliefs; while for Rawya, it was a process of involving her parents and reaching consensual outcomes. This agency has additionally served to allow for more autonomy over the women's own bodies.

Chapter 4: Scripting Experiences of Sex and the Sexual

The study of sexual scripts and the process of their construction is significantly important in understanding and theorizing sexual behavior. Moreover, navigating normative sexual scripts allows for the de/re/construction of these scripts which have demonstrated a positive association with increasing levels of agency over one's sexuality (Jackson, 2007; Sakaluk et al., 2014). Sexual selfhood is primarily the product of its wider cultural and social institutions (Jackson, 2007). Therefore, to better understand sexual scripts, it is important to examine influential social institutions.

Religious institutions are can significantly shape individuals' behaviors and practices (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). Islam is the majority religious group in Egypt making up to 90% of the population[9]. In Islam engaging in premarital or extramarital sex is considered highly sinful and completely forbidden. Muslims place significant importance on preserving one's virginity until marriage which is regulated within the religion's framework (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). Expectedly, the predominant national Islamic culture strongly influences individuals' sexual behaviors. Therefore, in Egypt, premarital sex is highly unacceptable and stigmatized (Oraby, 2012). Openly engaging in discussions pertaining to the topic carries inherent risks, as it can be perceived as a direct challenge to dominant religious and social discourses that meticulously regulate and censor sexuality as observed in the previous two chapters. Such deliberations challenge the established order and may provoke adverse consequences and societal backlash in Egypt. Additionally, it could be considered as an alleged breach to the previously mentioned "Egyptian family values". That is because sex or engaging in any form of sexual activity, especially when you are a woman, affects one's Sharaf -honor- and therefore it is constantly associated with one's morality and ethical values.

[9] Due to data restrictions, there are no exact statistics. The mentioned estimates were included in a US produced report on religious freedom in Egypt. Report can be found here: https://rb.gy/ynguy

On the national level, controlling and limiting individuals' sexual behavior has been facilitated through mechanism of social control, social learning, limited opportunities and gendering mobility (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). Consequently, young people would be less likely to deviate from their cultural indoctrination that forbids them from engaging in pre-marital sex out of fear of being ostracized by their parents, friends and social circles. Additionally, in a lot of Muslim communities, informal interactions and mixing of the sexes are strongly discouraged (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). These social restrictions decrease the opportunities of meeting willing romantic and/or sexual partners and therefore reduce the possibilities of unregulated sexual activity.

In this chapter, it will be demonstrated how the cultural themes and personal experiences of women, including those discussed in the previous two chapters, have shaped their perceptions, practices and experiences of sex and what is sexual and how it reflected on the construction of their sexual selfhood. I also explore how the sexualities of my interlocutors have developed and unfolded from their adolescence through their adulthood. Amidst the stringent social norms and control of female bodies that aims to eliminate any form of socially unregulated female sexuality, how has these women been navigating their sexual selfhood?

This chapter also includes exploring some of the constituents of the sexual self that are scripted on the intrapsychic level, such as "level of sexual experience, emotional memories of sexual pleasure (or lack thereof), perception of one's body as desirable, and perception of one's body parts as healthy" (Nack, 2000, p.96). I discuss four main themes including: different conceptualizations of sex, sexual shame, sexual pleasure and the process of de/re/constructing sexual scripts of one's sexual selfhood. Through looking into these different themes, I demonstrate the that the relationship between the four subsections and the developed sexual agency in adult women.

The questions in this section addressed the direct experiences that my interlocutors have had of sexual activity and sex including sexual pleasure, expectations of sexual partners' and past sexual experiences. Since these topics are highly stigmatized in Egypt, especially for unmarried women, the questions were the most sensitive and contentious in this section of the interviews. Therefore, the interviewees were explicitly reminded that they retained the autonomy to decline or abstain from sharing any sensitive information or personal experiences if they felt any discomfort as thoroughly discussed in the first chapter. The question that was waived the most, precisely two times, was addressing sexual pleasure whether self-induced or with a partner. In general, this question seemed to be the most sensitive question for the interviewees to answer. I was also concerned that some respondents may try to give socially desirable answers to some of the more sensitive questions to avoid being perceived negatively. Nonetheless, I believe that the fact that there will be no publication of the research within Egypt or in the Arabic language, has facilitated a greater willingness among my interlocutors to express themselves openly and candidly without the influence of social pressures.

Out of the ten women I interviewed, only one is currently married, Asmaa. Rawya was also married before but had been divorced for almost a year at the time of the interview. Sara is in a heterosexual relationship and the rest of the women reported to be single at the time of the interview. Therefore, from a societal point of view, Asmaa and Rawya are the only two women who are socially allowed to engage in sexual activity, as long as it is within the context of their heterosexual marriage of course. While the other eight women are expected to preserve their honor -virginity included- and abstain from any sexual activity until they get married. Only then will it become acceptable for them to engage in such activity.

4.1 What is Sex?

"What do you mean by sexually active?" or "what do you exactly mean by sex?" where the questions I was often asked back by my interlocutors when I asked them how long they have been sexually active for. While I was drafting the questions of this section, I asked myself the same question of "what do I mean when I say sex?". Mainly because it is a topic that I have thought about a lot before, and also, in the past I have engaged in multiple conversations within my social circles questioning the definition of sex or having sex. My only conclusion was that the definition of sex is not in any way uniform to all individuals and in all contexts. Thus, assuming that all my interlocutors share the same consistent definition of sex or of being sexually active would have been inaccurate. For the purposes of my studies, I did not set a fixed meaning of what sex is. Instead, I wanted to see how the woman I am interviewing would define it in light of their personal experiences -some of which were discussed in the previous two chapters- and conceptualization that are grounded in the wider frameworks of the Egyptian sociocultural context.

It is particularly important to look at the different definitions of sex as perceived by individuals in the Egyptian context since the consequences of having sex or engaging in sexual activity-more so for women- could be severe since the value of a woman is determined upon the behaviors and practice of her female body. Also, we should keep in mind the importance of the notion of El-Sharaf -or honor- as previously discussed in chapter 2. Accordingly, it is plausible in this context to anticipate the phenomenon that is referred to as "motivated definition" which is when individuals are deciding on how to label a situation, they consider the potential consequences of applying one label or another (Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2007). Therefore, they might opt for definitions or labels that result in positive consequences. In their case, their definition is motivated by said positive outcomes. So, in the Egyptian context, we can assume that a woman might choose to not classify certain sexual

acts as 'sex' so as to avoid the consequences of doing so, such as: reputation damage, social stigma, family disownment, and in extreme cases, an honor crime.

The predicament that is defining 'sex' is not unfamiliar in research. In a 1999 study based in the US, Sanders and Reinisch investigated how individuals define sex by presenting a list of sexual practices to their respondents and asking them to determine whether they consider engaging in such practice as having sex or not. Their results show that 99.5% of their respondents to consider penile-vaginal intercourse to be sex with lower percentages of other acts such as oral sex (40%) or anal sex (81%) (1999). The study did not mention the participants' sexual orientation which could have been useful data in analyzing the findings. This study, along with other similar ones, have traced a hierarchy of sexual behavior where most respondents considered penile-vaginal intercourse as sex while more ambiguity and controversy surrounded other forms of sex (Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2007). In agreement, another study has found that individuals are less likely to include a same-sex sexual behavior in their definitions of sex or virginity loss because of the absence of penile-vaginal intercourse (Randall and Buyers, 2003).

Defining sex in terms of the dyadic engagement of a penis and a vagina refers to the act in heterosexual vocabulary in an implication that it is the one standard conventional practice. Furthermore, this places heterosexuality as the only legitimate practice of sex. As a queer woman, Hend acknowledged finding herself trapped in this heteronormative paradigm of sex. She said:

> My first partner and I had decided to not have sex until we were spiritually married. We were still doing a lot of sexual activities, but we would say to ourselves it is not sex as long as we are not fully naked and there is no penile-vaginal penetration. However, we had a conversation about it a few years after and we realized that what we used to do is also classified as sex, but we were just trying to make ourselves feel better about it at the time.

Restricting the definition of sex to penile-vaginal penetration and nudity is an indication of the traditional gendered cultural scenarios of Hend and her partner. After years of grappling with her sexuality and religion, Hend acknowledged that her beliefs were rooted in religious and cultural understandings of heteronormative relationships and marriage which fueled her guilt towards premarital sexual acitivity and her "unusual" sexuality. Indeed, research has found a strong link between religiosity and the delay in initial sexual experience and/or sex (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012; Shirazi and Morowatisharifabad, 2009). Also, Hend's motivated definition of sex at that time could have been influenced by her need to preserve her virginity, and consequently her Sharaf so as not to jeopardize her social and familial bonds. Her understanding was strongly tied to the cultural level of sexual scripting which can be observed in her reflections on her past sexual experiences.

The ambiguity surrounding the definition of sex has consequently permeated to the understanding of one's own experiences and practices. In a 2007 US based study that aimed to explore definitions of sex among undergraduate students, several respondents exhibited unclear boundaries between what they classify as "sex" and "not sex". Consequently, this led to inconsistencies in the reflections on their own sexual histories and how they would generally label their experiences (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). This uncertainty can also be detected in Karima's answer when she was thinking of how long she has been sexually active for. After she initially said one year, when probed she seemed unsure of her answer, "I have been sexually active for one year yes. No wait, two years. But I also used to make out and stuff with my first boyfriend when I was 21. So maybe four years. Yes, four years." Karima's initial answer "one or two years" was based on a certain definition of sex that excluded "making out and stuff". She then changed her response after re-evaluating her experience and accordingly her labelling of it as sex. This suggests that Karima's

understanding of sex does not constitute clear boundaries of what practices are labelled as sex and what are not.

In the process of classifying an experience as sex or not sex, consent plays an intricate role. This issue was flagged in some of the interviews I conducted. When I was inquiring about how long my interlocutors have been sexually active in line with their definition of sex; some of them asked me if they should consider consensual only or non-consensual sexual experiences as well in their calculation of years. Five out of ten women interviewed reported being subjected to practices of sexual coercion. Nonetheless, not all of the five women categorized these practices as "sex". Research evidenced that women tend to not label their non-consensual sexual experiences as "sex" in order to avoid being called victims of rape or coerced sexual practices (Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2004, 2007). For instance, one of the women had mentioned earlier on in our conversation being sexually assaulted, however, when she was thinking about how long she has been sexually active for, she did not consider these practices in her timeline. Another participant said that she does not have a clear timeline of when exactly she became sexually active because her experiences of consensual sex had been entangled with coercive practices that she did not want to analyze. On the other hand, when I asked Yasmeen, she openly disclosed to me that her sexual debut experience at the age of seventeen was in fact a case of statutory rape[10] which she was not fully aware of at the time. She later sought professional help and has developed a better understanding of coercive sexual practices.

The question of "what is sex?" has proven to yield different conceptions that are subjective to individual's sexual history, past experiences, context, background and beliefs. Definitions of sex can also be motivated by a myriad of socio-cultural factors such as wanting

[10] Statutory rape, in general terms, is defined as unlawful sexual intercourse with a person under the age of consent, regardless of whether it is against the person's will (Garner, 1999, p.1267). Statutory rape is criminalized in Egypt and punishable by jail time (Reza, 2011).

to retain one's virginity, protecting familial and social bonds and the pursuit of social acceptance social acceptance. It is also important to observe the influence of gendered sexual scripts on individuals' reflections and conceptualizations of their own sexual experiences.

4.2 Shame and Other Concerns

The words "shame" and "guilt" were repeated numerous times throughout the conversations that I had with my interlocutors. The prominence of sexual guilt and shame within the context of Egypt is a predictable phenomenon. Sexual guilt is defined as the "generalized expectancy for self-mediated punishment for violating or anticipating violating standards for proper sexual conduct" (Mosher and Cross, 1971, p.71). As previously mentioned, the only form of proper sexual conduct is within the context of socially and religiously regulated heterosexual marital relationships. Building on the definition of sexual guilt, researchers have suggested the definition of sexual shame in particular to be "intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging due to our current or past sexual thoughts, experiences, or behaviors" (Kyle, 2013, p.22; Marcinechova and Zahorcova 2020).

The notions of sexual guilt and/or shame prominently emerged when I inquired about the concerns experienced by my interlocutors after their initial sexual experiences. Amal recalled her first experience with her then long-term partner. He was living in Cairo at the time, and she took the train from Alexandria to go visit him for the day. She said,

> It was the first time for both of us. I remember feeling so happy that I could fly. But that happiness was very short lived, unfortunately, it was quickly cut off with the Bawab's[11] stares when we were leaving the house. I felt as if their eyes were screaming the words

[11] Bawab: derived from the word door 'bab' and it refers to a kind of doorman that is common in Egypt. He typically resides with his family in a residential building to guard it and look after it (https://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/14/world/cairo-journal-beware-the-bawabs-the-know-it-alls-at-the-gate.html)

> "shame shame". I felt this overwhelming shame taking over me. On the journey back I made myself sick because I kept thinking about how I will go back home, and my mother will treat me normally thinking that I am her innocent good daughter when in fact I am dirty.

In order to understand Amal's feelings and thought process following her initial sex encounter, it is crucial to situate it within the broader context of her past experiences that shaped her beliefs and sexual convictions. These past experiences -some of which were narrated by Amal and explored in the previous two chapters- have essentialized shame and guilt into the social existence of her female body. Earlier, Amal had mentioned how, as an adolescent, her mother's regulation of her sanitary products consumption had caused her feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment towards her body. She had also spoken, with apprehension, about her father's description of heteronormative sexual behavior and desire that is imbued with binary traditional gendered roles and depicts women merely as objects of the male desire. She added that preserving her brother's and mother's Sharaf -honor- requires policing her own femininity and female body. The strong notions of sexual shame and guilt have been cumulatively internalized by Amal through her exposure to sociocultural subjugation and control of female bodies.

Sexual shame does not always emanate from one's own female body. It can also stem from external socio-cultural factors, highlighting the influence of the broader environment on the experience of shame. Mona, for instance, had her sexual debut at the age of 21. She remembered feeling ready but equally worried before going through with it, saying, "am I going to be burnt in hell? What about my virginity?" Mona's concerns mostly pertained to the social and religious consequences that she might have suffered post her initial sexual intercourse experience. Although she had stated earlier in the interview that she does not identify with religion and that it had no bearing on her actions and day-to-day life, she was

still worried about religious retribution, being burnt in hell as she described it, before engaging in sexual activity. That is because religiously inspired prevalent cultural values, strongly influence the public discourse which is usually mobilized to create policies, laws and regulations. Consequently, all individuals, regardless of their religious affiliations, are more likely to adhere to these wider socio-cultural and state organization (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). Mona's concern demonstrates how the national predominant Islamic culture has significantly shaped individuals' actions and sexual behaviors whether they are in fact religious or not.

It is crucial to examine the gendered dynamics of sexual scripts are and how individuals adapt to them, different genders alike, in the Egyptian society. This was evident in Mona's experience, saying, "I even remember talking about it to my partner at the time and he was wondering how I will be able to get married in Egypt after I have sex with him." Despite that fact that both Mona and her sexual partner were equally involved in the situation, it was evidently clear to both parties that Mona would be the one bearing the primary repercussions arising from their engagement in premarital sex. Her failure to preserve her virginity negatively affects her marriageability as predicted by her partner. This aligns with research data that found that a considerably larger proportion of women compared to men anticipated negative consequences as a result of having sex. The negative consequences mentioned by women were unwanted virginity loss and experiencing negative emotions about themselves. Contrarily, more men predicted positive outcomes of having sex such as increasing feelings of happiness (Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2007). Although this research was in the context of the United States, the gendered consequences of engaging in sex are common in the Egyptian context as well. Mona continued to explain that she was shamed by other sexual partners for not being a virgin and for having engaged in sexual relationships prior to her involvement with them. This further demonstrates the contradictory gender-

specific sexual scripts that enforce their rigorous control on female bodies in order to produce a certain sociocultural appropriate hidden sexuality. Additionally, Mona was urged to experience sexual shame whether by considering the socio-cultural ramifications of having sex, or through the censure of her sexual partners for not retaining her virginity. Sexual shame was constantly projected on her female body to regulate it into conforming with the normative sociocultural sexual scripts that ensure the re/production of the disciplined female body.

In the experiences of the women particularly with engagement in initial sexual activity, there has been two kinds of sexual shame: external and internal. External shame is the product of the surrounding socio-cultural environment that is being projected on female bodies and sexualities to further subjugate them. On the other hand, internal or internalized shame originates within the female body and can be developed over upbringing and adolescence years into adulthood. It is the product of internalizing socially endorsed narratives of regulation and control. The non-compliance or deviation from these curated scripts entails significant ramifications, as observed, primarily suffered by the female body.

4.3 Pleasure

Having delineated the prevailing stigma and sociocultural condemnation associated with engaging in discussions about sex and sexuality, the introduction of a discourse pertaining to female sexual pleasure introduces an additional stratum of social stigmatization to the dialogue. This was observed in the interviews when I inquired about respondents' experiences of sexual pleasure, particularly self-induced (masturbation) pleasure. Two of my interlocutors displayed clear signs of discomfort and did not wish to respond. Their reluctance to answer might be due to the mentioned discourse of extreme sociocultural censure to sexual pleasure, especially the practice of masturbation, in Egypt (Kasemy et al., 2016), in addition to their potential preference to not give socially undesirable answers.

The complexities of female pleasure and desire had been mostly overlooked in studies of sexuality and SRE[12] (sex and relationship education) alike (Fine, 1988; Hirst, 2013). While male pleasure is usually discussed as biological facts, questions regarding female pleasure are considerably given far less attention and importance (Fine, 1988). In a 2009 study that examined the interpretations of sex and sexuality within the gendered sexual scripts in the US, one of the main findings addressed the rarity of attention given to female sexual desire and pleasure. Respondents mentioned how women are expected to curb their desire and maintain silence when it comes to their sexual pleasure. Furthermore, women were perceived more as sexual objects rather than subjects (McCabe et al., 2009).

Gender plays a significant role in discussions about female sexual pleasure specifically in the terrain of patriarchy. Prevalent sexual scripts mainly portray women as providers of sexual pleasure to men (Sakaluk et al., 2014). Additionally, gendered sexual scripts tend to depict men to have a physical and pleasure-based approach to sexual relations and women to have an emotional-approach or rather not desiring at all (Hirst, 2013; Sakaluk at al., 2014). Yasmeen spoke about her experience of sexual pleasure from a gendered perspective, "I used to orgasm with girls really easily, but not with men. I think it is definitely psychological. Women humanize you; they see you as a person and treat you nicely even if it is just casual. While men dehumanize you, they treat you like a thing. So, I just felt safer with women." Having been sexually involved with men and women, Yasmeen reflected on her experience in gender binary terms. Her experience of feeling humanized versus dehumanized during sexual encounters with women and men respectively reiterates the McCabe et al. study findings where women reported feeling like sexual objects rather than subjects (2009).

[12] Sex and relationship education is lifelong learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships, sexual health and ourselves (SEF, 2005, P.1).

It is also important to examine the correlation between sexual shame and sexual pleasure. When I asked Rawya about her experiences of sexual pleasure, she said,

> I am always too worried to experience that. All the fear, anxiety and on top of that, there is my vaginismus[13]. There is always something to worry about. Before getting married, it was losing my virginity or my parents finding out or unexpected pregnancy. Now[14], it's the neighbors, people seeing a man going into my flat, and the police of course!

Rawya spoke of sexual pleasure exclusively in relevance to her negative feelings of distress, fear, shame and guilt. Her experiences of pleasure have always been riddled with her fears that were mainly pertaining to her sociocultural context. The community surveillance that Rawya is aware is being imposed on her female body could not have intersected with her ability to experience sexual pleasure. Studies have shown that notions of shame, particularly trait shame[15], are negatively correlated to sexual satisfaction and achievement of sexual pleasure (Beck, 2015; Marcinechova and Zahorcova 2020). Therefore, increasing feelings of sexual shame and guilt can significantly obstruct one's ability to experience sexual pleasure.

To experience sexual pleasure without the accompanying negative feelings of sexual shame and guilt, especially externally sociocultural ones projected, some women have resorted to self-induced pleasure. Amina elaborated on how solo bodily pleasure is her preferred way to attain enjoyment without shame, she said "When I am having sex with someone, I find myself constantly thinking about how I am disappointing my mother and older sister. So, this is why I find it easier to experience pleasure on my own. No guilt, no fear, just me and my body." Amina's feelings of shame and guilt are rooted in her commitment

[13] Vaginismus is a sexual psychophysiological pain disorder described as the tightening of the vagina at the entry of any object. It usually results from fear of intercourse, sexual guilt, misinformation about sexual matters (Jeng, 2004).
[14] As previously mentioned, Rawya had been divorced for a year at the time of the interview.
[15] Trait shame refers to shame as a personality trait rather than an emotional state experienced briefly as a result of a certain event (Goss et al., 1994).

to her mother and sister's initial restrictions where the right to sexual pleasure, if any, is not inherent to the female body and could only be attained within the acceptable sociocultural context, i.e.: heterosexual marriage. This is why masturbation has allowed her to experience pleasure that is guilt and shame free. This also shows that for Amina, sexual pleasure in itself is not correlated to shame but rather the severe consequences arising from deviating from the wider sociocultural scripts that strictly regulate female bodies.

It is critical to examine the role of emphasizing the importance of sexual pleasure in increasing the awareness and avoidance of sexual coercion practices. For instance, Amina spoke about how being more aware of what she likes and dislikes enabled her to assertively express her boundaries and desires, she said "One of the things I am very proud of is that I have learned to speak up and say, "no I am not doing this" if I am not comfortable in the situation or if the experience is not pleasurable." Amina's experience with pleasure, including self-induced, has given her a better understanding of her own bodily needs, discomfort, and sexual preferences. This also entails higher probability of resisting at times of discomfort and voicing concerns, as Amina has learned to do. This reaffirms Chris Beasley's theorization of pleasure, communication and sexual violence; "pleasure is not necessarily at odds with safety but instead may well produce it" (2008, p.160).

The role of sexual pleasure is not adequately emphasized in sexual development and enhanced sexual health (Hirst, 2013). The above accounts on sexual pleasure involve strong expressions of sexual shame and guilt. Experiencing feelings of shame has often affected the women's ability to have pleasurable sex experiences which consequently impeded their sexual health. Additionally, it is crucial to examine the role of gender constructs in the organization of sexual pleasure where female pleasure is considered secondary to male pleasure. The omission of female sexual pleasure from discourses of sexuality significantly interferes with women attainment of sexual and bodily agency. Therefore, the gendered

silence surrounding sexual pleasure can be seen as yet another mechanism of regulation of female bodies and sexualities (Hirst, 2013).

4.4 De/Re-Constructing One's Own Sexual Selfhood

In Simon and Gagnon's theory of sexual scripts, they explain how the scripting of the sexual self is intertwined with the everydayness of our past and present lives. Therefore, the construction of one's selfhood is not limited to past experiences and traumas that have been incorporated into our sexual subjectivity. Instead, it is a continues process that involves a reflexive process between our past and present (Jackson, 2007). Therefore, our past experiences are not a fixed dimension, "the present significantly reshapes the past as we construct our biographies to bring them into greater congruence with our current identities, roles, situations and available vocabulary" (Gagnon and Simon, 1974, p.13). This can be observed, for instance, in Yasmeen's understanding of her initial sex encounter. Her understanding and conceptualization of that past experience changed as she became more aware and was able to label it as statutory rape.

The continuous changeability of our sexual scripting allows for more agency of the sexual self, according to Simon and Gagnon (1974). This notion of agency was expressed by Amina when she spoke about how her experiences of sexual pleasure have allowed her to better understand her desires and boundaries. Consequently, she learned to communicate her dissatisfaction and resistance and equally voice her desires, which she described as an "achievement" that made for a radical positive change in her sexual experiences. Similarly, Nadia spoke about how her experience led her to develop a more conscious understanding of consent that is not ambiguous nor subjective. The contemplations of Nadia and Amina demonstrate positive changes in their sexual scripting that allowed them more autonomy and control of their sexuality.

4.5 Conclusion

Four main aspects of sexual selfhood were explored in this chapter: different conceptualizations of sex, sexual shame and guilt, pleasure and deconstructing/reconstructing one's own sexual selfhood. My interlocutors demonstrated different concepts of sex and being sexually active which had consequently reflected on how they labelled their own sexual experiences. These definitions were also motivated by a plethora or factors that were dictated by sociocultural norms such as: the importance of retaining the virginity and *sharaf* of the female body, the consequences suffered by women in case of engaging in sexual activity and the desire to maintain familial and social bonds. Another motivation to label an activity as sex or not is to avoid experiencing feelings of sexual shame and guilt which has been the case for several of my interlocutors. Furthermore, these feelings significantly negatively affect experiencing sexual pleasure and satisfaction.

It is also important to examine the interconnectedness of these aspects. Sex was often conceptualized by my interlocutors with their sexual histories in mind to avoid experiencing feelings of sexual shame or guilt. Research, and the women's experiences in this chapter, shows the negative correlation between feelings of sexual shame and/or guilt and the ability to experience sexual pleasure. Finally, sexual pleasure has allowed the women more agency over their own bodies and sexualities which has improved their relationship with their own sexual bodies and with sex overall to deconstruct their normative sexual scripts of sexual selfhood and construct healthier alternative scripts.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I aimed to investigate the construction of sexual selfhood of women in contemporary Egypt using a social constructionist approach. The discussion was based on a qualitative study where I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten Egyptian women. Respondents were aged 25-35, from Cairo or Alexandria (the biggest cities in Egypt) and attended university. In this study, I argued that the construction of women's sexual selfhood in the Egyptian context can be examined through looking into three main domains of analysis: tracing sexual themes in the supposed non-sexual upbringing, negotiating the boundaries of covering and uncovering the female body, and finally scripting sexual experiences.

Each of these three themes of analysis provided insight into the process of constructing the sexual scripts of sexual selfhood of Egyptian women. These scripts serve as a metaphor for understanding how behavior is produced within the context of social life. It is a lifelong process where the seemingly unsexual is integrated into the sexual (Simon and Gagnon, 1969). The period of adolescence and teenage years, particularly marked by first menarche, was established as a pivotal stage in the lives of the women interviewed, during which a substantial acquisition of social scripts occurred. Additionally, it is when the discourse of Sharaf -honor- is heavily integrated into the girls' lives as an integral notion to their female body and womanhood. Therefore, the supposed non-sexual upbringing of Egyptian women that seeks to produce female bodies in accordance with appropriate sociocultural scripts of sexuality and sexual behavior which was indicated through the chapters of this thesis.

To further examine the process of constructing the sexual selfhood of women, I emphasized the cruciality in considering the patriarchal bargain discourse in the process of negotiating the boundaries of covering and/or uncovering. It was then brought to light the different dimensions of social control that are enforced on female bodies. Through looking

into the stories of my interlocutors navigating the sociocultural system to attain more agency over their regulated female bodies, I demonstrated that this process of negotiating boundaries has strongly shaped their sexual subjectivity and consequently selfhood.

Finally, the last chapter demonstrated the experiences of sex of my interlocutors and how their sexualities unfolded in their adulthood with reference to their previously mentioned experiences in the preceding chapters. It is crucial to mention the influence of Islamic and public discourses on sexual behavior and cultural norms and its significant influence on experiencing feelings of sexual shame and sexual pleasure. In the context of Egypt, the normative sexual scripts heavily regulate female bodies and sexualities through mechanisms of social learning and control. This regulation only allows for normative heterosexual relations that are practiced within the context of heterosexual marriage.

There is a literature gap when it comes to studies of sexual selfhood in Egypt and the region particularly in modern times. My study aimed to fill in this gap through applying a social constructionist approach in the Egyptian context to investigate women's sexual selfhood. Using Simon and Gagnon's theory and grounding it in the Egyptian sociocultural context is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the sexual self. Thus, an effective understanding of sexuality and one's selfhood requires the understanding of the wider sociocultural contexts it is situated in. In the case of Egypt, that entailed looking into the prevalent public discourses such as Islamic religious discourses, notions of Sharaf, gendering the public space, and how they shaped and continue to shape sexual behaviors and identities.

This research contributes to the existing scholarly work on sexual identity of women in Egypt from a social constructionist approach. Additionally, It has opened up a myriad of new questions that could not be answered in this thesis due to the limited scope and time constraints. How can the expectations of sexual partners of one's sexual behavior influence de/re/construction of sexual scripts? What are the sources that women refer to for acquiring

sexual knowledge and education? What kind of physical health risks do unmarried sexually active women face within the stringent constraints on premarital sexuality? How has the relationship of the women with their siblings, whether sisters or brothers, further regulated their bodies? And how does this relationship contribute to the construction of normative masculinities and femininities? Does consent to sexual acts interplays with experiencing feelings of sexual shame and guilt? The study paves the way for further research work that takes on these questions whether within the same context or in other similar settings, i.e., other predominantly Muslim countries or North African countries with similar modern history of coloniality. Moreover, it is important extend the inquiry into the construction of sexuality among different research samples, such as women in rural areas, older women of different generations, women with child birthing experiences, etc. This can provide valuable insight into the intricate composition of our sexual identities and selfhoods and the different trajectories they undertake in various contexts and among changing factors.

Appendix I:

Interview Guide

Upbringing:

- Did you have conversations (actions) with your parents about menstruation and/or puberty?
- Did you have any discussions about sex or sexuality growing up? If so, how was it?
- What is a common/reoccurring thing about your body as a female that you heard a lot growing up? Did you believe it?
- What is 'El-sharaf' (honor) as a concept you heard of growing up?
- Would you say you grew up/are a religious person?

Covering up – The Hijab

- Did your parents impose any restrictions about the kind of clothes you can wear? Do you think these restrictions for them were coming from a religious or a social place?
- Did you agree with them? If no, did you try talking to them about it?

*(The following questions are asked only in case of wearing the hijab currently/in the pas*t)

- When did you start/stop wearing the hijab?
- Was there any pressure from family, peers or teachers to wear it?
- Did you like wearing it? What was your favorite thing about it? What did you least enjoy about wearing it?
- How long did it take you to make the decision to take it off?
- How did your family and friends react when you informed them that you want to take it off?
- How was the transition from covering up completely to not? In other words what are the positive and negative emotions that you felt during that time of transition?
- Do you sometimes miss wearing it? If so, what is that you miss about it?
- After of taking it off, what is something that has completely changed in how you see your body?

My body

- Do you have any tattoos or piercings? Did you have to take permission or inform your parents before getting them done?
- Are you sexually active? If yes, how long have you been?
- What where your main concerns when you first became sexually active? (sex ed, birth control, etc.,)
- How did these concerns affect your sexual experiences?
- How would you describe your past sexual experiences?
- For you, did your sexuality change over time, or has it been the same?
- How did your partners' expectations of your sexuality affect you?
- What is your experience with sexual pleasure? Alone/with a partner?
- Who did/do you talk to/go to for advice about sexual matters? Do you feel comfortable?
- Do you like sex? Do you see it as important to you?

Appendix II:

Information of Interlocutors

Name	Age	Hometown	Living situation
Amal	27	Alexandria	With a flat mate in Cairo
Nadia	32	Alexandria	Alone in Cairo
Mona	29	Cairo	Alone in Cairo
Asmaa	30	Cairo	With husband in Cairo
Yasmeen	25	Cairo	Uncertain - in Cairo
Sara	27	Cairo	With family in Cairo
Amina	25	Alexandria	Alone in Cairo
Karima	25	Alexandria	With flat mates in Cairo
Hend	32	Alexandria	With a flat mate in Cairo
Rawya	30	Alexandria	With flat mates in Cairo

References

Al-Tayib, A., & al-Tayib, A. (1964). The Changing Customs of the Riverian Sudan—III. Sudan Notes and Records, 45, 12–28. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41716855

Allouche, S. (2017). "(Dis)-intersecting Intersectionality in the Time of Queer Syrian Refugee-ness in Lebanon." Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research, 3 (1). pp. 59-77.

Amin, H. Y. (1999). American programs on Egyptian television. Images of the US around the World: A Multicultural Perspective, 319.

Baron, B. (2006). Women, Honor, and the State: Evidence from Egypt. Middle Eastern Studies, 42(1), 1–20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284428

Beasley, C. (2008). The challenge of pleasure: re-imagining sexuality and sexual health, Health Sociology Review 17, no. 2: 151-163.

Beck, A. R. (2015). Shame, relational aggression, and sexual satisfaction: A longitudinal study. Brigham Young University.

Brook, B. (1999). Feminist Perspectives on the Body (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315839554

Davis, D.-A., & Craven, C. (2011). Revisiting Feminist Ethnography: Methods and Activism at the Intersection of Neoliberal Policy. Feminist Formations, 23(2), 190–208. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41301662

Dimulescu, V. (2015). Contemporary Representations of the Female Body: Consumerism and the Normative Discourse of Beauty. Symposion: Theoretical and Applied Inquiries in Philosophy and Social Sciences 2 (4): 505–514.

Douglas, M. (2002). Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203029909

Fine, M. (1988). Sexuality, schooling and adolescent females: the missing discourse of desire. Harvard Educational Review 58, no. 1: 29-53.

Fortier, C. (2019). Sexualities: Transsexualities: Middle East, WestAfrica, NorthAfrica. Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC). ffhal-02448267.

Gadelrab, S.S. (2016). Medicine and Morality in Egypt: Gender and Sexuality in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Gagnon J. H. (1975). Sex research and social change. Archives of sexual behavior, 4(2), 111–141. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01541078

Garner, B. A. (Ed.). (1999). Black's law dictionary (7th ed.). St. Paul, MN: West Group.

Gender Wiki. (2020). Rania Youssef's dress at the Cairo Film Festival in Egypt in 2018. Gender wiki. Version https://tinyurl.com/yya9vjw4

Goss, K., Gilbert, P., & Allan, S. (1994). An exploration of shame measures—I: The other as Shamer scale. Personality and Individual differences, 17(5), 713-717.

Hafez, S. (2012). No longer a bargain: Women, masculinity, and the Egyptian uprising. American Ethnologist, 39(1), 37-42.

Hammad, H. (2016). Industrial Sexuality: Gender, Urbanization, and Social Transformation in Egypt. pp.141-177.

Herrera, L. (2001). Downveiling: Gender and the Contest over Culture in Cairo. *Middle East Report*, *31*(219), 16-19. https://doi.org/10.2307/1559250

Hirst, J. (2013). 'It's got to be about enjoying yourself': young people, sexual pleasure, and sex and relationships education. Sex Education, 13(4), 423-436.

Honkatukia, P., & Keskinen, S. (2018). The social control of young women's clothing and bodies: A perspective of differences on racialization and sexualization. Ethnicities, 18(1), 142–161. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796817701773

Houppert, K. (1999). The curse: confronting the last unmentionable taboo: menstruation. St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin.

Ilahi, N. (2009). "Gendered Contestations: An Analysis of Street Harassment in Cairo and its Implications for Women's Access to Public Spaces." Surfacing. 2009, 2(1): 56-69.

Jackson, K.E., & Monk-Turner, E. (2015). The Meaning of Hijab: Voices of Muslim Women in Egypt and Yemen. Journal of international women's studies, 16, 30-48.

Jackson, S. (2007). The Sexual Self in Late Modernity. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts (pp. 3–15). Vanderbilt University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1675bd1

Jeng, C. J. (2004). The pathophysiology and etiology of vaginismus. Taiwanese Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 43(1), 10-15.

Joseph, S. (1994). Brother/Sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon. American Ethnologist, 21(1), 50–73. http://www.jstor.org/stable/646521

Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. Gender and Society, Vol. 2, No. 3, Special Issue to Honor Jessie Bernard. pp. 274-290.

Kasemy, Z., Desouky, D. E. S., & Abdelrasoul, G. (2016). Sexual fantasy, masturbation and pornography among Egyptians. Sexuality & Culture, 20, 626-638.

Kimmel, M. (Ed.). (2007). The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts. Vanderbilt University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1675bd1

Kissling, E. A. (1991). Street harassment: The language of sexual terrorism. Discourse & Society, 2(4), 451-460.

MacLeod, A. E. (1991). Accommodating Protest: Working Women the New Veiling and Change in Cairo.

Marcinechová, D., & Záhorcová, L. (2020). Sexual Satisfaction, Sexual Attitudes, and Shame in Relation to Religiosity. Sexuality & Culture, 24(6), 1913–1928. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09727-3

Mccabe, J.M., Tanner, A.E., & Heiman, J.R. (2010). The Impact of Gender Expectations on Meanings of Sex and Sexuality: Results from a Cognitive Interview Study. *Sex Roles, 62*, 252-263.

Miller, L. R. (2021). Single women's sexualities across the life course: The role of major events, transitions, and turning points. Sexualities, 24(1-2), 226-251.

Mosher, D. L., & Cross, H. (1971). Sex guilt and premarital sexual experiences of college students. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 36, 27–32.

Nack, A. (2000). Damaged goods: women managing the stigma of STDs. Deviant Behavior, 21(2), 95-121.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. Feminist review, 89(1), 1-15.

Nencel, L. (2014). "Situating reflexivity: Voices, positionalities and representations in feminist ethnographic texts," Women's Studies International Forum 43 75-83.

Odeh, L. A. (1993). Post-Colonial Feminism and the Veil: Thinking the Difference. Feminist Review, 43, 26–37. https://doi.org/10.2307/1395067

Oliveira, S., Marta-Simões, J. & Ferreira, C. (2019). Early Parental Eating Messages and Disordered Eating: The Role of Body Shame and Inflexible Eating, The Journal of Psychology, 153:6, 615-627. DOI: 10.1080/00223980.2019.1583162

Peterson, Z. D., & Muehlenhard, C. L. (2007). What Is Sex and Why Does It Matter? A Motivational Approach to Exploring Individuals' Definitions of Sex. The Journal of Sex Research, 44(3), 256–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490701443932

Plante, R. F. (2007). In Search of Sexual Subjectivities: Exploring the Sociological Construction of Sexual Selves. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts (pp. 31–48). Vanderbilt University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1675bd1.7

Randall, H. E., & Byers, E. S. (2003). What is sex? Students' definitions of having sex, sexual partner, and unfaithful sexual behavior. Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 12(2), 87-96.

Reza, S. (2011). Egypt: Criminal Law.

Saba, Sadia A., (2021). "Pleasure, Politics, and Patriarchy: Women's Intimacy in an Authoritarian Egypt". Senior Projects Spring 2021. 181.

Sadek, G. (2021) Egypt: Draft Law Enhancing Criminal Penalties against Female Genital Mutilation Approved. [Web Page] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2021-02-24/egypt-draft-law-enhancing-criminal-penalties-against-female-genital-mutilation-approved/.

Sakaluk, J. K., Todd, L. M., Milhausen, R., Lachowsky, N. J., & Undergraduate Research Group in Sexuality (URGiS). (2014). Dominant heterosexual sexual scripts in emerging adulthood: Conceptualization and measurement. The Journal of Sex Research, 51(5), 516-531.

Saliba, I. (2020). Academic freedom in Egypt, In: Kinzelbach, Katrin (Ed.): Researching Academic Freedom. Guidelines and Sample Case Studies, ISBN 978-3-96147-370-0, FAU University Press, Erlangen. 141-174.

Seidman, S. (2014) The Social Construction of Sexuality. W W Norton & Company

Sex Education Forum (SEF). (2005). Sex and Relationships Education Framework, Forum Factsheet 30. London: National Children's Bureau for the Sex Education Forum. http://www.ncb.org.uk/sef

Seymour-Jorn, C. (2002). A New Language: Salwa Bakr on Depicting Egyptian Women's Worlds. Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies, 11(2), 151-176.

Shirazi, K.K., Morowatisharifabad, M.A. (2009). Religiosity and Determinants of Safe Sex in Iranian Non-Medical Male Students. Journal of Religion and Health 48, 29–36. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-008-9174-1

Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (1986). Sexual scripts: Permanence and change. Archives of sexual behavior, 15, 97-120.

Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (2003). Sexual scripts: Origins, influences and changes. Qualitative sociology, 26(4), 491-497.

Sultana, F. (2007). "Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research." ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies 6: 374-385.

Tadros, M. (1994). [Review of Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling and Change in Cairo, by A. E. Macleod]. Feminist Review, 48, 124–126. https://doi.org/10.2307/1395174

Uusikylä, H. (1998). The Seeds in the Container: Metaphors of conception and kinship in rural Bangladesh. Studia Orientalia Electronica, 84, 51-60.

Wilson, E. (1991). The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wolf, N. (2008). The Beauty Myth. How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women. Harper Collins e-books.