Women's Education, Work and Autonomy: An Egyptian Case

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ...................................................... vi

ABSTRACT ........................................................... viii

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION ............................................ 1
  The Need to Study Female Employment and Autonomy in Egypt .............. 5
  Research Questions ................................................. 6
  Objectives of the Study .............................................. 6
  Organization of the Study ............................................. 7

CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW ....................................... 8
  Definition of Autonomy ............................................... 9
  Summary of Recurring Themes ....................................... 11
  The Nexus Between Labor Force Participation and Autonomy ............... 11
  Multidimensionality of Autonomy .................................... 13
  Dimensions of Autonomy ............................................ 15
  Some Determinants of Autonomy ..................................... 15
    Education .................................................. 15
    Family Structure ............................................. 16
    Age ...................................................... 17
    Ownership and Control Over Resource ........................... 17
    Reasons for Working and Type of Employment ..................... 18
    Control over income .......................................... 19
    Amount of Contribution to Family Budget ........................ 19
    Type of Remuneration ........................................ 19
    Can Non-working Women Be Autonomous? ......................... 20
  Gender Roles: Change or Continuity ................................ 20
  Islamic Revivalism and Gender Roles ................................ 23
  *Hijab* (head cover) ............................................. 26
  Islamic movement and women ......................................... 27
  Concept of Honor and Shame, Obedience and Freedom of Movement ......... 29
  Violence Against Women ........................................... 31
  Women’s Issues, Postcolonial Psyche and Censorship ..................... 32

iv
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1. Education and Attitudes on Gender Role</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2. Inhibitors of Female Labor Force Participation</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3. Education and current labor force participation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4. Economic Autonomy</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5. Economic Autonomy by Work Status</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6. Economic Autonomy by Employment Status</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7. Economic Autonomy by Type of Remuneration</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8. Ability to care for self</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9. Ability to care for self by work status</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10. Ability to Take Care of Self by Employment Status</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11. Ability to Take Care of Self By Type of Remuneration</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom from Violence by Background Characteristics</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom From Violence by Ownership of Resource</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom From Violence By Employment Variables</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom From Violence Based on Family Socio-economic Status</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16. Percentage of Women Who Agree With Specific Reasons Justifying A Husband Beating His Wife, by Background Characteristics, Egypt 1995</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17. Women’s Freedom of Movement Based on Destination</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 18. Freedom of Movement by Work Status</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 19. Freedom of Movement by Employment Status</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 20. Freedom of Movement by Type of Remuneration</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 21. Odds Ratios for Different Dimensions of Autonomy Comparison Among All Respondents, Work Status is Used as Dimension of Employment</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 22. Odds Ratios for Different Dimensions of Autonomy Comparison Among All Respondents, Employment Status is Used as Dimension of Employment</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 23. Odds ratios For Different Dimensions of Autonomy Comparison Among All Respondents, Type of Remuneration is Used as Dimension of Employment</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24. Odds Ratios For Different Dimensions of Employment
Reason for Working Is Used As A Dimension of Employment ................. 67
Table 25. Odds Ratios For Different Dimensions of Employment
Control Over Income is Used as A dimension of Employment ................ 67
Table 26. Odds ratios For Different Dimensions of Autonomy
Allocation of Income is Used as A Dimension of Employment ............... 68
Table 27. Odd ratios For Different Dimensions of Autonomy
Employment Status Is Used As Dimension of Autonomy ..................... 68
ABSTRACT

It has been assumed that paid work leads to greater autonomy for women. This dissertation focuses on how education and employment relate to different dimensions of autonomy. Four dimensions of autonomy are discussed. They are economic decision making, ability to take care of self when sick, freedom from violence and freedom of mobility.

Secondary and higher education are associated with greater autonomy in economic decision making, ability to take care of self when sick and freedom of mobility. However, they do not automatically lead to increased freedom from violence. The relationship between work and autonomy is more complicated than that of education and autonomy. To get a clearer picture of the association between work and autonomy, this study focuses on three different dimensions of work, namely work status (work and do not work), type of remuneration (cash and non-cash), and type of employment (work for someone else, family worker and self-employed). Generally, women who work for cash display greater autonomy in all dimensions than non-working women and working women who are not paid in cash. Some types of work are more strongly associated with autonomy than others. In particular, there are differences between the self-employed and family workers. The first show greater autonomy than the latter. The difference in level of employment between these two groups relates to the nature of employment. Women who are self-employed develop skills to negotiate with various parties, own capital, albeit small, and control profit. In contrast, family workers work under the supervision of family members, who often co-reside with them, hence they have no greater autonomy at work. Therefore labor force participation does not increase their autonomy at home.

The finding suggests the importance of looking at the meaning of work in a more critical manner. Participation in paid work is often construed as a sign of modernity, therefore it is commendable. However, there is a wide array of reasons why women work and types of employment. Some of them generate autonomy, while some perpetuate patriarchal relations.

The study also finds that some types of work are associated with lower levels of autonomy. In particular, self-employed and family workers have higher odds of ever having been beaten than non-working women. In this case, the true causal factor is likely to be poverty and male employment.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

It has been assumed that paid work leads to greater autonomy for women (Piepmer and Adkins, 1973; Abadian, 1996; Govindasamy & Malhotra, 1996; Kishor, 1995; Macleod, 1991; Riley, 1997; Safilios-Rothschild, 1982; Zuhur, 1992). It seems that the relationship between paid work and autonomy is likely to vary depending on the history and current state of gender relations in the area of study. Consequently, the issue should be investigated empirically. Additionally, choices of variables should reflect the specific context of the study.

The research so far creates more questions than answers. Under what conditions does paid employment result in women’s autonomy? Is paid work better than unpaid work? Is domestic work more fulfilling than terrible paid work in a vulnerable position? Ross and Mirowsky (1992) argued that it makes sense to expect that the average person with a job has a greater sense of control than the average unemployed person. It is important to remember, however, that jobs, family and social contexts of employment vary. Jobs that do not provide workers with control over their work, and do not provide access to decision-making processes, but do have a high degree of supervision may actually give workers a lower sense of control than domestic work does. Low pay, oppressive working conditions, and heavy family demands may combine to nullify a positive association between employment and sense of control (Faulkner and Lawson, 1991; Lyon, 1991; Mullins, et al., 1996; Tinker, 1990).

Kishor (n.d.) contributed to a better understanding of the relations between female labor force participation and autonomy by arguing that employment per se does not increase female autonomy. Access to, and control over earnings are crucial determinants of women’s ability to translate their autonomy into other spheres of their lives. Working women exhibit varying degrees of autonomy (Hassan, 1998). This variance suggests the importance of other variables, such as control over profit (Butler, 1998); control over means of production (Toth, 1991); reason for working (Nawar et. al., 1995); disbursement of income (Kishor, 1995; Nawar, Lloyd, and Ibrahim, 1995). Miles-Doan and Brewster (1998) looked at the characteristics of paid work to explain whether and how paid work relates to increased autonomy.

The validity of this assumption [that paid work leads to greater female autonomy] is likely to depend on the intrinsic characteristics of the job and not simply on the fact that it generates income (Miles-Doan and Brewster, 1998: p. 69).
Due to data limitations, the only aspect of paid work that they were able to test was type of employment (Miles, 2000, personal communication). This dissertation is based on the 1995 Egyptian Demographic Health Survey that contains richer data on nature of employment. Therefore this dissertation will pursue further the Miles-Doan and Brewster (1998) hypothesis by incorporating various elements of paid work, such as work status, type of remuneration, employment status, and place of work. This study also departs from previous studies in that it focuses on female autonomy for its importance to women as women and not just as mothers.

The bulk of research on the relationship between paid work and increased autonomy focuses on various demographic issues, especially fertility (Balk, 1994; Dhamalingam and Morgan, 1996; Mason and Smith, 1999; Morgan and Niraula, 1995; Vlassoff, 1991) and child survival (Durrant and Sathar, 2000; Hossain et al., 2000; Jejeebhoy, 1998; Kishor, 2000). This trend might be related to the assumption that paid work does not directly affect demographic variables, but it operates through an intervening variable, namely female autonomy (Abadian, 1996; Riley, 1997; Safilios-Rothschild, 1982). The policy implications of such an approach is that female autonomy is not a goal in itself, rather it is a means of achieving demographic goal(s).

The literature stresses the importance of labor force participation, but does not yet reveal enough data about women who are not part of the work force. Ali (1998) argued:

.. some women may have decided to show their `autonomy' by shunning the public place. Rather than work for wages, some may have opted out of the wage economy altogether. What does this mean to liberal notions of autonomy of women and their control over their work situations? In such formulations, are there spaces for those who opt not to work for wages? (p. 180).

Reading from ethnographic research on Egyptian women, one might conclude that non-working women possess autonomy, primarily achieved by age (Ali, 1998; Lane and Meleis 1991; Rugh, 1994) or by ownership/control over resources like gold jewelry (Early 1993a, 1993b; Hoodfar, 1997).

The contribution of this dissertation to the available literature on paid work and autonomy is four fold. First, it will look at autonomy as a goal, rather than a means. Women’s well being and dignity are important goals that should be pursued separately from demographic goals. In other words, as long as women have the ability to make decisions that are important to their personhood, the demographic results of these decisions are irrelevant. Gender, which entails relations between men and women, and not sex, is the focus of this dissertation. As a consequence of this perception of autonomy, child-related decision making (about children’s education, health needs, marriage prospect) is inadvertently not included in the equation, since it is not directly related to women’s needs. Second, it will investigate empirically the assumption that paid work increases female autonomy in a nationally representative data set. It will explore nature of employment to see the elements of paid work that might contribute to increased, or decreased of autonomy. Third, it will look at working-women as a heterogeneous group, and...
explore the association between different dimensions of work and autonomy among working women separately. Last, it will include identification of freedom from violence as a dimension of autonomy. Although Jejeebhoy (2000) was the first researcher who identified the importance of this dimension of autonomy, so far there is no study that incorporates this dimension of autonomy. Therefore this is the first study based on the Demographic Health Survey data that analyzes the association between dimensions of employment and freedom from the threat of violence.

Modern Egypt is an interesting setting in which to study the relationship between female labor force participation and autonomy. First of all, Egypt is the first Arab country that produced feminist thinkers, such as Muhammad Abduh, Qasim Amin, and later Huda Sharawi (Ahmed, 1992; Badran, 1988; 1991; 1995; Hatem, 1986; Zuhur; 1992). Secondly, it has a long history of an active women’s movement. Under Nasser’s regime, professional women organized to fight intensely for gender equity. Their attempt was the basis for the extension of women’s rights, such as the right to vote and to run for public office in 1956 (Abdel Kader, 1987; Hatem, 1998; Talhami, 1996). Egyptian women were the first Arab women to acquire such political rights (Karam, 1998). In 1959, the Egyptian Labor Law 91 granted women the right to work, fifty days of maternity leave, day care services in jobs that employ more than one hundred workers, and protection from unfairly losing their job upon giving birth. (Hatem, 1998; Hijab, 1988). Third, the Egyptian system of education is free up to the doctoral level (Cochran, 1992) - and is a non-discriminatory system of education which can open many doors for women, including obtaining paid work (Sullivan, 1986; Khattab and Greiss el-Daeiff; 1984).

A glimpse of Egyptian history concerning women’s status and struggle casts light on the ups and downs of women’s status. Mooney (1998) argued that the present ideal and actual status and rights of Egyptian women do not reflect their centuries long struggle to improve their condition. A few researchers correctly point out that in spite of early feminist trends in Egypt, Egyptian society perceives women’s rights, status and roles in a traditional light (Abdel Kader, 1987; Badran, 1993; El-Sanabary, 1998; Mooney, 1998; Talhami, 1996).

As early as the 1860s and 1870s Egyptians saw the articulation of a feminist consciousness in the form of poetry, essays, and tales. These occasional publications preceded colonial occupation and the birth of nationalism (Badran, 1991). In the early 1930s, the issue of paid work for women was placed center stage in one feminist campaign (Badran, 1995). Interestingly, the issue of female labor force participation among middle-class women was perceived as a more threatening issue for men than female education was (Badran, 1995). Badran (1995) felt that paid work outside the home can break down the confinement of domestic life, reduce women’s financial dependency upon husbands and male relatives, and upset men’s monopoly in the work place. These issues are still relevant in today’s Egypt.

As shown above, issues such as women’s rights and gender inequality are not new to Egyptians. Furthermore, Egyptian history reveals that many reforms related to gender relations are spearheaded by Muslim thinkers. In the predominantly Muslim countries, including Egypt:

...The debate over the emancipation of women originated among Muslim
reformists. It was their contention that an Islam correctly interpreted and set free of traditional ballast was able to provide a viable system of beliefs and values even under changed circumstances of modern times. Thus, they felt that the position of women had suffered, not through the commands of the original Islam, but by the misinterpretation of the Quran and later un-Islamic additions. (Phillip 1978; p. 278)

The challenge that many reformists faced was how to redefine Muslim views on women so that they would fit into a modern framework with more progressive gender roles which would extend women’s opportunities in public roles without undermining Islamic law (Abdel Kader, 1987; Badran, 1991; Hatem, 1986). With the rising tide of Muslim fundamentalism, the challenge becomes even more pronounced today. Ahmed (1984) dubbed the tendency to fall back on the Islamic principles in Muslim countries “cultural loyalty,” which is intensified if westerners or others attack the “backwardness” of Islam. “Cultural loyalty” has played a major part in setting the limits of the debate on the roles of women in the Arab world, as Ahmed (1984) pointed out. “Cultural loyalty” emphasizes the “Arabness” of Arab women, placing Islam at the center of their lives, and making them reluctant to adopt anything foreign. Ahmed (1984) believes that cultural loyalty is reflected by:

...The persistence with which reformers and feminists repeatedly try to affirm (with remarkable tenacity and often too with ingenuity) that the reforms they seek involve no disloyalty to Islam, that they in fact are in conformity with it, and if not in conformity with the letter and actual text of the culture’s central formulation, then in conformity with what nevertheless is still there somehow, in the spirit not quite caught by the words (p. 45).

It is important to bear in mind that Egypt is one of the Arab countries that has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is a progressive international convention that has exerted great influence toward bridging the gap of inequality between men and women. The Arab countries that have ratified the Convention include Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen (Hijab, 1998). The ratification of a United Nations document is perceived as a government’s agreement to tailor its national policies along the line of the Convention. Reservation about particular parts of Convention documents must be clearly stipulated. Hijab (1988) wrote that Egypt clearly expressed such a reservation to Article 16:

Concerning the equality of men and women relating to marriage and family relations during marriage and upon its dissolution. This must be without prejudice to the Islamic sharia provisions whereby women are accorded rights equivalent to those of their spouses so as to ensure a just balance between them. This is out of respect for the sanctity deriving from firm religious beliefs
which govern marital relations in Egypt and which may not be called in question (p. 4-5).

The written reservation furthermore elucidates that the husbands are expected to support their wives throughout marriage and in cases of divorce, but wives do not have such an obligation. Therefore it is deemed plausible that only the husband has the right to divorce the wife, whereas the wife’s right to divorce is restricted since divorce initiated by a wife should be ruled by a judge. The ratification of CEDAW and the reservation to Article 16 mean two things. First, since Egypt ratified CEDAW, women should be granted full equality with men. Second, since Egypt expressed a specific reservation, the more specific applications of CEDAW, especially the ones related to the private arena, should be done within the spirit of Islam which, many argue, is not supposed to be questioned (Badran, 1993; Hijab, 1988). To put it differently, while women can obtain equality to men in the public sector, the same thing cannot be done in the private sector. Badran (1993) eloquently argues: “Feminists in Egypt have been most successful in the public sphere and most thwarted in the private sphere.” (p. 129).

For reasons outlined above, it is understandable that, in spite of the impressive history of the women’s movement, Egyptian women still constitute a minuscule part of the total labor force. In 1991, working women made up fifteen percent of the total Egyptian workforce in both private and public sectors, even though women constituted about 33 per cent of university graduates (Karam, 1998). Cochran (1992) posited that this small number of working women amidst the significant percentage of university graduates reflects incongruent messages. Higher education commends academic achievement. Society places high status on domesticity. Hijab (1998) pointed out that the low number of working women can be attributed to a combination of underestimating women’s work in agriculture and in the informal sector, and insufficient planning for women. The World Bank (1994) argued that although education can open many doors of opportunity for women and might enhance their autonomy, the effects of education can be annulled by legal and cultural obstacles to women’s full participation in society.

The Need to Study Female Employment and Autonomy in Egypt

Even if Egyptian women manage to participate in the labor force, inspite of various hindrances, it is not yet clear whether they gain autonomy from their paid employment. Several studies on the relationship between female labor participation and autonomy in Egypt (Govindasamy & Malhotra, 1996; Kishor, n.d., 1995; Nawar et al., 1995) reveal that female labor force participation in Egypt does not automatically result in female autonomy.

Other studies carried out in developing countries on the connection between paid work and autonomy are far from conclusive (Abadian, 1996; Dharmalingam & Morgan, 1996; Jejeebhoy, 2000). An explanation for this inconclusiveness it that work status alone does not provide a full picture of the nature of employment. It is, therefore, important to include other elements of paid work, such as type of remuneration, employment status, and type of
employment (Miles-Doan and Brewster, 1998)

**Research Questions**

So far we have limited knowledge on the association of dimensions of employment and autonomy. Knowing that a woman works for pay does not yield much information about the level of autonomy she attains, if at all. There are a number of studies that use one dimension of employment such as work status, employment status, type of employment, or type of remuneration. Similarly there are studies that try to analyze the impact of employment on autonomy among working women by looking at control over income, or allocation of income, or reason for working. Additionally, the literature is devoid of studies comparing levels of autonomy between working and non-working women. Data limitations set the number of variables that researchers can use. The richness of the 1995 Egyptian Demographic Health Survey Data allows the simultaneous use of the above mentioned variables and samples. The nature of data will give ample room to ask the following questions: under what conditions does female employment generate or not generate autonomy? Does cash payment affect autonomy differently than non-cash payment? Similarly, how do self-employed women fare in comparison to those who work for family members, for someone else, as well as those who do not work? When working-women are compared to each other, does working out of need and working out of choice yield different levels of autonomy? Do women who have control over their income have more autonomy than those who do not? Are women who give all their income to their family less autonomous than those who keep part or all of their income for themselves? Are self employed women more autonomous than family workers? These questions are important to fill in the gap in the literature and to create a more comprehensive picture of the association between dimensions of employment and autonomy.

**Objectives of the Study**

This study has several objectives:

1. since almost all studies on female employment and autonomy perceive autonomy as a means to attain various demographic goals, this dissertation is an attempt to study female autonomy as a goal in itself
2. to find a broader picture of the associations between various dimensions of employment and autonomy
3. to analyze whether dimensions of employment will always result in increased autonomy
4. since the literature rarely mentions the autonomy of non-working women, this dissertation will compare the level of autonomy among working women and non-working women, and across working women
5. to place the results of the study against the backdrop of Egyptian history to form long term gender policies that will enhance the well being of Egyptian women.
Organization of the Study

This chapter provides the background and rationale for the study, and specifies exact research questions.

Chapter two reviews the relevant literature on autonomy and augments knowledge of the theoretical basis initiated in chapter one.

Chapter three is dedicated to the explanation of the theoretical framework and research methodology. The framework guides the selection of the indicators of female autonomy. In this chapter, answers to the research questions are translated into a set of hypotheses. It also explains the sources of the data, the variables, the elaboration and the measurement of the variables. Finally, it describes the research techniques which will be used to analyze the data.

Chapter four presents the main findings of this research. The analysis is done within the framework of stated hypotheses and models.

Chapter five presents the policy implications and recommendations.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Although Egyptian women have been in the work force, both informally and formally, for thousands of years (Nour El-Din, 1995), women today comprise only about one-tenth of the labor force (World Bank, 1995). One third of these women are in professional, technical, or managerial professions (Kishor & Neitzel, 1996). However few ever married women currently work (19 per cent) or have ever worked (25 per cent) (El-Zanaty, Hussein, Shawky, Way, and Kishor, 1996).

There is general agreement that Egypt’s female participation in the labor force is under reported (Anker & Anker, 1995; Butler, 1998; Early, 1998; Hoodfar, 1998; Inhorn, 1998; Jenning, 1998; Larson, 1998; Singerman, 1998). There are two explanations for this under reporting. First, there may be a reluctance on the part of researchers to admit the actual or desired participation of women in income earning activities (Papps, 1992). Terms used to collect such data, such as “work” and “job” may not always be congruent with social perceptions of women’s work. One study in Syria revealed that when men were asked whether their wives worked for them, they said “no”. However, when they were asked whether they would have to hire a replacement if their wife should die, they answered in the affirmative (Chamie, 1985; Papps, 1992). The second explanation for lack of women’s visibility in the labor force is the concentration of women, especially the unskilled and illiterate, in the informal sector (El-Sanabary, 1998; Hassan, 1998; Hoodfar, 1997; Loban, 1998

The law governing women’s work has been in place for more than fifty years, yet the issue of women working is still contested terrain. Moghadam (1993) argued that whether paid employment has resulted in an increase in status for women continues to be a matter of debate for the Middle East as for other developing areas. Assertion such as Moghadam’s (1993) leave nagging doubts. Perhaps the link between women in the labor force and their autonomy is not so straightforward after all. Ali (1998) suggested placing such a link within a wide social and cultural context. In a similar vein, Dalal (1997) stressed the importance of “social technology” in an attempt to understand women’s status. Dalal (1997) explained that “social technology refers to the entire social arrangement and cultural practices, at various institutional levels, through which the society maintains all its production” (p. 203) Examples of social technology are class structure and the separation of public and private spheres (Dalal, 1997).

The concept of “social technology” is a useful tool for exploring the impact of female participation in the labor force and modernization in general. Modernization has altered the lives of Egyptian women in various ways. (Moghadam, 1995). Modernization has affected class divisions which “find expression in terms of power, income, wealth, responsibility, ‘life chances’, style and quality of life, and everything else that makes up the texture of existence.”
Although some women’s lives have changed for the better, others have suffered from modernization. Not only have some of them been uprooted from a familiar and secure rural life, they have to work in poorly paid urban positions (Keddie, 1991). Many women have no choice - they have to work (Hatem, 1988a, 1988b; Hoodfar 1990, 1997; Nawar et al., 1985). Increased numbers of women in the labor force is not always the sign of progressive development, especially when it is based on a rise in the supply of labor rather than an increase in demand (Baden, 1992). A substantial number of today’s Egyptian middle-class working women are the first generation of women working in their families, having enjoyed the universal education policy spearheaded by President Nasser (Macleod, 1991). There are more illiterate and poor women working in the informal sector than in the formal sector (El-Sanabary, 1998; Early, 1993).

Modernization and development also pose predicaments for Egyptian women. On the one hand, they provide income earning opportunities but on the other hand, these opportunities often clash with other expected roles such as mothering (Fernea, 1985; Singerman and Hoodfar, 1996; Youssef, 1978) and dependence on men (el-Messiri, 1978; Fernea, 1998).

As Egypt’s economy becomes more market-oriented, the rapid commercialization of daily life has emphasized the need for cash. In this transformation women have lost many of their domestic functions to the market, as many of the services they used to perform become commodified. This leads to the diminishing status of women within their family which originally was based on their non-cash contributions to the household (Hoodfar, 1990, 1997).

Given the complexity of the association between labor force participation and autonomy, the impact of work on women’s autonomy is likely to vary depending on a host of factors, such as level of education, nature of employment, ownership and control over resources. This literature review is an attempt to provide a broad picture of the association between various dimensions of autonomy and the nature of employment. The definition of autonomy will be presented first, followed by summaries of available studies on female labor force participation and autonomy. Then the determinants of autonomy will be presented. The effects of the Egyptian gender system on autonomy provide a deeper understanding on the association between women’s work and autonomy, therefore they are included here, although they will not be investigated empirically.

**Definition of Autonomy**

Defining autonomy is a challenging task since there are various terms that scholars use to encapsulate women’s place in society. Women’s status refers to both the respect accorded to individuals and the personal power available to them (Mason, 1993). Dixon (1978) on the other hand, defined women’s status as their overall position in society, and differentiated this from power which identifies women’s ability to influence and control at the interpersonal level. Safitios-Rothschild (1982) addressed the issue of women’s place in society from a different angle, introducing the concept of female power. She analytically distinguished two types of power, namely power which is derived from men, and that which is derived independently of
men. The first relates to the power that women enjoy as a result of being daughters or wives of powerful men. The second includes the ability of women to influence decisions that will affect their lives, such as control over income and property, freedom of movement and health-seeking behaviors. Ravindran (1999) made a case for female power as being subdivided into power over, as opposed to power to. Goodrich (1991) elaborated further “power-to is the ability to perform or produce, and implies also the freedom and resources to do so. Power-over refers to domination and control.” (p. 54).

Isvan (1991) distinguished power from autonomy based on modes of gender dispute resolution. Isvan (1991) maintained:

the relative strength of power versus autonomy depends on the cultural context such that the former is more important in settings where gender relations are confrontational, while the latter is more important in settings where norms favor nonconfrontational modes of resolving gender conflict (p. 1057).

Abadian (1996) suggested that the term autonomy, however, implies one’s increasing ability to make decisions, while Dyson and Moore (1983) perceived autonomy as the ability to influence the results of household decision making processes regarding themselves.

Autonomy has also been defined as the capacity to manipulate one’s personal environment through control over resources and information in order to make decisions about one’s own concerns or about close family members (Basu, 1992; Dyson and Moore, 1983; Miles-Doan and Bisharat, 1990). At the conceptual level, women’s autonomy is the ability of women to determine important events in their lives, even in the face of opposition by men and other women (Mason, 1984; Safilios-Rothschild, 1982).

Autonomy is related to the issue of agency. However the meaning and manifestation of agency is context-specific. “Women as agents” can be portrayed as individuals who are self-reliant, independent and alone” (Hirschmann, 1997: p.125). On the other hand agency can take place within an environment that emphasizes both individuality and collaboration (Obermeyer, 1995). Nedelsky (1998: 10) calls for a conception of autonomy that will combine “the claim of the constitutiveness of social relations with the value of self determination.” This concept of autonomy captures the dual locality of women as both individuals and members of society. Such description of autonomy highlights the importance of pre-existing conditions that might either enhance, or hinder, women’s autonomy. Alavi (1973) pointed out:

... individual action...is not free. It is constrained by social situation which an individual inherits...(he/she) ... must operate within the framework of a given set of norms and rules, whether “informal” in their existence or embodied in a legal system (p. 42).
Summary of Recurring Themes

Interest in female autonomy centers around the question of how it will shape the rate and direction of demographic changes, especially fertility. Because female autonomy is often used as a predictor of demographic changes, there are some widely used dependent variables in the current literature. They are as follows:

a) fertility (Balk, 1994; Dharmalingam and Morgan, 1996; Mason and Smith, 1999; Morgan and Niraula 1995; Vlassoff, 1991)
b) child survival (Durrant and Sathar, 2000; Hossain et.al., 2000; Jejebhoy; 1998; Kishor, 2000; Miles-Doan and Bisharat, 1990)
c) marriage formation and kinship (Dyson and Moore, 1983; Niraula and Morgan, 1996)
d) maternal health or health seeking behaviors (Bloom, Wypig and Gupta, 2000; Das Gupta, 1996; Khatab et.al., 2000, Miles-Doan and Brewster, 1998).

Critics argue that demographic driven questions might categorize female autonomy as a means to achieve demographic goal(s) rather than an end in itself (Abadian, 1996; Correa and Petchesky, 1994). Such attitudes often result in population policies that are detrimental to women’s right to self determination. Abadian (1996) maintained:

....Clearly, those working in the field of population and development must move away from the perception of women and their bodies as mere artillery in the war on population growth, wherein their health, integrity and general well-being are not of principal concern (p. 1802)

This dissertation is different than other writings on labor force participation and female autonomy in that it perceives autonomy as an end, rather than a goal, in gender and development planning. Autonomy entails the notion of personhood, hence the stress is on gender and not on sex. Gender consists of social relations between men and women, in many cases marked by inequality. Sex, on the other hand, refers to biological differences between men and women (Moser, 1995). As a consequence of the above argument, child related decision-making (about children’s education, health needs, marriage prospects) is not included in indicators of autonomy since it does not directly reflect women’s needs.

Another contribution of this dissertation is the investigation of the association between different dimensions of employment (work status, type of remuneration and employment status) and autonomy rather than work status only. This allows a further elaboration of what it is about work that is associated with autonomy.

The Nexus Between Labor Force Participation and Autonomy

The impact of labor force participation on women’s lives has been an intriguing topic among several scholars (Abadian, 1996; Govindasamy & Malhotra, 1996; Kishor, 1995; Macleod, 1991; Riley, 1997; Safilios-Rothschild, 1982; Zuhur, 1992). Does female labor
force participation tend to increase women’s autonomy at home? If it does, how? Will the fact that a woman brings money home automatically enhance her position at home, and eventually enable her to be more involved in household decision-making? Those are several questions that stem from the hypothesis of the relationship between female labor force participation and women’s lives. Theoretically it has been argued that working for money is empowering because it provides money at one’s personal disposal, self-esteem, and a separate identity from that of one’s husband (Riley, 1997; Ross and Mirowsky, 1992). However, findings from various studies have been far from conclusive.

Dharmalingam and Morgan (1996) contrasted two South Indian villages which provide women with two very different employment opportunities. In the first, a substantial number of women roll beedis (crude-hand rolled cigarettes); in the second, few women work for pay. Dharmalingam and Morgan (1996) found that women in Village I were not only able to contribute highly needed income to their family but also to learn how to negotiate with the contractors who provide work for them. This combination of financial contribution and ability to negotiate were later translated into autonomy in other spheres of life.

The conclusion of Dharmalingam and Morgan’s (1996) research is somewhat surprising. They asserted that the important determinant of wives’ autonomy was not labor force participation, but whether she lived in Village I where most women work. They suggested that certain types of occupations brings about attitudinal change at a massive scale which eventually leads to the development of a new set of acceptable attitudes. In the case of beedi work, it generated the need of freedom of movement and ability to effectively negotiate their needs with the contractors. Both factors eventually enabled women to change their relations with men, both inside and outside their household, for their benefit.

Samarasinghe (1993) argued that economic independence for women which is perceived as a key to individual autonomy requires both access to resources and control of one’s income. In other words, having access to employment will not guarantee autonomy. Samarasinghe (1993) did a study on female tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka. She found that although many female workers have higher cash remuneration than that of their male counterparts, they neither had access to nor control of their income. This was so since female workers do not collect their wages. Women’s wages were given to males, namely husbands or fathers, by the management, on a regular basis. The practice of handing over the wages to male members of the family started in the mid-nineteenth century when the tea plantation workers, consisting of entire families, were brought to Sri Lanka from Southern India. When Samarasinghe (1993) did her research in 1989, it was 40 years after Sri Lanka gained its independence from Britain and 15 years after the private tea companies were taken over by the state. Yet female tea workers’ wages were still given to male family members, perpetuating the gender discrimination. Therefore she argued that female tea plantation workers who do not have any control over their income are far from autonomous. They are no more than “puppets on a string” as Samarashinge’s (1993) article was aptly titled. Samarashinge’s (1993) research conclusion is not unique, however. Lu’s (1984) research on Taiwanese women and Salaff’s (1981) on young women of Hong Kong revealed very similar cases.
In an attempt to explain these findings, Mason (1995) pointed out that perhaps women’s employment is not a relevant proxy for their economic empowerment or control of material resources. It is true, or at least theoretically plausible, that a woman who brings money home will have control over that money - or somebody who contributes to family income will have the right to participate in family economic decisions. However, in a highly patriarchal society, this is often the exception rather than the rule. The explanation for this tendency is that in these societies women’s labor force participation is perceived as the extension of their roles as dutiful wives or daughters, and therefore does not result in autonomy. There is also another reason that is often ignored. In very poor families, all income is immediately used for basic needs; there is no discretionary income about which to make decisions (Desai and Jain, 1994). Thus, while paid employment may give women economic power or autonomy in some settings, this is by no means the case in all settings.

**Multidimensionality of Autonomy**

There are other studies that seek to find out the relationship between work and different aspects of autonomy. The most recent research on the relationship between Egyptian female labor force participation and autonomy was carried out by Govindasamy and Malhotra (1996); Kishor (1995); and Nawar et al. (1995). All of the studies are based on the 1988 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey. Nawar et al. (1995) used the data in conjunction with a 1991 Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) survey on “The Characteristics of the Household and the Role of Egyptian Women in the Family.” Although they used different models, the three studies scrutinized the meaning of autonomy and different aspects of it. They focused on the multi dimensionality of autonomy and the relationship between women’s autonomy in nonreproductive and reproductive aspects of domestic life. All of the authors agreed that while autonomy can be defined in various ways, most Egyptian women have varying degrees of power and autonomy in different spheres.

In an attempt to capture different types of autonomy Kishor (1995) created indexes to measure customary, noncustomary and realized autonomies. The customary autonomy index measures the extent to which a woman believes that she should have the last word in family planning, in the decision to have another child, and in her children’s education and marriage. The noncustomary index measures the extent to which a woman thinks that she should have decision-making power in areas beyond the traditional or customary realms of women. The types of decision-making that are captured by the noncustomary index include household budget, lending or borrowing, making decisions regarding visits to friends or relatives. Both customary and noncustomary indexes consist of attitudinal variables. In contrast, the realized customary index stresses the behavioral aspects of these attitudes. In other words, the realized index measures to what extent women perceive that they actually have decision making powers and freedom of movement. The three indices of autonomy are then used in two separate analyses. The first looks closely at whether the different autonomy measures are equally associated with the use of contraception by women and the survival of children up to the age of
The impact of women’s employment on autonomy also differs for each dimension of autonomy. Only realized autonomy is higher among women who work, irrespective of whether or not they control their earnings or earn cash for their work. In contrast, whether women who work differ significantly in terms of their customary and noncustomary autonomy from those who do not work depends on whether the work is for earnings or not and the degree of control over earnings. In comparison with women who do not work at all, noncustomary autonomy is higher only among women who work and give most of their earnings to their families, and customary autonomy is higher only among women who work and keep most of their earnings for themselves (p. xii).

To a certain extent, Govindasamy and Malhotra’s (1996) findings amplified Kishor’s (1995) arguments that there are indeed strong connections between women’s status in reproductive and nonreproductive domains. Govindasamy and Malhotra (1996) used a multivariate analysis that focuses on two dependent variables, namely current use of modern contraceptives and the role women think they should play in making reproductive decisions. The independent variables are freedom of movement, a woman’s own perception regarding the weight of her point of view within the household and women’s preference regarding who should control the household budget or make decisions regarding lending or borrowing. Based on their research Govindasamy and Malhotra (1996) concluded that even after controlling for background characteristics, the independent variables have a substantial impact on women’s preference on who should make family planning decisions in the household. This relationship clearly shows that Egyptian women’s attitudes regarding reproductive decision making are not independent of their attitudes concerning nonreproductive matters. The most important contribution of this research is that it discredits the continued use of education and employment as proxies for women’s position, particularly in their relationship with fertility control.

The various results from the field research illustrated above show that the relationship between female labor force participation and female autonomy in different aspects of life is more complicated than it is anticipated to be. In the Egyptian case it is hard to say that female labor force participation has been a liberating force for women the way it was supposed to be. Tucker (1993) concisely stated: “The idea that economic ‘modernization’ gradually brought women out of the ‘traditional’ confines of a harem or a peasant family into a modern labor force is no longer an accepted generalization: new research suggests far greater complexity.” (p. xi)
Dimensions of Autonomy

The multidimensionality of autonomy implies that there are a variety of types of autonomy (Jejeebhoy, 1995; Jejeebhoy, 2000; Kishor, n.d.). Several studies have been carried out to reveal different dimensions of autonomy. The most common themes are women’s power in household decision making and freedom of movement (Desai & Jain, 1994; Dharmalingam & Morgan, 1996; Dyson & Moore, 1983; Isvan, 1991; Kishor, n.d.; Niraula & Morgan, 1996). Household decision making is further differentiated into two: traditional sphere, namely child care; and non traditional, such as household budget (Jejeebhoy, 2000; Kishor, n.d.). The latest and most comprehensive study of the multidimensionality of autonomy is that of Jejeebhoy (2000). Jejeebhoy’s (2000) list of dimensions of autonomy includes: freedom of movement, economic decision making, child related decision making, freedom from threat of violence, access to economic resources and, control over resources.

Unlike dimensions of autonomy, determinants of autonomy are harder to compile. This is because some of the determinants of autonomy such as access to and control over resources, can be perceived as indicators of autonomy. In spite of the lack of clear cut boundaries between determinants and dimensions of autonomy, I try to include some of the most commonly used indicators of female autonomy.

Some Determinants of Autonomy

Education

Female education is generally considered an important means of attaining modernization (Howard-Merriam, 1979) and of ensuring the progress of a nation (Jayawardena, 1986). Attempts to provide female education in Egypt started in 1830 when Mohammad Ali erected his famous school of midwifery as part of his effort to insert secular education in Egypt (Abdel Kader, 1987). However, until recent decades many Egyptians felt that the risk of eroding the morality of women who leave the protectiveness of their homes outweighs the benefit gained from education (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987; Abdel Kader, 1987). Qasim Amin, a prominent judge and reformer, wrote despondently in Tahrir al-mar’a (the Liberation of Women) in 1899 about Egyptians who debated whether teaching women to read and write is permissible in Islamic law (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987).

Nowadays various Islamic groups have been gaining important ground among Egypt’s female university students (Shukrallah, 1994; Hatem, 1994; Moghadam, 1994; Hoffman-Ladd, 1987; Fluehr-Lobban, 1993; Faust et.al., 1992). Hoffman-Ladd (1987) interpreted this as a public assertion by the most conservative group about the importance of educating women.

Educational opportunities for Egyptian women proliferated during Nasser’s regime due to the creation of additional facilities and a gender blind state entrance examination system (Howard-Merriam, 1979; Hatem, 1988; Abdel Kader, 1987). The number of literate women rose from 12.4 percent in 1960 to 16.2 percent in 1976. While the number of women with primary and secondary education tripled during this period, it increased sixfold at the university
level (Ikram, 1980). It is noteworthy, however, that a gender gap in education persists. In 1984, 96 percent of boys attended primary school compared to 76 percent of girls. The respective rates at secondary and tertiary levels were 73 percent versus 52 percent and 28.6 percent versus 14.8 percent respectively (el-Sanabary, 1989).

It is important to note that many educational facilities are outdated and overtaxed, lagging behind the ever increasing students (Springborg, 1989; Beatty, 1994; Cochran, 1992). Free and compulsory education, coupled with a population explosion, contribute to the present educational system (Beatty, 1994; Lippman, 1989; Waterbury, 1983).

How does education affect autonomy? Kishor (2000) wrote that it can affect autonomy in various ways, such as “by equipping them directly with the information and the means to function effectively in the modern world.” (p. 133). Additionally it enables women to secure employment prior to and after marriage (Kishor, 2000). However, empirical evidence suggests that while economic development enables women to gain education, it does not necessarily change access to employment or gender relations in a significant way (Hull, 1979; Sharma 1980; Sopher 1980).

Various studies suggested that expansion of education contributes significantly to the growth of female workers (Hatem, 1988; 1994; Howard-Merriam, 1979; Talhami, 1996). This is especially true among female university graduates (MacLeod, 1991; Rugh, 1984; Sullivan, 1981). However, assuming that education and other “modern” institutions have a positive impact on Egyptian women is deemed uncritical (Ahmed, 1992; Hatem, 1993). Abu-Lughod (1998: 68) argued that many Egyptians...

...unthinkingly presumed that education is good, despite facts that the benefits of such a poor quality education as is available in the overtaxed state system, leading to poorly paid employment at best are dubious..... (p.68).

Moghadam (1995) asserted that the effect of female education varies by class, with most benefits accruing to women of higher class. Although state-sponsored education greatly enhances female labor force participation, women’s access to resources, including education, is mainly determined by their class. Moghadam (1995) maintained that among the few Arab women who work in the non-agricultural sector, the majority have a high education, urban background and professional jobs. Within the Egyptian context, one third of women who work can be found in professional, technical or managerial positions (Kishor and Neitzel, 1996).

**Family Structure**

Paid work affects women in various ways. One of them is preference for nuclear families. Al-Turki (quoted in Hijab, 1988) put forward that educated young women demand that husbands give the nuclear family priority over the extended family despite the fact that the latter remains strong. They acquire more power at the expense of that of their mothers in-law. In Haddad’s (1998) words: “Instead of being a guest in her mother-in-law’s home, the bride
gets to be in charge of her own household.” (p. 123) In a similar vein, Kishor (1995) and Miles Doan and Bisharat (1990) maintained that women who live in extended families will tend to be less autonomous than women in nuclear households. They put forward two arguments supporting this association. First, nuclear and extended families provide different opportunities for the expression of individual-level autonomy. Extended families provide more room for older people, male first, then female to control younger people in the family. Older women therefore are able to exercise a certain degree of control over the men and women in the family, provided that they are older. In contrast, younger women and new brides, being at the bottom of the gender and age hierarchy, do not have the opportunity to do so (Dixon-Mueller, 1989). In the nuclear family, however, they are more likely to be autonomous, since decision-making usually rests in the hands of the male head, and the next in line is usually the wife.

The reverse causal order can also be true. Women and couples who are more autonomous might choose to live in nuclear households, since their autonomy will hinder a harmonious relationship with other members of their extended families. Therefore, it is quite plausible to suggest that a higher number of autonomous women live in nuclear households than in extended ones. Research by Nawal et al. (1995) supported this assertion since their data revealed that married Egyptian women in nuclear households are more likely to be literate and much more likely to choose their own partners than married women living in extended families.

Age

In the Arab world in general households are stratified by gender and age (Barakat, 1985; Protho and Diab, 1974). Within the Egyptian context, age is an important determinant of autonomy (Lane and Melleis, 1991; Rugh, 1984). Dickersheid et al., (1996) succinctly summarize the elevated status of older women in Egypt:

In middle age, women are considered wise and are expected to advise others: their position is respectable: they have more freedom to move around the village; and they manage the family household. (p. 38).

In a similar line Baden (1992) wrote that a woman’s roles evolves around her age, slowly changing from a powerless young bride to a decisive wife and authoritative mother-in-law. This “traditional” source of autonomy remains important today. Brink (1991) added that women’s control over household resources in Egypt also increases with age.

Ownership and Control Over Resources

Another source of autonomy is ownership and control over resources. Laws in Egypt are highly influenced by Islam. According to Islam, women and men have equal rights to land tenure and property ownership (Asfour, 1995). After marriage, the husband has no right to the woman’s money or property. She has the right to own and control her property (Takla, 1995).
However, traditional structure, which is stratified by gender, continues to play a crucial role in discriminating against women.

The most common forms of property owned by Egyptian women are gold and furniture (Hoodfar, 1997; Loban, 1998). When women both own and control them, women have effective leverage in household decision making (Wikan, 1995, Toth, 1991). Women can easily sell their property when they need “key money” to rent bigger apartments or to purchase building plots (Wikan, 1995; Hoodfar, 1997.)

**Reasons for Working and Type of Employment**

There is a general trend towards increased female labor force participation in Egypt (Baden, 1992). However it does not necessarily lead to the betterment of Egyptian women. Hatem (1992) put forward: “Economic and political liberalization did not enhance the equality or the liberty of Egyptian women.” (p. 248). There are several explanations for this discrepancy. First, most Egyptian working women tend to work out of necessity ((Mohsen, 1985; Singerman and Hoodfar, 1996; MacLeod, 1991; Hatem, 1992). Second, many are concentrated in low-status occupations with low pay, mainly in the informal sector (El-Sanabary, 1998; Singerman and Hoodfar, 1996). Third, most of them have to face numerous difficulties and hassles, especially sexual harassment in public places (MacLeod, 1991; MacLeod, 1996; El-Sanabary, 1998).

Type of work is one of the determinants of female autonomy and job satisfaction. Apparently, work in the modern sector, as opposed to those in traditional sectors, are more likely to result in female autonomy (Youssef, 1982; Brink, 1985). Many women, primarily who work in the public sector, expressed high job satisfaction (Hijab, 1988). This was not necessarily the case for women from lower socio-economic background, as was shown by Hammam’s (1980) survey on 148 Egyptian factory workers at a textile plant outside Cairo which employed 400 females out of 1,150 in 1975. Hammam (1980) found that job satisfaction was limited, although the factory was chosen for the survey because it offered several services, such as a day care center, a consumer cooperative and literacy classes. Within the sample, 65 per cent of the women were single, 25 per cent were married and 10 per cent were divorced. All worked due to economic need. Although all women were proud to be able to contribute financially to their families, they thought that factory work was too arduous, and therefore not suitable for women. All single women planned to leave their jobs when they got married. Hoodfar (1990) reported evidence of the unpopularity of factory work, particularly among married women, and preference for white collar work which provides flexible hours, security and generous maternity benefits. Comparing the nature of different jobs, Cochran (1992) argued

No matter how difficult her working situation, the professional woman has a more positive experience than the clerical or domestic woman. Such professions as law, medicine, or dentistry provide maximum flexibility and satisfaction and a highly remunerative source of work (p. 72)
Control over income

Female labor force participation can be translated into various autonomies through control over income (Kishor, n.d.). Baden (1992) argued that wage level and number of hours put into work are less important than the share of household income that women control. The latter is the crucial factor that determines the degree of women’s economic autonomy. Some authors maintained that control over women’s income is less likely to occur in patriarchal societies. Safilios-Rothschild (1982) gave a gloomy picture of women’s lack of autonomy in such societies despite the fact that they participate in the labor force.

In patriarchal, traditional societies, however, such activities can be translated into power only if men allow it (italics original) - even if women’s productive contribution to the household is equal to, or even greater than, that of their husbands. In such cases, it is the men who control the wages and decide when the women will start and stop working (p.122).

El Saadawi (1988) concurred with Safilios-Rothschild. El Saadawi (1988) wrote that even though many women may have high-status professional jobs and make important decisions during the course of the day, and even though Islamic sharia insists that women have the right to keep their income, it seems that many husbands continue to have a final say on the expenditure of their income.

Amount of Contribution to Family Budget

Nawar et al. (1995) suggested that according to modernization theory, a working woman will be considered autonomous if she keeps most of her earnings for herself. However, since most Egyptian women work out of necessity (Mohsen, 1985; Singerman and Hoodfar, 1996; MacLeod, 1991; Hatem, 1992), those who give most of their earning to their families are the ones who obtain higher status (Nawar et al., 1995). This only holds, however, if the amount of their contribution is substantial, since giving surplus generates more power than merely contributing for the survival of the household (Wolf, 1991; Coleman, 1991; Blumberg, 1991; Toth, 1991).

The amount of women’s contribution to the family is also a function of the family’s class. Women who belong to well off families are not expected to contribute much to their family, therefore they are able to keep the bigger part of their income (Desai and Jain, 1994). This is related to the male gender role as family providers and social pressure to carry out such a role (Haddad, 1980; Rugh, 1984).

Type of Remuneration

Egyptian women work in different types of employment and their remuneration varies. As a consequence of becoming a cash oriented society, women’s cash contribution is highly valued (Hoodfar, 1990; 1997; Early 1993a, 1993b). Various studies suggest that women who earn cash, rather than in kind, are more likely to have a higher level of autonomy (Kishor n.d.;
Can Non-working Women Be Autonomous?

Although labor force participation is not the sole determinant of autonomy, the oft-cited source of female autonomy is labor force participation (Riley 1997; Abadian, 1996; Gage 1995; Nawar et. al., 1995). One might wonder whether non-working women can have autonomy.

Jejeebhoy (2000) put forward that determinants of each dimension of autonomy vary. Traditional factors conferring authority to women - age, nuclear family residence, ownership and controlling of resources (gold jewelry and furniture in Egyptian case), continue to have a powerful effect on women’s autonomy (Jejeebhoy, 2000; Dikersheid, et.al., 1996; Lane and Meleis, 1991; Singerman and Hoodfar, 1996; Early 1993a, 1993b). It is not surprising that Kishor (n.d.) noted that non-working women in Egypt have customary autonomy, namely autonomy related to traditional role of child rearing, but score lower in noncustomary autonomy.

Gender Roles: Change or Continuity

Indicators of autonomy only provide a partial explanation for the relationship between female labor force participation and autonomy. This is because such a relationship does not operate in a vacuum. Whether women can actualize their autonomy depends on a host of variables, such as class, state policy, development strategy, and the world (Moghadam, 1995). Other researches add conservative attitudes with respect to gender roles to the list (El Mikawy, 1999; Moghadam and Khoury, 1995; Talhami, 1996).

Gender roles in Egyptian society are clearly divided between public and private sectors, with the latter being the domain of women (el-Messiri, 1978; Ibrahim, 1985; Macleod, 1996). Various stereotypes of men and women in Egypt reflect socially accepted conceptions of gender identity (Haddad, 1980; Rugh, 1984). Men are expected to be in charge of decision making, to uphold the segregation of gender roles and to maintain emotional distance from wives and children (Davis & Davis, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1994). Women, on the other hand, are expected to be generally submissive to men and confined by social norms to roles within the family (Haddad, 1980; Hussain, 1984; Rugh, 1964 ). Ali (1998) questioned such portrayal of Middle Eastern women in general, and Egyptian women in particular. Ali (1998) wrote:

Seldom does literature on women or gender in the Middle East address the issue of affection between husbands and wives and how bonds of mutual support and caring are constructed within households. ... Depictions of gender relations in ... Egyptian households always portray women as oppressed without ever mentioning relationships of kindness, sharing, and mutual love between husbands and wives (p. 177-178).
The image of down trodden Middle Eastern women can be traced back to the representation of them as “the other” who significantly differs from Western women (Ali, 1998; Tucker, 1993).

Although Egyptian women play multiple roles, traditionally their most important roles are those of mothers and wives (Fernea, 1985; Hijab, 1988; Hoodfar, 1997; Mohsen, 1985; Zuhur, 1992). Egyptians are stratified based on, among other things, gender (Goodwin, 1994; Rugh, 1984) and relations, including marital ones, are based on obedience. Egyptian personal-status law is based on Islamic law and an Islamic conception of marriage as a contractual agreement between the husband who pledges support and the wife who pledges obedience. The definition of obedience is not static. The nature of obedience is often contested and continually negotiated (Esposito, 1982; Fluehr-Lobban & Bardsley-Sirois, 1990). Lane and Meleis (1991) observed the importance of obedience but warned against hasty conclusions about female oppression or subordination. Some studies on Arab women have shed light on their roles as agents who craft their own lives and history, albeit within rigid social, cultural, and legal constraints (Ali, 1998; Hoodfar 1991, 1997; Keddie and Baron, 1991; Lane and Meleis, 1991; MacLeod, 1991).

The rigidity of Egypt’s gender system does not seem to change significantly in spite of its progressive educational policies which used to be open to all, regardless of gender and social class. This seems to contradict Caldwell’s (1980) argument. Caldwell (1980) viewed mass education as the introduction of western middle-class values. According to Caldwell (1980) school threatens traditional family values and family centered patriarchy. Caldwell’s argument was supported by Kritz and Gurak (1989). In strongly patriarchal societies, schooling allows girls to have a wider social network, new reference groups, greater exposure to the modern world, and experience in dealing with peers and authority figures other than their parents (Kritz & Gurak, 1989).

Faust, Bach, Gadalla, Khattab and Gulick (1991) tested the Caldwell thesis in Egypt. Faust et al. (1991) maintained that

This aspect of his model may seem to be too much an expression of western middle-class ethnocentrism to be valid. However, it must be remembered that Egypt’s mass education system was (italic original), for many years, a Western style system. Ironically, it is now also a vehicle for the inculcation of non-Western religious values (p. 337).

Faust et al. (1991) were not the only ones to challenge the notion that schooling experience in developing countries leads to modernization of gender attitudes. Jeffery and Basu (1996) put forward that schooling does not increase the autonomy of girls due to the conservative nature of schooling that perpetuates traditional gender roles. However, although Egypt has a relatively successful educational policy, its school curriculum does not depart from the traditionally approved gender roles.

Mensch, Ibrahim, Lee and El-Gibaly (2000) pointed out that “Egyptian school texts contain clear messages about the appropriate roles for women and men in society.” (p. 5).
Concomitantly, “increased schooling does not always promote egalitarian attitudes” (p. 1). Upon completion of reviewing history and civic textbooks used in Egypt, Ibrahim and Wassef (2000) conclude that “....with a few exceptions, women... are depicted in supporting roles rather than independent or leadership position.” (p. 6). Similarly, Mohamed (1985) found that Egyptian Arabic elementary reading text books depict men and women based on gender stereotypes. These text books for grades three to six do not reflect the changing roles of women. It is little wonder that elementary school girls (Khattab & el-Daeiff, 1984) as well as female university graduates (Cochran, 1992) still cling to the notion that women’s roles as mother and home maker supercede other roles, such as worker. Cochran (1992) even went farther to claim that for many highly educated women, education is perceived as a “cultural stopgap until they marry.” (p. 74). This has a lot to do with the conflicting message that women keep on receiving. On the one hand they are led to believe that educational achievement is commendable. On the other hand social values dictate that women’s respect depends mostly on their ability to carry out family responsibilities and behave in a traditionally prescribed manner (Cochran, 1992). Consequently few educated women find social encouragement to work (Hatem, 1988). Cochran (1992) summarized this sentiment by stating the awareness of educated women of one of the consequences of working for money. The action of working can be construed as broadcasting their husband’s inability to support their family, since traditionally the husbands should be sole breadwinners.

Besides school another agent of socialization is the media. Al-Obaidi (2000) argued that “[Egyptian] women were basically projected as performing a decorative duty and as marginal to national growth and development.” (p. 265). Al-Obaidi (2000) worried about the impact of Egyptian films, which are saturated with gender and class violence, and the deeply rooted notion of dominant men and submissive women. Similar themes run through state-controlled media. Many studies conclude that exposure to images of sexual, physical or verbal violence can lead to acceptance of sexual violence (Schwartz, 1996). Al-Obaidi (2000) asserted that young adults might be desensitized to real suffering of real people or imitate violent film characters, especially when they embrace the idea that violence is not only accepted, but rewarded. Furthermore, many Egyptian movies tend to “sexualize and trivialize women” (p. 270). Al-Obaidi (2000) also added:

Many phrases, words, songs and lyrics introduced by films have been used by the public throughout the Arab world. Young adults use these phrases, words, and lyrics for harassing women in the streets or public places (p. 272).

It seems that school, the media and society in general give a congruent message about the appropriate gender roles. It is very likely that the present gender roles will continue to hold. Research on Egyptian adolescents shows that most probably the patriarchal gender relations will be perpetuated. Among respondents age 16 - 19, 91 percent of boys (as
opposed to 87.5 percent of girls) agree that the wife “needs her husband’s permission for everything.” As far as decision making is concerned, girls are more likely to prefer joint decisions over husband or wife independent decision (Mensch et al., 2000).

This discussion about the role of education and the media in maintaining and changing traditional values serves as a tool of analysis in understanding definition and negotiation of various gender roles in Egypt.

Gender roles affect female autonomy by dictating what kind of autonomy women should have. Women’s decision making autonomy, for example, commonly centers around women’s traditional role, namely child rearing (Govindasamy & Malhotra, 1996). On the other hand decisions concerning “non traditional matters,” such as family budget, freedom of movement, are often related with non traditional sources of autonomy such as labor force participation, cash remuneration (Jejeebhoy, 2000; Kishor, n.d.).

Gender roles also influence women’s decision on whether they should work at all. Among many segments of Egyptian society, women are discouraged from working, unless they are educated (Shukrallah, 1994; Wikan, 1985). Their education will enable them to work in gender appropriate works, such as teaching or medicine (Cochran, 1992; Qais, 1993).

Islamic Revivalism and Gender Roles

The discourse on gender roles in Egypt has taken a conservative turn (Abdel Kader, 1987; El Baz, 1997; el-Mikawy, 1999; Hatem, 1998). This change happened in tandem with the worsening economic conditions in Egypt. With the failure of Nasser’s experimentation with socialism, in the mid 1970s Egypt opened up its economy to the private sector. The government has been turning its economy away from import substitution industrialization (the 1960s) and the dependence on renter revenue. It has been gearing its economy towards export-oriented industry. It has also been carrying out International Monetary Fund and Word Bank recommendations for structural adjustment since the 1990s (Moghadam, 1993; Waterbury, 1983). The result of these reorientation is a high rate of unemployment due to the shrinking of the public sector and the lack of growth in the private sector (El-Mikawy, 1999). Sadat’s open door policy was not successful in attaining better economic conditions for the country and the people. On the contrary, the inflation rate sky rocketed while the exposure to consumer goods expanded widely. The result was a frustrated and disillusioned population. A lot of Egyptians experienced relative deprivation, a gap between what they expected to attain and what they actually could obtain (Amin, 1997; El-Guindi, 1981). It is in this context of economic failure and political delegitimation that Islamic discourse is presenting itself as an alternative (Ayubi, 1991; Beatty, 1994; Campagna, 1996; Moghadam, 1993; Springborg, 1989; Talhami, 1996; Tibi, 1997; Waterbury, 1983). Shukrallah (1994) argued that acceptance of the “Islamic alternative” symbolizes rejection of other discourses - secular, liberal, or socialist. These discourses are perceived to represent “defeat, humiliation and impoverishment”(p. 16). Furthermore “Islam is indigenous in the region, providing not only a
unity with the past, but a sense of ownership and identity (p. 16). Furthermore Shukrallah (1994) wrote that rapid development—which has happened in Egypt—leads to tensions among generations and sexes. Some pressure groups will reinsert a traditional, cultural pattern to ease the tension. Within the Egyptian context these pressure groups are represented by various Islamic movements.

In the forefront of most Islamic movements is the reversal of gender roles to the traditional ones which separate men’s and women’s spheres into public and private arenas (El-Baz, 1997; Kandiyoti, 1991; Tessler and Jesse, 1996; Tohidi, 1998; Waterbury, 1983). Consequently, many Egyptian secularist liberals and progressives fear that women’s rights are now under threat (Talhami, 1996). They saw various telling indicators, such as the growing popularity of Islamic dress and hijab (head cover) and the more conservative personal status laws that replaced Sadat’s more liberal ones (Abdel Kader, 1987; Early, 1993; Goodwin, 1994).

Additionally there has been an increase in formal speeches or publications that strongly encourage women’s return to the home and their traditional roles (Abu Lughod, 1998, Talhami, 1996). Justifications for such calls vary, such as releasing jobs for the male breadwinners, enabling women to concentrate on their roles as mothers, protecting women from improper mingling with the opposite sex (Abdel Kader, 1987; Abu Lughod, 1998; Amin, 1997; El-Baz, 1997; el-Mikawy, 1999; Gerami, 1996) and even crowded public transportation (Hatem, 1998). The shaping of this new discourse sometimes manifests itself in severe criticism towards women’s public participation. According to one of the most popular Islamic preachers “Sheikh Sharawi” (who hosted a prime-time television program): “A woman who works while she has a father, brother or husband to support her is a sinful woman.” (Badran, 1991, p. 226). So widespread is the backlash against working women that El-Mikawy (1999) called the tendency the conservative consensus.

The occurrence of the conservative consensus is somewhat ironic since a substantial number of Egyptian families have to rely on two incomes to maintain a middle class existence or simply to get by (Abu Lughod, 1998, Early, 1993a, 1993b; Hoodfar, 1997). However, several authors pointed out that the increasingly conservative climate and the rise of male unemployment as well as the reduction in male migration to oil rich countries are not a coincidence (Abdel Kader, 1987; Abu Lughod, 1998). Traditionally, Egyptian males’ primary role is family bread winners (Early, 1993a, 1993b; Rugh, 1984) This role is supported by the sharia. Based on this law, women should be able to rely on their husbands for economic support (el-Messiri, 1978; Rugh, 1985). Engineer (1992) argued forcefully that:

The Quran puts the entire burden of maintenance of the wife on the husband whatever her own wealth and income. She is not obliged to give her husband anything from her income. Even if a husband is poor and she is wealthy, the husband has to give her maintenance according to his capacity (p. 115)

As stated previously, various social changes impede men from fulfilling their expected
role. In turn, this difficulty gives birth to the tightening control over women. This tendency is a reflection of men’s attempt to maintain order. Bulbeck (1998) explained this tendency lucidly:

By putting women back in their place (veiled, obedient to father, husband, or son, publicly punished even unto death for presumed sexual transgressions or expressions), men seek to put the world back in store, safe and secure despite rapid changes and economic disorder (p. 29)

It is interesting to note that Hatem (1994) pointed out that the glorification of motherhood does not belong solely to religious movements. Hatem (1994) argued that there was a secularist ideal of domesticity which coexisted since 1959 with the women’s legal right to work. Women’s roles as mothers and wives provide a “basic identity” for women, whereas employment creates an “added identity.” In other words female labor force participation should not diminish the importance of domestic roles (Hatem, 1994). Since both secularist and religious movements share the notion of women’s “proper roles”, it is no wonder that public opinion concerning such roles is very difficult to alter.

Various writings on Islamic groups create an impression that they share almost identical visions and ways of thinking (Campagna, 1996; Tohidi, 1998; Zuhur, 1992). Baden (1992) argued that the Islamic movement is not monolithic. Baden (1992) was aware that some feminists claim that the present day Islamic movement is the epitome of a return to traditional values and ideology, but she refuted the statement. Not only the Islamic movement has a substantial number of intellectual advocates that support modernization - within the boundaries of Islam - but they also contest various issues, such as women’s right to work (Ferne, 1998; Keddie, 1991; Karam, 1998; Moghadam, 1991).

Nevertheless the fact that women receive conflicting messages remains. How do women reconcile rigid social expectations and their changing roles? Egyptian women have proven to be resourceful. Rather than openly challenge their husband’s authority, they resort to the arts of persuasion and negotiation. Jabre et al. (1997) explained that their strategy was

....to defer to their husbands, gradually gain their support, and eventually win their respect. In this way, the women retained their husbands’ esteem, their families’ equilibrium, and the respect of the community while beginning to make and act upon their own decisions (p. 6).

This quotation amplifies Ibrahim et al.’s (19970 elucidation of the importance of harmony and belonging to a group even while one fends for oneself.

Another mechanism to circumvent the conservative consensus is by wearing “Islamic dress” (al-ziyy al-shari’i) which consists of a long sleeve, a long skirt and head cover or scarf, which is also called the hijab (veil, cover, protection) (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987). The most conspicuous part of the “Islamic dress” is the hijab. (El Guindi, 1980; Fernea & Fernea, 1979; Williams, 1979)
Several researchers noted that the hijab has quietly reappeared in the lives of many Muslims in different countries, not only in Egypt. This tendency was noticeable since the 1970s and is more apparent today (El-Guindi, 1981; Fernea, 1998; Hijab, 1988; Karam, 1998; MacLeod, 1991, 1996; Mohsen, 1985; Shukrallah, 1994; Williams, 1979; Zuhur, 1992).

Hijab can symbolize different things: allegiance to Islam, a political statement, the desire to be both modern and Muslim, an attempt to create a space in a primarily male public domain, or simply a way out of the financially taxing “fashion war” (Williams, 1979; Fernea and Fernea, 1979; El Guindi 1980; 1981; Rugh, 1984; Ahmed, 1992, Hoodfar, 1991; Zuhur, 1992; MacLeod, 1991).

Shukrallah (1994) maintained that outsiders might be puzzled to learn that Huda Sharawi, one of the most prominent early Egyptian feminists, shed her veil to identify herself with progress, faced repercussions for her actions, and today “modern” Egyptian women meekly don it again. Hofmann-Ladd (1987) argued that the veil is a response to social changes which is no longer predictable. The coming back of hijab has a lot to do with the clash between modernization that provides some Egyptian women with education, skills, and job opportunities and “traditional values” that encourage women to stay at home (MacLeod, 1991; 1996; Mernissi, 1981; Moghadam, 1994; Hoffman-Ladd, 1987; Fluehr-Loban, 1993; Zuhur, 1992; Hijab, 1988).

Another problem that some of these women have to deal with is husbands’ or fiancé’s jealousy due to the fact that working women have to mingle with the opposite sex in their workplace. There is also a lot of fear among men of the possibility of losing their honor if the conduct of the working female members of their family incite gossip from neighbors or relatives (MacLeod, 1991; Zuhur, 1992). It is clear that working women need to carve their space in public arenas while defending their own and their family’s honor. Hoffman-Ladd (1987: 24) wrote succinctly that the veil “... broadcasts woman’s respectability, enabling her to venture into the public sphere without the harassment or damage to her reputation...” (p. 24).

There are other practical advantages to wearing a head cover, as Fernea (1998) found out. Her Egyptian informants asserted strongly that not only did veiled girls get better jobs or get married more easily, but they also had an easier time getting their electricity turned on, getting a train ticket, and getting their telephone hooked up. As one of her informants put it: “Covered girls can cross boundaries. They have power! They have authority” (p. 256).

Hirschmann (1997) questioned whether veiled women reveal agency. This thought is a result of various contentions on the motives for veiling, ranging from subjugation to patriarchal values to independence in asserting one’s belief (Haddad, 1984; Zuhur, 1992; Mohsen, 1985; El-Guindi, 1981). Hirschmann (1997) argued that although to a certain degree some women express their choice and freedom to veil, the meanings of those choices and freedoms are very limited since they are dictated by patriarchal parameters.
Islamic movement and women

One common feature that connects fundamentalist movement is control over women’s lives (Clark and Feldman, 1996; Brown, 1994; Freedman, 1996). That is why women’s sexuality, space, and agency are regulated. Curbing women’s freedom of mobility and imposing strict dress codes are a priority (Faust et. al., 1992). Women’s role is reduced to that of wives and mothers (Ahmed, 1992; Mernissi, 1991; Esposito, 1980; Bahira, 1996). Consequently, progressive women, including feminists eye such movements warily. Esposito (1998) has written:

Feminist organizations from Algeria to Malaysia have warned that Islamist power sharing would in fact reverse the educational and social gains of postindependence period, remove women from public life and gain, restrict their roles solely to that of wife and mother. Thus, it remains important to view the religious, historical and political reconstruction of Islam in Muslim societies and its impact on gender (xi).

Gerami (1996) critically analyzes Islamic movements, which she refers to as fundamentalist. Gerami (1996) disagreed with the preconceive notion of the regressive nature of Islamic movements:

... to label fundamentalists as regressive can be misleading. It is mostly in the family issues that they hold fast to traditional practices, but when it comes to politico-economic structure, they give in little to the past. It is this interplay between fundamentalism and modernism that has escaped the attention of scholars as well as the public’s mind (p. 38).

It should be noted however, that neither do Islamic movements constitute a homogeneously misogynic force, nor have women responded to them in a uniform way (Bouatta, 1994; Cherifati-Merabtine, 1994; Tohidi, 1994; Shaban, 1998; Charrad, 1998). There is a wide range of Qur’anic interpretation regarding gender relations and gender roles (El-Sanabary, 1998; Tessler and Jesse, 1996; Hassan, 1999; Shaaban, 1998). Female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, the most well know Islamic group in Egypt, for example, argue that Islam encourages women’s involvement in public life and female education (Tessler and Jesse, 1996).

The emergence of Islamic movements coincided with the expansion of female labor force participation in Egypt. Women’s work outside the home separated them from traditional male control. This was true for both educated and uneducated women. Economic modernization in Egypt led to the emergence of an urban middle class woman. Increasing access to education and opportunities for gainful employment in the formal economy provided such women with a new public presence (Sullivan, 1986; Macledod, 1991; 1996). Many realized they had more personal choices than marriage and motherhood (Karam, 1998;
Fernea, 1998). These factors posed a threat to male domination. Consequently, reassertation of patriarchal power became central to virtually all fundamentalists (Keddie and Baron, 1991).

Islamic movements’ tightening grip over women concerned the notion of women as the last bastion of tradition and transmitters of social values (Shukrallah, 1994; Gerami, 1996; Helie-Lucas, 1994; Moghadam, 1994). Male members of society were determined to ensure that what was passed on to the next generation was pure, not corrupted by various forms of westernization (Harris, 1994; Clark and Feldman, 1996; Hoffman-Ladd, 1987).

Some writers relate the Islamic movement to the disempowerment of men (Abdo, 1994; Ahmed, 1992). It has been suggested that one reason why some Islamic movements are so concerned with women is that as a group, women are weak. They do not have political power. Therefore, they become an easy target for “the restoration of male dignity” especially when men can not control their sources of powerlessness, such as unemployment (Mernissi, 1991).

One of the paradoxes of the Islamic movement is the active presence of many women. Some feminists found this fact disheartening (Clark and Feldman 1996). How could women be supporters of organizations and activities that limit their own rights or be hostile to other women? Moghadam (1991) wrote analytically that supports from middle class women towards Islamic groups reflected two things. First, it showed the failure of Nasser, Sadat and even Mubarak’s political and economic policies. These policies furthermore have alienated this particular class. Second, it demonstrated the attractiveness of the Islamic movement as an alternative option. Lippman (1989) argued that even members of the educated elite who were not sympathetic to the religious movement understood its appeal. Nasser’s state socialism failed to bring prosperity. Sadat’s open door policy was not successful either in bringing the promised economic gain, and it severed Egypt from its spiritual roots. What is left then is Islam, an indigenous ideology which is widely embraced by Egyptians.

Women who support Islamic movements do so because they gain something from their act. Moghadam (1994) argues that, especially among non-working women, such a movement can provide stability amidst social upheaval. Moghadam (1994) pointed out that “stability lies in part in clearly defined sex roles, family life, and a religious orientation.” (p.19). Even some working women find the appeal of the Islamic movement irresistible. They are drawn to these movements because of their emphasis on family, and because the Islamic movement demands that both men and women place a higher priority on raising children and family relations in general. Lack of child care, family responsibilities and work-related demands conspire to push many Egyptian working women to a breaking point. Writing on the impact of fundamentalism Hardacre (1991) argued that many women may in fact make “conscious decision to use the fundamentalist message to secure the husband’s loyalty and support of them and their children.” (p. 142). In a similar vein Enloe (1989) pointed out that “it isn’t always obvious that surrendering the role of cultural transmitter or rejecting male protection will enhance a woman’s daily security, reduce her burden.” (p. 5) Returning to the traditional and religious values might enable women to lessen their burden by garnering support from their husband and religious-based network.
Many women found a social niche within the Islamic movement, some of which had a progressive view of women’s education, maintaining that education in the fields of medicine and education, not only will improve the welfare of women but also lessen contact across gender lines (Moghadam, 1994; Baden, 1992). Islamic movements may open opportunities for participation in grassroots organizations (Moghadam, 1991; Tessler and Jesse, 1996). Islamic movements in Egypt may help women to retain their public space indirectly, by emphasizing the veil (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987; Hirschmann, 1997; McLeod, 1991; Zuhur, 1992). Some women gained respect from their family members, by virtue of their participation in the Islamic movement. This respect was sometimes translated into autonomy, with a number of women being able to voice their opinion about marriage and employment (Zuhur, 1992). Hence, contrary to the arguments of some analysts (Clark and Feldman, 1996; Brown, 1994; Freedman, 1996; Helie-Lucas, 1994) many Islamic movements are not particularly regressive (Baden, 1992; Tohidi, 1994).

Women, across class lines in Cairo are actively engaged in Islamic studies that deal with the Islamic laws and practices today. By actively studying and teaching their religion, these women challenge the historically male-centered character of Islamic pedagogy (Mahmood, 1998). Their participation proves that women are not always mere victims, or spectators, of social change. Women can be agents who actively voice their concerns, even within the boundaries imposed by various social forces (Mooney, 1998; Ahmed, 1992; Karam, 1998; Baden, 1992). Ingersoll (1995) concluded that religious fundamentalism is not simply constructed by men and imposed on women.

Concept of Honor and Shame, Obedience and Freedom of Movement

It should be clear by now that the cultural climate affects women’s autonomy. Freedom of movement, for example, has to be exercised within the boundaries of the concepts of honor and shame. In patriarchal societies, which include Egypt, women are often considered as a form of property (Mogadham, 1993; UNICEF, 2000; Population Reports, 2000). Their honor, and by extension, the honor of their family – depends in great measure on their virginity and good conduct (Kandiyoti, 1977; Wood, 1988; Rubin, 1975; Patai, 1967; Pitt-Rivers, 1977; Tilhon, 1983; Hirschon, 1984). The concept of honor and shame requires vigilance on the part of the men of the family. They are responsible for guarding the female’s sexual honor, hence men’s control over women (Abu-Odeh, 1996; Haeri, 1980). One reflection of this concept is male control over the whereabouts of female members of the family (Mogadham, 1993; Mernissi, 1989; Botman, 1999; Abu-Odeh, 1996).

Consequently, women’s freedom from the threat of violence and women’s freedom of movement should be placed within the context of preoccupation of preserving family honor. Abu-Odeh (1996) coined the terms “biological and social hymens” which women should protect. Social hymen refers to appropriate gender relations and separateness of public and private spheres.
The norm of shame and honor is only one inhibitor of female freedom of mobility. Another equally forceful depressant is the notion of obedience (ta‘ah) of wives (Lane and Meleis, 1991; Fluehr-Loban and Sirois, 1990). Bayt-al-ta‘ah (house of obedience) is not originated from or related to the Qur’an or Sunna (the practice of the Prophet), yet it is law (Guenena and Wassef, 1999). Under this law a husband is obligated to provide maintenance to his wife. In return a man has the right to demand obedience from his wife. The origin of bayt-al-ta‘ah is the notion that a wife should remain in the conjugal home and obey her husband in exchange for his financial support. Women are not supposed to leave the matrimonial home without their husbands’ permission. However, leaving the home for lawful work does not constitute disobedience so long as the wife does not abuse this right, it is not contrary to the interests of her family, and her husband has not explicitly asked her to refrain from working (Najjar, 1988; El Alami, 1992; Guenena and Wassef, 1999). Some men used bayt-al-ta‘ah as a loophole to avoid alimony. When the wife leaves her house without her husband’s permission, she is considered disobedient and therefore must forfeit alimony upon divorce (Guenena and Wassef, 1999).

The relationship between obedience and maintenance have been harshly criticized. Hamadah (1996: 338) equated the relationship between men and women in the house of obedience as “the buyer and his acquisition.” (p. 338). In a similar line Mernissi (1987 argued that in this construct women are viewed merely as consumers while men are praised as producers.

Abu-Lughod’s (1986) research on Bedouin women suggested that women’s obedience must be seen as a choice. Abu-Lughod (1986) argued “...people pity a woman who seems to obey her husband because she has no choice,” (p. 105) because of poverty, for instance, because she has no male kin to protect her. Although women advise each other to uphold obedience, and admonish those who do not, they appreciate “willful” women. These are not women who openly challenge cultural values but get around them through self-assertion. It is also interesting to note that although man’s honor comes from woman’s obedience, this obedience should be given freely (Abu-Lughod, 1986).

Nevertheless the concept of honor and shame, as well as obedience, affect various dimensions of autonomy of women. Working women do not necessarily have freedom of movement to go places as they wish (Kishor, n.d.; Ali, 1992). When women have to or want to go to places other than their work place, they still ask permission from their husbands (Ali, 1992). Thus, mobility does not grant them freedom of movement outside the work place (Kishor, n.d.). Kishor (n.d.) explained this tendency by arguing that women who work outside the homes gain freedom of movement through practical consideration. They have freedom of movement because it is a prerequisite for working.

The concept of shame and honor as well as obedience do not only shape women’s freedom of movement. They influence other aspects of autonomy such as freedom from the threat of violence and ability to make family decisions.
Violence Against Women

One important indicator of autonomy, but one that is not often included in studies of labor force participation and autonomy, is freedom from the threat of violence. Violation of women’s rights are often sanctioned under the cloak of cultural practices and norms and even interpretation or misinterpretation of religious teachings. Many cultures condone or at least tolerate violence against women in various forms (The State of World Population, 2000; Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Coomarswamy (1996) defined domestic violence as:

Violence that occurs within the private sphere, generally between individuals who are related through intimacy, blood, or law... [It is] nearly always a gender-specific crime, perpetrated by men against women (p. 5).

Some feminists argue that patriarchal society and economic structure maintain the subordinate status of women and tacitly sanction violence against women (Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1983, Hoagland, 1998; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Millet, 1970).

Some causes of domestic violence vary culturally. However, several causes of domestic violence are universal. In a comparative study of gender violence in 90 societies, 75 societies share four dominant socio-cultural factors as predictors of domestic violence. These factors are: 1) gender economic inequality; 2) a pattern of using violence for conflict resolution; 3) male authority and decision making in the home, and 4) divorce restrictions for women. The study found that the more dependent women are on men, the more vulnerable they are to violence (Levinson, 1989). A study by UNICEF (2000) arrived at the same conclusion.

Violence against women is a manifestation of gender inequality. Hence, lack of economic resources, which reflects gender inequality, increases women’s vulnerability to violence.

As in other parts of the world, Egyptians also have to grapple with the issue of domestic violence. However, statistics on victims of domestic violence are sketchy as victims are reluctant to report incidents to the police station (Mahyar, 1999). From limited data, one can deduce that domestic violence is a widespread problem. In Alexandria, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women, accounting for 28 per cent of all visits to area trauma units (Graitcer and Youssef, 1993). A survey of 500 women and 100 men carried out by the Al Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture found that 33 per cent of women surveyed were beaten by their husband. The beating was serious enough that 16 per cent of them needed hospitalization. Furthermore, the results of the survey clearly show that wife beating is a phenomena that cuts across social economic levels in society. In spite of that it is still startling to find that 9 per cent of domestic violence victims in this study are university graduates, some even hold doctorates (Mahyar, 1999).

Lane and Meleis (1991) observed that wives experiencing domestic violence tend to be young. Generally the abuse lessens with the increase in women’s age and the maturity of their children, especially boys. Grown children are usually capable of deflating escalating arguments and preventing violence. Other factors that reduce violence are the close proximity of parents,
brothers and cousins. However Morsy (1978) pointed out that support from kinsmen vary. Women can expect help from kinsmen who are indebted to them or who are relatively well off. Morsy (1978) wrote cogently:

By contrast, a woman may be beaten by her brother or father and sent back to her husband’s household when she turns to kinsmen of limited resources with complaints of illness or maltreatment. In fact, the woman’s own relatives may condone the husband’s action and blame his fury on her repulsive attitude and her “long tongue.” (p. 141)

It is interesting to note that some women share the notion that men have the right to discipline their wives by using force. Some of them even view a certain amount of physical abuse as justified under certain conditions. For instance, 80 per cent of women surveyed in rural Egypt said that beatings were common and often justified, particularly if the women refused to have sex with her partner (El-Zanaty et al., 1996). Myriad factors discourage or prevent women from leaving a violent relationship. Among them are: fear of losing custody of children (Marano, 1996); lack of resources or support to establish temporary residence, and powerful social pressures to maintain marital relations at any cost (Levinson, 1989).

Although domestic violence occurs in all socioeconomic groups, studies find that women who live in poverty are more likely to experience violence than women of higher status (Levinson, 1989; UNICEF, 2000). However, the relationship between poverty and increased violence is still not clear.

It is important to remember that women’s increasing economic activity and independence can also increase domestic violence (Schuler et al., 1996). Some feminists point out that violence can be perceived as men’s response toward advancement of women’s status. Increasing women’s status, especially economic status, conveys a threat to men’s perception of dominance. In an attempt to subordinate women, some men resort to violence (Russell, 1975; Browmiller, 1975; Chafetz, 1995).

Other explanations of domestic violence include rigid gender roles that delineate private and public spheres, the notion of female chastity as a measure of family honor and the idea of entitlement or ownership of women (Population Reports, 2000; UNICEF, 2000). Another cause of violence against women in general is economic changes in societies. Increasing levels of violence in several regions, such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia have been linked to macro-economic policies such as structural adjustments program, globalization and the concomitant spread of inequality (UNICEF, 1989; Mazumdar et al., 1995).

Women’s Issues, Postcolonial Psyche and Censorship

In addition to Islamic movements, there is another factor that shapes the discourses on gender relations, namely “postcolonial psyche.” Postcolonial psyche is characterized by an acute awareness that “the west” often labels postcolonial countries as backward or inferior.
This awareness is a harbinger to a fixation with projecting favorable, if not perfect, images of a country. Such preoccupation with maintaining a good impression often leads to denial or dismissal of various women’s issues, especially domestic violence (Abdel Kader, n.d. a; Zuhur 2001). Makiya (1991) argued that many Arab nations, including Egypt, wallow in the notion of victimhood, arguing that as victims of colonization, human rights records of poscolonial countries cannot possibly be evaluated with similar standards as non postcolonials. In other words, issues related to human rights should be put in historical context. Makiya (1991) maintained that violations of human rights should be addressed as such. Placing them against the backdrop of a particular historical context amounts to justifying them and will not serve the best interest of the Arab world. Abdel Kader’s (n.d. b) argument about the case of Egypt amplified Makiya’s (1991) statement:

Arab society, including Egypt, seems to always be in a transitional phrase... I was constantly reminded of the fact of transition. Implicit in this assumption was an apology or an excuse, meaning the state was not at its best. It implied Egypt was in a state of turmoil, search and identity crises, and consequently should not be judged too harshly. According to this view, it is only much later that a country can reach a state of equilibrium and balance and be held accountable (para 2)

Preoccupation with maintaining a good image and the inability to live up to the universal human rights standard (although the term “universal human rights” is contestable to some) feed into the inability to take criticism and censorship. For example, when Cable National Network (CNN) broadcasted footage of female circumcision, the producer and network faced legal charges from the Egyptian government for supposedly promoting a negative image of Egypt. The charges were later dropped and the minister of health denounced female circumcision by issuing decree 261 in 1996 which deemed female circumcision illegal in government owned hospitals and clinics. This ban on female circumcision caused uproar among some supporters of female circumcision, who challenged the decree in court and had it overturned. However, the decree was reinstated in 1997 (Guenena and Wassif, 1999). In spite of the Egyptian government’s indignation over the CNN case the 1995 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey showed that 97 percent of ever married Egyptian women are circumcised.

The Egyptian government displayed a similar reaction towards the 1995 EDHS reports pertaining to domestic violence. The original 300 page report was trimmed to a 20 page summary on the results and limited discussion. During a two week deliberation among high ranking officials on the findings of the 1995 EDHS, the report was banned. Attempts to censor EDHS backfired. When word of the ban was out, overnight the report became a must-read in Egypt. Eventually the government decided to provide access to the reports to the public, although they are only available upon request (Abdel Kader, n.d. a.). Furthermore Abdel Kader (n.d: para 10) asserted: “Still it is the issue of wife-beating that upset government officials the most. According to the officials, wife beating is not an Egyptian phenomenon”
(italics mine). It is important to note that although the Demographic and Health Survey has been conducted three times in Egypt, the 1995 EDHS was the first one that addresses the issue of wife beating. Years later, Tadros (2000) encountered similar reactions in a workshop on the Convention on the Elimination of Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Issues of wife beating were met with denial, “that kind of thing does not happen in our country” and caution “we shouldn’t be discussing such personal issues publicly, it does not do good to anyone” (Tadros, 2000: para 2). Tadros (2000) conceded that discussing women’s vulnerability towards violence is still a relatively new phenomenon. Zuhur (2001: para 49) concurred, arguing that violence against women and attempts to legally end gender-based discrimination are perceived as “too controversial” or “too western.” Fortunately Makiya’s (1991) fear of the Arab world’s silence in the face of violation of human rights, including women’s rights, does not hold in Egypt. Abdel Kader (n.d., a.), for example, supported the attempt to discuss wife beating openly and tackle it.

The many who fear Egypt’s image will be tarnished because of such reports [1995 EDHS] are only fooling themselves... Nobody benefits from painting rosy pictures of the lives of Egyptian women... The only alternative to solving these urgent problems is to face up to them (Abdel Kader, n.d. a., para 13-15).

While commending Egyptian women who focus on domestic violence, Lila Abu Lughod, a prominent scholar on Middle Eastern studies, worried about how issue of domestic violence can be construed in the west (Ahmad, n.d.). Abu Lughod pointed out that violence against women in the United States or England will not be linked to the inferiority of cultures in those countries. In contrast, similar issues in Egypt can be placed against the backwardness of Egypt. Consequently, Egyptian feminists are often caught in a bind, since they have incompatible messages to convey to separate audiences. They are eager to present the Egyptian women’s agency to the West. At the same times they often criticize the patriarchal nature of their society. Abu Lughod maintained that such criticism can be understood in the west as a confirmation of the entrenchment of patriarchy (Ahmad, n.d.).

**Decision Making Autonomy**

Women’s ability to participate in family decision making is an important marker of autonomy (Niraula and Morgan, 1996; Dharmalingam and Morgan, 1996; Dyson and Moore, 1983; Desai and Jain, 1994; Kishor n.d.; Isvan, 1991). It is an expression of their ability to use their knowledge and resources to influence their surrounding for their own benefit. Since autonomy is multifaceted, different women have different kinds autonomy. Kishor (n.d.) argued that women with traditional sources of autonomy, such as age, have autonomy in child related decision making. Those with non traditional sources of autonomy, like labor force participation which is paid in cash, express more autonomy in non traditional spheres, such as decision
making concerning family expenditure.

It is noteworthy that in spite of formidable challenges faced by Egyptian women who want to enter or remain in the work force, their numbers tend to increase. The percentage of women in the work force doubled from 1971 to 1981, increasing from 7 per cent to 14 per cent. This number does not include women who make a living in the informal sector (Fluehr-Lobban, 1993). This upward trend still holds today (Baden, 1992). Since many Egyptian women work out of necessity (el-Messiri, 1978; Hoodfar, 1990, 1997; Early, 1993a, 1993b), some authors argue that their income earning activity cannot be perceived as a source of autonomy (Nawar, et al., 1995; Ibrahim, 1985) or as a symbol of progress (Moghadam, 1993, 1995). Sullivan (1986) argued to the contrary. Although Egypt’s female labor force participation seems insignificant in comparison to that of western countries, put in an Egyptian concept, it does show progress (Sullivan, 1986). Furthermore, Fluehr-Lobban (1993) argued that a woman who is active in Arab-Islamic society “... is a courageous woman, like her counterparts elsewhere, in that she has taken the bold step outside of the domestic arena into the public world of men...” (p. 105).
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the definition of autonomy used in this dissertation. It explains the process of measuring concepts such as work and autonomy and choosing survey questions that reflect such concepts. Additionally, it discusses sources of data, data limitations, and strategies applied to circumvent the limitations. Finally, it discusses the hypotheses and the model.

Conceptual Model

Three concepts are used in this research, namely education, work, and autonomy. It has been suggested that education and labor force participation lead to greater autonomy for women. In the Egyptian context, however, results of studies to date on the relationship between education, labor force participation, and autonomy have been mixed.

Measuring Work

Generally, labor force participation is measured by work status, and it is assumed that those who work will be more autonomous. However, when one looks at type of remuneration, it is theorized that working women who earn cash, as opposed to those who don’t, are more likely to be autonomous. This is due to the fact that as Egypt’s involvement in a market oriented economy increases, cash contributions to the household are perceived as more important than ever. A better, albeit more complicated picture of the association between work and autonomy appears when employment status is used as a dimension of work. Women who work for others tend to be paid in cash and have more autonomy than those who are self-employed or family workers. Consequently, it is expected theoretically that the first category is more autonomous than the second. Self-employed women and family workers sometimes fall under the category of informal sector workers, hence it is assumed that they share similar characteristics. Theoretically, however, the two groups should be maintained as separate categories. Self-employment in theory offers high autonomy since women make individual decisions regarding production, negotiate with various parties, create their own schedule and earn profit (Miles-Doan and Brewster, 1998). Furthermore, self-employment enables women to distance themselves from the patriarchal regime that other work arrangements might entail. In contrast, working for family members does not create the ability to reduce patriarchal control. In essence, women simply move from one type of patriarchal control to another, or are under the same patriarchal order both while they supposedly carry out paid work as well as
when they don’t.  

Theoretically, type of employment offers more insights about women’s autonomy than work status and type of remuneration do. Still, a combination of the three indicators of employment provides a better picture of the association between paid work and autonomy. For example, there is a wealth of research that shows that most family workers tend not to be paid cash, since “paid work” is assumed to be the extension of domestic work. It can be deduced, then, that a particular combination of employment status (for example family workers) and type of remuneration (non cash) will produce lower autonomy.

**Measuring Autonomy**

At the conceptual level, women’s autonomy is the ability of women to determine important events in their lives, even in the face of opposition by men and other women (Mason, 1984; Safilios-Rotschild, 1982). Autonomy is related to the issue of agency. However, the meaning and manifestation of agency is context-specific. “Women as agents” can be portrayed as individuals who are self-reliant, independent and alone” (Hirschman, 1997: p. 125). On the other hand, agency can take place within an environment that emphasized both individuality and collaboration (Obermeyer, 1995). Nedelsky (1998) calls for a conception of autonomy that will combine “the claim of the constitutiveness of social relations with the value of self determination” (p. 10). This concept of autonomy captures the dual locality of women as both individuals and members of society. The definition of autonomy in this dissertation is based on Nedelsky’s (1998) thought that captures the reality of Egyptian women who see themselves as individuals with multiple statuses such as wife, daughter, mother, friend, worker. Autonomy is the ability to affect important decisions in one’s life through negotiation, reciprocation, collaboration and manipulation. Autonomy is a murky concept, one cannot observe autonomy directly, but one can observe its consequences. For example, it has been observed that educated women tend to have greater freedom of movement than those who are less educated. This in turn increases their access to paid work, networks, information and health care.

**Dimensions of Autonomy**

In her discussion on the nexus of education and fertility, Jejeebhoy (1995; 1997) identified six interdependent aspects of female’s autonomy. Based on the literature review on the relations of paid work and female autonomy in Egypt and in other developing countries, I used four of Jejeebhoy’s (1995: 207) dimensions of autonomy in this study. The most commonly investigated dimensions of autonomy are decision-making autonomy (being able to influence decisions that have impact on their lives and well being), physical autonomy (freedom of movement), economic and social autonomy (having access to and control over economic resources), emotional autonomy (less self denial, putting nuclear family ahead of extended family) (Jejeebhoy, 1995) and freedom from domestic violence (Jejeebhoy, 1997).
Freedom of movement is an important dimension of autonomy, since it provides opportunities for women to interact with others outside the home and family, to take advantage of social services such as health care, as well as recreational activities. Being able to participate in economic decision making ensures that women’s economic needs are being met. Within the Egyptian context, joint decision making represents equal gender relations, although this might not seem to be radically egalitarian in other contexts. Meanwhile, ability to make health related decisions will reduce women’s tendency to place their health at the bottom of their priority list. This question is important for Egyptian women’s well being since they often neglect their own health. Freedom from domestic violence is important on two accounts. Firstly, it enhances women’s physical and psychological well being. Secondly, it will enable women to exercise other dimensions of autonomy - economic decision making, health-related decision making, freedom of movement - without fear of reprisal.

**Indicators of women’s autonomy**

Rather than creating an index (based on the assumption that several variables have particular relations among each other, therefore they represent a specific dimension of autonomy), I chose individual variables to measure different autonomies. Below is a list of the dimensions of autonomy, followed by the variable name and the question, taken verbatim from the questionnaire, that reflects those dimensions of autonomy.

**Physical autonomy:** ability to move around freely

*Freedom of movement*
Are you usually allowed to go to the following places on your own, only with children, only with another adult, or not at all?
Just outside your house or compound?
Local market to buy things?
Local health center or doctor?
In the neighborhood for recreation?
Home of relatives or friends in the neighborhood?

**Emotional autonomy:** less self denial among women, placing greater importance on immediate family rather than on extended family

*Ability to take care of self*
If you are ill and need to see a doctor do you first have to ask someone’s permission?
Yes
No
Economic and social autonomy and self reliance: having access to and control over economic resources

Economic Decision Making
Who mainly decides how your family’s income is spent?
Husband only
Respondent only
Both husband and respondent
In-laws
Parents
Others (specify)

Freedom from domestic violence
Freedom from violence
From the time you were married has anyone ever beaten you?
Yes
No
No answer

Ideally, each of the categories should be kept in accordance with the original questionnaire. However, cases concentrated around certain values, rendering finer distinction impossible. Recoding did erode nuances, but it had to be done for the practical purpose of being able to produce sound statistical analyses.

Initially I considered creating a Guttman scale for freedom of movement. However responses to the item did not follow the distribution of a Guttman scale. Therefore I used a different strategy. The literature review reveals that freedom of movement can be perceived as a continuum, therefore making allowance for different degrees of freedom of movement. Women who can go alone obviously have more freedom of movement than those who have to go with children. On the other hand, women who are permitted to go only if they are escorted by an elder have limited autonomy. Their autonomy is similar to those who are not allowed to go. Because the former group is small, these two were collapsed into one, namely “not permitted.”

Answers to questions on freedom of movement were recoded based on the rank of difficulty to gain freedom of movement to a certain destination. Going outside the home is the easiest freedom of movement to acquire, therefore the answers were recoded into “not permitted” (coded 1) and “alone” (coded 2). Permission to go to the health unit and to go visit relatives/friends is perceived to be moderately difficult to obtain. Answers were recoded into “alone” (coded 3), “with children” (coded 2) and “not permitted” (coded 1). Permission to go on a picnic is the most difficult to obtain, therefore the answers were left alone, with the exception of the coding. The codes were reversed as follows: “not permitted” (coded 1), “with older one” (coded 2), “with children” (coded 3), “alone” (coded 4). An additive index on
freedom of movement was created to combine all three indicators into one. Construction of additive indices is simple. It involves adding up each person’s scores on various variables that measure the same construct (Weisberg et. al., 1996). The additive index on freedom of movement was then collapsed into binary categories, “high” and “low” by creating a new variable that split the sample into two groups based on whether their scores are below or above the median.

Further recoding was also needed due to small cell sizes. Economic decision making provided the following options: husband only, wife only, both husband and wife, someone else. The last option generated the following answers: husband’s relatives, wife’s relatives, children. Theoretically, husband’s relatives reveal husband’s power in household decision making, likewise, wife’s relatives show wife’s ability to partake in household decision making. Therefore the answers were recoded as follows: “husband” and “husband’s relatives” are collapsed into “husband”, “wife” and “wife’s relatives” are grouped into “wife”, whereas “children” and “both husband and wife” are changed into “both husband and wife.” The new categories (“husband”, “wife” and “both husband and wife”) show that the cell size of “wife” is small. These categories were then recoded for the second time into “husband only” and “wife can decide.”

Measuring the Factors Associated with Autonomy

It is hard to say with certainty whether the relationship between structural factors such as work and education, and autonomy in Egypt will be weak or strong, or negative as opposed to positive. Various studies on Egyptian working women demonstrate that the positive impacts of paid work are often undermined by “traditional factors” such as young age, presence of mother in law and lack of ownership of gold jewelry. Age is a crucial determinant of social stratification within the family. Additionally older women are less likely to co-reside with their mother in law. Gold jewelry plays a pivotal role in either maintaining or enhancing a family’s status. Lack of it means less leverage for women. Since the three traditional factors are still predominant in the Egyptian society, they are included in the equation, along with more widely used variables that might affect women’s autonomy, namely place of residence, highest level of education.

Three of the independent variables (“employment variables”) measure dimensions of paid work. They are work status (whether women work), type of remuneration (whether women earn cash), and employment status (work for self, for someone else, or for family member). These dimensions of employment give a fuller and clearer picture of the nature of paid work than work status does.

Analysis of working women only

Since working-women are not homogeneous, the interplay between the dimensions of autonomy and employment are investigated in a subpopulation of working women only. In
addition to the other determinants, several variables are included that are important for working women, such as reason for working, type of occupation, control over income (whether women have main control, some control, or no control over income), and allocation of income (whether women give all income to family, keep part of income for self, or keep all for self). Information on autonomy among working women is incomplete unless one knows why women work, how income is used and how much control women have over their financial contribution. A separate model for working women will be run, using the above mentioned independent variables.

Data Source

Data used in this dissertation is derived from the 1995 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS-95). It is a nationwide survey of 14,779 ever-married women aged 15-49 (El-Zanaty et.al., 1996). It is not the first of its kind, since two other EDHS’s were already carried out in Egypt in 1988 and 1992.

The EDHS-95 involves three types of questionnaires: a household questionnaire, an individual questionnaire, and a woman’s status questionnaire. The first two were built upon the 1988 and 1992 EDHS’s and additional questionnaires which were deemed necessary due to the development of research in demography. For example EDHS-95 includes topics not covered in previous surveys, namely schooling of children and female circumcision. The women’s status questionnaire is a new aspect of EDHS-95. It is based on a module constructed in the DHS program to reveal the multidimensionality of women’s status in Egyptian society. It has been modified to include questions perceived as relevant to women’s status within the Egyptian social and cultural contexts. The women’s status module was administered to a subsample of 7,121. This is the data set that is used in this dissertation.

Data Limitations

Selection of variables illustrates a compromise between what I wanted to do and what I could do based on the available data. Initially I wanted to include other variables which are contextually or theoretically important. One such variable is participation in a savings scheme which is not a bank. Informal savings groups, known as gameeya in Egypt, are ubiquitous and socially as well as economically vital for the survival of Egyptians, especially the resource poor. It is an economic resource one can fall back upon, since a gameeya can be formed in response to a neighbor’s crisis, such as death of a family member, sudden loss of job, etc. I was surprised to find that only a minuscule number of respondents answered the question about participation in an informal savings scheme. The same thing is true for control over jewelry. The literature points out very clearly that control over resources is a stronger predictor of autonomy than ownership is. At the end I was not able to use the variable due to small cell sizes. The majority of people who own jewelry either did not answer or were not asked about whether they have control over jewelry. Location of work (whether women work at home or
away) is a predictor of autonomy. Unfortunately there is not enough variation among respondents, so this variable could not used in analysis. The majority of respondents (92.1 per cent) worked away from home, and only 7.9 worked at home.

Some questions posed a different problem. They were coded in ways that can not be interpreted. For example, a question on reasons for being beaten yield only numerical answers (1, 2, 3) instead of “talking to men”, “refusing to have sex,” etc. Other variables, such as number of working days and amount contributed to family, cannot be used because I was not able to reject null hypotheses that number of working days and amount contributed to family are independent of “autonomy variables.”

Hypotheses

Different hypotheses are developed for the full sample and working-women only sample.

Hypotheses for Full Sample

1. Is education associated with all the dimensions of autonomy in the same way or is it more strongly associated with some than others?

2. There have been some theoretical concerns about the autonomy of non-working women. It is assumed that non-working women are less autonomous than working women. It is important to note, that working women, like non-working women, are not homogeneous. Therefore, when age and ownership of jewelry are considered, there is a likelihood that non-working women will be more autonomous than particular working-women who do not have as much resources.

3. Are some types of work more strongly associated with autonomy than others? Is this true for all dimensions of autonomy? In particular, the literature suggests there may be differences between the self-employed and family workers. Theoretically self-employment offers high autonomy. Women are not under the control of employers, hence they are free of patriarchal influences that often colored relations between employers and employee. Women have the freedom to operate their business in the way they see fit. In reality, many of the self employed women in Egypt are not highly educated and do not come from a privileged background. Will their low education negate autonomy that comes from being able to dictate their terms? How do self-employed women fare compared to family workers? Theoretically, family workers have less autonomy than self-employed women, not only because they are continually under the control of the male members of their family, but also because they are more likely not to be paid cash.
Hypotheses For Working-Women Only Sample

Working women might possess different degrees of autonomy, depending on why they work, whether they have control over income and how they use their income. Theoretically women who work out of need will be less autonomous than those who work out of choice, since the element of choice is missing. Women who have control over their income are expected to garner more autonomy. However, in a society where women gain acceptance through collaboration with other parties in their society, women who contribute all their income seem to be able to obtain more autonomy.

Models

Different regression models will be run separately for the full sample and the working-women only sample. The full sample consists of both women who work and those do not work. This model enables us to study the association between education, employment and autonomy. Additionally the model allows easy comparison among working women and non-working women.

The “employment variables” turned out to correlate among themselves. Therefore three separate models will be run, using only one dimension of employment (employment status, work status, and type of remuneration) at a time.

A separate model for working-women only uses the same indicators of autonomy but different independent variables. The independent variables are: age, age squared, place of residence, control over income, allocation of income, reason for working and type of occupation.

Since all indicators of autonomy are dichotomous, logistical regression will be used. Logistic regression is a variation of ordinary regression. It is useful when one deals with dichotomous dependent variables. The two values of the dependent variables usually represent the occurrence or non occurrence of some outcome event, usually coded 1 or 0, respectively. Logistic regression produces Odds Ratios (OR) for each independent variable. The definition of the odds of an event is the probability of the outcome event occurring divided by the probability of the event not occurring. The odds ratio for an independent variable signifies the relative amount by which the odds of the outcome increase or decrease when the value of the independent variable is increased by one unit (Demaris, 1992)
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This dissertation is an attempt to empirically study the relationship between education, work and autonomy. The 1995 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey contains rich employment data that enables one to look at the different dimensions of paid work such as work status, employment status and nature of employment. The use of all three dimensions allows an exploration of the assumption that taking up paid work increases women’s autonomy. The research questions are as follows: How are the different dimensions of work related to autonomy? Are there aspects of work that are associated with lower autonomy? Under what condition is paid work associated with lower autonomy than non-employment? Lastly, how does control over income, allocation of income, reason for working and type of occupation affect autonomy among working women?

Introduction

Based on the literature review on education, paid work and autonomy in Egypt and other developing countries four indicators of autonomy are selected. They are: economic decision making, freedom from the threat of violence, ability to take care of self when sick and freedom of mobility. The indicators are entered into the analysis as dichotomies so the models are run using logistic regression.

There are two separate sets of analyses, one using the full sample (working and non-working women) and the other focusing only on working women. The first set enables one to see whether and how employment affects autonomy and whether the association is different for working and non-working women. The second set focuses on working women, investigating the influence on autonomy of their reason for working, what they do with their income and whether they have control over the income that they contribute to the family. Various descriptions of working women in this sample show that they are as diverse as non-working women in terms of age, education level, family structure and ownership of jewelry. A comparison among working women further reveals that they work for different reasons (either out of need or out of choice) and they may or may not have control over income that contribute to their family. Furthermore, working women are in different types of occupations.

Since work status, employment status and type of remuneration are highly correlated, models are run separately for each dimension of employment. Similarly, since control over income, reason for working, allocation of income and employment status are highly correlated, four models for working-women are run based on each different of aspects of employment.
Findings

Educational Attainment, Employment, Attitudes on Gender Roles and Work

Data shows that women with a secondary level of education or more have a higher likelihood of working, of earning cash and of working out of choice rather than due to a family need. Table 3 indicates that education is associated with participation in the labor market. Those with a secondary degree or higher are more likely to be employed, to earn cash and to work for someone else. Conversely, women with no education are less likely to earn cash and have a greater likelihood of working for family members or of being self-employed. However, the association between education and attitude toward gender roles is less clear (see table 1). More than seventy percent of respondents across educational level categories believe that “a woman’s place is not only in the household, but she should be allowed to work,” yet less than fifty percent agree with the statement “if girls are educated it should be to prepare them for jobs not just to make them better mothers and wives.”

High percentages across all educational categories agree that there is some work for men only and some women-only work, and that each should not be doing the others’ work. However, a very substantial percentage of women also believe that “if the wife has a job outside the home then the husband should help her with the children and household chores.” Furthermore, more than half of the women at all level of education maintain that women should speak up if they disagree with their husband. It is interesting to note that more women with education higher than the secondary level believe that “working women are poor mothers.” This does not necessarily mean that they do not perceive themselves as capable mothers. On the contrary, they may value their mothering skills highly, rendering the quality of child care providers, professional or otherwise, less satisfying. Their dissatisfaction with the child care providers is likely to be even more pronounced when they are managed and run poorly. Consequently many working women feel that they shortchange their children by going to work and leaving the children under the care of people who are less qualified than they are (Miles, personal communication, March 2003). Table 2 indicates the main reason respondents give for not working is lack of skill or education. Although education in Egypt is supposed to be free, at least theoretically, some studies show that those belonging to the upper rung of the social ladder are more able to benefit from it (Moghadam, 1993; Cochran, 1992).

Table 4 shows that all variables operate in accordance with theoretical expectations. A larger proportion of women with higher education, urban residence, and nuclear family type report joint decision making. An interesting pattern can be noticed in the bivariate analysis between level of education and decision making related to expenditure. Women with no education and primary education are more likely to make independent decisions than women with more education. On the other hand, ability to make joint decisions increases with educational level.

In addition to education, age appears to be a strong predictor of autonomy as expected. The percentage of women who make sole decisions regarding family expenditures
rises along with age.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 are cross-tabulations between economic autonomy and the three employment indicators, namely work status, employment status and type of remuneration. Unlike in table 4, there are only two categories of economic autonomy, namely “only husband can decide” and “wife can decide.” Due to the small size of the category of “wife only”, this category is collapsed with “both husband and wife” into a new category, namely “wife can decide.”

Table 1. Education and Attitudes on Gender Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Men and women do different work</th>
<th>Husband should help</th>
<th>Women’s place not at home</th>
<th>Working women are poor mothers</th>
<th>Girls educated for job</th>
<th>Wife should speak up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>% Agree 73.0</td>
<td>% Agree 58.6</td>
<td>% Agree 72.8</td>
<td>% Agree 52.3</td>
<td>% Agree 44.7</td>
<td>% Agree 55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>% Agree 71.7</td>
<td>% Agree 67.0</td>
<td>% Agree 73.6</td>
<td>% Agree 50.8</td>
<td>% Agree 45.2</td>
<td>% Agree 62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>% Agree 65.5</td>
<td>% Agree 73.8</td>
<td>% Agree 77.8</td>
<td>% Agree 50.5</td>
<td>% Agree 41.4</td>
<td>% Agree 71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>% Agree 63.9</td>
<td>% Agree 81.3</td>
<td>% Agree 76.7</td>
<td>% Agree 59.8</td>
<td>% Agree 45.2</td>
<td>% Agree 80.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Inhibitors of Female Labor Force Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for not currently working</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household care</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t find work</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband/elders oppose</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer need to work</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No skills/no education</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2337</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education</td>
<td>Currently working</td>
<td>Earning cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Economic Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person(s) making decision on family expenditures</th>
<th>Husband only</th>
<th>Wife only</th>
<th>Both husband and wife</th>
<th>Total number of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background characteristics of respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest educational level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>1145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>1566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>1359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of family members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother in law</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Economic Autonomy by Work Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economy autonomy</th>
<th>Work status</th>
<th>Does not work</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only husband can decide</td>
<td></td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife can decide</td>
<td></td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>1675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2294</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>2924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Economic Autonomy by Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Does not work</th>
<th>For family member</th>
<th>For someone else</th>
<th>Self employed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only husband can decide</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife can decide</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1251</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7. Economic Autonomy by Type of Remuneration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Autonomy</th>
<th>Type of Remuneration</th>
<th>Does Not Earn Cash</th>
<th>Earns Cash</th>
<th>Does Not Work</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only Husband Can Decide</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>639</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Can Decide</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>1251</td>
<td>1583</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The variables in tables 5, 6 and 7 behave in accordance with theoretical expectations. Women who work, are paid in cash, and work for someone else are more likely to partake in economic decision making. Similarly, compared to family workers, women who are self employed display greater economic autonomy.

**Ability to Take Care of Self**

When ill and needing medical attention, do women have to ask permission to see a doctor? This question is important to reveal whether women see the importance of taking care of their health and can act on this knowledge on their own. Table 8 shows that the percentage of women who can see a doctor without permission increases with education, age, and urban residence. When family structure is compared, there is a lower percentage of women who live in an extended family who report that they can see a doctor without permission compared to women in nuclear families.

Cross tabulations between ability to see a doctor without permission and indicators of employment (type of remuneration, work status and employment status) (table 9, 10 and 11) give a clearer picture of the relationship between employment and women’s ability to take care of self when ill. The bivariate relationships are consistent with the literature review. Women who work, earn cash and work for someone else are more likely to see a doctor without asking for a permission. Compared to working women who are not paid in cash, a greater number of women who do not work report that they can go to see a doctor without permission.

**Freedom from violence**

The 1995 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey data show domestic violence is widespread in Egypt.
Table 8. Ability to care for self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Characteristic</th>
<th>Percent Reporting They Can Go to Doctor Without Permission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of Residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Members in Residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother in law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9. Ability to take care of self by work status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability to Take Care of Self When Ill</th>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Does Not Work</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask Permission Before Seeing Doctor</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>1236</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Need Permission Before Seeing Doctor</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>374</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>1610</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Ability to Take Care of Self by Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Does Not Work</th>
<th>For Family Member</th>
<th>For Someone Else</th>
<th>Self Employed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask Permission Before Seeing Doctor</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Need Permission Before Seeing Doctor</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>373</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1610</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11. Ability to Take Care of Self By Type of Remuneration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability To Take Care of Self</th>
<th>Type of Remuneration</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does Not Earn Cash</td>
<td>Earns Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Permission Before Seeing Doctor</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Need Permission Before Seeing Doctor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One out of three ever-married Egyptian women has been beaten at least once since marriage. The proportion is somewhat higher in rural areas. Women in the youngest age bracket (15-19) reported the highest percentage of wife beating.

Domestic violence decreases with education (table 12) and ownership of jewelry and furniture (table 13). Women who work are less likely to be beaten (table 14). Furthermore those who earn cash have less likelihood of experiencing domestic violence than those who do not (table 14). Better family economic conditions (measured by material of floor and type of toilet) lead to lower domestic violence (table 15).

Theoretically, women who work are more autonomous than those who do not. However, a closer look of the data reveals that autonomy is dictated by, among other things, employment status. In some respects, women who are self-employed or are family workers are worse off than those who do not work. Compared to non-working women, there are higher percentages of self-employed women who are ever beaten (45.9 percent). The percentage is higher among women who work for family members (55.4 percent). As will be shown later women who work for family members also come from poorer families than those who work for self.
Table 12. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom from Violence by Background Characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the time you are married has anyone ever beaten you?</th>
<th>Percentage “no”</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 44</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 49</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Education</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family members in residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother-in-law</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom From Violence by Ownership of Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Jewelry</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own Jewelry</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Own</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Furniture</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own Furniture</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Own</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom From Violence By Employment Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the time you are married has anyone ever beaten you?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Working</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Not Working</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of remuneration</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earn cash</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not earn cash</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Employment Status                           |         |                |
| Work For Family Member                     | 35.5    | 27             |
| Work For Someone Else                      | 82.2    | 325            |
| Self Employed                              | 50.0    | 35             |
Table 15. Percentage of Women Reporting Freedom From Violence Based on Family Socio-economic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the time you are married has anyone ever beaten you?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material of floor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth, sand</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement tiles</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>1495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, better materials</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No facility</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional with bucket flush</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>1639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern flush toilet</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on reason for working (out of need or out of choice) do not reveal a lot, since the majority of both categories of women work out of need. Data on household ownership of consumer goods confirm that self-employed women come from families who are financially better than those who work for family members. Compared with women who work for family members, a higher percentage of self-employed women have gas/electric stoves, refrigerators and electric fans.

Interestingly, although not surprising, a number of women condone domestic violence under certain pretexts, from wife burning food to more serious offenses such as the wife talking to other men or the wife refusing sex. Table 16 shows that, as expected theoretically, urban women, women with higher education, women who work, and those who earn cash are less likely to agree with wife beating, regardless of the reason.

Freedom of movement

The Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey 1995 uses a four point scale to measure freedom of movement: go alone, go with children, go only with other adults, not permitted. The choice is attributed to the fact that “...freedom of movement is likely to vary along a continuum, ranging from unrestricted movement (can go by themselves anywhere) to no movement (can never go alone or with someone anywhere) (El-Zanaty et. al., 1996, p. 135). Furthermore, the EDHS 1995 measures women’s freedom of movement in terms of their ability to go to five different places - just outside their home, to the local market to shop, to the local health center or doctor, to visit friends or relatives who reside in the neighborhood and to go in the vicinity of
the neighborhood for recreational purposes. Results suggest women’s freedom of movement varies in accordance with destination and purpose of outing. Most women have unrestricted freedom of movement to go outside their house or to the local market. However only 70.9 percent of them can go alone to the local health center and 61.7 per cent can go unaccompanied to the homes of relatives and friends. An even smaller percentage of women (16.0 per cent) is able to enjoy the freedom to go out alone on a picnic and other recreational activities in the neighborhood.

The cross-tabulation between work status and freedom of movement reveals a curious pattern. A high proportion of both working and non-working women shows high levels of freedom of movement. A closer look at the relationship between age and work status suggests the greater freedom of movement that comes with age may explain this finding. Data reveal that there is a non-linear relation between work status and age. The pattern of relationship can be best described as an “upside down U.” The proportion of women not working for pay was highest among 15 to 19-year-olds. It was slightly lower among 20 to 24 and 25 to 29-year-olds. The proportion then leveled off and increased toward the older end of the age spectrum.

The bivariate analysis between type of remuneration and indicators of autonomy reveal that women who do not work for pay can be more autonomous than women who work outside the home, but are not paid cash. Compared to working women who are not paid in cash, there are greater percentages of non-working women who have the ability to make economic decisions, who are never beaten and who are able to see a doctor without permission. Bivariate analyses of freedom of movement are harder to interpret. Working women who are not paid in cash form the highest percentage of those who have high freedom of movement. Data on type of employment show that the majority of women who work for non-cash earning are family workers or are self-employed, and work away from home instead of at home. A combination of employment type (work for family member and self) and job location (away or at home) can be an explanation of high freedom of movement among working women who are not paid in cash.

High freedom of movement among women who are self-employed is easier to explain than that of women who work for a family member. Self-employed women have greater freedom of movement because they make independent decisions regarding their job, regardless of how insignificant their contribution to their families might be. High freedom of movement among women who work for family member could be related to assurance for husbands that family honor is going to be guarded since the women do not work for men unknown to the family.
Table 16. Percentage of Women Who Agree With Specific Reasons Justifying A Husband Beating His Wife, by Background Characteristics, Egypt 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Characteristics</th>
<th>Reasons justifying a husband beating his wife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wife Burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of residence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest educational level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not work</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of remuneration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn cash</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not earn cash</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17. Women’s Freedom of Movement Based on Destination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Go Alone</th>
<th>Go Only With Children</th>
<th>Go Only With Another Adult</th>
<th>Not Permitted to Go</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just Outside House</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Market</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Health Center</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes of Relatives and Friends</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation in the Neighborhood</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18. Freedom of Movement by Work Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom of Movement</th>
<th>Work status</th>
<th>Does Not work</th>
<th>Works</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1688</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>2237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>85.6%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2341</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>2982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19. Freedom of Movement by Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Does Not Work</th>
<th>For Family Member</th>
<th>For Someone Else</th>
<th>Self Employed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20. Freedom of Movement by Type of Remuneration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Remuneration</th>
<th>Does Not Earn Cash</th>
<th>Earns Cash</th>
<th>Does Not Work</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>1191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>1608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bivariate Analyses Among Variables Used in Working-women Only Sample

Control over income show the predicted pattern. Working women who have control over their income are more likely to take part in economic decision making, to have higher freedom of movement and to see a doctor without permission. However they are more likely to be beaten than those without control. Women who live in a nuclear family are more likely to have main control over income that they contribute to family.

The reason that women were working (out of need and out of choice) was not associated with autonomous attitude and behavior. Thirty three percent of women who work out of need ask permission before seeing a doctor, while the figure among women who entered paid employment by choice was 34.6 percent.

Cross tabulations between allocation of income and autonomous behavior do not show clear patterns, hence they are harder to interpret. For example, those who give all their income to their family are more likely to make decisions in terms of household expenditures. However, those who keep all their income for themselves tend to see a doctor without permission. Yet women in this category are more likely to be beaten.

Findings from the full sample

Analysis featuring the different dimensions of employment yield information that is consistent with the literature. In the models, women who do not work are the reference category. The odds of having economic decision making power is 3 times higher among women who work compared to those who do not (table 21). Similarly working raises the odds of being able to see a doctor without permission by 43%. Cross tabulations between work status and freedom of violence reveal that women who work are less likely to be beaten. However in the multivariate model the relationship between work status and freedom of violence is not statistically significant.

The regressions that use employment status as a measure of paid work (table 22) produced results that are in agreement with the bivariate analyses. Working for someone else increases the odds of being able to make economic decision-making 4 times. Women who are self employed have 5 times the odds of making economic decision making than those who do not. Working for family members decreases the odds of being free from by violence by 60 percent. On the contrary, working for someone else increases the odds of being free from violence by 38 percent. Family workers are more likely to co-reside with members of their extended family and are not paid in cash. Thus their work like an extension of their domestic work. They work under the supervision of family members and are subjected to the same patriarchal values that are upheld in the household. Additionally cross-tabulations between employment status and ownership of consumer goods show that compared to women who work for someone else and the self-employed, most family workers come from poor families. A combination of family structure and poverty seems to increase their vulnerability of domestic violence.
Cross-tabulations between employment status and ability to see a doctor without permission show that women who are self employed are less likely (than those who do not work) to see a doctor without permission. The logistical regression, on the other hand, reveals that self employment increases the odds of seeing a doctor without permission 2 times. It is important to note that working for family members appears either not to influence autonomy or to lead to less autonomy.

Table 21. Odds Ratios for Different Dimensions of Autonomy
Comparison Among All Respondents, Work Status is Used as Dimension of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Autonomy</th>
<th>Economic Decision Making</th>
<th>Freedom From Violence</th>
<th>Ability to Take Care of Self When Sick</th>
<th>Freedom of Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URBRUR (1)</td>
<td>1.108</td>
<td>1.060</td>
<td>1.950*</td>
<td>1.919**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASQUARED</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>1.001**</td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td>1.212**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>1.092**</td>
<td>.924*</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>.998*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCLEVEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY (1)</td>
<td>1.176</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>1.177</td>
<td>1.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY (2)</td>
<td>1.434*</td>
<td>2.904*</td>
<td>1.356</td>
<td>.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGHER (3)</td>
<td>1.684*</td>
<td>5.614*</td>
<td>1.725*</td>
<td>1.999*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWNJEWL (1)</td>
<td>1.263*</td>
<td>1.455*</td>
<td>1.058</td>
<td>.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOINLAW (1)</td>
<td>.526*</td>
<td>1.089</td>
<td>.552</td>
<td>.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERFAM (2)</td>
<td>.367*</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td>.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKSTAT (1)</td>
<td>3.342*</td>
<td>1.031</td>
<td>1.430**</td>
<td>1.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*ED LEVEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*PRIMARY</td>
<td>.948**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*SECONDARY</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*HIGHER</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.01 level
* * Significant at 0.05 level
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of autonomy</th>
<th>Economic Decision Making</th>
<th>Freedom From Violence</th>
<th>Ability to Take Care of Self When Sick</th>
<th>Freedom of Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URBRUR (1)</td>
<td>1.081</td>
<td>1.034</td>
<td>1.965*</td>
<td>1.922*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASQUARED</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>1.001*</td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td>1.216*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>1.086**</td>
<td>.920**</td>
<td>.958</td>
<td>.998*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCLEVEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY (1)</td>
<td>1.154</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>1.163</td>
<td>1.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY (2)</td>
<td>1.307**</td>
<td>2.633*</td>
<td>1.356</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGHER (3)</td>
<td>1.452</td>
<td>4.813*</td>
<td>2.729*</td>
<td>2.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWNJEWL (1)</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>.853</td>
<td>1.489</td>
<td>.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOINLAW (1)</td>
<td>1.834*</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>1.768</td>
<td>.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERFAM (2)</td>
<td>1.270*</td>
<td>1.458*</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>.709**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLSTAT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORFAM (1)</td>
<td>.751</td>
<td>.589**</td>
<td>1.401</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORSOMEONE (2)</td>
<td>4.649*</td>
<td>1.375**</td>
<td>2.072**</td>
<td>1.825*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFEMPL (3)</td>
<td>5.130*</td>
<td>.849</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.040*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*EDUC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*PRIMARY</td>
<td>.947**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*SECONDARY</td>
<td>.962</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*HIGHER</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.01 level
** Significant at 0.05 level
Table 23. Odds ratios For Different Dimensions of Autonomy
Comparison Among All Respondents, Type of Remuneration is Used as Dimension of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of autonomy</th>
<th>Economic Decision Making</th>
<th>Freedom From Violence</th>
<th>Ability to Take Care of Self When Sick</th>
<th>Freedom of Mobility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URBRUR (1)</td>
<td>1.066</td>
<td>1.042</td>
<td>1.924*</td>
<td>1.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASQUARED</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>1.001**</td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td>1.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>1.086**</td>
<td>.923**</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCLEVEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY (1)</td>
<td>1.152</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>1.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY (2)</td>
<td>1.265*</td>
<td>2.740*</td>
<td>1.311</td>
<td>.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGHER (3)</td>
<td>1.383</td>
<td>5.154*</td>
<td>2.606*</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWNJEWL (1)</td>
<td>1.261**</td>
<td>1.459*</td>
<td>1.056</td>
<td>.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOINLAW (1)</td>
<td>.551*</td>
<td>1.115</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERFAM (2)</td>
<td>.379*</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td>.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARNING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASH(1)</td>
<td>5.454*</td>
<td>1.219</td>
<td>1.525*</td>
<td>1.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONCASH(2)</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.656*</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*EDUC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*PRIMARY</td>
<td>.970*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*SECONDARY</td>
<td>.965*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE*HIGHER</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.01 level
** Significant at 0.05 level

People who have “other family members” residing with them have an 83 percent increase in their odds of participating in economic decision making. Cross-tabulations between family structure and employment status reveal that those who co-reside with other family members tend to work for family members. In table 15, under economic decision making, high educational level is not significant because it is highly correlated with working for someone else.

Table 16 shows that women who work for cash have 5 times the odds of participating in economic decision making compared to women who do not work. On the other hand non-cash earning decreases the odds of being free from violence by 65 percent, cash earning also increases the odds of women of being able to see a doctor without permission by 53 percent. These results are consistent with the cross-tabulations. The results for the highest level of education yield expected results with one exception. Level of education is not a significant
predictor of ability to make economic decision making. This is inconsistent with the cross-tabulations between level of education and economic decisions. Cross-tabulation between level of education and cash earning show a high correlation and this explains why highest educational level is not significant.

Several variables were tested for interaction. They are age and education, place of residence and education, education and ownership of jewelry. There is a significant interaction between age and education, but it only shows under the model that uses economic decision making as the indicator of autonomy. Together, age and education depresses women’s ability to make economic decisions. When a subset of analyses were done for separate age brackets (0-20; 21-35, 36-49) the results vary slightly. A combination of young age and education depresses women’s ability to make economic decisions. Within the 21-35 and 36-49 year-old age groups, interactions between age and education are not significant. The pattern of interaction is hard to interpret because the table generated from the cross-tabulation between age and education did not yield any clear pattern.

The results once again confirm previous research that shows that given the patriarchal nature of Egyptian society, the association between education, labor force participation and autonomy is not straightforward. Labor force participation is associated with higher levels of economic decision making and health-related decision making but lower levels of freedom from violence for some groups of workers. Family workers in particular do not show higher levels of autonomy than women who don’t work.

In contrast, self-employment is associated with greater autonomy on all fronts, with the exception of freedom from domestic violence. Although this is congruent with theoretical expectations, it raises questions about the role of education in shaping autonomy. Just like family workers, most self-employed women are not highly educated. Does it mean that level of education is less influential than work autonomy in shaping other dimensions of autonomy? What are other factors that might lead to higher autonomy among self-employed women as opposed to family workers? Economic sector of work and household income are possible sources of these differences that can be investigated with dataset. The data show that 82.9 percent of family workers are concentrated in the agricultural sector. In contrast, self-employed women are scattered in various sectors: sales (41.4 percent), agriculture (32.4 percent) and service and manual (24.3 percent). Since data on household income was not available, ownership of consumer goods is used to compare the household economic status between self-employed women and family workers. Generally speaking more households of self-employed women can afford consumer goods than those of family workers. Judging from a large number of respondents who checked “no” for questions related to ownership of particular consumer goods, it seems that color TV, electric fan and gas/electric stove are by no means affordable for all Egyptians. Eight percent of family worker households own a color TV, as opposed to 19.8 percent of the household of self-employed women. Additionally 27.6 percent of family workers’ households own an electric fan as opposed to 30.6 percent of self-employed women’s families. Similarly, 27.6 percent of family workers’ household possess an electric or gas stove, compared to 41.4 percent of self-employed women’s households. This
shows that perhaps family workers lack the ability to raise capital, however small, that would enable them to participate in a more beneficial type of employment. Their participation in the labor force represents a survival strategy among the poor which consists of involving as many people in family business with a non-cash payment or no payment altogether.

**Findings From the Working-women Sample**

Because the four independent variables are highly correlated, four separate models were run based on dimensions of paid employment which are important for working women. The four employment related independent variables are: reason for working (working out of need is the reference category), control over income that is contributed to family (no control is the reference category), allocation of income (give all to family is the dummy variable) and employment status (work for family member is the reference category). The association between control over income and autonomy is consistent with the cross-tabulation. Women who have main control over income that they contribute to their families have more autonomy in economic decision making, ability to take care of self and freedom of movement than women who do not have any control. The separate investigation of working women makes the difference between family workers and the self-employed more clear. Working for someone else raises the odds of making economic decisions by 5 times in comparison to working for a family member; self-employment raises the odds 7 times. Furthermore, working for someone else increases the odds of taking care of self 8 times, and self-employment raises the odds 5 times.

Not all results of the regressions are significant, probably due to small cell sizes and correlation among some of the independent variables. Thus “reason for working” and “allocation of income” cannot be interpreted due to lack of statistical power.

Level of education is not always significant in the models. Where it is significant, the results do not depart from those of cross-tabulations that show higher education goes hand in hand with increased autonomy.

How do education and employment relate to the different dimensions of autonomy? It has been assumed that educated and working women are more autonomous than uneducated, non-working women. However, the results of this study suggest that the relations between education, employment and autonomy are more complicated than the widely held assumption stated above. The relationship can be either negative or positive, depending on which dimensions of autonomy is involved. Various dimensions of work contribute different degree of understanding on the relationship between employment and autonomy. While work status (work or do not work) and type of remuneration (cash and non cash) provide explanations for different degrees of autonomy among women, type of employment (work for someone else, family workers and self-employed) offers the most useful insight. The self-employed enjoy greater autonomy than those who work for family members. The difference in degree of autonomy among these categories relates to their distinctive nature of employment. While working for family members constitutes a continuation of a patriarchal relations in the homes,
self-employment provides room for women to free themselves from such relations. As a result self-employed women are able to obtain autonomy, both in the work place and at home.

Table 24. Odds Ratios For Different Dimensions of Employment
 Reason for Working Is Used As A Dimension of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Autonomy</th>
<th>Economic Decision Making</th>
<th>Ability to Care For Self</th>
<th>Freedom From Violence</th>
<th>Freedom of Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.074**</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>1.029</td>
<td>1.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbrur</td>
<td>1.682</td>
<td>2.756**</td>
<td>1.125</td>
<td>2.958*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary (1)</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>1.357</td>
<td>.763</td>
<td>1.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary (2)</td>
<td>1.057</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>4.983*</td>
<td>.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher(3)</td>
<td>1.349</td>
<td>1.134</td>
<td>7.249*</td>
<td>.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work out of choice (1)</td>
<td>1.208</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>1.326</td>
<td>1.505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.01 level
** Significant at 0.05 level

Table 25. Odds Ratios For Different Dimensions of Employment
 Control Over Income is Used as A Dimension of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Autonomy</th>
<th>Economic Decision Making</th>
<th>Ability to Care for Self</th>
<th>Freedom From Violence</th>
<th>Freedom of Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.064**</td>
<td>1.039*</td>
<td>1.037**</td>
<td>1.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbrur</td>
<td>1.817</td>
<td>1.950*</td>
<td>1.166</td>
<td>2.866*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary (1)</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td>1.135</td>
<td>.836</td>
<td>1.596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary (2)</td>
<td>1.104</td>
<td>1.428*</td>
<td>6.036*</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher(3)</td>
<td>1.186</td>
<td>2.897*</td>
<td>10.071*</td>
<td>1.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main control (1)</td>
<td>3.109*</td>
<td>1.891*</td>
<td>1.074</td>
<td>4.114*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some control (2)</td>
<td>2.106*</td>
<td>1.327**</td>
<td>3.442</td>
<td>2.304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.01 level
** Significant at 0.05 level
Table 26. Odds ratios For Different Dimensions of Autonomy
Allocation of Income is Used as A Dimension of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Autonomy</th>
<th>Economic Decision Making</th>
<th>Ability to Care For Self</th>
<th>Freedom From Violence</th>
<th>Freedom of Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.068**</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>1.022</td>
<td>1.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulbrur</td>
<td>1.498</td>
<td>2.831</td>
<td>1.075</td>
<td>3.268*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary (1)</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>1.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary (2)</td>
<td>1.123</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td>5.573*</td>
<td>.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher(3)</td>
<td>1.254</td>
<td>1.015</td>
<td>8.879*</td>
<td>1.590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep part for self (1)</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>1.083</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep all for self (2)</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>1.920</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.01 level
** Significant at 0.05 level

Table 27. Odds ratios For Different Dimensions of Autonomy
Employment Status Is Used As Dimension of Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Autonomy</th>
<th>Economic Decision Making</th>
<th>Ability to Care for self</th>
<th>Freedom From Violence</th>
<th>Freedom of Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.053*</td>
<td>1.041**</td>
<td>1.032**</td>
<td>1.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulbrur</td>
<td>1.457</td>
<td>2.539**</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>3.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary (1)</td>
<td>.823</td>
<td>1.163</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary (2)</td>
<td>1.832</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>5.007*</td>
<td>.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher(3)</td>
<td>1.846</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>8.840*</td>
<td>.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empl. status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for someone else</td>
<td>5.703*</td>
<td>8.227*</td>
<td>1.647</td>
<td>1.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>7.908*</td>
<td>5.221**</td>
<td>1.347</td>
<td>1.292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.01 level
** Significant at 0.05 level
CHAPTER 5
POLICY RECOMMENDATION: FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

The relationships between education, work and autonomy appear straightforward. Higher education affords women better and wider life chances, including paid work. A combination of education and paid work will lead to increased autonomy, not only in the work place, but also at home. The findings can be summarized as follows. Secondary education and higher have stronger effect on autonomy than primary education. The association between paid work and autonomy varies, depending on which dimensions of work and autonomy are discussed. There are three different dimensions of work, namely work status, type of remuneration and employment status. Women who work for cash display greater autonomy than those who are not paid in cash. Type of works reveals a clearer relationship between work and autonomy. Women who work for someone else have greater autonomy than the self-employed and family workers. The comparison between self-employed and family workers further shows that the first category has a greater chance of obtaining autonomy at work and translating that into different dimensions of autonomy in the home. This finding is important because in many cases the self-employed and family workers are grouped together under the category of the informal sector. The two groups should be treated as separate categories because each type of work entails different characteristics. Self-employment requires ownership of capital, however small, and ability to negotiate with different people. Additionally it allows women to make profit, albeit very limited, and to some extent, control it. Family work, on the other hand, can be construed as the extension of domestic work. The line between household and work place is very blurred. It is not paid in cash, if it is paid at all. There is no difference between who is in charge in the household and in the production sphere, since a lot of women that are engaged in family work share residence with other family members.

There are two conclusions from this study. First, there is a need for a critical evaluation of the assumption that participation in the labor force constitutes modernity, therefore it is good. This statement is not intended to negate the benefits that modernity brings. However, one often overlooks the fact that there is a wide variation in paid work. While some promising work offers prestige, good salary and autonomy, some does not. What is empowering about work that does not give room for development of new skills and is poorly paid? Second, it serves as a reminder that while paid work might alleviate the practical gender needs of poor women, it does not necessarily meet their strategic gender needs. Strategic
gender needs stem from the unequal gender relations that hinder the development of women’s autonomy. Strategic gender needs cannot be met without efforts to alter existing gender relations. It seems that the entrenchment of patriarchy in the Egyptian society can depress the various dimensions of autonomy. With the Muslim fundamentalists gaining inroads, this trend is even more pervasive today. Fortunately, Egypt has a long history of a strong feminist movement, which can act as a counter balance to the growing influence of Muslim fundamentalism. Due to the pressure from the feminist movements, Egyptian women will not necessarily completely lose their hard earned rights.

This dissertation has achieved most of the objectives stated in the introduction. Although autonomy is a murky concept, the study attempts to show various manifestations of autonomy. Findings on economic decision making and ability to take care of self are consistent with the literature. Women who are highly educated, work for cash and work for someone else show a greater propensity for participating in economic joint decision making. Similarly, they seem more able to take care of their own health needs. The findings on freedom of movement and freedom from violence are less consistent with the literature. There seem to be other unmeasured factors that affect freedom of movement and freedom from violence. The study also tries to relate work and autonomy by breaking down both work and autonomy into different dimensions. This strategy enables one to look at work from a simple dimension (work status and type of remuneration) and a more complex one (employment status). The most difficult objective to attain is comparing level of autonomy between working women and non-working women. Generally speaking, working women display a greater autonomy than non-working women. However, women who work for family members have greater odds of being victims of domestic violence than non-working women. It is therefore hard to say with certainty that working women are more autonomous than non-working women. There is simply not enough data to study the autonomy of non-working women as a separate category. This is an important subject that is understudied, given the lack of literature on this topic.

More Egalitarian Past

It is important at this juncture to compare the current state of Egyptian women with the past conditions. Egyptian women’s lives have always been influenced by Islam, since many Egyptian state laws are either taken directly from Islam or are a modification of Islamic laws. Comparison across time provides images of Islamic practices, that are neither unchanging nor monolithic.

In spite of the common notion of subordinated women, historical writing shows that is not always the case. Marsot (1995) explained that the tendency among various scholars to portray women in a negative light might stem from male historians’ bias. Works by female historians who asked questions from the perspective of women revealed a different picture of women which might otherwise be overlooked. The works of Hanna (1983), Tucker (1985) and Marsot (1995) show a more flexible and egalitarian past. There are certain periods in Egyptian history that convey a discrepancy between prescriptive discourse and actual history.
Even the normative discourse of the Islamic jurists has changed over times, in some cases providing more room for women’s autonomy. Tucker (1985) examined collections of *fatwa* (legal edicts) issued in the 19th century. Tucker (1985) found legal cases which result from litigation involving women. Tucker’s (1985) as well as Jennings’ (1973) research show a picture of dynamic women who were involved in the market place, managed large estates and initiated litigation in court. Hanna (1983) demonstrated that issues such as freedom of movement, which are perceived as part of the modern discourse have been contentious for many years. Women’s right to freedom of movement is a contested terrain, not only in contemporary Egypt, but also in the 17th century Egypt. Some Muslim jurists at that time maintained that a wife has to obtain her husband’s approval to leave her marital home. Court records show women’s ingenuity in circumventing such restriction. Some women attached clauses in their marriage contract to maintain some degree of freedom of movement. For example some women stipulated that they would have the right to visit their parents at any time, others attached a clause stating they could continue to pursue their long held profession. Adding a clause or clauses to a marriage contract was not only socially acceptable, it was also legally binding (Hanna, 1983; Jennings, 1973). This is because in Islam marriage is not perceived as a sacrament, but rather a contract between two people. Hanna (1983) pointed out that women from all walks of life enjoyed the ability to write a stipulation to a marriage contract. Class influenced the degree of restrictiveness of the contract. Women from wealthier backgrounds have more power to draw a more restrictive contract.

What are the social conditions that allowed the development of greater roles for women in ancient Egypt? Marsot (1995) outlined several conditions that are conducive to women:

1. The degree of education among the sexes was not greatly different, in that both were not highly educated (with the exception of the strata of *ulama*, or people who are learned in religious matters).
2. The patriarchal centralized system of government was weakened [due to a high number of contending parties who vied for power], giving women, *ulama*, merchants and the upper strata a chance to exploit available resources.
3. The life span of males was short because of conditions of violence and infighting
4. The difference in age between the spouses was not large and the women was sometimes older than the male (p. 1)

A combination of the above factors tends to minimize patriarchy and to increase the role of women.

A Vision for The Future

The basis of gender relations this vision differs significantly from that put forward by several western feminism. Although using the term “western feminism” poses the danger of collapsing distinctive discourses, the term will be used for lack of a better alternative. First, the
vision that emerges is not focused on individualism, hence it is compatible with societies where individual needs have to be negotiated through a web, sometimes tangled, of social relations among kin and friends. Second, it does no create a public and private dichotomy which incorporates the ethnocentric assumption that the first represents modernity, hence it is good and should be pursued, whereas the latter conveys tradition that contradicts, or even hinders, modernity (Afsaruddin, 1992; Nelson 1974). In countries where gender segregation is prevalent such as in Egypt, public and private arenas intersect or collide in the household in various forms. For example, Nelson (1974) argues that fixation on the inequality of public and private spheres might overlook cooperative modes of relations among the two arenas. It is often suggested that the inability of men to tackle the unemployment problem or the abuse of power by the state results in a tightening of control over women (Baden 1992; Abdel Kader, 1987; el-Mikawy, 1999; Hatem, 1998; Shukrallah, 1994).

The center stage of this vision is Islamic/Muslim feminism (the two terms are often used interchangeably). Although some past and contemporary Egyptian women disavow the terms “feminism” or “feminist”, arguing that they are western constructs or imperialist tools, their work is distinctively feminist. Additionally, it is important to note that the majority of Egyptian early feminists framed their feminist concerns within the Islamic value system (Yamani, 1996; Karam, 1998).

Abou Bakr (n.d.) attempted to define Islamic feminism as follows:

Islamic feminist research is undertaken by Muslim women scholars and activists who are not just “critiquing (i.e. attacking or deconstructing) Islamic history and hermeneutics,” but are also providing alternatives and seeking solutions inspired by Islamic values. This is done through consciously producing an Islamic discourse that problematizes and addresses gender injustice. In other words, Islamic feminism figures more clearly on the level of knowledge production and discourse, and is research-oriented. Rather than emphasizing negativism towards the religion or simply using it as a temporary rhetorical position, Muslim feminists deal with the Islamic perspective as an encompassing overarching world view of divine justice, compassion, egalitarianism and liberation from slavery or submission to any being other than God. Another very important Islamic principle that is insisted upon and utilized by Muslim women activists for their advantage is a Muslim woman’s right to a direct relationship with God with no human mediators (para 8).

In a similar line, Karam (1998) in her study of women Islamists and feminism in Egypt used the term Muslim feminism rather than Islamic feminism. Karam (1998) defined Muslim feminism as women activists, who use Islamic teaching in the Qur’an and hadith (tradition) “to show that the discourse of equality between men and women is valid, within Islam.” (p. 1). Additionally Islamic/Muslim feminists do not see their struggle as separate from a wider attempt of social reform which will benefit both men and women. By doing so, Islamic/Muslim feminists fending
themselves from criticism of “womanist” bias (Abou Bakar, n.d., a). Yamani (1996) described the activity of Islamic/Muslim feminist as “introducing a feminism which is ‘Islamic’ in its form and content.” (p. 5)

Application of Islamic feminism requires an in-depth knowledge about the source of Islam, namely the Qur’an and the hadith (tradition). It, however, requires distancing oneself from various schools of thought and weeding out the teaching of Islam from the infusion of various local cultures (Abou Bakr, n.d., a). The importance of such knowledge is paramount since the endeavor of Islamic/Muslim feminist entails two things. Firstly, Qur’anic verses and narration that convey a more egalitarian treatment of women are stressed. In contrast those which call for limitations on woman’s action are reinterpreted (Abou Bakr, n.d., a; Afary, 1997). The feminist understanding of Islam can be bolstered by revisiting the visible, dynamic, knowledgeable and outspoken women in the early Islam. Additionally, Islamic history shows ample examples set by the Prophet Muhammad in terms of how men should treat women of their family and of their community (Abou Bakr, n.d., b; Saleh, 2000; Karam, 1998)

Various Islamic/Muslim feminists who are well versed in Islamic teaching have emerged in the Middle East, including Egypt (Karam, 1998; Yamani, 1996). It is Islamic/Muslim feminists in Iran, however, who planted the seed of a more progressive interpretation of Islamic laws (Afary, 1997). The entrance of such feminists into the debate on gender in Islam has, to a certain degree, changed the discourse. After all, the state uses the same source to justify its patriarchal nature (Afary, 1997; Karam, 1998).

Within the Egyptian context, Muslim feminists who are equipped with knowledge of theological issues can counter the criticism leveled by Egyptian males. They can, for example, ask Muslim men if they perform their Islamic duties as husbands, brothers and sons. Heba Ra’uf, a noted Egyptian activist and feminist criticized Egyptian men for not having the courage to challenge the authority of the state. At the same time they endlessly focus on the various sources of social ills that women posses, admonishing them to dress and behave properly. Heba Ra’uf perceived this tendency as an aversion of Islamic responsibility. Why concentrate on a small “corruption”, when there is a bigger, and more serious problem to fight against? (Utvik and Vikor, 2000).

It seems that Egypt is a fertile ground for the growth of feminist consciousness. It has a long history of feminism. Additionally, contemporary Egyptian feminists have shown tenacity, ingenuity and courage, in spite of the imminent presence of Islamic fundamentalism.

How will Islamic/Muslim feminism affect the four aspects of autonomy discussed in this dissertation? I would argue, in line with the Islamic feminist discourse, that knowledge can be the source of power. Whether the power can be materialized depends on the parity of knowledge between spouses, as Marsot (1995) found in ancient Egypt.

1. Economic Decision Making

Ideally, Egyptian women should have the ability to participate in a joint decision making. Although it is not radically egalitarian from a western perspective, it is quite
progressive in a patriarchal Islamic society that perceives men as heads of household and
decision makers, sometimes sole decision makers. Muslim/Islamic feminists can argue that joint
decision making is congruent with the principle of consultation (shura) in Islam. Muslim
feminists in different places, such as Iran and Malaysia, have published pamphlets that explain
more egalitarian gender roles in Islam, backed with appropriate Qur’anic verses and hadith.
Needless to say, their efforts drew scathing criticisms from Muslim fundamentalists, who
perceive their efforts as a corruption to the pure or true Islamic teaching (Afary, 1997).
Nevertheless, this kind of movement seems to be gaining inroads (Karam, 1998; Yamani,
1996).

2. Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement is a contested area in Egypt, partially because it is linked to the
issue of honor and shame. Males are constantly worried that their honor will be soiled if the
female members of their family behave in a manner that is not socially acceptable. Although
times have changed and Islamic fundamentalists have gained unprecedented power, lessons
from the past might still be applicable. For example, adding clauses in the marriage contract to
secure the right of freedom of movement still looks appealing, and it still can be done. It is
important to bear in mind that according to Hanbali, one of the four Islamic schools of thought,
once the husband accept the conditions requested by the wife, the consent becomes binding.
This practice was documented in writings from the 17th century Egypt, and seemed to be
working well. Knowing what women can and cannot do in matters related to marriage is a
source of empowerment. For example, encouragement to include protective clauses in the
marriage contract is absent from the 2000 personal laws, although it was part of earlier
personal laws (Zuhur, 2000). Women who lack awareness that such options exist might miss
out on the opportunity to take steps that will guard them from curtailment of their freedom of
movement. Article 20 of the 2000 Personal laws concerning women’s right to travel without
her husband was struck down before its passage. This decision was taken to pacify ferocious
opposition from Muslim fundamentalists (Zuhur, 2001).

3. Ability to Take Care of Self.

Ability to take care of one’s health should be perceived as a basic women’s right as
well as human right. This right should be couched in Islamic teaching, such as the obligation of
human beings to take care of their health, since God creates a cure for every ailment.
Women should be empowered to think that their health is as important as their children’s or
their spouse’s.

However, empowerment without improvement in health care services will not be
effective. The lack of female doctors might cause reluctance among women, even autonomous
women, to seek medical care. It is reasonable to recommend that the government increase the
number of women in all medical establishments as part of a more general effort to increase the
quality of care.

4. Freedom from Violence

Research suggests that violence against women is related to rapid social changes which alter gender roles and, in some cases, social class (Mazumdar et. al., 1995; UNICEF, 1989). The results of this research show that unpaid family workers are more likely to have been the victim of domestic violence compared to self-employed women and both are more likely to have ever been beaten than either non-working women or women in higher status occupations. Both the self-employed and family workers face the economic insecurity of the informal sector but family workers have none of the autonomy associated with being one’s own boss.

An anti-poverty scheme focused on women in the informal sector, would address a source of domestic violence while improving women’s economic opportunities. Since family workers tend to come from modest backgrounds, they would benefit from credit schemes that enable them to start self employment. Self employment not only provides room for women to learn to negotiate with various parties, to control their capital and earnings, albeit small, but also to free themselves from the patriarchal relations that family work often entails. Self-employment gives them networks and the means to help protect themselves from domestic violence. Such a scheme may encounter resistance from Muslim fundamentalists who favor women removing themselves from the workplace to cede the limited employment opportunities to men. However, this is not an option for the many households that depend on two incomes and the growing number without male earners.

A focus on the informal sector is timely. The number of women seeking economic opportunities in this sector is expected to grow. Reasons identified in the literature include: a) the deepening economic crisis among lower and middle class Egyptians; b) the contraction of the public sector, traditionally the largest absorber of female workers; c) the decline of attractiveness of education for daughters as its economic returned is considered to be minimal.

The findings and the visions can be applied in other developing countries that draw their laws from Islamic sources and are experiencing the resurgence of Muslim fundamentalism. Policies such as universal education should be placed in a wider context, like employment policies. What does a government want to achieve from universal education? Education for the sake of education? Education to improve the skills of future workers? Education to perpetuate the status quo, or education to alter the social order to achieve a more just society? Similarly, employment policies should consider the changing roles of men and women. What will a country do with the increasing number of highly educated women and uneducated and unskilled working women? A rigid distinction between “proper” type of employment for men and women will not solve other problems, such as underemployment, unemployment and poverty. Similarly, maintaining that Islamic studies is beyond the purview of women will only perpetuate the infusion of culture and religion, which for the most part will maintain gender inequality based on local culture rather than religion.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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