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Collectivism, Communication, and Cultural Conflict: The Dialogical Acculturation of Christian Egyptians in the Diaspora

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COLLECTIVISM, COMMUNICATION, AND CULTURAL CONFLICT:
THE DIALOGICAL ACCULTURATION OF CHRISTIAN EGYPTIANS IN THE DIASPORA

By

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I dedicate this work to:

1) All of the beloved relatives who have fallen asleep during my doctoral studies, especially Reverend Samuel Wahby (Baba habibi), Mrs. Naima Luka (dear Grandma Na3eema), and Mohandess Wadie Bishai (my much-loved Uncle Q. Q.); I look forward to the day when I can see your dear smiles again!

   and

2) All of the brothers and sisters (of all ethnicities, nationalities, ages, and faiths) who have endured—or succumbed to—the various slings and arrows of biculturality; may we open our eyes and see the Way leading to the only Truth in this world, and realise that earthly misery is nothing if we’re living the Life.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Speechless. That’s the only word to describe what I am right now. I’m speechless, speechless with gratitude. So many people have contributed to this dissertation—not just positively but negatively, as well, though I’m no less grateful to the naysayers and hellcats (whom I love as much as everyone else, probably).

But seriously, I don’t even know where to begin. So many people I want to thank, and so much love in my heart for each of you (even the lady at Wal-Mart who kindly gave me a quarter when she found me wringing my diamond-studded hands and frowning with great tragedy and melodrama when I realized that my plastic bag full of red peppers had amounted to $20.23—and I only had a 20 on me. May God always bless you for your mad skillz of non-verbal perception—and the kindness that allowed you to approach a perfect stranger when you saw the ferocious CSM1 slicing cleanly through the self-checkout line on that fateful day in 2009).

I know what you’re thinking: “If this is you ‘speechless,’ then I’m beyond terrified at what you’re like when you’re in a chatty mood, Sally Sall.”

I agree one hundred per cent, dear reader. Nonetheless, I refuse to curtail my thanks of the people who made my doctoral expedition possible—and those whose kindness, love, support, encouragement, friendship, and random cruelty (in a very few cases) made the journey so pleasant and/or productive.

Let’s start with some “warnings” and/or notices (yes, let’s!):

First of all, I really have tried to scale down this list; it’s about half as long as it once was, but you’ve got to remember that I’m still in dissertation-writing mode, aka “forty-to-sixty-pages-a-day—before edits.”

Second of all, I am heart-sick to report that the “real” version of this open thank-you-note was lost in the ancient hard drive of my Laptop of Doom (TM), and I’ve had to begin again; it’s now 5ish in the morning on the day after my wonderful, surreal defense of this tome, and I’ve had about 3 hours of sleep over twice as many days.

In other words, I’m sure I’ll forget the most important people in my life, and then spend the rest of my life hearing about it. (Maybe it would be more prudent to have a nap before finishing this up and sending it off. But no, I cannot...a deadline looms large in the horizon, and so I shall press on and accept a life-time of merciless nagging.)

Third of all, a majority of the individuals mentioned below are doctors (of medicine, engineering, philosophy, education), but I have left off those titles for a particular reason (which I’d be happy to share when I’ve had more sleep); fear not, however, friends mine, for I shall not “up and start calling you by your first names” (unless I already do); furthermore, there are some individuals whose last names are left

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1 Customer Service Manager at Wal-Mart.
off. This is for one of two reasons (which I’d be just as happy to share, but later, when I’ve had more sleep, obviously).

Wow, I really am in dissertation-writing mode still. But it shall not be borne, for time is even shorter now than it was when I first began this behemoth of a “thank you” page! And so, without further ado, I (finally) begin this section...

First and foremost, my love, thanksgiving, and praise go to my best Friend, my Father, my constant Companion, and the only Being I know who can knit a big something out of a bigger nothing; to quote Toby Mac of DC Talk, “people tell me that You’re just a dream.” If so, may I stay asleep forever.

Precious Friend, Your Presence is like a cloud of the headiest fragrance—surrounding me, filling my lungs, clinging to my hair; You live in my veins and my bones, behind my eyelids and under my skin. I can’t escape from Your kind care...but why would I want to?

The earth sings songs of gratitude and exaltation to you with every pulse, and so does my spirit. I can never thank You enough for giving me (to) a family that knows and loves You (as if anyone could keep from falling down and worshiping you, coz you RULE! ♥♥♥ Yay for JC! ♥♥♥ ).

I would love nothing more than to keep praising the name of ♥ Jesus ♥ (who ROCKS!) thanking Him for the innumerable blessings He’s given to me, and the billions of miracles He’s done in my life—not that there haven’t been storms, but since He’s never left my side, they’re less than nothing—but I can’t, for there isn’t enough ink in the world to write them all down. (Also, I’d never get to hand this manuscript in, which would indubitably result in DJ Sally Sall getting the smack-down of her life from two people in particular, and then there would be more drama than in Hollywood, Bollywood, and all of the Egyptian film industry—combined.)

Ok, on with the show, then; the biggest “shokran gazeeeeeelannn” in the world (except for God’s, obviously) goes to all of my ultra-supportive and unimaginably-loved family members, who are truly the ones who deserve this Ph.D.—both for their help, and for allowing their ginormous ears (not in the Dumbo sense) to be damaged with my numerous idea-fests and ranting marathons...not to mention my unbreakable habit of sleeping at odd times (for two or three hours on end) and then being a grouch (for the next 24 or 26 hours) and snapping like a terrier.

These gluttons for punishment—I mean “saints”—include Samy, Hanaa, Susan, and Chrissy Bishai, and my beloved grandmother, Linda Samuel Wahby, who all contributed, inspired, and/or “got” to hear my voice every day (about 37 times or so, especially Mama and The Parents. Actually, I think that Mama deserves this PhD far more than I do, for her constant prayers, moral support, keen political analysis and reporting, not to mention another thousand things. SSSSS :) And Uncle Wafeek for even listening to my weekly dissertation woes, much less all the great advice and wonderful prayers, tab3an. And of course the mega-important POM and Band of Brothers (particularly Tony) who were always mega-supportive and technologically savvy. And The Parents again, who have had to deal with me and my shenanigans on an almost-daily basis. Ba7ebokom bshakl :)
An enormous debt of gratitude is also owed to the following beloved (apologies, for I can’t think of any other word to use that doesn’t smack of a Hallmark card, not that “beloved” doesn’t) relatives: my uncles Victor, Mofied, Wafeek, and Hany Samuel Wahby, and Aunt Nancy, and cousins Sammy, Jenny, Phillip, and William Wahby (all of whom I don’t see enough! That shall change, inshallah!); Aunt Hoda and Uncle Ramez Morgan Luka; all my dear cousins back in Egypt; and finally Aunt Valerie and cousins Nadia, Samy, and Nabil Bishai, my fellow adventurers in biculturalism (whom I think of often and hope to see again soon, inshallah!).

And of course, no list of relatives would be complete without my dear grandfather—Reverend Samuel Wahby to the world, but “Baba Habibi” to me—whose memory was with me as I wrote this (as always).

Moving on to the next group, we find it made up of some outstanding individuals who shall be horrified to know that I consider them relatives, even if their DNA isn’t particularly similar to mine. First I’ll start with my beloved dissertation committee members and “graduate-degree-enablers,” then I’ll move on to an alphabetical listing of the rest of the best, those sisters and brothers of different mothers whom I love more than I can say (but should they be alphabetized by first or last name? Choices, choices...).

To the four angelic mentors—Peter Garretson, Davis Houck, Felecia Jordan-Jackson, and Steve McDowell—that made this work happen (and happen well, if I do say so myself, muahahaha), I give my humblest and most-heartfelt thanks (not that the thanks to everyone else is less-heartfelt, of course). Thanks also for always treating me as though I were not a sleep-deprived moron (which I fear I was, at the time... “the time” being 2005ish-until...hmm, yesterday).

Actually, I don’t even know what I can say to you all to thank you properly for the time and effort it took to deal with my thousands of questions, and read hundreds (or thousands) of pages, except “thanks for putting up with my shenanigans,” “love you a ton!” and (perhaps most importantly) “y’all rule the WORLD!” (Ok, I’ve thought of more to say now, so scroll down a bit if you want to read it!)

Special thanks also to the dear gentlemen that made it possible for me to even apply to FSU, Mohammed el-Nawawy and Bruce Swain.

Dr. Mohammed, I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the parents would have been more than a little uncomfortable letting their oldest daughter move so far away from home if God hadn’t put you in UWF’s Department of Communication Arts on that blessed visit to Pensacola all those years ago! Of course I’m very sad that I didn’t arrive in time to take a course with you, but am very happy that we even got to meet! A huge shokran gazeelan to you for your friendship and support these past eight (?) years, and may God bless you and your family always!

Dr. Swain, what can I say? If it hadn’t been for you, I’d be teaching part-time and playing video games full-time, or something equally beastly. So basically, you saved my life, and for that I shall always be grateful, even more-so than I am for your encouragement of and brilliant edits to my thesis project (the late, great Mid-East Meets West, which I believe started me on this whole “culture and communication” thing in
the first place). The fact that you’ve been the best of mentors and dearest of friends since that time is what means most to me, however, even more than the fact that it never would have occurred to me to write about Egyptian culture in the first place unless you’d mentioned it to me; I must, therefore, go on the record once again and say that every book I write/I’ve written after 2003 is really thanks to you...so thanks to you, dear Dr. Swain!

And now, we bring you the “individual thanks” portion of the show!

To my dear and beloved Aunt Ginger and Aunt Lizzie, and all the members of the MaNaJRi.e. Group (especially Th.B., P., Th.B., Th.A., and Th.T., but NOT B. & C.): You are princesses (and kings and queens), my dear, dear, dear friends. Every day I accomplish something (from walking the dogs to writing a book), it is because of your encouragement. Thank you for it, and for inviting me to come live in the Group Compound (I just might one day, so beware!). I pray that I can see you very very very soon inshallah.

To Robert Atkins: Even though he’s no longer with us, Dr. Atkins made my weight loss of 130 lbs (without surgery) possible in under two years; despite the fact that I still dream of apples and pomegranates and strawberries and V-8 and tomatoes and cherries (and limes, yalahwey), yay for low-carb (and yay to God for allowing me to stick to the beastly regime)!

To Jamie B.: Thanks for all the great conversations this past year, my friend! I pray that all is well with your family, and hope to go back to the famous discussion on Johnny Carson and happiness very soon.

To Kenneth Barrett, Jr.: Oh Mr. B! How I miss you. I can’t believe it’s been over ten years since I was the class-skipping beast who found out she was actually decent at something, and therefore never once skipped your classes. Thank you for teaching me so much about photography, but a thousand times more thanks to you for being a dear friend and the best encourager in the whole world. When I ran into you at the Greek Festival several years ago, I was going through the toughest time I’d gone through until that point, and was seriously considering dropping out of my doctoral program; your encouragement and support in that one conversation made me drop the notion in less than a moment, however, and I haven’t looked back since. So basically, this Ph.D. should really go to you. May God bless you always and I sincerely hope to see you and E. very soon, God willing!

To Paul W. Brazis: I don’t know where to begin, Dr. B! You’re one of the kindest and most supportive (and nicest and most intelligent) people I’ve ever had the honor of meeting, and if it took something bad (or annoying, anyway) to get to meet you, then I thank God for it (the bad/annoying thing, and of course, getting to meet you all those years ago). Thank you for your unfailing kindness, your interest in my work, and all the wonderful suggestions you’ve made over the years. May God bless you and your family richly!

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hope we can collaborate on some projects in the near future inshallah, and put an end to all the cultural and societal moshkellaz we discussed last time!

Back to **Peter Garretson**: Oh, Dr. G., thanks a million times over for your wisdom these past few years! Apart from bringing up great points and wonderful historical suggestions for the “Magnum Oops,” your sage advice in matters of career and prioritization have allowed me to not only finish the dissertation in a non-horrific amount of time, but to finish at all. And so for that, my parents (and I!) are most grateful. Can’t wait to read your next book very soon inshallah, and remember that you have a standing invitation for a traditional Egyptian dinner in whatever city or state my family and I move to!

To my dear **E. GM**: Wa7ashteyen ya benty! Ro7ty fein? Oh, I guess that it’s I who ro7t somewhere. Anyway, can’t thank you enough for all the help you gave me during the famous dissertation-writing stage, bass more-so for the wonderful friendship and support. I think you’re actually one of like seven nass that I can have great discussions about Rabena with, and for that I’m so so so grateful! Hope all is well with your family inshallah, and sa7betek donna betsalem 3aleky kteer geddan, in fact she can’t wait teegy teshofkom fi m3ssr (heya and as7abha, tab3an) :D Love you lots and Rabena ma3aky and hope to talk very very soon!

To **Doris Gray**: Thanks so much, Dr. Gray, for teaching me so much about being a great teacher, Middle Eastern scholar, and wonderful human being. You are always in my prayers and I hope to see you again one day soon inshallah.

To **Davis Houck** (again): Hmm. In this section, I’ve already said “can’t thank you enough,” “I don’t have enough words,” and referred to loving people “more than I can say”... could this be another theme, Dr. Houck?? The rhetoric of speechlessness, maybe? I wonder if it’s an Egyptian thing or a Sally thing (or just a dorkus maximus thing, uhh... huh huh huh...). Anywhoo, can’t thank you enough (there it is again!) for opening my eyes to different (and eminently useful!) takes on research methods (historical-critical rules!), rhetorical themes I’d never have considered (forgiveness and deception were particularly inspired — and inspiring!) and, of course, art. That reminds me, I should get my friends B. & B. to drive me to the store where I’m getting this really gorgeous painting framed...

To **Felecia Jordan-Jackson**: Oh Dr. J, I shall weep before two sentences are written! Miss you horribly :(. Not only have I valued your friendship (or did we decide that you’re my older sister who only looks younger?) but also your example of being able to balance teaching with research and family — and how to balance these things (whilst holding your beliefs close in every case). So maybe I have half a chance at balancing at least the first two inshallah (since I had such a great teacher at it!). There still remains a metric ton (at least) of other things I want to say, but I’m starting to get weepish remembering many of the more interesting and fun occasions (including—but not limited to—the “Miss Gin and Miss Sally Show” last summer, the coining of the term “Uncle You-Know-Who,” all our great discussions about culture, and of course, the day I fell down on the job and had no idea how to answer your friend about Systems Theory, hehe). And the beloved Marriage Salon Discussions (i.e. “The Famous Three Musketeers
Conversations”) with you and Dr. McDowell ruled the world; I learned so much from both of y’all’s comments, but also from your remarks to one another (whether about the Dissertation of Doom or about other things). Uh oh, I suspect that the weepishness hath returned, and so I’ll close for now, but I reserve the right to go on about the “good old days” for at least half an hour before June, 2010 (INDH of course). Love, Sally W. F. (or maybe not W. F. anymore...inshallah!).

To Kareem: Wa7ashteny beshakl yabni, Rabena yekoon ma3aak and ye7afez 3alek and montazera our next conversation inshallah!

To Melissa Mackal: Dear and beloved Melissa, I don’t know what to say! (This seems to be a trend with the people I love best/am most grateful to.) I think this was the most difficult one to write, actually. Thank you for making me forget about my whole “research rules, antisocialism forever!” mentality of a few years ago. Our famous quarterly visits to dear Uncle Moe are the highlights of my year, I think, and so are the famous phrases (particularly “Past performance predicts future performance,” *gleeful smile*). Out of all the reasons I don’t want to leave this town, you are the biggest one! (Not that you’re big, but you’re one of the few true excuses to stay here, or at least be sad about leaving! Not that I ever will, probably.) Never before have I met someone with such emotional strength—and graciousness and elegance through life’s storms. I pray that the best is yet to come—in all aspects of your life! Thank you for being so trustworthy, and for sharing your wisdom (which I am always in dire need of). And for always listening to my spiels and new theories. And asking the questions that lead me to the best decision. And not letting me take the easy way out and/or go with the cop-out answer. And at least another million things for which I am eternally grateful! God bless you and the Rs forever.

To Stephen McDowell: What an interesting several years it’s been, Dr. McDowell! Thanks for your kindness, understanding, support, and confidence (in both me and my work) during that (sometimes-challenging) time. Thanks for the teaching assignments, the suggestions, and the advice you were so generous with. Thanks even more for keeping me from putting all 27 theories in this book, for it would then have been 2019 by the time I defended! :) I already miss (quite horribly, actually) the famous weekly meetings with you and Dr. J., and shall always remember the fun discussions about the Marriage Salon (TM) and of course, hearing your travel tales and good advice. I pray God’s richest blessings upon you, for it was a rich blessing in my life to be able to join your wonderful department and learn lots and work with you!

To Midiane: See, I remembered to use the name you asked me to, though it was most difficult for me to do so. Where do I begin, my brother, my old friend? With the fact that you’re my conscience about xcult? That our research interests and paths have been nearly identical in more than a few forms and fashions? No... how about with the fact that you are one of the truest and most loyal people I’ve ever been blessed to meet? And one of the most talented? And most fun to talk to? Hmm... those are all true, but hardly starting points. And so I shall skip the beginning and move to the bit where I say “here’s to nine more decades of friendship and cultural inquiry and writing and art and walking with the Main Man, JC! Inshallah may God always protect you and your family and
looking forward to chatting yet more about the interesting topics we’ve already covered...and some new ones, maybe!”.

To **Matthew Pace**: Mikey rules the world! I mean, T-Bone rules! Hehe. Miss you lots, old friend! I maaayy be visited soon inshallah, and we maaaaaay go to Whataburger (not the one on Davis!) and Luna Lanes. Hehe. So proud of all your accomplishments, but more-so, for the fact that you’re one of the kindest and most talented people I know. May I learn this kindness from you and stop being a bratty beast, inshallah; you’re so money and you don’t even know it! Who’s the big winner? Who’s the big winner? T-Bone, T-Bone wins! I walked around for an hour with that *stupid* ... erm, Icee... on my tray. Hehe.

To **Stephanie P.**: It’s your old friend Peter! Thank you so much for all your prayers, and for keeping in touch when I’m so bad at it. Miss you and everyone at your great church, hope to see you all soon! Blessings and CONGRATS on your great news from mid-March!!!

To **Linda S. Turner**: Oh, Mrs. Ash, miss you a ton! Thanks for always being a good example of kicking trash AND living life to the fullest...and looking great in the process! And for introducing me to Foucault and all the other peeps we had to read (even though I struggled ferociously against such assignments at the time). And the Orange Kerchief. And the famous trips to Wal Mart...ahh, those were the days, my dear friend! May I learn your fearlessness and wonderful communication style at some point before the end of the world (won’t happen, but I can dream, right?!). Love, light, blessings, and eternally-great highlights to thee, dear Mrs. Ash.

To the **Egyptian Warrior**: Thanks a ton for all of the insights you showed to me, and all the tales you shared. I pray that your show went well, and that you and your fiancee have had a brilliant couple of months. God bless you!

To **Hugh Stephen Whitaker and Penny**: Oh, Dr. Steve and Penny, miss you both horribly! Can’t believe it’s been two years since last I saw you all. Thank you for all the friendship and support during my difficult early years in Tallahassee; you truly made the town come alive, and I hope that we get to hang out soon (and not just because the town has gotten stale again)!Wow, eight pages of acknowledgements! Only on Planet Sally... :) Anyway, just a few more and then I’ll close (to make room for the other 300+ pages...)

To my Bainbridge family, including the ultra-helpful **Tonya Strickland** and **David Pollock**, the life-saving librarians, and especially, my hComm “kids”— particularly **Laura Mock** (my spiritual sister!), **Betty Meredith** (my other spiritual sister!), **Christopher Troendle** (FFVI forever!!), **Christopher Powell** (hehe, the Korean family!), and **Renita Dumas** (I don’t know where to start!)—who brighten every single class session and make the drive worth-while.

Speaking of students who brightened classes, I must also thank past FSU students who have made the life of this (almost) ex-TA more bearable; some of them are: **Laura Varney, Drucker, Talia, Scott B.**, the three **Michelles** from my evening class in 2008 (in Keiser, actually), **Allan F.** (Tidus rules!), **Dr. Brett**, and a host of others whom I miss seeing and wish the best for.
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A special thank you to Aunt Aida Cass, who wisely and kindly brought to my attention something that I (in my typical “absent-minded but well-meaning moron/genius” fashion) had not even considered! I would have had zero responses if it hadn’t been for you, dear Aunt Aida, so God bless you and your family a thousand-fold and every bit of research I do in the future will bear the marks of your kindness and perception :)

A special thank you also to “Ms. NDS” who was discussed in the last chapters; you provided so much insight into both the culture and the condition and, in all honesty, you were one of my inspirations to keep going—if only to help one person who’s endured the hardships you have...but they haven’t been in vain, my sister, for as you once told me, your “suffering isn’t in vain—even if I am misunderstood in this life, I know that my Heavenly FATHER above is using my suffering to His Glory, who am I to complain, even if I have ‘every right to’ by the standards of this world!! In fact, if I complained or made a big stink about somethings, I make all Christians look bad, and I also do not get my reward in heaven. So I will continue to ‘count it all joy’ for His Name’s sake, amen!” Ameeen ya setty, ameeeen! :)

And... I certainly can’t close without giving a special special thank you to Ulla Bunz for rescuing my dissertation defense with her mad technology skillz, Bea Awonyi for saving my dissertation with her patience, understanding, and suggestions, Jack Tyndall for being like the sun-shiniest of summer days, all my friends at SDRC, and especially Brian Dixon and his vast knowledge and coolness!

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Oh, and the two dear friends that have spent the most time with me (and who’ve suffered through this degree more than everyone else on this list—put together—except for God, obviously): Habaybi Klaus and Emmaline—what a blessing you’ve been to me, and to everyone who knows you! You’ve changed my life more than I can say, and saved it more times than I can recount here. Rabena yekhaleekom leya always, and praise to His Holy Name for giving you to me—and me to you.
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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BDM</td>
<td>Bidimensional Model (of acculturation). Refers to John W. Berry’s response to the assimilationist Unidimensional Model. The BDM is sometimes called “the fourfold model.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFS</td>
<td>Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>Dialogical Model (of acculturation). Refers to the multi-stranded model written about by Hermans and Bhatia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOB</td>
<td>“Fresh off the boat.” Refers to a recent immigrant—or a person who looks/seems like it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch. An international human rights organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOL</td>
<td>“Laugh out loud.” Used online (when people are too lazy to type the whole phrase) or in text messages (when messages are limited to 120 or 160 characters).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDS</td>
<td>Negative Dialogical State (of acculturation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDM</td>
<td>Unidimensional Model (of acculturation). The first acculturation model to gain popularity in modern acculturation studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES ON STYLE, CONTENT, AND TERMINOLOGY

1. As per the guidelines of submission set by the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, both ‘āyn (transliterated as 3) and hamza (transliterated as 2) are denoted by the use of a single quotation mark, though I preserve all original spellings and/or transliterations of journalists, authors, and participants

2. When citing literature and/or data, I include the term originally used, unless otherwise noted; in some cases, a term has been used so often (in literature and data) that I have used the same term, in order to avoid confusion. Some examples of these are: Eastern, Western, American, North American, and Arab.

3. The words "Coptic" and "Copt" are not used in this manuscript, except in 1) direct quotes, and 2) references to the Bohairic and/or Sahidic versions of the Ancient Egyptian language; this is due to the multiple definitions of the words. Some, for example, believe that a "Copt" is defined by ethnicity; this category contains those believing that the word refers to "the most undiluted descendents of the Pharaonic people, who were the original Copts" (Bishai, 2004)—whether Muslim or Christian. Others believe that membership is determined according to religion; "Copt" in this case usually refers to an Egyptian member of the Coptic Orthodox Church (COC), though some also use the word to refer to Ethiopian members of the COC, or else non-Egyptian converts to that faith.

4. "Arabs" and "Egyptians" usually refers to those living in their countries of origin, while those living elsewhere are called "diasporic" or "Egyptian American" (or whatever diaspora is being discussed. "Diaspora" refers to any country other than the home country; in other words, an Egyptian living in Ethiopia would be considered "diasporic," despite the proximity of the two countries. First-generation Americans are immigrants (of any age), second-generation Americans are children of immigrants. The term "bicultural" is a broad one which may refer to someone who is genetically "half-Arab," someone who has immigrated, been born to immigrants, or spent significant time with cultures other than their own (i.e. an Egyptian raised by a British aunt and uncle in Alexandria).

5. Another issue that must be mentioned at the outset surrounds a book on "Arabs," one actually using the word "Arab" in its title; first published in 1973, Raphael Patai’s *The Arab Mind* has proven to be a work of remarkable endurance—but not always in a good way. Several critiques have been made of the book, including: 1) its allegedly "racist" overtones, 2) the fact that Patai was not only an Orientalist but a "Hungarian-
born Jew and lifelong Zionist” (“Arab Mind Revisited,” 2004) and 3) the argument that "Arabs" only respond to force. And while Lee Smith of Slate Magazine wrote that Patai was a "keen and sympathetic observer of Arab society," most reviews of the book have either disparaged it outright (one unnamed scholar wrote that "the best use for this volume, if any, is as a doorstop," Whitaker, 2004) or expressed their agreement with Edward Said—who also criticized the book more than once, but most notably in his Orientalism.

Edward Said has, of course, received several criticisms of his own work, as well—even/especially the particularly-enduring (and more-endearing) Orientalism. Despite these and other critiques, however, both men continue to be read and cited; this dissertation certainly makes several mentions of Patai’s book as well as two Said books (Orientalism and Out of Place).

Some readers may wonder how a claim supported by conflicting viewpoints is possible; others may wonder why a dissertation riddled with citations from both scholars makes no mention of the rift separating their work.

Both questions are answered by noting that I have used selected snippets (from each author) in a vacuum, or perhaps "out of context," in places.

This does not mean that I have twisted their conjectures in order to support my own; what it means, rather, is that I have supported my conjectures with their claims, their stand-alone facts, even "fragments" of their main arguments (even if I don't particularly agree with those main arguments). Such a thing is possible because the validity of a "fragment" does not necessarily depend upon the larger argument it supports (though the reverse is true).

For example, I may agree with some of Patai’s research about the general roles played by certain forms of language within Arabic-speaking countries, but disagree with his larger point that language was responsible for a particular event in one of those countries.

Likewise, the disagreement between Said’s and Patai’s main arguments (or philosophies, even) does not necessarily mean that every "fragment" offered by one scholar will automatically conflict with the other’s; therefore, a forthcoming section may contain equally-valid and non-conflicting citations from both scholars.
ABSTRACT

Many Egyptians—hyphenated and not—have begun to publicly articulate their struggles with identity confusion, collectivist clash, and communication incapability; these (and similar) issues have, in fact, taken center-stage in both Arabic-language and bilingual (English/Arabic, Arabic/French, etc.) media outlets.

The dissertation’s two general purposes were, therefore, to:

1) Expand the dialogical model of acculturation (DM), and

2) Discover current cultural climates common among Christians in Egypt and in the diaspora—regardless of where they were born and raised.

The general purposes were divided into three narrower goals, including:

1) An exploration of the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,

2) An understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or “dreams” held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt or the diaspora), as well as

3) A discovery of participants’ manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).

These goals were, in part, accomplished by asking three main research questions (one of them divided into two segments):

RQ1—What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?

RQ2a—What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, “dreams”), negative (“cultural anxieties,” conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?

RQ2b—How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?
RQ3—How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the "three communication dimensions" (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?

The questions were investigated through descriptive questionnaires administered online, and qualitative interviews that were either administered online (synchronously and asynchronously) or conducted face-to-face and video-taped, while the review of online blogs from eight bloggers (one Coptic Orthodox, seven Egyptian Muslim) provided additional insights, achieving validity through corroboration and triangulation.
PART I
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

An Introduction To The Problem

Acculturation has been a topic of contemplation since the beginning of civilization, and while cultures may have changed, the issues surrounding cultural readjustment have not. People throughout history have, for example, often wondered how to deal with intercultural situations; some argued that what began as tolerance for "outsiders" and their "strange" ways would unavoidably end in a compromise of beliefs, a betrayal of homeland, and a loss of identity, while others endorsed the adoption of anything useful, entertaining, or exotic. These are just two of the possible answers to such questions as the foundational "what is acculturation?", the pragmatic "how should one acculturate?", and the philosophical "is it possible to acculturate without losing who I am?".

In Laws, Plato (348/1980) answered those questions with a resounding argument against cultural contamination; some of his preventative strategies included limiting travel to those over forty (so long as they were accompanied by several countrymen) and relegating foreign guests to the outskirts of town (Plato, 348/1980; Rudmin, 2003).

The United States, on the other hand, has answered those questions in several fashions since the latter portion of the 19th Century, when the first wave of freedom- or opportunity-seeking immigrants arrived in the young nation; at that point in history, immigrants were urged to assimilate (J. W. Caughey, 1966), while a century later the dominant mentality seems to encourage diversity and multiculturalism, as evidenced by tokenistic advertising and governmentally-regulated hiring practices these past thirty years (EEOC, 2009).

Despite the measures taken by U.S. policy-makers to ensure the official inclusion of people from all populations, however, some unregulated aspects of life in the United States continue to hinder or baffle immigrants (Ben Shalom & Horenczyk, 2003; Berry, 1992), particularly "Easterners" (Bhatia, 2004), and especially "Arabs" (Naff, 1983; Tavakoliyadzi, 1981, p. 27, cited in Faragallah et al., 1997); their difficulties may be due to any number of factors, including such obvious obstacles as the disparity between "Eastern" and "Western" cultures (Bhatia, 2004) or the average U.S. American’s lack of knowledge about ultra-foreign customs (Althen, 1988), as well as less-obvious, more-complicated hindrances like the strategic, systematic, and acceptable use of deception in some collectivist countries (Triandis, 2002), the strong link between certain cultures and the faiths practiced there, or the disparity in communication styles of home and host cultures.
Confusion and Conflict

Acculturation, famously defined in 1936 by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits as a phenomenon arising from situations where "groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149), has expanded from its narrow and exclusionary beginnings; this can be seen in the fact that today's acculturation scholars do not accept assimilation as the only option, and, instead, examine various philosophies like identity-construction or self-construal, identify common coping strategies used by immigrants, or investigate why a recent immigrant interprets himself as "Other" while his sister believes that her new situation is "foreign."

Despite the measures taken by acculturation scholars worldwide, however—measures resulting in hundreds of distinct models (Rudmin, 2003) and thousands of scholarly books and articles on this important topic—bicultural individuals, immigrants, and diaspora-born children with ties to "Eastern" countries are often unable to resolve such questions as "what culture do I belong to?" and "who am I?" (Bhatia, 2007). This confusion intensifies when they realize the long-lasting ramifications of each particular course of action available to them as they attempt to negotiate between two cultures that may seem incompatible, even mutually-exclusive.

What's at stake in such situations is not mere confusion, however; rather, it is the crushing feeling of betrayal that may visit the South Asian or Arabic-speaker upon his "moral modernization," as in the case of Mark (Bishai, 2009), a young Egyptian from Beni Mazar (one of the more traditional villages in Egypt). Mark, who originally intended a four-year stay at NYU followed by a permanent return to Egypt, now "cannot return or imagine returning," since he feels "ashamed to go back home and face my family," after having tasted the "pleasures of the city" (dating, the subway, and "round-the-clock take-out").

At stake, also, is the fear that mere experimentation will result in "losing oneself" to a lifelong habit, as in the case of Maha, who had never touched liquor while in her conservative Cairo neighborhood; upon moving to Texas for her husband's engineering job, however, she became an "alcoholic...not drinking a dozen drinks a night," she clarifies, explaining that "I have to have my drink every night or else I become very annoyed and unpleasant."

The greatest element at stake in the lives of many Easterners is arguably the "purity"—both actual and perceived—of the Eastern woman in the West; in this case, becoming "morally modernized" enough to go on the most innocent of dates could very well lead to a lifelong habit. This is due to the far-reaching ostracism arising from the "scarlet Aleph" that is pinned onto a "tainted" woman by the all-seeing community of immigrants; such branding stems from the belief that a woman's reputation, once tarnished, is irreparably damaged (Zayan, 2008). Tina, a 30-year-old Egyptian immigrant who arrived in the U.S. just after high school, is a perfect example of this; "married off" to a rich stranger at 18, she soon learned that he was abusive, got a cousin to "take care of" her husband, and has lived with several non-Egyptian boyfriends since then. "It did not matter anymore, you know? It is like...I knew that no guy in his right mind—no
respectable one, Egyptian one, you know—would look at me after I was no longer 'virgin pure,' so why bother denying myself happiness. You know?"

These are only a few of the confusing conflicts that so-often obstruct the happiness of people with ties to "traditional" countries, however; other issues are described by bloggers, journalists, and film-makers. For example, more than a thousand filmic depictions of intercultural conflict have been produced since the 1950s; some of the best-known examples of such portrayals include the classic films Flower Drum Song, Fiddler on the Roof, South Pacific, Love is a Many Splendored Thing, and The King and I, as well as the more recent Mississippi Masala, My Big Fat Greek Wedding, Bend it Like Beckham, East is East, My Son the Fanatic, Something New, Beauty Shop, and The Joy Luck Club. The fictionalized antics shown in these and other works have served as both cultural lexicons to curious-but-uninitiated audiences, and sources of identification, validation, or inspiration to bicultural individuals in similar, "real life" versions of the situations demonstrated.

The ability to identify with a fictional character does not, however, assist an immigrant or "second-generation" individual (one born to immigrant parents in their host land, following Suinn, 1987) with dozens of decisions that must be made every day—decisions that may seem straightforward to the host-land-native but often suggest treachery or betrayal to the hyper-connected "traditional" and/or "collectivist" family.

One may, then, wonder just how or why decades-old diasporas have not yet learned of or enacted strategies that effectively prevent or "cure" acculturation woes; are they, for example, too lazy to seek assistance on their own? Furthermore, are immigrant parents unaware of their children's confusion, or simply uncaring? The answer to both questions is that many are, indeed, aware of tensions or conundrums but no closer to rectifying those situations; this may be due to ignorance, unwillingness to compromise on their beliefs, or any number of other reasons. In the case of some Easterners, for example, the suffering may fail to seek help from mental-health specialists or other health-care practitioners due to shame over experiencing a conflict (Nassar-McMillan, 2003), unawareness of culture's role in the conflict, or denial that a conflict is even happening, though some practicing Orthodox and Catholic Arabic-speakers do seek private counsel from their Fathers of Confession or other clergy. Many, however, unconsciously share a mentality articulated by a then-recent immigrant, who explained that "I've got God and my family, what else do I need?" (Bishai, 2004, 2009).

This mindset briefly but accurately summarizes the traditional, fatalistic, God-centered view of life in many Middle Eastern countries; it is also a declaration of family solidarity, designed to both project an image of collective unity and strength and provide that support and strength. Because of this emphasis on cohesiveness, however, Arabs— who may begin to suffer a "collective, confused identity" (Nassar-McMillan, 2003)— generally shun the notion of seeking "professional help" (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000), viewing it as "disloyalty to group honor...a sign of shame and weakness" (Amer & Hovey, 2007); and since many therapeutic or diagnostic techniques that may be useful to immigrants—empirical dialogical maps (Raggatt, 2000) and personal position repertoires (Hermans, 2001), for example—are only available from mental-health
practitioners (particularly those relatively-few with expertise and/or first-hand experience in cross-cultural psychology or acculturation), the dilemmas of acculturation that so-frequently baffle immigrants are sometimes included in the cultural legacy inherited by subsequent generations who have not themselves immigrated.

Of late, however, has emerged an encouraging trend of near-constant media coverage of cultural conflicts, identity, and courtship trends on such Arabic-language television programs as *Fi Beyout Asrar* (literally "in houses are secrets," but roughly translated as Behind Hidden Doors), *El Banat* (The Girls), *Taht el Salalem* (Underneath the Stairs), as well as many of those appearing on Christian networks like *Al Karma*. But while coverage has finally been given to such vital issues—issues frequently ignored and belittled by many "third-wave" immigrants (1965+) of the previous generation (according to their now-grown "children," anyway), due to the common "all or none" preferences to remain fully separated, or else assimilate completely—many lack access to these television programs, or are unaware of them; and while it is encouraging that some in this decade have begun to pay such close attention to the existence of trauma caused by, and remedies to acculturation issues, mere awareness is not enough.

*Conflicts and Closets*

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding an immigrant’s migration, disparities between home and host culture exist, and must, somehow, be adjusted to; some have little or no difficulty with a new way of life, but many immigrants do experience some degree of distress, as evidenced by the last century’s proliferation of literature on acculturation (Ben Shalom & Horenczyk, 2003; Rudmin, 2003), coping strategies (Berry, 1997), and acculturative stress (Berry et al., 1992). Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, for example, wrote of the "psychic conflict" involved in negotiating a new culture (1936, p. 152), while researchers in each subsequent generation have continued to validate and expand upon acculturative stress literature (Berry, 1980; Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1983; Born, 1970; Burnham, Hough, Karno, Escobar & Telles, 1987; Hovey, 2000; Ting Toomey, 1999; Triandis, 2002), paying special attention to those immigrants who have less fluency in the language or customs of their host culture (Berry, 1992; Chaichian, 1997; Miller, 1999).

Mere fluency in "Western ways" is not a conclusive solution to East-West acculturative stress, however, as Easterners may gain knowledge of Western culture but remain distressed; this fact is evident in the large number of relatively recent studies focusing on Easterners in Western countries. One oft-cited example of such research is Chaichian’s study on the cultural identity of first-generation Iranian immigrants to the U.S. (1997); the study revealed that these educated, middle- and upper-class, Muslim immigrants living in a mid-Western town were "fully acculturated" to the American way of life, cooking American dishes for their American-born children and celebrating national or Christian holidays. The immigrants each maintained a scrupulous observance of Iranian traditions and ensured that their children’s education of and exposure to Iranian cultural values was complete; oddly enough, however, was the fact
that their levels of loneliness and isolation increased with each passing year spent in the United States.

Other notable examples demonstrating the disconnect between Eastern immigrants’ life-satisfaction and familiarity with Western customs are drawn from the multitude of studies focusing upon Desis, or South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Nepalese and Bengali) emigrants and their non-Asian-born offspring; some of these studies include Netting’s 2006 investigations into Indo-Canadian attitudes on arranged marriages and love matches, Zaidi and Shuraydi’s (2002) similar work with “young Pakistani Muslim women living in a Western society,” Dhingra’s 2003 research on the racial identities of second-generation Asian Americans, as well as Maira’s 1999 investigations into the "bhangra" subculture of second-generation Indian Americans and Kurien’s (2005) quest to elucidate the identity struggles of the same demographic. Most participants in the studies mentioned either suggested or definitively stated that they lived more than one life, though "confusion" was not mentioned in every case; "closeting" was, however, and many indicated that such dichotomies were stressful to maintain. Subjects spoke of secret relationships (Maira, 1999; Netting, 2006; Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002), difficulties reconciling the various cultural dimensions of their personalities (Dhingra, 2003; Maira, 1999; Netting, 2006; Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002), and frequent inability to "be themselves" around relatives (Netting, 2006; Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002), Western friends (Kurien, 2005), and other immigrants (Dhingra, 2003; Maira, 1999).

These findings are supported by personal documents, including thousands of blogs and personal websites of immigrant and Western-born Indian or Pakistani youth, many of whom identify themselves with or by acronyms such as ABCD (American-Born Confused Desi), ABCDEFGHIJ (American Born Confused Desi, Emigrated From Gujarat, House In Jersey), or KLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ (alternately defined as "Kids Learning Medicine, Now Owning Property, Quite Reasonable Salary, Two Uncles Visiting, White Xenophobia, Yet Zestful" and "Keeping Lotsa Motels, Named Omkarnath Patel, Quickly Reaching Success Through Underhanded Vicious Ways, Xenophobic Yet Zestful"); other seemingly-light-hearted plays on the tension between Eastern and Western identity include the use of words like "coconut" or "Oreo," each denoting that the South Asian (or Arab) in question is or feels "brown on the outside, white on the inside" (other Asians often use "Twinkie" to denote a "yellow" version of the same thing), as well as multiple variations of popular lists such as "You Know You’re Desi When...". South Asians "back home" have also begun to grapple with conflicts between East and West, resulting in their own acronym—CAD—which denotes a "Confused Americanized Desi" (Badruddoja, 2007).

As previously mentioned, however, struggles between East and West are not exclusive to South Asians or Iranians (or Arabs, for that matter); on the other hand, some have argued that the acculturation of individuals from Arabic-speaking countries (hereafter "Arabs") is exceptionally and unnaturally difficult (Naff, 1983; Tavakoliyadzi, 1981, p. 27, cited in Faragallah et al., 1997).
Furthermore, confusion and conflicts between Eastern and Western mentalities and customs are only two of the many interrelated problems commonly experienced by Eastern-Westerners; others include the practical issues of language, ability to function, and communication.

**Capability and Communication**

As previously mentioned, some individuals—both "researcher" and "researched"—feel as though a great divide separates East from West. They report that the Arabic-speaking world is steeped in tradition and respect for it—as evidenced by Arab culture’s collectivism, indirectness, and appreciation of lengthy (or "flowery") discourse—while the Western world emphasizes novelty, individualism, directness, and concise (or "efficient") communication; some even claim that neither set of qualities is particularly better than the other, just different.

On the other hand, they differ to such a great extent that effective, accurate communication between Easterners and Westerners often seems impossible (Nydell, 2002); in other words, while an immigrant’s heavy accent or a native’s distressingly-swift speech may raise barriers between them, blockades may arise in response to discrepancies between communication styles or, perhaps, the respective cultural lenses used to interpret a situation (Ting Toomey, 1999). An Egyptian may, for example, be dismayed or offended that her ritual refusal of hot tea was automatically accepted by the American offering it; her analysis of the situation might be that the American does not respect or like her. Likewise, an American who has no conceivable desire for a third piece of cake may be frustrated by the Egyptian host’s repeated offers, and wonder "Did not he hear me the first seven times?".

Such situations are easily remedied by learning about one's host culture and applying the appropriate cultural lens, though some do not realize the importance of doing so, while others learn the culture but continue to apply the "wrong" lens, out of habit or rebellion or any number of reasons; the same remedy of learning and applying is also helpful to the natives of the host culture, though they cannot be expected to learn about the cultures of all immigrant groups.

Whether communication between immigrants and host-land natives is impeded by barriers or blockades, the result may take the form of more time spent engaging in lengthy commiserations with fellow immigrants (particularly over the "oddness" or "inhospitality" of the host culture) and/or less time spent with natives of the host culture (Chaichian, 1997). This would not be particularly detrimental to the immigrant, but for the fact that acculturation is enhanced—or interfered with—by the tone of social interactions between immigrant and native (Berry, 1992; Nagel, 2002; Nesdaie & Mak, 2003); and since the factors having greatest influence upon acculturation are interrelated, seemingly isolated challenges such as "work-place communication" or "neighborly greetings" may eventually interfere with all aspects of the immigrant’s new life.

Thus, while socialization with the host culture’s natives (Triandis, Vassiliou, & Thomanek, 1966; Weiss, 1970) may be the easiest and most effective manner of adjusting to that culture, the frequent difficulty in doing so often leads immigrants to exclude
themselves from socialization and, thus, "successful" acculturation—whatever that is; therefore, communication—like the confusion and conflict and closeting earlier discussed—often results in a negative cycle that perpetuates misery.

Ironically, this misery has actually resulted in highlighting the incontrovertible need for scholarly attention to the problem; that problem—whose background has been provided in this section—is, therefore, stated in the section below.

**Statement of the Problem**

While four distinct issues—confusion, conflict, closeting, and capability—have been discussed in the preceding section, it was their frequent byproduct—misery—that actually inspired the dissertation; in this section, the problem and its implications are briefly outlined.

Very simply, the dissertation’s problem of interest is the frequent inability to positively and conclusively resolve or prevent acculturation issues faced by certain cultures. That said, it must be noted that misery is neither a necessary outcome of this inability, nor a prerequisite to inclusion in the study.

It must also be noted that while the number of issues surrounding that oft-mentioned inability to resolve acculturative challenges likely hovers in the hundreds (or thousands), the dissertation has focused on just four: confusion, conflict, closeting, and capability (or "incapability," as the case may be), as they relate to acculturation.

These four challenging issues—themselves inspired by "misery"—also provided inspiration, by suggesting three distinct but interrelated dimensions of communication strongly and visibly connected to acculturation and themselves.

These three communication dimensions were identification (also referred to as "identity," see Chapter Three for details), cultural orientation (collectivism, individualism), and communication style (high- and low-context).

As mentioned earlier, connections between the three dimensions are both visible and strong—as are the connections between each of the three dimensions and each of the four issues (confusion, conflict, closeting, and capability).

Now that the problem and its parameters have been established in this section, the study’s origins and foundation are detailed in the next.

**Rationale for the Study**

After a preliminary review of literature (Biklen & Casella, 2007, p. 55) on various populations who had immigrated from an Eastern country, or had been raised by such immigrants, two facts announced themselves; they were: a definite pattern of the aforementioned "inability," and an under-representation of specific groups. Raising its voice above the din was a two-pronged plan that declared its ability to address the inability within the under-represented groups—and in similar populations with similar issues.
Regarding those similar populations (non-"Western" collectivists) with similar issues, Christian Arabic-speakers were among the least-represented; Egyptian Christians, in particular, were only mentioned in a few scholarly studies, and were only focused upon in about twenty doctoral dissertations (and a handful of master’s theses). Shifting to the two-pronged plan, it suggested that inability to resolve acculturation issues might be addressed by the 1) increase of information on the population and topic of interest, which would then enable the 2) creation of coping strategies tailored to the acculturation issues commonly faced by Eastern immigrants and their American-born children; it should, however, be noted that the plan’s second prong—the creation of strategies—was beyond the scope of this study.

A preliminary review of acculturation literature was conducted, as well; it revealed the most suitable framework for this study, as well as one observation and two gaps in that model and the associated literature.

The multi-stranded dialogical model of acculturation (see below for a review) emerged as the model best fitting Eastern populations—and not just because most of the scholars and psychologists promoting the dialogical model (DM) are/were themselves Easterners; the model—unlike the UDM and BDM—is a dynamic playing field in which individuals select the strategies or "voices" deemed appropriate within a particular situation.

As for the observation, it turned out that the "standard" definition of "acculturation"—in the sense of "being acculturated"—could not be used within the dialogical framework; the first of the two gaps related to this, as the DM currently has no clearly-defined concept of what acculturation is, or of being "acculturated." Furthermore, assessments claiming that an individual is "more acculturated," "less acculturated," or "acculturated" at all currently have no meaning within the eminently-subjective and amorphously-shaped model; in other words, while most acculturation models try to measure acculturation levels (like a yardstick might) and/or predict the factors that help and hurt acculturation (as a crystal ball would), the current dialogical model is just a dry-erase board on which various options are written.

It is not clear if this is due to an oversight, or by design, since one of the defining features that has pleased supporters of the DM is the "freedom" possible within the model. For example, while the prevailing theory (Berry’s Bidimensional or fourfold model) and its predecessor (the assimilation-based Unidimensional Model) both employ directional axes, the DM might, instead, be imagined as a web, an octopus, a stream, a wagon-wheel, or a grab-bag. So the dialogical model of today makes no distinction between the competent and the incompetent, the capable and incapable, while all other acculturation models do, in some form or fashion.

Another distinction that the DM does not currently make involves distress; that is, the individual’s state of affect regarding conflicts or confusion (or closeting) over the opposing cultural options ("strands") allowed for in the model. It is again unclear if this second gap, like the first, is intentional; whether intentional or not, however, it should be noted that many—most notably Hovey (1998, 2000a, 2000b; Hovey & King, 1997) and associates, as well as Nicklett & Burgard (2009), more recently—have published studies
linking acculturation and/or acculturative stress with depression and/or suicidal ideation, suggesting that affect is an important consideration to both immigrant and second-generation demographic groups.

Whether intentional or not, these gaps in the dialogical model—those of definition and affect—curtain the effectiveness of the DM and must be addressed if the dialogical model is to be used as a practical tool.

This is because most studies that have used the dialogical model use it as a descriptor, labeling every case "dialogical," calling upon the word to denote anything and everything that contains dialogue; while the word "dialogical" does, indeed, refer to dialogue, labeling something as "dialogue" is not enough to take the discussion to another level and actually make a difference in the discussion—if, indeed, a difference would be helpful. In other words, merely using the label to indicate the dialogical renders this model, the dialogical model of acculturation, into a one-dimensional entity; it becomes like window-dressing or, perhaps, the bow on a Christmas gift—something that enhances the image but would not be missed. Actually, the current dialogical model of acculturation is almost identical to Hermans' dialogical self theory (1994), but for the indicated use with immigrants and their descendents, and the addition of host culture to the model.

The adjustments needed to transform the dialogical model—or else use it as an ingredient in a larger concoction, instead of setting it as the "final product"—are important to make, especially since 2010 promises to be an era of theoretic reinvention in the field of acculturation (Bhatia, 2009; Rudmin, 2009); two recent recommendations from Rudmin (2009) address the definition of acculturation, and Hovey (1998, 2000a, 2000b; Hovey & King, 1997), as previously stated, has provided empirical support for the linkage of various negative symptoms with acculturation, and while neither gentleman's focus is the dialogical model, their recommendations fit very well (see Chapter Three).

The aforementioned preliminary literature review also revealed one final thing: that the majority of literature on the dialogical model has come from Easterners who write of the reality and necessity of the dialogical mind within their respective cultures (Bhatia, 2002; Chaudhary et al., 2001; Said, 1999); the Eastern mind in the West is no less multi-stranded, polyphonous, or dialogical, and is thus best served by the dialogical model. Because of this, the dissertation is dedicated to the practical use and advancement of the DM—through attention to the aforementioned gaps—and will hopefully transform the window-dressing into a yardstick.

Goals of the Study

This study arose from the need for practical strategies which could enable a positive resolution to acculturation issues inspiring the misery, indecisiveness, and "closeted living" so common to Arabic-speakers in the diaspora. As earlier stated, mere awareness of the issues has proven insufficient; tensions must, in general, be acknowledged, analyzed, understood, and acted-upon. Such tasks are foundational to
the improvement of communication between those born in different nations—whether parents and children, or natives and immigrants—and the achievement of first- and second-generationers’ positive mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional health (Berry, 1997; Nesdale & Mak, 2003).

This study also arose in response to gaps in the dialogical model of acculturation; while a dozen or more models are generally proposed each year, most are soon criticized or else ignored, necessitating a return to the prevailing acculturation model. This is most unfortunate, due to the fact that these new or adjusted models are generally created in response to the shortcomings of the prevailing model. The dialogical model’s premise is, however, very promising, especially due to the large number of cultures purported to think in such a manner.

In sum, this research was hoped to provide insight into the barriers encountered by immigrants and second-generationers in the diaspora, thus aiding or enabling the future creation of new coping strategies that would help them.

**Scope of the Study**

Building upon the gaps discussed in the last section, two general purposes were articulated, leading to the creation of three goals designed to realize the purposes; these goals were met through three research questions and one sub-question. This section is devoted to stating all of these things.

With regard to the general purpose, this study sought to:

1) Expand upon the dialogical model of acculturation, and

2) Reveal the current cultural climates common among Christians in Egypt and in the diaspora—regardless of where they were born and raised.

These general purposes were, as earlier mentioned, divided into three narrower goals, including:

1) An exploration of the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,

2) An understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt or the diaspora), as well as

3) A discovery of participants’ manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).
These goals were reached by asking three main research questions (one of them divided into two segments):

RQ1 — What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?

RQ2a — What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?

RQ2b — How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?

RQ3 — How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the "three communication dimensions" (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?

Having set out the thoughts behind the study, the chapter turns to the dissertation's practical aspects.

**Overview of the Study**

As previously mentioned, Egyptian Christians are among the least-researched groups in the areas of communication, acculturation, and Middle Eastern studies; in this section are addressed the practical concerns of studying this underrepresented group.

With regard to the framework most suited to accommodating the multi-faceted, conflicted demographic targeted by this study, it was the dialogical model of acculturation (DM) that filled this role; the DM, as earlier stated, holds that individuals are made up of several or many dialoguing, sometimes-incompatible "selves" (Bhatia, 2002).

Discussions with members of this population were central to the study; these discussions took the form of qualitative interviews, which were granted online and face-to-face, by Yahoo Messenger and on video-tape, respectively. Use of a descriptive questionnaire provided validation, corroboration, and triangulation of information and, furthermore, ensured that topics too sensitive to be comfortably discussed were, nonetheless, included.

The examination of multiple online sources, such as blogs and messageboards, supplied additional perceptions from the similar population of Egyptian Muslims; including these perspectives was intended to provide additional corroboration (Stainback & Stainback, 1988), triangulation (Denzin, 1978) and validation (Babbie, 2001; Patton, 2002) of participant responses.
Rationale for Population of Interest

Ten years ago, Bahira Sherif called for an increase in the research of non-Western traditions in marriage formation and family structure (1999b). Encouragingly, the number of studies examining that general area has increased since that time, but there remains an alarming lack of diversity in the populations and topics researched; for example, Chinese-American acculturation, Indian and Pakistani courtship/marriage, and Arab or Muslim family dynamics have all been well-researched, but the studies focusing on the courtship or acculturation of Chaldeans, Copts, Maronites, Bahais and Druze—all religious minorities in the Middle East—have been rare or nonexistent. To address this, the dissertation's main demographic of interest was, again, Egyptian Christians.

Since Egypt's Christians account for ten or more per cent of the population—making them the largest group of Christians in the Middle East (Wakin, 2000, p. 4)—it is important that they be included in scholarly work. The inclusion of Protestants—an even smaller minority in Egypt—in a study of Christian Egyptians is less common, but that much more important. Additionally, as 63 per cent of all Arab Americans are Christian and 12 per cent of approximately 3.5 million Arab Americans are Egyptian (Arab American Institute, 2002), it was vital to investigate the acculturative and cultural impact America has on Christian Egyptians in America and other diasporic countries—and the impact that the West and American Egyptian Christians have on those in Egypt.

Further reinforcing the decision to study Christian Egyptians were several factors: first, among all Arabic-speakers, Egyptians (especially Christians) have a unique collection of interesting communication styles, requirements, and rituals surrounding courtship—which was the dissertation's original topic of interest before the decision was made to cast a wider net in order to find out what was central in the minds of Christian Egyptians; second, many Christians (in Egypt as well as America) remain unmarried—which their families find problematic—due to cultural conflicts (Nydell, 2002); third, the researcher's parents are immigrants from Egypt who frequently return, resulting in a pool of potential subjects numbering in the thousands; additionally, the researcher is natively fluent in Egyptian Arabic (particularly the Bahri dialect) and was able to conduct interviews in both English and Arabic, based upon the participants' language preferences.

With respect to the participants included, their diasporic nationalities were largely reported as "American," while several lived in Australia, and a few lived in each of the following countries: Canada, England, South Africa, and Egypt; it is due to the concentration of these American Egyptians that the next chapters use the United States as an example of a "Western" country.

With respect to the bloggers included, their nationalities were Egyptian, and their religions mostly Muslim; it was originally hoped that fellow "Easterners"—whether "Arab," Pakistani, or Indian (among others), living either in those countries or the West, and belonging to any generation and system of belief, could be included; once the dissertation’s focus shifted from courtship to "central issues," however, it became much more difficult to find English-language blogs that both met all of the inclusion criteria and
wrote solely in English without using jargon specific to their communities. Therefore, the blogs reviewed all belonged to Egyptians.

As the rationale for this population has been set forth, the discussion now shifts to the significance of this study.

**Significance of the Study**

As previously mentioned, the failure to address the acculturation of different varieties of Egyptian Christians was and is a gap in the literature, one that this study hoped to address. And with regard to the broader significance of this study, it should be noted that exploring acculturation through an evaluation of three communication dimensions was hoped to expand the knowledgebase on communication in general, and intercultural communication in particular.

The location of the missing "acculturation" definition within the dialogical model was hoped to enable that theory to be used as a practical tool, rather than a mere description; with respect to the lack of depth in the current model, a slight adjustment—that of affect or valence—was hoped to both make the dialogical model more useful, and to allow future instances of acculturation woes to be prevented, and past or present instances to be curtailed.

Finally, as the study explored various aspects of participants’ dreams, anxieties, and attitudes, it was hoped that future researchers would be able to gain a better understanding of acculturation obstacles particular to this demographic and similar ones; thus enabled, researchers may finally come up with effective coping and communication strategies for preventing future acculturation issues—or, at least, treating current ones.

As the significance of the study has been outlined, the discussion turns to the great need to study these significant issues from a communication perspective.

**Need for the Study from a Communication Perspective**

While such dimensions as cultural orientation (collectivism and individualism) have been grounded in social or cross-cultural psychology (Ng, et al., 2000), and while the field of acculturation has gained importance and expansion through the work of those in the fields of psychology, history, sociology, and anthropology (among others), an examination of the problem from a communication perspective proved to be equally useful. This was due to communication’s weighty role within acculturative processes; for example, unsuccessful communication between native and immigrant may deter the immigrant’s further attempts to learn about or socialize with other members of the host culture. Equally-deterrent to successful acculturation might be the exclusive reliance upon inaccurate or outdated media representations of Americans and their communication styles, as the immigrant attempts to learn how he "should" behave, and how she "should" communicate with her new colleagues or neighbors.
Psychology, history, sociology, and anthropology have, however, made such valuable contributions to the field that it would be impossible (and undesirable) to completely avoid their contributions; the study, thus, incorporates viewpoints and/or literature from each of these fields.

**Organization of the Study**

This manuscript is divided into three parts: Part I, divided into four chapters, provides a general overview, review of literature, and plan of methods used; more specifically, Chapter One introduces both problem and study; Chapter Two reviews literature on Egyptian culture, history, and law. Next is Chapter Three’s review of the literature on acculturation in general, a review of literature on the theoretical framework supporting this study (the dialogical model of acculturation), followed by a discussion on the new directions proposed by this study. Finally, Chapter Four describes methods used to investigate the anxieties, dreams, and attitudes (among others) of Christian Egyptian, as well as methods of data analysis used by this study.

Part II contains three data chapters, each detailing one of the communication dimensions; Chapter Five discusses Identification/Identity, Chapter Six focuses upon Cultural Orientation, and Chapter Seven is devoted to Communication Style.

In Part III, the data presented in Part II is further discussed, first in Chapter Eight—the main discussion—and then in Chapter Nine, which describes the study’s limitations and then offers new directions for acculturation, and suggestions for future research.

As the study’s organization has been presented in this section, Chapter One draws to a close; the next chapter provides additional detail about Egypt’s culture, history, and law.
CHAPTER TWO
EGYPT'S CULTURE, HISTORY, AND LAW

Introduction

Modern Egyptian culture has been shaped by several factors, including various cultures and faiths—particularly Islamic law, as well as cultural elements deriving from that religion. These official and unofficial guidelines have traditionally informed the roles of women and marriage in Egyptian society, but since global influence has entered the country through technology and travel, new options have become available, shifting, or attempting to shift, old or ancient boundaries within the traditional, Islamic nation; these shifts happen everywhere, but the impact is more obvious and seems more radical when the proposed changes move forward (from tradition to "modernity") as well as sideways (from East to West) in direction.

Despite these attempted shifts, however, Egypt is still considered a traditional nation, as the proposed changes in moral code, for example, have not been "approved" by society; this is evident in the fact that most Egyptians—even those claiming a great liberality—would be unable to openly cohabit with someone of the opposite sex, or become visibly pregnant out of wedlock without inciting riots or being stoned in the street. Furthermore, while some educated or "Westernized" Egyptians may espouse or practice Western forms of communication or cultural orientation—like low-context communication or individualism, for example—the country’s citizens have not yet made a unified, widespread shift in that direction.

The Egypt in this chapter is, thus, the Egypt that existed between 1952 and the late 1990s, the Egypt that many immigrants today still hold in their hearts. This chapter—which reflects the directions indicated by the responses of diasporic and unicultural Egyptian informants and pilot study participants—begins with the American/Western culture, moves to the Egyptian/Arab culture, shifts to the history of the region, and ends with legal and societal discrepancies between Christians and Muslims.

Culture

Since culture is such a foundational aspect of life and the perceptions thereof, it is vital to examine the cornerstones of Arab culture, especially in contrast with American values.

This is important for two reasons: first, because most would agree that the Arab outlook on life has little in common with the American, so a summary of the juxtapositions would be helpful. Second, in addition to this great divide between world-
views and customs, humans often view situations through an ethnocentric lens, positioning their own culture or outlook as "central" and anything else as "other."

What this means is that some may view the contents of this chapter in relation to their own experiences (i.e. "That's so weird!" or "That's so me!") without being consciously aware of the role that their culture may have played in those experiences; for example, an Egyptian may not realize that it is an "Arab trait" to long for wide open spaces (Hall, 1966, p.2), and an American man who had previously judged an Egyptian American male colleague as "too touchy-feely" may not have considered that the notion of "personal space" (especially between members of the same sex) applies to Western societies more than Eastern (Hall, 1959).

The following section, then, identifies certain traits or values that—despite current debates suggesting a lack of cohesive American culture—are considered American.

**American Ways**

Gary Althen's experiences as a Malaysian teacher in the Midwestern United States led him to write *American Ways* in 1988. This section sets forth some of his observations about "American culture," observations that illuminate the general reasons behind some difficulties encountered by immigrants and the bicultural, and also set the context for specific conflicts discussed in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

As previously mentioned, the most-represented diasporic country in this study was the United States (also referred to as "America"), hence that nation’s representative role of "Western" culture in the dissertation; it should be noted, however, that several other English-speaking "Western" countries—among them Canada, Australia, and England—subscribe to similar notions of culture as those described below.

With respect to family structure, he notes that Americans dealing with foreigners who seem "excessively concerned with the opinions of parents, with following traditions, or with fulfilling obligations to others" tend to assume that such a person "feels trapped or is weak, indecisive, or 'overly dependent,'" due to the American belief that all people must resist being in situations where they are not "free to make up their own minds" (Althen, 5-6); he further notes that Americans often believe that foreigners feel relieved and liberated in the United States, as though they’ve escaped from a hellish regime and are finally free to pursue the life they want. This point is especially important to our larger discussion, because it—and its reverse—represents a major underlying cause of conflicts between various cultural orientations.

Althen then discusses the goals of American parenting, which he lists as "self-reliance and responsibility," sharing that people over 20 years of age who still live with their parents may be considered "immature," "tied to the mother’s apron strings," or "otherwise unable to lead a normal, independent life" (Althen, 5), noting that people over 22 years of age—including elderly parents—pay room and board to family members they are living with; according to him, this is done to show "independence, self-reliance, and responsibility for oneself."

Althen shifts to the rhetoric of independence and individualism, which he finds in such phrases as: "do your own thing, I did it my way, you’ll have to decide that for
yourself, you made your bed now lie in it, if you do not look out for yourself no one else will, and look out for number one” (Althen, Chapter One). He also discusses the American need for "alone time,” contrasting it to the "foreign" need to be with someone at all times.

The discussion moves to the American notions of equality and informality (i.e. using first names), and it is suggested that "Americans do not display the same type or amount of respect that is required in many foreign cultures." Other observations include the American lack of concern over history and tradition, the emphasis on looking ahead, and the impatience with passiveness or acceptance of bad conditions. Althen explains that Americans believe in a basic goodness of humanity, and in the usefulness of volunteering, democracy, self-improvement, and rehabilitation.

Next is an informal discussion of time, which Americans view as a valuable resource. This derives from Hall’s classification of monochronic time, and corresponds with several qualities admired and sought for by Americans; some of those listed are organization, achievement, materialism, “getting the job done,” having a good work ethic, being assertive, and being direct—as demonstrated in the phrases "let's put our cards on the table," and "let’s stop playing games and get to the point." Althen further notes that Americans are not concerned with "face."

Americans, additionally, "distrust people who are, in their view, excessively articulate...[and who] do not look them in the eye when talking to them," though he later points out that Americans have a particular pattern of eye contact and avoidance that corresponds with their turn in conversation (Althen, pp.27, 143). This is in direct contrast to Arabs, who are generally appreciative of eloquent speech, and who "gaze continually into the eyes of people they are talking to” (p. 143); he also cites American distress with periods of silence in a conversation, unless the silence takes place with "people they know fairly well” (p. 145).

Another thing that makes Americans "uncomfortable" is the display of respect (p. 38), though they are not uncomfortable with the thought of conversations with the opposite sex (as Arabs are), and do not automatically suspect that men and women "will participate in sexual activity if they are alone together” (p. 84); this is purported to stem from the mentality that people are capable of showing "restraint" in such a situation, indicating their "maturity."

Althen's observations span a total of nearly two hundred pages, and this section has introduced those germane to the discussion. The next section presents the reverse—those bits of research pertaining to the Arabic-speaker.

Arab Culture, Egyptian Culture

Much has been written on "Arab culture” and "Arab traits” over the years, but considerably less has been published about Egyptians. Some believe that Egyptians and Arabs are identical in everything but accent, while others point to dozens of specific differences between regions and countries; either way, it is important to note differences between the general culture of Arabic-speakers and the general culture of the "West" (to borrow the terminology used frequently in literature about the U.S.).

This paper takes the position that the culture of the Middle East today has been
largely shaped by Islamic culture, and that the Arab countries have more in common with one another than they have differences—fundamentally, anyway; in other words, despite individual differences between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, or Morocco and Syria, people from each of these countries would likely have much less difficulty getting around the other three "Arab" countries than they would in a Western country. There are, however, great discrepancies to be found between the twenty-two countries constituting the "Arab World," in the areas of wealth, richness of known history (or lack thereof), and postcolonial effects.

That said, this section only mentions personality traits traditionally considered "Arab" as well as "Egyptian" in the literature, and avoids several differences irrelevant to the present discussion; some of these differences include the relatively recent personal status code reforms in Northwest Africa, the laxity of Lebanese culture in comparison to Egyptian, and the "atypical" behaviors (with regard to "typical Middle Eastern" culture) displayed by Tarqui tribe members and Gulf Arabs (Shaaban, 1988). Finally, the term "Arab" is only used where the cited author has specifically referred to Arabs.

The discussion begins with contributions from one of the first "modern" researchers to write extensively on Arabs. Edward Twitchell Hall's *The Silent Language* (1959) focuses on cultural orientation, chronological orientation, and directness. Beginning with cultural orientation—specifically collectivism and the notion of family honor—he shares that American men living or working in the Egypt of the 1950s and 60s could not imagine people taking revenge on them "as a price for seeing a woman without her family’s permission," and that it would not even "cross his mind that she might lose her life if she chooses to be intimate with him," further explaining that "death of the woman and revenge on the man are within the expected range of behavior in the less Europeanized parts of the Arab world" (p. 112). This he attributes to the "centrally located institution without which the society would perish or be radically altered," a collectivist, "functional interlocking complex" that is the entire family (p. 112).

Hall also writes that the "accompanying network and obligations" inherent to the Middle Eastern family serves to fulfill "many of the same functions that our government" does, transforming the female daughter into a "sacred link between families," likening her to a European or American judge who must "remain above reproach" (p. 112).

With respect to directness, Hall shares that:

> in the Middle East…refusal of one party to come to the point and discuss the topic of a meeting often means he cannot agree to terms but does not want to turn you down, or simply that he cannot discuss the matters under consideration because the time is not yet right. He will not, moreover, feel it is improper to meet without ever touching on the topic of the meeting. (p. 142)

He links this to the polychronic notion of time, which leads the Arab to begin "at one point…[and go] until he’s finished or until something intervenes." Hall then defines
Arab time as "what occurs before or after a given point," adding that "Americans cannot shift the partitions of schedules" without upsetting their day, while Arabs can (p. 142).

Hall’s 1966 book, The Hidden Dimension, covers the proxemics—Hall’s term for the study of physical space and/or distances—of several cultures and orientations; in it, he writes that "people from different cultures... inhabit different sensory worlds," noting that American women who have married Arabs in this country and who have known only the learned American side of their personality have often observed that their husbands assume different personalities when they return to their homelands where they are again immersed in Arab communication and are captives of Arab perceptions. (p. 2)

He also writes that "Arabs have much higher tolerance for crowding in public spaces and inconveniences than do Americans and northern Europeans." Despite this, however, he notes that Arabs are "apparently more concerned about their own requirements for the spaces they live in than are Americans," (p. 61) revealing that the Arab dream is for lots of space in the home...They avoid partitions because Arabs do not like to be alone. The form of the home is such as to hold the family together inside a single protective shell, because Arabs are deeply involved with each other...personalities are intermingled and take nourishment from each other like...roots in soil. If one is not with people and actively involved in some way, one is deprived of life. An old Arab saying reflects this value: "Paradise without people should not be entered because it is hell." (p. 158). in the course of my interviews with Arabs that term "tomb" kept cropping up in conjunction with enclosed space...an enclosed space must meet at least three requirements that I know of if it is to satisfy the Arabs: there must be plenty of unobstructed space in which to move around...very high ceilings...and...there must be an unobstructed view. (p. 162)

Hall’s analysis of spatial relations in the Middle East is that "Arabs do not mind being crowded by people but hate to be hemmed in by walls" (p. 162, emphasis mine). Likewise, he shares that Arabs and "Jews [both Semitic peoples] make sharp distinctions between people to whom they are related and those to whom they are not" (p. 121). He is careful to place this in the context of "self," which he contrasts thus:

in the Western world the person is synonymous with an individual inside a skin...in northern Europe...the skin and even the clothes may be inviolate....for the Arab the location of the person in relation to the body is quite different. The person exists somewhere down inside the body. The ego is not completely hidden, however, because it can be reached
very easily with an insult...protected from touch but not from words. (p. 156)

He remarks upon the usefulness of "tucking the ego down inside the body shell," suggesting that it not only permits "higher population densities but would explain" just why

Arab communications are stepped up as much as they are when compared to northern European communication patterns...the sheer noise level [is] much higher...the piercing look of the eyes, the touch of the hands during conversation...[these all] represent stepped up sensory inputs to a level which many Europeans find unbearably intense. (p. 158)

Hall then relates that "there is no physical privacy as we know it in Arab families, not even a word for privacy," sharing that among Arabs, the "way to be alone is to stop talking," emphasizing that "an Arab who shuts himself off in this way is not indicating that anything is wrong or that he is withdrawing," just that he wants to be alone (p. 159). He is quick to note that failing to ask after an Arab friend offends his or her feeling of closeness, leading Arabs to "frequently complain that Americans are cold or aloof" or "do not care" about the relationship (p. 161).

In The Temperament and Character of the Arabs, Sania Hammadi makes several of the same points, adding that the Arab is

...tied hand and foot by the demands and interference of his group, he is not left alone to do what he pleases...advice is given even when not asked for... he may not make a decision for himself without consulting his near relatives and the senior members of his group. (1960, p. 32)

She goes on to explain that even a "token" request for advice must be made, since "pride is one of the main elements on which Arab individualism rests," that "foremost in the Arab....is his self-esteem." She then counsels the non-Arab to "pay tribute to it," since "the Arab is very touchy and his self-esteem is easily bruised" (1960, p. 99). These points are remarkably relevant to the dissertation, and appear with great frequency in the forthcoming data chapters (Part II of this manuscript).

Margaret Nydell’s comprehensive Understanding Arabs (2002) makes many of the same points that Hall and Hammadi do, though more sensitively, and from the perspective of the new millennium. She begins by touching upon "modernization" in the Arab world, largely attributing it to Western technology and social innovations; she then ponders questions that have become central to this dissertation: namely "whether Arab countries can adopt Western technology without also adopting Western values and social practices that go with it," and "whether they can modernize without losing cherished national and traditional values"; she goes on to recount the many ways young people have begun to "Westernize," including an increasing admiration and preference
for "Western dress and liberal thought," which both appear in the Arab world "to the
distress of older or more traditional Arabs" (p. 7). She then reveals that Arabs wish to
"modernize, but not at the expense of certain traditions," since it is "a mistake to assume
that Arabs aspire to create societies and governments on Western models" (p. 7). She
takes up the subject of conflicting ideals, reporting that "many young people in
particular agonize about their identity," and are torn between family, nation, and
religious group, among other things. Also agonized-over by Arab youth is the question
of "appropriate lifestyle choices, a dilemma that is simply unknown among Westerners"
(p. 14); Westerners, she writes, often notice a "dual personality present in many educated
Arabs" (p. 15). This notion of dual personality, which Edward Said (1999) as well as
Hermans (1994) and Bhatia (2002, 2004) have entitled "polyphony" or "the dialogical self"
(respectively) are more-closely examined in Chapter Three, and also appear as central
themes in Part II of this dissertation.

Shifting from contextual frames to actual Arab traits, Nydell lists several
fundamental beliefs of Arabs, including: fatalism, love of children, that aging brings
wisdom, and that "the inherent personalities of men and women are vastly different" (p.
23). Some Arab values she notes are dignity, honor, and reputation, as well as the
necessity to behave properly so as to create a good impression, the almost-requisite
loyalty to family, the precedence of family preference over personal preference, and the
importance of social class/family background as the determining factor of personal
status (p. 25).

With respect to religious attitudes of Arabs, she mentions two overarching
concepts in Arab life: the wide-spread belief in both God and His will, and the
permanent of religious affiliation despite personal belief or commitment; further, she
notes that piety is one of the most admirable traits a person can display to an Arab. She
then translates several common Arab fears, including Western exploitation of the East,
the misunderstanding of Arabs by Westerners, and that "imitation of Western culture
will weaken traditional family ties...social and religious values" (p. 26).

Moving to other aspects of "every-day life," Nydell writes that friendships form
the basis of "getting things done" in collectivist Arab cultures, that friendships are quick
to develop, and that a "friend" is not just someone to spend pleasant times with, but
someone who can both ask for favors and helpfully intervene in situations requiring
intercession (p. 29).

She then makes the important point that a positive outcome is less important to
an Arab than a positive response to his or her request; in other words, one should not
openly refuse a request made by an Arab, but rather diplomatically agree to do what
one can, despite personal feelings as to the outcome (p. 29). This is an example of the
facework that governs Arab life (see Chapter Three); Nydell provides another example
of the relative insignificance of a positive response, drawn from Raphael Patai’s The Arab
Mind:

The adult Arab makes statements which express threats, demands, or
intentions, which he does not intend to carry out, but which once uttered,
relax emotional tension, give psychological relief and at the same time
reduce the pressure to engage in any act aimed at realizing the verbalized
goal...once the intention of doing something is verbalized [the speaker
gets the] impression that he has done something about the issue at hand,
which in turn psychologically reduces the importance of following it up
by actually translating the stated intention into action...there is...a
psychologically conditioned substitution of words for action... the verbal
statement of a threat or an intention (especially when it is uttered
repeatedly and exaggeratedly) achieves such importance that the
question of whether or not it is subsequently carried out becomes of
minor significance. (1973, pp. 60, 64-65)

Next, Nydell mentions a very popular appeal for a friend’s intervention: the
phrase "do this for my sake" (the famous "'ashan khatri"), which she puts down to the
expectation of loyalty from friends (p. 32). She then shifts to the swift assessment of a
new acquaintance’s status and social network, including the Arab practice of "name-
dropping" and recounting of "life story," each designed to assure the (potential) new
friend of the speaker’s potential for usefulness; she reveals that the failure to establish
"who you are" to a new Arab acquaintance equates with "hiding something" (pp. 32-33).
Another example of the Arab’s tendency to read something into silence appears when
Arabs are faced with silence (i.e. "not asking after them for a few days") from busy
friends, leading the Arabs to wonder if they’ve somehow offended those friends (p. 34).

With respect to business relations, Nydell shares that a "good personal
relationship is the most important single factor in doing business successfully with
Arabs," who always make sure to "set aside a few minutes at the beginning of the
meeting to inquire about each other’s health and recent activities," and who find it "rude
if you do not respond to these pleasantries" (p. 35).

In contrast with Althen’s aforementioned point (in the previous section) that
Westerners are uncomfortable with respect displays (Althen, 1988), Nydell instructs the
Westerner to note that Arabs expect regular praise and positive feedback, as reassurance
that they are being noticed and valued; she makes sure to point out that these
statements, while common, are sincerely meant (pp. 36-38).

Criticism is insulting and often "taken personally" by the Arab; this reveals that
Arab culture is "diffuse" (Triandis, 2002), due to the fact that critical comments are
necessarily correlated with dislike. In a culture dependent upon relationships, personal
influence, and connections (Nydell, p. 39), being (or merely feeling) unpopular has many
ramifications, hence the distress felt upon criticism.

Shifting to the Western notion that "objectivity equals maturity," the Arab
would, rather, see objectivity or a lack of emotions as coldness or uncaring; this is
because of the Arab emphasis on emotions (and displays thereof), including repetition,
raised voices, eloquence, gestures—even the striking of a thigh or wall or table—each of
which serves to convince the listening audience (be it one person or a thousand) that the
speaker is in earnest and does, indeed, "care" (pp. 39, 47). If this protocol is not followed,
Nydell warns, the Arab becomes very distrustful of the speaker and may even stop listening (p. 75).

Nydell also addresses the trait of fatalism, which is tied to Arab belief that God controls everything, though she warns that this mentality is more common among traditionals and the uneducated (Nydell, 2002, p. 44). The mentality comes from a belief that self-confidence is not only arrogant but blasphemous, leading to the profuse use of *inshallah* ("if God wills it") and a Arab conversation that is "peppered with blessings... little prayers for good fortune, intended to help things keep going well." This is linked to the fact that obscenities, curses—even the name of certain diseases (like cancer, usually referred to as "it" or "the bad disease")—are offensive, frequently kindling fear into the oft-superstitious Arab (p. 122). Another author mentions Egypt’s "IBM Syndrome," which refers to the fact that things will happen "inshallah" [God willing], and even if not today then perhaps "bokrah" [tomorrow], and that even if those things don't happen in a timely manner, "maa'lish" [it is ok]; this "syndrome" reveals the fatalistic view that keeps the frequent frustrations of Egyptian life at bay (Zayan, 2008, p. 51).

Moving to marriage, Nydell tells us that marriages must be approved by the family in order to ensure the social compatibility of the match, to show respect for parents, and to avoid being disowned (2002, p. 95). She cites the reasons for Arab marriage as "financial security, social status, and children," because the main goals of Arab society are a happy family life and a passel of well-raised children (p. 95); incidentally, this explains why it is an insult to accuse someone of not being well raised (p. 99)

Shifting to other implications of being badly-raised in an Arab society, Nydell writes that the Middle East has become a place of frustration for educated and/or liberal Arabs, who increasingly "find the pressure from the family to conform to rigid social standards to be oppressive," indicating that "much of what has been written on the subject of Arab character and personality development is extremely negative, especially those comments made by Arabs," leading her to deduce that "many Arabs feel resentful of the requirements imposed by their families and by society" (p. 95). Nonetheless, speaking ill of one's family or the restrictions they've imposed paints the speaker—and not the family—in a negative light (p. 100). Similarly, while there are likely many atheists or impious people in the Arab world, actually admitting to such beliefs (or lack thereof) generally causes Arabs to lose respect for a person (p. 100).

One example of the technically-neutral type of comment designed to protect an Arab’s family appears in *Out of Place*, Edward Said’s memoir, where the Arab American offers his own workaholic, polychronic view of "the Arab way." Throughout the 1999 book, he refers to his father’s legacies to him, particularly the elder Said’s "relentless insistence on doing something useful, getting things done, ‘never giving up,’ more or less all the time" (p. 12). He writes that such a mentality resulted in his own inability to define or enjoy any form of "leisure or relaxation," reporting that he never developed a "sense of cumulative achievement," due to the fact that "over time 'Edward' became a demanding task master, registering lists of flaws and failures" (p. 12). Said’s father also provided another long-kept legacy, in the form of a lecture to young Edward on the
most important trait an Arab demanded in a wife: "you must marry a woman... who has never been kissed before you kiss her" (p. 41).

Likewise, Susan Wilson’s guide to Egyptian culture (2006) reveals that "showing too much interest [in a woman] can compromise" her honor, since "even the slightest personal attention could compromise an Egyptian woman in the wrong situation" (p. 89). This comes from the fact that Egyptians generally seek good marriages, even though they are sometimes still "arranged based on nothing more than a casual smile across a room" (p. 91). Wilson does warn that marriages arranged by jealous or vindictive mothers-in-law might result in a horrible match, chosen purposely, so as to assure that the son’s devotion is not "diluted by the wiles of his new wife" (p. 96).

Now that detailed sketches of the general American/Western and Egyptian/Arab cultures have been presented, the discussion shifts to previous incarnations of Egyptian society.

**Egyptian Society—The Day Before Yesterday**

Egypt, as previously discussed, is the classic example of a collectivist culture. While some manifestations of this may possibly stem from the antiquity and richness found in Egypt’s history, others are directly traceable to Islamic culture and law. As each of these has played such a big role in the creation of today’s Egypt—the Egypt discussed by every person participating in this study—it is useful to review pertinent developments within ancient Egyptian and Islamic timelines.

Face, defined as "a mask that changes depending on the audience and the social interaction" (Goffman, 1967), serves to both protect and enhance the image of a family within a collectivist culture; researchers in the relatively-recent past have named such interactions and endeavors "facework" (Ting Toomey, 1997). The protective function of facework revolves around an Islamically-derived notion that the burden of family honor is placed on the perceived seemliness and propriety of its females, particularly its daughters; similarly, facework is employed to conceal any aspect of a family’s past or present that may tarnish their reputation and suitability during marriage negotiations. An example of this is the common claim that a "car accident" was responsible for a relative’s death, since cases of or deaths caused by mental illness or physical conditions often render an entire family "untouchable." With respect to the enhancing function, facework is often used to present a family in the best light possible, since the success of many interactions is based upon how highly a family is thought of.

Dynastic Egyptians (3150 B.C. to approximately 500 B.C.) placed the same emphasis on image, though their conception of it was neither "truly" collectivist in nature nor based on the perception of virtue of females; Egyptologist Joyce Tyldesley (1995) writes that dynastic women could own property, work outside the home, bring cases to court, and initiate divorce proceedings. She goes on to record that there was no official marriage contract or ceremony, that the relocation of a woman and her belongings into a man’s house was enough to signify a union, and that virginity was not a requirement for marriage (Tyldesley, 1995, Chap. 2). Thus, the virginity of the dynastic
female—who was often encouraged to prostitute herself in temples before her 14\textsuperscript{th} birthday—was not the source of family honor (if intact) or shame (if not).

The linkage of honor with a woman’s propriety is thought to have happened over a thousand years later, with the introduction of Islam; Guity Nashat and Judith Tucker (1999) trace the first veilings to the royal house of Caliph Walid, who ruled between 705 and 715, writing that the Abbasids made veiling and seclusion “official policies” in or around 750 A.D. (p. 48). The policies soon spread to all conquered territories, including Egypt; despite the fact that some Egyptians remained Christian (Ghorab, 2006a), Coptic women were also subject to veils and seclusion. Seclusion was supposed to ensure the woman’s “good sexual conduct” (Moghadam, 2003, p. 124), but some believed it disturbed “the balance of her moral strength,” since “captive women are, before anything else, sick women” (Amin, 1900, p. 139).

Segregation went on for over a thousand years, with small respites as the nation was conquered by one army or another; then, in the 1880s, women (and a few men)—inspired by the examples of other countries—decided that a change was needed. Some modern observers note the discrepancies between Western and Eastern treatment of women, citing parts of Europe—where “men fought one another over insults to [a lady’s] honor, putting their own lives at risk”—and Egypt—where honor was found in the perception of a woman’s virtue, and where sometimes-innocent women “who had dishonored male relations were the targets of male violence” (Baron, 2005, p. 41).

This is not to say that the freedoms and rights of European women were infinitely greater than those of Egyptians, however. For example, while British writer Jane Austen often allowed her characters to descend into lamentations on or critiques of society, most of the critiques could have been written by Egyptians about their own situation; in Sense and Sensibility, Emma Thompson’s version of Austen’s heroine Elinor Dashwood “comforts” a male friend who is lamenting his unemployed status by telling him that while “you talk of feeling idle and useless, imagine how that is compounded when one has no hope and no choice of any occupation whatsoever” (Thompson, 1995).

Many restrictions, then, were a function of earlier time periods, and not mere Eastern “backwardness.” Western nations seemed to modernize all at once, however, while Egypt did not; some attributed this “backwardness in Egyptian society” to the continuing “low status of women” (Amin, 1900, p. xii). And indeed, some Egyptians lived under thousand-year-old laws—notably, that segment of the population whose figurative arms were tied by a government that prohibited married women from teaching, but provided free weekly checkups and state-issued photo IDs to prostitutes (Keddie, 2007, pp. 96-97).

Beth Baron (1994) argues that Christian Syrian immigrants to Egypt in the 1880s were the catalyst for comparisons between Egypt’s relative “backwardness” and the modernity that seemed to be spreading in other places (p. 105). Syrian women, for example, were the first to appear in Egyptian theatre; they were also the first females to enter Egyptian operating theatres, and the first founding editors of women’s journals that country. Syrian writer Rosa Antun counseled that her Egyptian friends “copy what is useful and appropriate of ourselves and reject...whatever reason judges as corrupt,” in her
own attempt to "dampen blind love for the West" and "protect the core of their [Egyptians'] own culture" (Baron, 1994, p. 105).

Despite this advice from their less-conservative Syrian sisters, Christian women in Egypt ("Copts") were still frightened of leaving the home unveiled, but Christian writer Salama Musa pushed for a secular Egypt, which he saw as the only chance for both Christians and women to get more rights and freedoms (Baron, 1994, p. 109). Baron draws a parallel between these two oppressed populations, writing that:

the question that Copts as a community faced (whether to maintain their autonomous status and "protections") and that women as a sex faced (whether to retain their seclusion and "privileges") was in many ways quite similar. Should they remain segregated or push for greater integration into society? Would relinquishing certain exemptions enhance or hurt the position? (Baron, 1994, p. 110)

From then on, things began to advance, though the movements "forward" were by no means in the same direction; Baron explains that "the phrase 'rights of women' had many meanings" as "the views of female intellectuals also covered a wide range" (Baron, 1994, p. 104). And indeed, while many Muslim activists pushed for reforms to Islamic law, some left religion out of their calls for change; moreover, supporters of women's rights did not necessarily campaign on behalf of Coptic rights, and Coptic activists did not always adopt Salama Musa's secularist stance.

Either way, new activists were born every day; in 1909, for example, Nabawiya Musa was the first female to take and pass the thanaweya 'ama (secondary school) exam. The passage of two years had mademoiselle Malak Hifni Nasif standing up during the all-male Nationalist Congress meeting, demanding a complete education for all women (Joseph, 2001, p. 24); she later made headlines for condemning polygamy and petitioning that family law be reformed (Baron, 1994, p. 113). Modernist Muslim writer Saadiya Saad El Din campaigned to abolish the zar (exorcism dance ceremony) and wailing at funerals, decried the ease of male divorce, and sponsored the notion of marriage as a "conjugal partnership" (Baron, 1994, p. 113). And in 1923, Huda Shaarawi unveiled in a public place. Two Egyptian women's journals provided assistance by raising awareness of and support for these actions and the causes behind them (Baron, 1994, p. 76), leading to an unprecedented event; this 1951 event involved fifteen hundred women, including feminist Doria Shafiq, all of whom "stormed parliament demanding full political rights, a reform of the personal status laws, and equal pay for equal work" (HRW, 2003).

There were male activists, as well; jurist Qasim Amin wrote two highly influential and controversial books, The Liberation of Women and The New Woman, both of which go on (at length) about how Egypt could be "fixed" if only the government would "fix" the status of women. "Women's proper upbringing is the key to all other problems," he rhapsodizes (Amin, 1900, p. 28), advising that "in order to improve the condition of the nation, it is imperative we improve the condition of women" (p. 75). When he is not making prosaic
remarks, he takes great pains to describe, in the most poetic manner possible, his thoughts on the slavish, desirous, and delirious existence of the woman:

From the time of her birth to the time of her death a woman is a slave because she does not live by or for herself. A woman lives through and for the man, depending on him for all her needs. She leaves the house only if escorted by him, she travels only under his protection...acts only when he allows it, and can make no move except when he directs it....You will not find a single Egyptian man who trusts his wife or who accepts her interaction with a strange man.... Our men primarily want women to be chaste, and we have the right to expect it....our way of life increases the tendency in women toward carnal appetites. Imprisoning [them] as we do...they...more readily yield to their passions than free women do. (pp. 132-141)

Despite his outwardly-sympathetic tone about social ills of the day, some have criticized Amin’s work for its glossing-over of Islamically-based inequality. Others feel that his situation (half Ottoman, half Upper Egyptian/Saiidi, and son to a man of rank) may have skewed his perception of women, and that his contact with women before the writing of his books could only have been with family members, servants, and perhaps prostitutes, resulting in a misleading picture of Egyptian women at the time. Still others feel that the books employed manipulative techniques or reverse psychology to instill a new version of the old Islamic agenda; or, as Leila Ahmed put it, "the thoroughly patriarchal Amin...was calling for the transformation of Muslim society along the lines of the Western model”—trading Western colonialism for the colonialism imposed by Islam—"under the guise of a plea for the liberation of women" which was actually designed "to help eradicate bad habits by the natives" (Asad, 2003, p. 233).

Whatever Amin’s goals were, his work marked a turning point and did eventually influence scores of young Egyptian singles in two areas: age of marriage and emphasis upon spiritual harmony within marriage. In terms of the former, he writes of having several friends "past the expected age of marriage, who have in fact remained single, either voluntarily or by force of circumstance...People now most commonly marry between the ages of 20 and 30, while in the past it was usual to marry on reaching maturity" (Amin, 1900, p. 156). And indeed, girls in this time period who had married at 14 and 15 soon found their younger sisters unmarried into their mid-twenties, having discarded the notion of the dreaded "21 year-old spinster" once they found that higher learning seemed to "increase aspirations of women in certain sectors of society for higher income and better standards of living" (Moghadam, 2003, p. 19).

With respect to the latter point, Amin writes poetically (and, some contend, manipulatively) about love and its importance in marriage, asking how two sane individuals could commit themselves to a merging of lives when their souls are perfect strangers with nothing in common, and pointing out that "most people refuse to buy a sheep or a donkey before seeing it, examining it thoroughly, and receiving reassurance about any apparent defects" (p. 77). He also underlines the importance of an "attraction
of the senses," which he finds necessary, though not an "adequate basis for marriage" (p. 78).

Another Amin—this one a present-day economist—demonstrates the effects of his mother's illiteracy on the Egyptian longing for love, writing that:

when my father and mother would shed tears on hearing the old love songs of Umm Kulthum etc., they were probably only crying about the love that they had never really experienced....I do believe that it was my mother's economic dependence on my father that cast a shadow on their life together. It was not a relationship completely lacking in love and affection, but the moments of tenderness came at in frequent intervals. (Amin, G., 2000, pp. 81-83)

Time went on, and Egyptian society was further modified, due in part to "a distinctive feature of the Nasser government," in the form of "its political support for the education of women and their integration into national development," specifically "Labor Law 91 of 1954," which "guaranteed equal rights and equal wages, and made special provisions for married women and others" (Moghadam, 2003, p. 57). Galal Amin (2004) reminisces about that time period and the Faculty of Art at his college, which was famous for being full of beautiful girls...considered at the time to be the most appropriate [academic department] for girls....There they could while away their time in the study of the least demanding subjects until the time came for them to make a good marriage...there was no harm in...learning some foreign language or reading a bit of world literature as she sat waiting for her husband.

A few more years, then Sadat came to power. His wife recollects that by 1976, and through the efforts of her and her husband, "30 per cent of medical, pharmacy and dentistry school graduates were women," which she writes was "a far cry from the first days of the Revolution, when 91.3% of Egyptian women were illiterate" (Sadat, 1987, p. 328).

Then, in the 1980s, the Solidarity of Arab Women's Association, founded in 1985 by Egyptian feminist Nawal el Saadawi (Amireh, 2000), began publishing articles that questioned the institution of marriage, asking "why women are happier in love but not marriage" and linking marriage to slavery, as well as revealing some women's desire to "become mothers outside of marriage" (Sabbagh, 1996, p. 191).

Around the same time, however, Bouthania Shaaban (1988) published dozens of interviews of Arab (but not Egyptian) women that revealed conflicting accounts of the roles of women, virginity, and marriage in the Middle East. For example, she recounts that for a woman in the Middle East, "loss of virginity meant the loss of her life" (p. 9) but also that "today, younger men's attitude to virginity is changing (though no man would openly admit this), and is becoming quite relaxed and understanding" (p. 10).
This might be a function of disparities between particular cultures or generations, or even differences between rural and urban mentalities, but it might also be related to the mixed emotions and viewpoints that surround such a complicated, thorny issue; for example, an Egyptian man may be appreciative of Britney Spears and her wardrobe, yet condemn the same clothing (or lack thereof) on an Egyptian girl. Likewise, it is fully possible for an Egyptian or Egyptian American woman to be intensely critical of a ”true” American (defined by previous informants and referring in this paper to those having no strong ties to any other country for at least two generations) female’s ability to wear a miniskirt, but simultaneously feel sad that she can never have that experience, jealous of the American for not being subject to the accountability she was born into, and angry that she herself was born into it. It should, however, be noted that pockets of Egyptian women—some Christian, some ”upper-class” Muslim—today do actually dress in a completely ”Western” style, as opposed the majority of Muslim women that have now donned the neqab (a tent-like garment that covers the head and shrouds the body completely).

In any case, this double standard, as will be discussed below, is a frequent occurrence in the polyphonous Arab mind, as well as the Islamic culture that Coptic historian Nadia Ghaly says ”left a heavy print on Copts as well as Egyptian culture in general” (Bishai, 2005a, 2006); as the beginnings of this heavy print have been elucidated within this section, examples of the Islamic print are provided in the next section.

**Egyptian Society—Yesterday and Today**

*A Traditional Problem: Delaying Marriage*

It has been said that marriage is more than ”mere romance.” The institution, for example, serves three of the ”traditional” culture’s primary goals, those of legitimizing children, making the unmarried daughter or son into a ”person” (Sherif, 1999b; Joseph, 2001), and guarding females and their families from talk of impropriety (Baron, 1994; Keddie, 2007).

The first goal is straightforward, and shared (to a certain extent) by many non-traditional cultures. The second and third, however, are more difficult for individualistic Western cultures to understand. Likewise, the delay or absence of marriage presents different sorts of problems to Eastern and Western parents today. In this section, the three goals are further discussed, as are issues created by the failure to meet them.

With regard to the legitimization of children, it is unsurprising to note that that ”illegitimate” children are nearly unheard of in Egypt; this is not because it never happens, but because discussing taboo subjects or defending them makes one seem ”unrespectable.”

Moving on to the link between marriage and ”personhood,” it should be noted that this attitude was also prevalent in the United States at one time, though perhaps for different reasons; a delayed marriage in the 1950s or before often implied that the woman was undesirable, that she would be required to live with her family indefinitely, that she ”had” to get a job (if she was even allowed), or that she was unhappy at her
singleness, as evidenced in such films as The Rainmaker (where the “spinster” was played by Katharine Hepburn) and Now, Voyager (featuring Bette Davis). Women living alone or electing to pursue career options were often perceived in a certain way, as the literature of or about the time often portrays; for example, these women were sometimes viewed as immoral (as was Countess Olenska in The Age of Innocence), troublesome (like Anne in L.M. Montgomery’s Green Gables series), even manly and/or frigid (Catherine Brook and Hetty King in Kevin Sullivan’s television adaptations of Montgomery’s Anne of Avonlea), due to their independence. Today, none of the aforementioned assumptions is necessarily true, as single American women may choose to remain unmarried, might feel “free” instead of “unwanted,” and can, in many cases, determine their desired level of education or work; that is, they are neither forced nor restricted. Furthermore, parents of these women may object to their daughters’ choices or situations on the bases of wanting grandchildren for themselves, and/or happiness and security for their daughters.

Finally, the burden of an entire Egyptian family’s honor is often still placed upon the daughters’ shoulders—particularly with regard to their actual and perceived virtue—thereby making the unmarried female into a liability (Baron, 1994; Keddie, 2007); this is because community gossip may turn an innocent conversation with a male into”proof” of an illicit affair, thus tainting the family. Worries over delayed marriage—and its implications—are frequently articulated in television programs like Fi Beyout Asrar and Bela Koyood, and by such works as Ana 3ayza Atgaweza [I Want To Get Married], an Egyptian Muslim’s blog-turned-book, which has received coverage by the LA Times, Egypt Today, and the BBC.

These three goals—children, personhood, and family honor—are intimately connected, and may present a variety of challenges to modern Egyptians; for example, when a female lives ”at home” with her family-of-origin, she is unable to form her own household, thereby leading to a perception by others that she is a perpetual child; this can be seen in the use of a system-of-referral that uses a woman’s family or marital status to refer to her. For example, the unmarried Afifa may be called “bent Magda” [Magda’s daughter] or even “okht Salma elli mesh metgaweza” [Salma’s unmarried sister] rather than her actual name; single men are often subjected to this system, as well. The system—which is less common in today’s twenty-somethings and their younger siblings—only reinforces the mentality that a single person is not actually a person until she (or he) runs her (or his) own household.

The matriarchal Golda phrased this same sentiment to her new son-in-law in the classic Fiddler on the Roof, an award-winning film about three Russian Jewish sisters and their struggles with mate-selection; upon viewing her grandson for the first time, Golda shakes her head and attempts to hide a gleeful smile, unable to refrain from crowing that “we never thought you’d amount to anything, but now, a house, a baby…you’re a person now!”

As this section has discussed the problems associated with delayed marriage, the following section focuses upon the solution that has traditionally prevented the delayed marriage in Egypt.
The Traditional Solution

The traditional method of ensuring accomplishment of the three goals mentioned above was a form of arranged marriage thought unique to Egypt; in this section, that method is introduced and outlined.

The salon marriage, or gawaz salon, was so named because meetings between prospective brides and grooms took place in the salon, or formal living room (Joseph, 2002). This "salon meeting" defeated the inconvenience of women's seclusion, which officially ended in the 1920s but nonetheless continued to restrict many women until the 1950s; it also gave the female's family a chance to determine the suitability of the gentleman caller and afforded the young man a closer look at the girl who caught his eye. Often, however, the salon meeting was either set up by a helpful relative or khatiba [professional matchmaker] who had instead discovered the girl—whether unbeknownst to the young man, or at his request. Sometimes the gentleman's parents or other family members accompanied him on this important trip, but not always.

Generally speaking, unchaperoned conversation between the prospective bride and groom wasn't allowed, so a suitor's credentials—his family name, his occupation, his wealth—were heavily weighted. Some families also took the man's charisma or demeanor into account, others studied the chemistry between the potential couple.

If the young lady in question was interested in the match, she might serve an extra pastry or a mug of inordinately-sweetened tea to him; if he felt the same he would compliment the tea. Salted tea, on the other hand, indicated her disinterest or repulsion, as did his failure to compliment or even taste the offered refreshments. This high context communication both protected honor—easily compromised by too lovelorn a gaze—and "saved face," in the case of disinterest. It also ensured that decisions were swiftly made; if the match was accepted, a wedding date—just weeks or days later—would be set. Generally speaking, the betrothed would not meet again until their marriage.

Egypt's Evolution

Today's Egypt is not quite so restrictive, however; young, single women are allowed in public now. They attend university and obtain good jobs. Satellite television and internet access are widely available, in public settings and within the home. International travel and telephone conversations are not nearly as scarce—or expensive—as they once were.

Technology's entry into Egypt and women's exit from seclusion have combined to allow the "forward" movement of Egyptian society, as manifested in two especially significant changes: first, as women spend increasing time in the public domain, they notice and are noticed, removing the necessity of the traditional salon meeting. Second, the introduction of information technologies allows individuals in Egypt to watch and be watched, leading to a "contamination" of their culture, waking a desire for things unavailable to them, and providing them with Western traits to emulate.

This emulation of Western traits (by Egyptians) is often thought to convey culture and privilege; at the same time, Egyptians who seem excessively concerned with the West (or all things foreign) are said to have 'o'dat el khawaga, translated directly as "the Foreign Complex." One common example of this in Egypt includes the (often incorrect) usage of random English
words in Arabic conversation ("Bahebak...Wana Kaman," 2003). Another manifestation of the 'o’da leads some native-born Egyptians to feign an inability to properly pronounce the more difficult Arabic letters (most commonly ein, reh, and qaf), so as to appear less Egyptian and more "exotic."

While this posturing may seem strange to Westerners, it is important to remember that Egyptian society is culturally complicated: tight in structure, vertical in nature (Triandis, 2002), and built around the image, honor, and status of the collective; one social network is tied to another—to their mutual detriment or benefit. To this end, Egyptian culture is dependent on high context communication, facework, and what many in the West might consider deception (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Ting Toomey, 2002; Triandis, 2002). Such an intricately-woven system of actions and reactions places Egyptians and their lives on display, leaving them open to the scrutiny of those around them. Further, the success or failure of a person is largely dependent on social interactions (Nydell, 2002; Wilson, 2006), which rely on reputation, which is influenced by such additional factors as family of origin, accomplishments, style of communication (Nydell, 2002; Ting Toomey, 2002), and the ability to both "fit in" with and "stand out" from those in the community; that is, by following protocol and raising the standard, respectively.

What this means is that the every-day Egyptian must constantly "prove" that he or she is "worth" interacting with. Some supplement their status with bribes—cash to officials and frequent gifts to those in influence (Nydell, 2002; Wilson, 2006)—while others "emphasize [their] good name," in the absence of economic inducements (Sherif, 1999b).

Each of the above-mentioned factors—women’s relative liberation (Amin, 2004), the world-wide technological revolution, the Western "invasion,"(Giddens, 1990; Nydell, 2002) and the endurance of the image-reliant and somewhat clannish nature of Egyptian culture (Hall, 1959; Nydell, 2002; Triandis, 2002)—has contributed to the conflicted state of many Egyptians, some of whom associate "change" with "disloyalty" or "betrayal" (Nydell, 2002). The current economic crisis, political upheavals, and religious tensions have further contributed to a general sense of insecurity and unrest in the land once known for her prosperity and peaceful relations.

And so while Egyptian culture is structured around many sets of conventions that provide external controls to keep citizens in line, it is not uncommon for people to experience confusion as policy and possibility collide. This confusion is just one of the challenges common to Egyptians as the combination of positive advancement, negative developments, and national instability has—together with the unchanging impressionability and enthusiasm of youth—given rise to several legal and sociocultural problems in the country.

Some recent examples include those of Hala el Masry, a Coptic blogger who was arrested for blogging on torturous acts committed by Egyptian State Security officials in the line of duty (Ghorab, 2006b); Abdel Kareem Nabil Soliman, a young, Muslim-born law student at al Azhar who was expelled from that university and then tried, convicted, and sentenced to four years in prison over several blog postings (Ghorab, 2006c, 2007a; Salib, 2006); Alaa Abdelfattah, another Egyptian blogger and activist who was arrested and held for 45 days without being charged; Hala Sarhan, a talk-show host who was expelled from the country for her coverage of "improper" topics (such as "adult nursing") that resulted in
presenting Islam as a source of incredulity and ridicule; Wael Ebrashy, editor of Sout el Ommah newspaper, who was sentenced to one year in prison for his criticism of the Egyptian government; and 50 Egyptian men who went on trial for the "crime" of homosexuality. Each of the aforementioned was subjected to legal action and/or threat over an action that did not, technically, break any laws in effect at that time.

Another area implicated in the struggle to balance tradition and "modernity" involves a much greater percentage of the nation, however; courtship, usually defined as "pre-engagement dating" in the West, here includes engagement, as the only "dating" permitted by some Egyptian families happens post-engagement. Attitudes and practices surrounding courtship—and, by extension, marriage—are, it should be noted, changing as a result of the four factors above. Such evolution is neither unidirectional nor forward-moving, necessarily; this assumption provides the study with a foundation for one of the problems feared by Egyptians: delayed marriage.

Acceptable Behavior: ‘Ayb vs. Khateya

Before discussing the problem of delayed marriage, it is important to define a debate currently raging over what is acceptable behavior, with respect to the bifurcation between ‘ayb [forbidden, taboo, unconventional] and khateya [sin] in the culture of Arabic-speakers.

As previously mentioned, Egyptians are religious people (Nydell, 2002; Wilson, 2006); those who aren't must feign religiosity at some level, or suffer a loss of social status and/or respect (Nydell, 2002). Despite the incompatibility of Christianity and Islam, many Egyptians of both faiths acknowledge a somewhat-vague notion of the "unacceptable" that has never been standardized or completely agreed upon—even by people of the same faith.

Bounded on one side by ‘ayb (see Hatshepsut, 2007) and khateya on the other side, the far-reaching cultural code of propriety may be defined by year of birth, religion of birth, and level of religiosity, among others; this ambiguous code may lead one group to decry a woman's low-cut shirt as ‘ayb and another to deem it "sinful."

On the other hand, the words are sometimes interchangeably used, leading to a bit of confusion as to whether a particular behavior's unacceptability rests on cultural or religious grounds, though it should be noted that pious and practicing Christians and Muslims alike (are supposed to) condemn pre-marital sex and illegitimate children—regardless of their feelings about a style of dress feared (by some) to promote these things.

Either way, the implications of a real or imagined transgression against this moral code might result in community ostracism against offender and family, filed complaints, or honor killings; it should be noted, however, that while it is "difficult to get precise numbers" (Mayell, 2002) about the frequency of honor killings today, the practice has decreased a great deal within Egypt—so much so that only a few cases per year receive media attention. These actions—from ostracism to murder—all arise from the fear that the failure to "punish" an offender will necessarily call the respectability of that "sympathizer" into question, rendering him "guilty" by association, thus leading to his own social banishment.

This is important to note, because some may take the above to mean that Arabs are, by definition, hypocritical back-stabbers (a charge that has, by the way, been leveled at Arabs by some Arabic-speakers) who take more pleasure than perfidy in character assassinations, who
might feel more bloodthirsty than bummed over physical assassinations; this is not (always or even "usually") the case, however. An exceedingly poignant example of this can be found among the pages of Ted Dekker's Blink, the tale of a Saudi princess who tries to escape an arranged marriage to a man of great moral and physical repugnance (2003); the illustration takes place right after the princess’s very young, just-married best friend has been sentenced to death for defying her septuagenarian spouse. The order is especially cruel, specifying that the girl's own father is to carry out the execution-by-drowning—unless he would prefer to let someone else take care of the job, and kill him and several other relatives at the same time; the sheikh is sickened by the mere thought of taking a life he originally gave, but cannot fathom being killed himself, or causing additional deaths. The sheikh ends up carrying out the task, weeping bitterly whilst holding his young daughter under-water. Grisly though it may be, the example effectively illustrates the common fear of guilt-by-association.

The Western world, however, operates under several assumptions that the East does not share, including (but not limited to) the following four: first, people do not (in theory) judge or ostracize someone on the basis of religion, preference, moral failing, hair color, or any other thing that does not affect them directly; second, that people are free to do what they will in public and private, as long as they do not break the law; third, that sexuality is an important and basic or "built-in" component of most humans; and fourth, that a person does not have to be married to act upon—or be aware of—their sexuality. As can be imagined, each of these fundamental beliefs clearly violates notions of 'ayb and khateya which, in turn, breach the collectivist creed.

It is important to keep in mind the disparities between Eastern and Western values, mentalities, and levels of community involvement as the discussion shifts to address factors that may lead to the delay of marriage—especially since the presence of these Western assumptions may skew Egyptians’ views concerning the desirability of marriage in the first place; these factors are discussed more thoroughly in the next section.

**Egyptian Society—Tomorrow?**

Egypt’s culture may seem inextricably bound by rules and traditions, but as Netting (2006) points out, an exception with isolated, secret beginnings often pushes further and further, until what was once the exception becomes the rule. On the other hand, there is no way to tell whether a particular attitude held by a thousand Egyptians actually belongs in the category of "exception" or "rule" within today’s Egypt.

For example, while Zayan (2008) writes that "a woman is expected to be a virgin on her wedding day," since "premarital sex is an absolute taboo" (p. 62), one report claims that 21 per cent of educated young men in Egypt confessed to knowing a "non-virgin" (male or female), crediting that number to a popular physician in Egypt (Sharp, 2005); that Cairo gynecologist—who spoke of a "growing sexual revolution" in Egypt—also claimed that 50 per cent of "young people" in Egypt have had pre-marital sex (Kandela, 1996). It is impossible to tell whether Zayan’s or Sharp’s research is closer to the absolute truth; it is just as impossible to divine which statistic (21 per cent of non-virgin-knowers versus 50 per cent of premarital-experimenters) is actually more correct.
This impossibility is due not only to the disparities between claims, but to the fact that people’s responses may be inaccurate; in other words, one person may exaggerate, while another "sanitizes."

Another example of shifting "exceptions" lies in the fact that while many Egyptians agree (at least subconsciously) that marriage is a major prerequisite to personhood, some feel that marriage is more about money than anything else, and that marriage is, thus, "rendered less essential in economic terms as women become financially independent" (Amin & Al-Bassusi, 2003). And while arranged or salon marriages are generally considered to be protection against gossip, some rather see it as "a patriarchal custom and part of the culture of honor...practiced only in those places where women’s status is low" (Razack, 2004); similarly, Madiha el Safty, a professor of sociology at American University in Cairo, believes that salon marriages are "obsolete and have been so ever since women started working and leaving the house" (el Katatney, 2007). This speaks to past restrictions which ensured that women would not meet men on their own, but does not acknowledge the thousands of Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora claiming to have met someone through a salon marriage, and neither does it address the issue of whether the men at work or school are actually suitable, attractive to the women, or interested in the first place.

Whether el Safty is right or wrong, it is true that some Egyptians have emulated the Western practice of seeking love, or at least chemistry (Myers, Madathil & Tingle, 2005), when evaluating the suitability of a spousal candidate; and rather than waiting to see what comes along, they have also begun to seriously consider what they want in a spouse (as opposed to relying on mere credentials).

Some have even become proactive (Qureshi, 1991) in their searches for better candidates via networking, church groups (thinly-veiled singles groups) or websites. Hashish & Peterson, who studied two Cairo computer-based, offline, "real life" matchmaking agencies, identify six major factors of importance to mate selection: age, education, past marital status, financial status, character and physical appearance (1999). They fail to mention religion, which most Egyptians would consider of greater importance than the other six factors combined, though searches may have been limited to a client’s stated religion, or perhaps the study assumed that all Egyptians are Muslims. Another form of computer-assisted dating that has grown steadily in recent years is the online dating service; some believe that salon marriages are being replaced by online matchmaking websites like Mr. Egypt and Qiran.

Habibi-Habibti’s slogan is based on such a notion, stating that "Your mother can no longer find you the perfect match. It is time to take matters into your own hands" (el Katatney, 2007); many Egyptians apparently agree. Women are able to post their own profiles on all of these sites, though some websites allow families to post profiles for female relatives, in order to preserve the respectability of the young lady—and the honor of her family (el Katatney, 2007). This trend of taking the spouse-hunt online is unsurprising in a society where "romances are often kept secret from all but close friends...[and where] a woman’s dating may tarnish her reputation and affect her future marriage prospects" (Joseph, 2003). The match rate from these websites—80 to100 a
month for Mr. Egypt and over 100 per week on Qiran (el Katatney, 2007)—is also unsurprising, given that "Egyptians, who generally either do not marry for love or who marry for love only after ensuring social compatibility between their own and their spouse’s families, would thus appear to be at a distinct advantage in internet relationships" (Hashish & Peterson, 1999).

Now that the trends of present and future have been introduced, the discussion moves to another trend which many Egyptians hope will soon disappear from their country, that of the double standard.

**Double Standard: Gender**

Just as Easterners and Westerners view individual rights and acceptable courtship behaviors differently, so, too, do Islamic customs and laws treat men and women differently, holding them to different standards and assigning them different duties. This is not to say that one biological sex necessarily has it "better" or "worse" than the other does, only that there is a difference. It is important to note, however, that there are several inconsistencies within these discrepancies.

In this section, several dichotomies appearing in the literature—including the "strong spirit/oppressed victim," the "innocent virgin/experienced pleasure-giver," and the "moronic hysterical irrational creature/responsible party"—are discussed. Each of these is manifested in the stifling of women, or else the denial of their full personhood and agency; this is problematic because, as Qasim Amin wrote, when the women of a country are oppressed, the whole nation suffers (Amin, 1900, p. 28).

Offering one explanation of the problematic double standard is Shaaban, whose mid-80s interviews with Arab women indicate that it is both the passionate nature of the Arab and the Arab man’s fear of such that continues to restrict modern women and hold them to more stringent guidelines; she provides the analysis that "it might well be that because men detect something terribly strong [that they] become obsessed with the effort to suppress this, whether by reducing us to obedient servants or turning us into sexual objects" (1988, p. 15). Whatever the cause, she addresses the linkage of honor to female propriety:

The crime of honor is a legal term covering the murder of women suspected of having had premarital sexual relations. The killers are usually male next-of-kin. The word honor is used because Arab men relate their personal and family honor to the premarital sexual behavior of their nearest women kin. (p. 27)

She then offers an alternate view of the linkage, as derived from an interview with a woman who had just been devirginised by scissors, in order to prove her virginity to a fanatical man she had recently married:

What honor means here is precisely the preservation of the girl’s virginity
for prospective husband and her abstinence from any sexual relationship before marriage—and this applies only to women. This is the prevailing definition here not only of the woman’s honor but the honor of her family. (p. 77)

While many would agree to this definition, she warns that as "simple and true as it is [that statement] would be taken as a disparagement of Arab morality and Islamic religion" (p. 77), which may explain why many have traditionally refrained from saying such things. Despite the Arab or Muslim emphasis on purity and honor, it would seem that some people find the emphasis to be of an outward sort; Shaaban cites a Lebanese woman who clarifies the dualistic expectations:

Most Arab women live in two totally different worlds before and after marriage. Before marriage they are supposed to be saints, holy virgins who never like to know or hear about sex. If they were to hear anything that touches on the subject they are supposed to shy away and leave the place. Once they are married they are supposed magically to change into sexy wives and wonderful mothers who know all about the ins and outs of family life. We were brought up to think that sex was very dirty...the complete absence of sexual education in the Arab world is appalling and women are paying the price for this. It is okay for men to talk about sex and to know everything about it, in fact for men it is considered manly to have a sexual education, but it is shameful for women to have any knowledge about the subject. (pp. 125-6)

Shaaban concludes that "There is more sexual libertinism in the Arab world than there is in Europe but it is all done discreetly," and that "the secrecy which engulfs our sexual lives subjects women—because they are the ones who are prone to social shame—to all kinds of blackmail and abuse" (p. 128); her latter statement echoes what Raphael Patai suggested in his controversial The Arab Mind—namely, a "notion that Arabs are particularly vulnerable to sexual humiliation," which "became a talking point among pro-war Washington conservatives in the months before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq" (Hersh, 2004).

Sherif (1999a) concurs with at least part of Patai’s conjecture, writing that a situation containing a man and a woman is "thought to be inherently sexual and thus dangerous for the young female virgin." She goes on to share the "common wisdom that sexual feelings will arise in such a context," adding that a "meeting of the eyes or lingering gaze between man and woman is thought to have sexual connotations, therefore resulting in any need to carefully protect the woman from interactions with men." This mentality—while held by many Muslims and non-Muslims alike—may be a
direct result of the Koranic scriptures such as Sura 24:30-31, which counsels Muslims to "lower their gaze and guard their modesty," as well as the Hadith, which decrees that "not one of you should meet a woman alone unless she is accompanied by a relative" (Bukhari, 846) due to the fact that "whenever a man is alone with a woman, Satan is the third among them" (Tirmidhi, 867).

If an improper interaction does take place, however, the blame is not placed upon the man—despite the fact that he is viewed by Islamic tradition and law as mature and responsible; rather, blame is placed on the female, who is considered "hysterical," "overemotional," "emotionally ill" (Amin, 1900), whose testimony is only worth half of a man's (Sura 2:282), and who is set a "degree" less than a man (Sura 2:228).

This system of responsibility does not correspond with modern logic; that is, the logic used by many people today would neither hold responsible the "less intelligent" and "less rational" party, nor consider the "more responsible" and "mature" party to be blameless. This system—an example of the Egyptian double standard—is, however, often followed in Egypt.

Another manifestation of the larger "double standard" often followed in Egypt focuses on a person's system of belief; the next section is devoted to a discussion of that very topic.

**Double Standard: Religion**

Official government census data and various Coptic organizations have long debated the true proportion of Christians in Egypt, giving figures that range from 6 per cent of the country to upwards of 20 per cent ("Controversy in Egypt," 2008). Whatever the true proportion is, the population of Christian Egyptians is religiously heterogeneous, divided into three groups: Coptic Orthodox, Coptic Evangelical (Protestant), and "other." The former group is the largest, and is described as encompassing 85 to 95 per cent of the Christians in Egypt; the second group is said to have between two and four per cent of the Christians (Ibrahim, 1999), while the last group—which contains Catholics and some splinter groups—is said to make up one to two per cent. Finally, only a few thousand Egyptians are Jewish or Bahai'i.

This is not to say that the members of the groups are equally religious, but as Nydell (2002) pointed out, every Arab belongs to a religion.

Another point of difference between Christian Egyptians is that of location; while Egypt is the logical choice of residence for those born there, some are unable to eke out a living, while others face enough religious persecution that life in their homeland is no longer possible.

This persecution almost unilaterally occurs to members of the Christian minority, taking various forms, including targeted personal physical harassment (Bishai, 2005b; Ghorab, 2006a) discrimination in academic or occupational settings (Bishai, 2007), refusal to do business with "the people of the Book," and violence based on the victim's refusal to convert (Ghorab, 2006a). It is, thus, unsurprising that Christian Egyptians—like other Christians in the Middle East—flee their homelands in significant numbers. Consequently,
every Western country now includes a "Coptic diaspora," a sub-society teeming with immigrants, each of them brimming with anecdotes and advice on the acculturative strategies that worked best and worst for them, some of them brimming with tales of the persecution that drove them from their homes—persecution their Muslim brethren did not and do not have to deal with.

Another thing that Muslim Egyptians do not have to deal with is legal under-representation. In terms of legalities surrounding their marriages, for example, the unions are regulated by Sharia (Bishai, 2005b, 2006), whereas Christians have much less legal recourse in that area. This is because, as previously noted, Christians are sometimes subject to or exempt from certain laws. One prominent exemption appears in the area of marriage; in Egypt, Christians do not follow Muslim law or ritual ("Incorporating Sharia," 1999), as their marriages are, instead, the domain of the Church (Barrakat, 2006).

Another exemption relates to divorce, which the Coptic Orthodox Church has only allowed in the case of adultery. In 1978 and 1998, drafts of a unified Christian personal status law were written, modifying Pope Yoannes XIX’s strict Christian status code of 1938; both drafts were more liberal, allowing divorce in circumstances other than adultery. The drafts were each five sections long, and presented 146 items that dealt with procedures and protocols of engagement, marriage, the marriage contract, rights and duties, financial commitments, parental responsibility, authority, legitimacy of offspring, divorce, separation, and adoption (Ahram, 1999).

More recently, Pope Shenouda—patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church—has reaffirmed his commitment to the biblical stance of "No divorce except for adultery" (BBC, 2008). And with regard to the second-largest non-Muslim population in Egypt, it turns out that "until 1902, the Protestants also prohibited divorce except in cases of adultery," according to Fouad El-Mote‘i, a member of the legislative committee that prepared drafts of Coptic reform drafts in both 1978 and 1998 (Ibrahim, 1999).

Clearly, the discrepancies between Christian and Muslim modes of marriage and divorce (Barrakat, 2006), as well as the gross under-representation, inequality, and frequent physical threats that Christians in Egypt are subject to, have great effect upon those living there, and, perhaps, those who once did (Bishai, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007); these elements, together with the traditional Egyptian mentality that is three hundred-and-sixty degrees removed from the "Western way," may serve as a partial explanation as to why Christian Egyptians in the West seem to have greater issues "acculturating" to the West in a satisfactory manner—as evidenced by Faragallah, Schumm, and Webb’s 1997 findings of "greater life satisfaction, but...reduced family satisfaction" in Christian Arabic-speakers in America, and Amer & Hovey’s similar results in 2007. But before discussing these important topics, a review of acculturation theory would be helpful.

Therefore, as the culture of Egyptians and other Arabic-speakers has been discussed in this chapter, the next is devoted to the dissertation’s theoretical underpinnings: acculturation—specifically the dialogical model thereof—and the three communication dimensions earlier mentioned—identification, communication style, and cultural orientation.
CHAPTER THREE
CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

Introduction
As previously mentioned, one of the dissertation’s general purposes was the expansion of the dialogical model of acculturation (DM); this was accomplished by:
1) exploring the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,
2) obtaining an understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt and the diaspora), and
3) ascertaining participants' manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).

In order to facilitate the forthcoming discussion about these theoretical concepts, Chapter Three provides a review of past and present acculturation literature, and an examination of the three communication dimensions—identification, cultural orientation, and communication style—used by this study in the assessment of participants' acculturation.

Acculturation Models

The inherent challenges of acculturation have plagued or pestered immigrants (and occupied peoples) for thousands of years; unsurprisingly, different eras have used different approaches as they sought answers to the same unspoken questions which asked "how to acculturate?" and "how much to acculturate?".

For example, Lot's Biblically-recorded struggle to resist the customs of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Plato's (348/1980) warning against cultural cross-contamination might indicate an ancient emphasis on protecting a culture's purity from outsiders; in Plato's case, physical distance, or lack of interaction with the "other" was a key strategy. The struggles of immigrants to a younger United States (circa 1880), however, led those immigrants in a different direction—that of assimilation into their new surroundings—suggesting a different type of cultural purity (J. W. Caughey, 1966); that era's incarnation of purity (in the U.S., anyway) emphasized not physical but mental or emotional distance from outside influences, in order to turn the nation's outsiders into insiders, which it accomplished by promoting assimilation (i.e. stifling immigrants' home culture influences and "strongly supporting" that immigrants embraced the customs and mentalities of the United States).

That form of cultural purity seems to have died out and given rise to yet another form of "purity," which involves neither physical nor emotional/mental distance, and,
instead, promotes the diverse representation of plural cultures and other populations, and protects the cultural purity of the various cultures represented; the result of this philosophy is today’s "cultural plurality," where citizens of various backgrounds and situations are unified by their nation of residence.

In this section, several acculturation models of past and present are introduced; the discussion also includes various challenges, implications, strengths, and weaknesses of each one.

As mentioned in Chapter One, transportation technologies like locomotives and ocean liners indirectly contributed to the younger America’s immigrant “issues,” due to their facilitation of travel at a time where assimilation was unquestioned; current communication technologies such as media outlets and the internet have further augmented the same dilemma, due to their ability to show one culture to another.

In both cases, various changes are offered to—or imposed upon—a person or population; the problem is not so much about the specific changes as it is about changing at all. For example, while I may be overjoyed to notice a pair of insulated oven mitts lying on the table when I am already holding a pot of scalding coffee with both hands, the jubilation would soon fade upon discovering that I would need to take at least one hand away from the pot in order to don the glove (though it would be safer to set the pot down altogether); perhaps I am in a hurry, or worried about spilling the almost-boiling beverage. Maybe I just don’t want to go through the hassle of putting the pot down, putting the gloves on, and picking the pot up again; in any case, I am reluctant to make use of something that will not only help me, but protect me (and, therefore, all surrounding fabrics) from the beautiful, brown, and blistering beverage.

Another factor that may reduce the attractiveness of an otherwise-positive (or neutral) change is a variation upon the familiar "guilt-by-association." In this case, the change is rendered objectionable because the acceptance of that change automatically suggests (to others, if not self) acceptance of the change’s "home culture”—possibly resulting in the perception of treachery against country or family (Nydell, 2002); in other words, embracing stereotypically-American dishes like mac’n’cheese, pizza, hamburgers, and apple pie might be perceived as a denouncement of family based upon an alleged acceptance of individualism and moving away from "home” at 18 years of age, though this is only one possible scenario. Returning to the scalding coffee example to further illustrate this "guilt-by-association," if the pair of oven mitts was offered to me by a young man called Romeo—and my name was Juliet—then accepting the gift could, indeed, be interpreted as a betrayal of family (whether I thanked him with a wink and a smile or with a spiteful sneer and a splash of searing coffee), since I allowed him to help me out; if my name actually happened to be Mr. Capulet, however, I would, likely, refuse the gloves (by ignoring the lad or kicking him) and avoid treachery—even if I knew that the spiteful snub would result in some seriously-singed skin.

In either case, individuals unwilling or unable to adjust to their new situations (for whatever reason) do, sometimes, get “burned,” and may, in fact, turn around and exert a poisonous influence upon those around them (Chaichian, 1999), leading to avoidance by others and/or despair over increasing isolation, resulting in a self-
perpetuating negative cycle. Within more immigrant-friendly—and immigrant-rich—countries, the impact of distressed expatriates may be greater and more widely-felt than in communities with a mere handful of "outsiders."

Distress, however, does not only visit those unable to adjust; for many immigrants (particularly those from Eastern countries), an excessive willingness to adjust can be just as distressing as the inability to do so—especially if the willingness is disapproved of by a person's family or conscience.

Either way, each year brings with it increased instances and levels of "continuous contact between culturally distinct groups" (Smith-Castro, 2003). Since a person's self identity is usually tied to his or her cultural membership (Miller, 2007; Umaña-Taylor, 2003), the selection of an appropriate acculturation strategy is vital to attaining psychological and social success.

While assimilation was once the preferred method of acculturating, today's immigrants and bicultural individuals are, as previously mentioned, often encouraged to borrow from and identify with both cultures, resulting in "integrated" Mexican-Americans, Egyptian-Americans, and other "hyphenated" members of society. Some are opposed to this, however, claiming that "the hyphen enacts a violent shuttling between two or more worlds" (Visweswaran, 1994) or that "hyphenated labels only serve to represent dislocation and displacement of the migrant identity" (Bhatia, 2002). But integration—defined by Berry as a balance between home and host cultures (Berry, 1997)—is only one acculturative strategy available to the immigrant.

The notion of contact-based shifts in culture materialized much earlier than did the first use of "acculturation," the 1880 invention of anthropologist J.W. Powell (Rudmin, 2003). De Tocqueville wrote of a similar notion over half a century before, and Plato is often cited as the first to write about it (Rudmin, 2003). The Greek philosopher was apparently familiar with and sensitive to the process of shifting culture, because his Laws (348 B.C.) includes a section dedicated to advice on the control of what Rudmin (2003) calls "cultural contamination."

Some of Plato's suggestions include quarantining foreign visitors or strangers (keeping them outside the city gates, specifically), in order to minimize the risk of infecting citizens with the foreigners' strange ways, and also limiting travel to those over 40 years of age, with the stipulation that traveling be undertaken cautiously, and in groups, in order to minimize exposure to people from other places. In his own words, "the intercourse of cities with one another is apt to create a confusion of manners; strangers are always suggesting novelties to strangers" (Plato 348/1980).

Revisiting the late 1800s, one finds that J. W. Powell's coinage of the word sparked great interest in the fields of anthropology, psychology and sociology; 1898 had anthropologist W.J. McGee (Rudmin, 2003) defining acculturation as the "process of exchange and mutual improvement by which societies advance from savagery, to barbarism, to civilization, to enlightenment," while in 1900, Powell wrote that societies did not have to be on friendly terms in order to be shaped by one another—a view resurrected by Deveraux & Loeb (1943) nearly fifty years later.
On the other hand, just one year after Powell’s notion of "antagonistic acculturation" was published, Sarah Simons—who eventually put together a comprehensive review of "social assimilation" literature, publishing a five-part article with the same name—wrote that the "psychic conditions" had to be right for cultural change to take place (Simons, 1901).

G. Stanley Hall was the first psychologist to write on the subject of acculturation, and Thomas & Znaniecki followed soon after (in 1918) with the first complete theory on the subject (Rudmin, 2003), which continued to grow in different directions. One early definition that has proven particularly enduring is that given to acculturation by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits:

acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups...under this definition acculturation is to be distinguished from culture change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It is also to be differentiated from diffusion, which while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place without the occurrence of the types of contact between peoples specified in the definition above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation. (1936, pp. 149-152, emphases mine)

Despite such varying possibilities and viewpoints in the literature, acculturation’s ultimate goal in those days was—practically speaking, anyway—the immigrant's eventual cultural indistinguishability from natives of the host culture; this goal or "acculturation strategy" was called "assimilation." Early literature usually operated under the assumption that this assimilationist process—later dubbed the unidimensional model of acculturation (UDM)—was the best or only acceptable outcome for an acculturating individual, but as the UDM was "based on a flawed assumption that individuals cannot orient to more than one culture" (Lee et al., 2006), recent years have produced very convincing arguments against the unidimensional model (Ryder et al., 2000).

For example, studies by Escobar (1998) as well as Portes & Rumbaut (1990) have indicated that immigrants attempting to "Americanize" under an assimilationist model had higher rates of mental illness or drug addiction than did those maintaining ties to their home cultures, while Padilla (1994) found that members of second- and third-generations (children and grandchildren of immigrants) experienced higher rates of "social ills" like drugs, alcohol, AIDS, teen pregnancy, gang membership, or domestic violence than did first-generations (Sexton, Weeks & Robbins, 2006); these studies suggest that the first-generation’s proximity to home-culture-customs may have kept them more "grounded," due to an enhanced sense of identity (see the following section for a review of identity theories. Identity-enhancement through membership has,
additionally, been suggested to promote "greater interest in cross-cultural contacts" (Sidanius et al., 2003).

The model of acculturation that replaced the UDM has turned out to be the most enduring acculturation theory since Powell's first mention of the term; called the bidimensional model (BDM), this formulation gained popularity in the early 1980s and has remained the standard since then. References to the model almost unilaterally denote John Berry's fourfold framework (used interchangeably with the term "BDM" in this paper), which is guided by an acculturating individual's answers to two questions: *Is there any value in maintaining my cultural heritage? Is it of value to maintain relations with other groups?* (Berry, 1992). To reach a "diagnosis," an individual's answers are plotted on a chart with four quadrants labeled separation, integration, assimilation, and marginalization; *separation* refers to an individual who refuses to relinquish his or her home culture and, instead, rejects the host culture; *integration*, as previously mentioned, could be described as borrowing somewhat equally from both cultures; *assimilation*, again, involves a complete embracing of host culture and a complete loss/abandonment of the home culture; and *marginalization* refers to those not fitting into home or host culture (Berry, 1997; Ryder, et al, 2000).

The popularity of the BDM does not mean that the model has gone unchallenged or remains unmodified; some feel that it does not reflect shifts in situation and mood, and/or fails to account for personal differences (Bhatia, 2002; Rudmin, 2009), while others take issue with the quantitative notion of "measuring" a person's acculturation level—especially in light of the fact that each immigrant's level is based not only on differences of personality, but on the social and/or political conditions under which the immigrants left, their social class and socioeconomic status "back home," and their ruralness or urbanity of background (Chaichian, 1997). This is to say nothing about the ever-increasing rate of globalization, found in "multinational citizens, diasporic communities, massive flows of transmigration and border crossings" that converge to further complicate acculturation (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

Despite these and other critiques of the BDM's style of measurement, the biculturally-balanced "integrated" position of the fourfold model has long been considered the acculturation strategy with the highest correlation to positive mental health (Berry, 1997, 2002). With regard to issues of content and classification, however, the bicultural option of acculturation—built upon a system of differentials (Baxter, 1988; Deleuze, 1994, p. 181)—is uncomfortably dialectical in nature; this is problematic in a world where individuals can be influenced by various cultures experienced online, through the media, or from immigrants and sojourners—especially since each person is influenced at a different rate, if at all. Such an uneven dispersion of external influences often causes an unstable dilution of core cultural values (Rudmin, 2009).

The problem arising from the variations of Berry's biculturality (integration) is not found in the potentially-decreased homogeneity of cultural effects among immigrants and the bicultural; neither is it necessarily tied to the potential loss of culture in one or many. The problem is, instead, found in the internal and external struggles that arise as a result of conflicting viewpoints among hitherto similar people (Yamada &
Singelis, 1999); for example, if twenty travellers from twenty countries were inexplicably deposited in a cash-only San Antonio flea market, armed only with currencies from their respective homelands, then none of the travellers—hailing from such diverse nations as Russia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Ireland, France, and Korea—could buy anything, and neither could they buy anything from one another (assuming none of them had snuck in a trip to the money-changer before boarding the Texas-bound plane). In other words, the difference in currency—or cultural value—would make it impossible to conduct a successful transaction.

And with regard to the belief that integration is the "healthiest option," Koch & Bjerregaard (2003) write that positive mental health is not significantly related to the strategy of integration, though several studies do present empirical evidence to support the notion that correlations exist between some form of "biculturalism" and positive self-esteem (Soliman & MacAndrew, 1998), positive self-construal (Yamada & Singelis, 1999), and avoidance of negative social behaviors (Padilla, 1994).

These and other inconsistencies and/or inadequacies of the UDM and the BDM have, over time, led to numerous revisions of existing acculturation models or creation of new ones; some examples include dualistic notions like "cultural bifocality" (Rouse, 1992), which involves the ability to "see the world through two different value lenses (Sexton, Weeks & Robbins), or the recently-revisited "double consciousness," defined by Dubois (1903) as the distinction between who African Americans actually were, as opposed to the way they were seen by prejudiced individuals.

Moving from duality to multiplicity, Baron (1991) wrote that acculturation was "multidirectional and multidirectional" (Hall, 2004), based upon observable (clothing, food, language) and unobservable (attitudes, mentalities, beliefs) characteristics of the host culture (Hall, 2004). LaFromboise and various research partners developed a model of cultural adjustment strategies comprised of five options (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; LaFromboise & Rowe, 1983)—alternation, assimilation, acculturation, fusion, and "multicultural" (Hall, 2004); alternation, the most well-known of the five options, is marked by "bicultural competence," while the term acculturation is appropriated and refashioned to indicate "competence in a second culture without complete acceptance." Fusion is a state where the individual creates a new culture based upon the ones she or he has membership with, and the grammatical misfit "multicultural" refers to "distinct cultural identities...maintained within a single multicultural social structure" (LaFromboise et al., 1993); this model's formulation of assimilation is identical to Berry's version, and is defined as "absorption into the dominant culture" (Lena Hall, 2004). LaFromboise's five-sided model, while praised (overall) and mentioned in several therapy handbooks (Falicov, 2000) has, nonetheless, remained relatively unadvanced and is not often used as a framework within current acculturation studies.

Another model has, however, begun to gain support from various academic fields; adapted from Hermans' dialogical self theory, the resulting dialogical model of acculturation (DM) reflects the multiplicity of incompatible cultural positions within a
single person (Bhatia, 2002), and also allows for the concurrent existence of multiple strands (Bakhtin, 1930s/1981; Said, 1999) of language, thought, and self.

As an identity must itself take shape before it can reach a point of conflict with unfamiliar systems, a brief review of relevant identity-formation theories would be helpful; the next section, therefore, gives a general overview of several dominant models of identity before focusing on the theory of the dialogical self, upon which the DM is based.

Identity Formation

While Erik Erikson’s 1968 theory of identity formation posits that identities are formed in adolescence, children studied thirty years later were found to have shown curiosity or begun inquiry into their own ethnic makeup as early as the seventh grade (Roberts et al., 1999); either way, the theory maintains that it is precisely that exploration—and the subsequent commitment—that leads a person to "reconcile his conception of himself and his community’s recognition of him" (Erikson, 1959, p. 120, emphasis in original). Based upon this theory, Marcia (1980, 1994) developed a typology of identity statuses that, like Berry’s fourfold model, contains two dimensions (exploration, commitment) and four states (diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, achieved); likewise, a "diagnosis" of a person’s state is achieved by indicating the absence or presence of each dimension. Umaña-Taylor (2003) thus explains the states:

According to this typology, individuals who have not explored or committed to an identity would be considered diffuse...those who have explored but have not yet committed would be considered to be in moratorium... individuals who have not explored, but have committed to a particular identity would be considered foreclosed, whereas those who have both explored and committed would be considered achieved.

Erikson’s theory and Marcia’s typology, then, both address the formation of identity, whereas a theory articulated by Tajfel covers similar content from a different angle: affect. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1989), which states that a person’s membership in a group forms her or his identity, posits that the valence of a person’s self esteem is based upon the membership group’s social acceptance—or lack thereof (Phinney, 1992; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Umaña-Taylor, 2003).

Phinney uses Marcia’s typology as well as Erikson’s identity formation theory in concert with Tajfel’s social identity theory to create a definition of ethnic identity (1989) followed by a measure of ethnic identity (1992); this Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) evaluates a respondent’s levels of exploration, commitment, participation in cultural activities, and affirmation and belonging regarding their ethnic group. The MEIM accomplishes this using a 14-item instrument that "is used to determine degree of ethnic identity achievement" (Umaña-Taylor, 2003).

Further advancing these notions of identity, ethnicity, and affect is Umaña-Taylor (2003), who adds a third dimension, affirmation, to Marcia’s typology; the result
is that "a positive or negative label is assigned to their diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, or achieved status," yielding such categories as diffuse positive and diffuse negative. The reasoning for this added dimension is that the absence or presence of affirmation is a "distinct component" that influences ethnic identity; or, as she puts it:

the framework through which ethnic identity is examined…can more clearly capture its variability…captures the experiences of individuals who feel that their ethnicity is an important component of their social selves, engage in a process of exploration, resolve their feelings, and choose to affirm the role that their ethnic identity plays in their lives…it also can capture the experiences of individuals who have explored their ethnicity and maintain a clear sense of what that group membership means to them, yet may not ascribe positive feelings toward their ethnic group (Umaña-Taylor, 2003).

She argues that her proposed measure finally makes it "possible to distinguish individuals who are diffuse or foreclosed," and reveals that "White" and other "ethnic majority individuals" in her study mostly fell into the category of diffuse positive (low in exploration, low commitment, positive feelings about their ethnic group) while "the majority of Latino, Asian, and Black individuals" fell into the category of resolution positive (high in exploration, high commitment, positive feelings regarding their ethnic group); these results, she writes, further support other studies' claims that ethnic identity is "more salient for ethnic minority group members" (Phinney, 1989, 1992; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Roberts et al., 1999).

Some identity theories are not, however, based upon dichotomous, fixed options (yes/no, "did they or did they not") that result in typologies (diffuse, moratorium, etc.), but rather open-ended processes that may or may not be followed, and that might end up in any number of variations. The next section discusses one such theory, the theory of the dialogical self.

**The Dialogical Self**

The notion of the "dialogic" (or dialogue between voices) has figured into several prominent theories since William James distinguished between the I and the me—where I is subject and me is object (Barresi, 2002)—and further divided the Self into the material, social, and spiritual selves (Barresi, 2002; James, 1890, p. 329). His formulations, it should be noted, predate (and are not directly related to) Freud’s writings on the id, ego, and super-ego—which did not appear until 1923—but re-appear in some of the Twentieth Century’s most well-known and enduring theories.

In this section, the theory of dialogical self is examined; this examination is important to the study of the dialogical self, due to the great distinction between dialogical acculturation (or related aspects thereof) and psychiatric conditions (which are not included in the goals of this study).
Freud’s writings notwithstanding, some of the subsequent theories influenced by James focused on the existence of polyphony, or multiplicity of voices. Bakhtin, for example, used the polyphony in Dostoevsky’s work as a basis for further inquiry into the notion of various voices—whether they appeared in a person or in a story; the "polyphonic novel," as he called it, was a unified result of distinctly different viewpoints and dialogues. Dialogic works of literature, he claimed, were involved in constant dialogues (or "unending conversations," as Kenneth Burke wrote in 1941); polyphony, he concluded, was responsible for independent elements that "combine but are not merged" (Bakhtin, 1929/1984, p. 6).

Others have focused upon the dynamics of dialogue; Buber, for example, argued that two people enter dialogic relation when they share silences and conversation (Moroco, 2008)—"even when they are separated in space," due to the "continual potential presence of the one to the other" (Buber, 1965, p. 97).

Drawing upon these arguments and further combining the themes of polyphony and dialogue, Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon (1992) formulated the notion that Self is a result of the dialogue between multiple voices or identities within an individual; Hermans, Rijks, & Kempen (1993) further developed the theory by

approaching the self as a polyphonic novel; that is, a novel where different voices, often of a markedly different character and representing a multiplicity of relatively independent worlds, interact to create a self-narrative. (p. 208)

Since then, dialogical self theory has gone on to influence or inspire researchers from relatively unrelated disciplines like philosophy (Cooper, 2003) and cultural anthropology (Van Meijl, 2006); scholars interested in "modernity studies" have also applied the notion to their interdisciplinary field, using it to research such issues as identity within cyberspace (Hevern, 2004), "glocalization" (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007), and digital methods of learning (Ligorio & Pugliese, 2004).

Psychology has also benefited from dialogical self theory, particularly in the areas of psychotherapy (Angus & McLeod, 2004), developmental psychology (Bertau, 2004; Fogel et al., 2002), Jungian psychoanalysis (Beebe, 2002), and cultural or cross-cultural psychology (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008; Bhatia, 2007; Bhatia & Ram, 2002; Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Valsiner, 2002); in this last field especially, many case studies (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004) and a few experiments (Stemplewska et al., 2005; 2006) have been done to develop or test the theory of the dialogical self.

As defined by the cultural branch of psychology, the dialogical self is constructed of four elements: the-other-in-the-self, multiplicity-in-unity, the coexistence of exchange and power, and the importance of innovation (Hermans, 2008; Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992).

The-other-in-the-self refers to the internal dialogues humans have with imaginary others (Watkins, 1986). Social anthropologist J. L. Caughey (1984) identifies three types of these "imaginary figures" (Hermans, 2008): those who are created entirely
by the individual (i.e. a "dream guy" or "imaginary friend"), those who are based upon "media figures" unknown by the individual (i.e., the Secretary of State or Mick Jagger), and those who are "imaginary replicas of lovers, parents, and friends who are treated as if they are actually present" (Hermans, 2008). Due to these dialogues, Hermans claims that an individual’s I:

fluctuates among different and even opposed positions and has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice, so that dialogical relations between positions can develop. The voices behave like interacting characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. Each of them has a story to tell about its own experiences from its own perspective. (Hermans, 1996)

He goes on to explain how these different and distinct "characters exchange information about their respective Mes," resulting in a "complex, narratively structured self" where some of the voices become "more dominant than others" (Hermans, 2008).

The second component of the dialogical self, multiplicity-in-unity, refers to the notion that a healthy individual is whole and unified, but free of the "fragmentation," once required for a diagnosis of that era’s "multiple personality disorder" (Hermans, 2008). Dissociative identity disorder (DID), as it is now called, was brought to public attention through such films as The Three Faces of Eve and Sybil; DID positions the Self within a "disturbed relationship between the 'host personality' and a diversity of separate personalities or 'alters,'" each representing a cast-off or "rejected part...of the original self" (Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 1996, p. 267, in Hermans, 2008).

Hermans draws a distinction between dissociation and multi-voicedness, however, using the organization of selves as a line of difference; in the case of dissociation, the individual’s I is "unable to move flexibly from one part of the self to another," especially in reference to the "requirements of the situation at hand" (Hermans, 2008). This results in an "impeded" dialogue between different selves, and is considered both unhealthy and "aberrant." Within a "healthy dialogical self," however, an "opposition or conflict between positions" is expected or even allowed for, since the oppositions appear in the form of "active shifting between incompatible positions" and not "separation or fragmentation" (Hermans, 2008).

Thus, while several "selves" are found in both cases, it is the "simultaneous, cooperative, and dialogical relationship between different sub-selves" that separates the "healthy" notion of self as multi-voiced but unified from the "unhealthy...sequential, monological succession of" fragmented and rejected parts battling within the dissociative individual’s mind (Hermans, 2008; Watkins, 1986).

The next element of the dialogical self, called coexistence of exchange and power, concerns the construction of Self in light of the environment and surroundings; this element, Hermans writes, is rooted in the Western cultural bias of "self-contained individualism" (Sampson, 1985). Within this system, Self is defined as a "centralized unity with strict boundaries between self and environment that coincide with the skin"
(Hermans, 2008) and a "vessel for storing all the particulars of the person" (Callero, 2003, p. 127). This view is reminiscent of Hall's assertion that "in the Western world, the person is synonymous with an individual inside a skin...[while in] northern Europe generally, the skin and even the clothes may be inviolate," as opposed to the Arab, for which the "location of the person in relation to the body is quite different, [existing] somewhere down inside the body" (Hall, 1966, p. 156).

The final element of the dialogical self is called openness to innovation, which Hermans explains as the willingness to learn new outlooks and strategies (Hermans, 2008). Individuals are said to "position" themselves in agreement with or opposition to a given situation, rather than playing or filling a "role" (Harre & Van Langenhove, 1992).

These four elements—the other-in-the-self, multiplicity-in-unity, the coexistence of exchange and power, and the importance of innovation (Hermans, 2008; Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992)—comprise the theory of dialogical self; despite its roots in cultural psychology, however, the theory does not specifically address the circumstances of shifting between cultures.

The idea of multiplicity does, though, lend itself to Eastern ways of life (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2001), as well as immigration to Western countries by Easterners (Bhatia, 2002), hence the intuitive application of dialogical self theory to immigrants' various attempts to determine just how to acculturate and how much to acculturate.

Having examined the notion of the dialogical—particularly in the case of identity-formation—the dialogical model of acculturation is defined and evaluated.

**The Dialogical Model of Acculturation**

Originating in several unrelated places—the writings of Hermans (1994, 2008), Chaudhary and Sriram (2001), Bhatia (2002, 2004, 2007), and Said (1999), each citing Bakhtin (1930s/1981, 1929/1984) and some recognizing James (1890)—the dialogical model of acculturation is the only model in circulation that allows an immigrant to simultaneously exist in whatever state is most comfortable for him or her, accepting the multiplicity of his or her identities as options, not oppression, polyphony, not cacophony. In this section, the flexible model providing this dissertation with a framework is described and evaluated.

The word "dialogue" is comprised of "dia," Greek for "through," and "logos" which may refer to "meaning," "word" or "spirit" (Bohm, 1996). Goodall (1996) writes of the special power that dialogue has to help one "transcend the ordinariness of everyday life" (in Poulos, 2008), while Poulos (2008) likens dialogue to "unchoreographed dancing" imbued with "creative or transformative energy" that he calls "unruly, unpredictable, extraordinary, and deeply entwined with both the desires and the actions of the dancers."

The most well-known (or best-selling) literature discussing the dialogical acculturation strategy is *Out of Place* (1999), the memoir of Edward Said, whose very name inspired his defense of multiplicity: "Edward," he shares, was a Western name that stood out during his childhood in Palestine and Egypt, while "Said" was the ultimate in
what he called "Arab names." His arrival in the United States upon entering young adulthood only added more confusion—or interest—to the mix, and for years he wondered who he was; as early as 1978, he is said to have wondered "whether the idea of a separate and distinct culture is even a good one" (Zemon, 2003). Finally, however, he embraced a freedom stemming from the realization that he was all of them:

the underlying motifs for me have been the emergence of a second self buried for a very long time beneath a surface of often expertly acquired and wielded social characteristics belonging to the self my parents tried to construct, the "Edward" I speak of intermittently, and how an extraordinarily increasing number of departures have unsettled my life from its earliest beginnings. To me, nothing more painful and paradoxically sought after characterizes my life than the many displacements from countries, cities, abodes, languages, environments that have kept me in motion all these years....I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self and identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents, like the themes of one’s life, flow along during the waking hours, and at their best, they require no reconciling, no harmonizing. They are "off" and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in-place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations and moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme. A form of freedom, I'd like to think, even if I am far from being totally convinced that it is. That skepticism, too, is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place. (Said, 1999, pp. 217, 295)

Early support for this notion of the multi-cultured, multi-stranded self came from Raggatt, who, like Said (though not particularly in response to the Arab-American), opposed the existence of an autonomous core "self" or "ego" identity; his counterargument endorsed a multi-voiced or dialogical self, which he saw as "the product of alternative and often opposing narrative voices, each of which has his or her own life story, competing for dominance" (2000).

As in Hermans' theory of the dialogical self, these oppositions create and allow "dynamic movement between voices," involving "negotiation, disagreement, power, playing, negotiation, negation, conflict, domination, privileging, and hierarchy" (Bhatia, 2004). This polyphony of voices is said to stem from their "movement between a multiplicity of I positions" (Bhatia, 2004). Josephs (2002) explains the notion of voice by writing that:
the obvious characteristic of the voice is its potential to speak, to tell a story...this story is not just any story but a motivated story, rooted in emotions. A voice can talk to other voices, agree or disagree with the other voices’ stories. A voice can also be ignored or silenced by other voices...A voice can take over the floor and become...the logical figure on a ground of temporarily invisible backgrounded other voices. But a voice can also [demand that] another previously suppressed voice to come to the fore. Last but not least, a voice can change qualitatively due to its interaction with another voice. (Josephs, 2002)

This means that the self is fluid when encountering various cultures and situations; those from countries with a polychronic orientation would, then, have an advantage in dealing with the dozens of cohesive fragments that may comprise one person. Chaudhary and Sriram (2001) would agree, having written that the dialogical model is "very comforting to the Indian mind," continuing that:

For the Indian psyche, the dialogical self is a reality...the notion of a dialogical self is inherent in the social milieu in which Indians grow up, are socialized and live, and on which they depend for physical, social, and spiritual sustenance.

Sunil Bhatia, who has published on the dialogical model of acculturation more often than anyone (other than Hermans, who led the dialogical renaissance in psychology), defines the "ethnic" dialogical self in the terms of Berry’s model, writing that:

The dialogical process involves the ethnic minority group or individuals moving continuously between opposing cultural positions while simultaneously holding positions of being assimilated, separated and marginalized. The model implies that acculturation and identity are both dynamic, with the ethnic minority individual creating multiple presentations of the self depending on other individuals and also the situations encountered. (2002, emphasis mine)

Despite the fact that the dialogic self emphasizes multiplicity, it is not meant to foster chaos or disorganization; that is, just because the theory allows for multiple strands does not mean that dialogical perspectives haven’t been thoughtfully considered—or discussed—from different angles (White, 2008). For example, Buber (1958) writes of "equiprimordialization," which offers a person the choice of pursuing further dialogue (White, 2008), while Josephs (2002) writes that voices are sometimes "backgrounded," implying a consciously-made decision. This is not to say that a person choosing one behavior over another is necessarily choosing it on the basis that it reflects a culture he would like to embody at that moment, only that the behavior itself is merely
the best or most fitting course of action in that particular case, and according to that particular person. So it would seem that the credo of the dialogical self is a relativistic "anything goes," so long as that anything is useful.

On the other hand, a complete absence of parameters might end up freeing the individual from any loyalty at all—whether to culture or interests or personality—resulting in a permanent marginalized state of indifference, not freedom; as British lyricist Gaz Coombes (1999) put it, "I do not know why to stay...no ties to bind me, no reason to remain...just keep moving, I'll keep moving, well I do not know who I am..."

_Culture, Society, and the Dialogical Model_

The notion that personality "is what it is," as opposed to being rigidly defined as "Egyptian" or "Western," transforms the person into a free agent, fashioned from any and all elements that she or he has come across and deemed useful—whether or not the determination of "usefulness" is agreed upon by the conscious and subconscious. For example, Magda may notice and subsequently learn (without volition) a Western strategy that she heartily disapproves of; in this case, her conscious abhorrence for said strategy does not affect her unconscious acquisition of it in the first place.

At the same time, however, the question arises of whether certain identities within a person may actually be mutually exclusive. In this section, the varying effects of culture and society upon the dialogical model are discussed, beginning with the aforementioned mutual exclusivity of various identities.

One example of mutual exclusivity and the dialogical model is that a person cannot fully belong to Christianity and Islam; each system of belief requires adherence to respective scriptures that vary greatly, both in histories and philosophies. The children of interfaith marriages may disagree about the mutual exclusivity of their parents' faiths, but discussions with religious leaders of most systems of belief would likely result in chapters, verses, suras, and/or credos that "proved" the interfaith children "wrong." Other examples concerning religion involve Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Christian Scientists—who maintain their Christian statuses despite the fact that many of the "mainstream" Christian denominations do not consider them to be so—and Catholics—some of whom consider their denomination to be the only true Christianity, others of whom claim to be Catholic and not Christian, while some non-Catholics agree that Catholicism does not count as Christianity.

Cases can effectively be made for and against each of the preceding examples; this is because individuals supporting opposing sides may construct notions of religion or denomination or piety, even, in different ways, leading to the question "just what is meaning, then?". The following answer is from Kurzman (2001), who links the making of meaning with the evolution of society:

Meaning includes moral understandings of right and wrong, cognitive understandings of true and false, perceptual understandings of like and
unlike, social understandings of identity and difference, aesthetic understandings of attractive and repulsive, and any other understandings that we may choose to identify through our own academic processes of meaning-making...Meaning-making is not limited to social movements. All action involves meaning-making, just as all action involves contention. However, social movements may be a particularly conducive site to privilege meaning-making, because their activities foreground resistance to the dominant norms and institutions of society. They raise questions about the possibility of alternative world-views and alternative dispensations, and in so doing they challenge participants and observers to re-think meanings that are too often taken for granted. Social movements actively make meaning, challenging established meanings. (Kurzman, 2001)

The preceding passage inspires questions like the following: If Egyptians challenge Egyptian-ness and change who they are in order to emulate the West, are they still Egyptians? What makes them Egyptian? What makes Egypt 'Egypt,' other than location and history? And ultimately, is there any use in protecting the integrity of cultural difference in a world where communication can and does occur so easily and regularly across time zones?

Other people are asking similar questions about their own cultures; for example, Bhatia (2007) shares several "questions of acculturation" asked by Indian Americans, including "Am I an authentic Indian? American? Or both?" as well as "Do I belong here or there or nowhere?" and "Am I black, brown, or white?"

Khan (2001), speaking of the "emerging identities" within a changing India, similarly wonders whether they will reflect (or perhaps imitate) Western constructions and whether those who adopt these identities will attempt to live these out within Indian cultures, or whether differing identities will be constructed. (p. 111)

While his research is focused upon "queer Indian bloggers" and this study is focused on socially-stifled and sometimes-closeted Egyptians, the concerns over distinct Eastern identities—as opposed to darker-skinned and accented versions of, as he writes, "Western constructions" thereof—are very similar; these are not, however, the only questions associated with Eastern and Western constructions of society. As previously mentioned, the dialogical model of acculturation lends itself to Eastern philosophies. One may therefore ponder why Easterners often experience such difficulty "dealing with" Western ways, if dialogical thought—that is, the balancing of two or more opposing viewpoints—is so foundational to their culture.

An answer suggested by the researcher’s pilot studies, as well as preliminary literature and document reviews, is that these Easterners are, when "back home," dialogical within only one framework. That is, they juggle any number of opposing options, but generally filter their decisions through a collectivist framework, so that even
if their selection is contrary to Eastern customs, the final outcome of the selection is not. For example, whether a woman avoids dating (in order to protect her family's image), or a man dates frequently (closeting his activities from family or society in order to avoid disinheriting), each is visibly operating by the "rules" of collectivism, and reaping the "benefits" thereof; another woman may date openly (for whatever reason) and be punished ("dissed, dismissed, and disowned") or not for her behaviors, but reactions to those behaviors will ultimately involve and perhaps even hinge upon collectivist concerns. The actual selections themselves (dating secretly, openly, or not at all) are immaterial, since many or most Easterners are "in the same boat," with respect to the necessity of suppressing or closeting their behavior.

In the West, however, it is likely more stressful to avoid and/or closet that which many or most of the natives are able—and often encouraged—to do, whether those behaviors include dating or making individual decisions. By the same token, being engaged with other Eastern-Westerners might provide additional support for maintaining the Eastern way—though it may also create additional stress, if members of the home community "cramp their style" by perpetuating the system of external controls.

The presence of and connection with a cultural (Egyptian) or religious (Muslim, Coptic Orthodox, etc.) diaspora may therefore ease or intensify cultural woes, but so, too, might the lack of any fellow Egyptians (or Coptic Protestants, Easterners, etc.); this is an important connection to explore, and while a portion of the dissertation's participants have skirted the connection, it should be noted that these elements have not been commonly researched with respect to the dialogical framework.

Unsurprisingly, every major article or book written on dialogic acculturation processes has come from someone with more than one cultural reference point; for example, despite having worked or spent significant time in North America, Chaudhary, Sriram, Ram and Bhatia are Indian, Hermans is from the Netherlands, Bakhtin was Russian (Min, 2001), and Said was an "Arab." It is only logical, then, that nations with rich diversities of citizens would partially embrace a viewpoint that individualism generally shuns (Althen, 1988)—the one that says people's personalities are fluid (Said, 1999); or, more to the point, as "Americans" get more "ethnic," and as America gets less homogenous—as cultural pluralism takes root—so, too, must the hitherto individualistic society of the United States admit that personality and identity might just be fluid (Hermans, 1994; Hermans & Kempens, 1998), at least for some Americans. Also, that this fluidity might be helpful in dealing with people from different cultures.

As immigrants (and members of rapidly-evolving societies, for that matter) vacillate between useful but repulsive options, as they attempt to navigate between concepts or affiliations once thought to be mutually exclusive, as they wonder which nationality they belong to and, ultimately, whether previous versions of those national identities even remain in circulation today, the dialogical model—applied to self, adjustment, and culture in general, really—becomes the only viable option in the dynamic, global world of today; it could, however, benefit from some modifications, however. As this section as provided the basic details of the dialogical model of
acculturation, the next one provides details about some modifications which may increase the benefits of the model.

**New Directions**

Since so much has been written about the bidimensional model of acculturation, it would only seem natural to continue with what has proven so successful; there are, however, many things that the BDM does not account for, such as situation, mood, or stage of life (Ryder et al., 2000). In a way, the DM fills those gaps, by acknowledging the shifts most people undergo from month to month and moment to moment. On the other hand, the dialogical model does not account for everything and, furthermore, suffers from a few gaps of its own.

In this section, these and other previously mentioned rationales for the study—the gaps in the dialogical model, specifically—are discussed in greater detail, followed by a formal statement of the new directions suggested by the researcher’s pilot study and preliminary literature review.

Very generally speaking, the DM seems to fall short of actually making a difference to immigrants. This is because it does not make a distinction between those who are benefiting from their (perhaps unconscious) adherence to the DM and those who constantly experience identity crises because of it. In other words, the dialogical model may reassure the immigrant that “It is only natural that we’re made up of different influences fighting for dominance,” but may not help make decisions or exorcise feelings of conflict, trauma, and guilt.

Some may argue that neither UDM nor BDM reached the "practical" level of making a direct difference in immigrants’ lives, but the fact that those models seemed to skulk in dusty corners of psychologists’ personal libraries—making the frequent-but-random cameo appearance in scholarly studies (which themselves lurked in bookshelves inaccessible to most immigrants)—does not mean that the dialogical model has to, or even should follow suit; it has too much to offer, and the effort required to make a difference with it is negligible—particularly when compared to the trauma that could be reduced by using it.

This trauma, as previously mentioned, arises from the common linkage of "change" with "disloyalty," resulting in a pairing which often leads many Arabs to believe that their ability to adjust to Western ways makes them less Arab—or more traitorous (Nydell, 2002). Furthermore, the Arab who has suffered through a tug-of-war between East and West will not be contented with a mere assurance or "diagnosis" confirming that he has, indeed, suffered; rather, he will want to talk about it, maybe even do something about it—even if those words or actions fail to resolve the issue to his liking. As Raphael Patai (1973) noted, "threats, demands, or intentions...once uttered, relax emotional tension, give psychological relief" to the adult Arab (1973, 60, 64-5), supporting the claim that dialogue is a useful element to use with Eastern populations—both in the "diagnosis" and "treatment" of their acculturation issues.

To this end, it may be useful to add a qualifying label of "negative" to particular states in the immigrant’s experience of polyphony, similar to Umaña-Taylor’s (2003)
addition of "affirmation" to Marcia's typology of cultural exploration and commitment. The failure to use that label is indicative of a relatively well-adjusted state where decisions are made through rational choice (as opposed to guilt), and where the individual is free from harrowing symptoms that present when attempting to decide between "Eastern" and "Western" courses of action; the "normal" dialogical state is, then, what Hermans (1994, 2002) and Bhatia (2002, 2004) have been calling "dialogical acculturation."

The negative dialogical state (NDS), on the other hand, represents a time and place of overwhelming struggle, confusion, conflict; the individual realizes that there are several options open to her, but in her current state she can only see the drawbacks of each. For example, dating a young man she is fond of might make her happy, but it will also force her to be secretive and perhaps deceptive to family members; not dating the young man will make her sad; agreeing to an arranged marriage might make her angry. Thus, she is torn between many options, each of which seems worse than the last one; this "being torn" is only half of the negative dialogical state, however, for such conflicts as the one described above are quite common amidst Egyptians (in Egypt and the diaspora)—and quite normal within the dialogical model. For the label of NDS to be "earned" (according to my proposal), other criteria must be met; these criteria are not "established" in the scholarly sense, however, having only been noted in one scholarly work (this one), and are not, therefore, included in the current section, though they appear in Part II, in conjunction with the situations I've counted as "evidence" supporting the validity of the negative dialogical state.

While it would be presumptuous to include NDS criteria in this section dedicated to "official" theories, it would be negligent to exclude from this discussion the need for and benefits of the proposed label of NDS; very simply, if a college freshman facing the quandary described above ("to date or not to date") has heard about the NDS in her church youth group, she may take comfort in the fact that Egyptians world-wide have gone through the exact same issue, she may seek anecdotal advice about getting rid of NDS, she may even realize that professional help may be required to deal with the serious and pervasive NDS. This may seem very basic, but one must consider the alternative of "leaving things the way they are now." In the case of ignoring the smaller conflict over dating, such ignorance may result in any number of unpleasant or unwise consequences; in the case of ignoring the larger issue—that of NDS—such ignorance may result in ten or more years of visiting and revisiting the same few problems and experiencing increasing levels of the same "symptoms" that have made her first year in college miserable; in the case of leaving the dialogical model as it is now, it should be noted that whatever the source (priest, parent, internet psychic, counselor), simply labeling her indecision "dialogical" does nothing at all for her, though being able to offer a plan of action or set of communication strategies appropriate to the situation might. For example, if it isn't NDS, then perhaps those strategies, tailored to the issues—dating depressions, work-place woes, etc.—may be more than enough; if it is NDS, then the issue—that of the person's underlying state—may be dealt with. It is very important that the actual problem (whether situation or NDS) be addressed; ignoring a genuine
workplace woe (failed communication, sexual harassment, etc.) in order to address a case of NDS that doesn't exist is just as pointless as treating a sprained ankle with a thigh-high plaster cast, while solving an immigrant's dating dilemma but leaving NDS unchecked is just as harmful (and unwise) as wearing a long-sleeved shirt to hide the blood dripping from a fatal slash of the wrist.

In addition to providing those most susceptible to NDS with information about self-diagnosis and resources, "preventative training" may help immigrant parents avoid approaches known to fail, or at least provide them with information to facilitate detection of "warning signs" in their children. Moreover, Umaña-Taylor's (2003) research suggests that using a "typology classification may be useful for understanding how different components of ethnic identity relate to outcome variables such as self-esteem," and despite the fact that typologies are the precise opposite of the multi-strandedness of the dialogical model, the documentation of common issues caused by disparities in the identifications, cultural orientations, and communication styles within one family could reveal a more effective method of dealing with common problems.

That said, I am not suggesting that coping strategies should be written for every variation of every possible issue or situation that Egyptians (regardless of birth and current place of residence) have ever experienced; in this time of social change, it would be impossible, anyway, as the "trendiest" problem might be a distant memory by the time resources and literature are publicly available. Instead, I have attempted to address a heretofore-neglected element that usually increases the difficulty of the acculturation struggle: the disparity between identifications, cultural orientations, and communication styles of various Egyptian Americans. The disparity is often quite obvious between immigrant and American-born Egyptians (i.e. immigrant parents and their second-generation kids), who are more likely to encounter people with various identifications, orientations, and styles than are Egyptians "back home." This is not to say that the actual conflicts over important issues—such as freedom, virginity, or "acceptable" marriage partners—do not matter, only that ineffective communication and unstable identifications and/or orientations might make normal, expected conflicts—such as "developmental issues" that often plague adolescents and their parents (Sam & Oppedal, 2002)—that much worse.

Furthermore, while some studies persist in using such categories as "traditionalists" or "negotiators" or "rebels" in their classifications of coping styles used by immigrants and their children, this usage ignores two facts: the first is that these are extremely broad categories which neglect to address or even take into consideration an individual's conflicted state of mind. That is, these categories only address the actual outcomes of situations, and not the process of getting there; this is significant because one "traditionalist" may actually subscribe to the ideals she is exemplifying in her decisions, while another may be suffering immensely as she complies with family wishes but dreams of another course of action. This study has been, therefore, less interested in uncovering end-stage behaviors (that is, outcomes) and more interested in exploring those elements that tended to reappear within a given individual's self-perpetuating negative cycles—namely conflicts between actions and attitudes—and
those elements leading to them. Many Egyptian men, for example, report that they
would not marry a woman who had ever experienced feelings for a man—even if the
feelings were never articulated (like a "crush" from afar) or acted upon ("What do
Egyptian boys think...", 1999). Likewise, the study’s interest was in a person’s intent—
whether the resulting action was realized or not. The second ignored fact is that even if
there were pure "traditionalists" or "negotiators" (Netting, 2006), the number of people
(in general, not just in this study) who are entirely one way or another is likely very
small, particularly since notions of "traditional" so greatly vary from one person to
another, and from one generation to the next, since "each generation is less conservative
than the last," according to one of my key informants.

Thus, viewing the communication dimensions (identification, cultural
orientation, communication style) as both indices of acculturation and as obstacles to
communication proved doubly effective in this study; furthermore, this unique focus
will hopefully assist in future methods of intervention and assistance among relevant
populations. Finally, as previously suggested, the tailoring of preventative and curative
strategies to problems common among acculturating or bicultural individuals will
hopefully reduce the frequency of present and future conflicts, positively impacting a
large percentage of Egyptians, Arabs, Easterners, collectivists, and humans.

As the new direction for the dialogical model has been outlined, the next section
takes a closer look at the indices of acculturation used in this study.

Indices of Acculturation

As the "godfather of acculturation" once wrote, "a good deal of confusion has
surrounded the measurement of acculturation" (Berry, 1980, p. 12). These words, which
accompanied the arrival of John Berry’s fourfold model nearly thirty years ago, are just as
true today as they were then and will, in all likelihood, be just as true thirty years from
now. Despite such confusion, however, researchers must continue to propose new
methods of inquiry into this significant topic.

The following section discusses indices used to measure acculturation, beginning
with a review of past methods used in other studies, moving into an analysis of why these
methods could not have worked for this study, and finally shifting to the communication
theories underpinning the indices used in this study.

Previous Studies

Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady (1991), taking Berry’s thought about confusion and
acculturation-measuring to the next level, once counseled researchers to "give
individualized attention to the specific culture of immigrant groups [when] developing
acculturation measures," though more than ten years after that advice was given, the
question of "how to best conceptualize and measure acculturation and enculturation for
specific racial and ethnic groups" (Lee et al., 2006) was still considered a "persistent
problem" (Kim & Abreu, 2001).
Nonetheless, acculturation research has continued; in this section, the three communication dimensions—which are being used (in this study) as indices of acculturation—are defined and discussed.

The first dimension, identification, is a common index of acculturation among studies of cultural adaptation; defined as the extent to which a person identifies—or wishes to be identified—with a certain culture (Faragallah et al., 1997), identification is sometimes used interchangeably with a similar (but not identical) word—"identity." The latter word may refer to various ingredients that distinguish one person from another, though it may also refer to the various memberships a person "identifies”—or wishes to be identified—with, hence the usage of both terms (identification and identity) in the dissertation.

Some, like Kulczyzsky and Lobo (2002), feel that "the extent to which ethnic intermarriage occurs is widely accepted as an important indicator of assimilation and identification," claiming that intermarriage between American-born Arabs and non-Arabs necessarily implies a "diminishing ethnic identification," while others measure various acculturation levels through such commonly-used indices as length of residence in the U.S., exclusive use of the English language, current age, age of arrival, endogamous social relations, food preference, frequency of home-culture cooking or meal-consumption, outgroup marriage, education level, socioeconomic status, and participation in or engagement with American or English-language media—whether newspapers, television, or film (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997; Kulczyzsky & Lobo, 2002; Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2003; Wald & Williams, 2005; Zsembik & Beeghley, 1996). Additionally, in response to the recommendations of Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady (1991), Tsai and Knutson (2000) developed the General Ethnicity Questionnaire for Chinese Americans, while Henry, Biran, & Stiles (2005) developed the Perceived Parental Acculturation Behavior Scale (PPABS) specifically for Arab Americans.

These measures, while effective in quantitative studies, would not identify a participant's identification so readily in a qualitative study; for example, it is true that statements such as "I prefer Arabic food" or "I would marry a non-Egyptian" may help uncover certain attitudes or behaviors, and, thus, identifications held by respondents, but the aforementioned studies' reliance on purely quantitative measures would not have worked in this dissertation's conception of "measuring" acculturation. This is for several reasons, including the fact that Likert and Likert-type scales cannot remain concise and yet account for every possible exception, such as the Egyptian who loves the culinary creations of her home land but abstains from them, due to severe food allergies; scaled questionnaires (such as those asking participants to "Check all that apply") would be similarly insensitive to a "separated" Egyptian man who nonetheless shuns all Arabic food due to traumatic memories of his mother's "cooking." Another reason for the incompatibility includes the lack of richness that makes this study a qualitative one. Finally, with regard to the aforementioned gap in the dialogical model's conception of acculturation, the lack of an actual definition for the notion of "acculturation" makes it impossible to create a comprehensive scale "measuring" it.
Another problem with identification comes from negative stereotypes that Westerners sometimes have of Arabs (Shaheen, 2003); for example, many Egyptians and Arabs reacted to September 11th by outwardly distancing themselves from everything—from "strange" writing to "bizarre-sounding" languages—that could be misconstrued as "Other." Pragmatically speaking, the cost of bringing Arabic media into one's home may be prohibitive to some Arabic-speakers; but while it often seems that Christian Egyptians (in the Diaspora or not) are usually highly-educated and often successful, there are those who cannot afford such luxuries, and others who could not or will not justify the expense. Moreover, the fact that an Egyptian or Egyptian American does have subscriptions to Arabic newspapers or the Dish Network does not mean that he or she necessarily views either, or that they view them out of affection for and identification with the language.

Finally, with regard to obstacles arising from the Egyptian mentality, I originally forecasted that some participants might become suspicious of certain questions, particularly those dealing with identification as an Arabic-speaker or a Christian; further, I felt that if participants disliked specific questions, they would insist on criticizing or lecturing before deigning to answer each questionnaire question in the traditional Egyptian mode—garrulous, theatrical, and abounding with qualifiers or spiral logic. My predictions did, of course, come true, and while such courses of action were not unwelcome to me at all—quite the contrary, actually—a quantitative questionnaire would have been skewed by such actions, if its inflexibility did not itself "skew" the actions (by obstructing them).

As previous studies’ indices have been presented and critiqued in this section, the next discusses those indices used in the dissertation.

This Study

As the sections above have defined various models of acculturation as well as past indices thereof, the next reviews relevant literature and further discusses this study’s choice of acculturation-indicating dimensions—identification, cultural orientation, and communication style.

First of all, each of these dimensions served a somewhat different purpose within the larger goal of triangulation. For example, the first dimension was meant to indicate whether participants identified as Egyptian, American, both, or neither, whereas the second and third dimensions—cultural orientation and communication style—were supposed to indicate participants’ knowledge of Egypt’s cultural orientation and communication styles, and their tendencies to adhere to them.

Through these different—but equally telling—dimensions of communication, participants’ preference for or bias against the cultural influences appearing within their multiplicities was supposed to emerge; these two facts were and are foundational to the creation of a viable definition of acculturation, and the validation of my concept of a qualifying label (the negative state) to be used with the model of dialogical acculturation.

The following sections explain each dimension of interest, provide an example of it, then discuss the research questions guiding inquiry into those areas.
First Dimension: Identification

Defined as the extent to which a person identifies (or wishes to be identified) with a certain culture (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997), identification has been used by many in their explorations of acculturation, including Richardson (1967) in his work with minorities, and Padilla (1980) in his work with Mexican immigrants; measures of identification have also been used in studies on Arab acculturation, such as those by Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb (1997), Kulcyzsky & Lobo (2002), and Wald & Williams (2005), among others.

These and other studies have all shown that identification with any group, but especially a cultural group, is an important factor in a person's mental health (Hovey, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Koch & Bjerregaard, 2003), sense of self (Yamada & Singelis, 1999), and interactions with people of similar or different identifications (Sidanius et al., 2003); a 1994 study by Padilla found that members of second- and third-generations experienced higher rates of "social ills" like drugs, alcohol, AIDS, teen pregnancy, gang membership or domestic violence, due to a lack of proximity to the customs of their parents' home culture, while Umaña-Taylor (2003) reported that white respondents had lower levels of ethnic identification than did subjects of all "non-white" groups.

But having a membership is only part of the battle, for some memberships lack enough support, while others provide excellent support—by getting "too close for comfort." As this section has discussed memberships and their importance, the next describes two particular support levels of these memberships—and their implications.

Second Dimension: Cultural Orientation

In the last section, identifications and "memberships" were discussed. In this section, two particular support levels of one particular membership take center stage; these support levels lie at opposite sides of the spectrum of cultural orientation: at the "more supportive" (or "more stifling") end is found collectivism, whose opposite—individualism—is found at the "less restrictive" (or "less supportive") end. It should be noted that while cultural orientation generally refers to families (as opposed to friends), the terms "collectivist" and "individualist" may be used in other contexts; furthermore, while it is certainly possible for different members of the same family to occupy exceedingly different positions on the spectrum of cultural orientation, it is more common (and less problematic) if members' positions are somewhat close. For example, while Mr. X is a hard-core individualist, his teenagers might be closet collectivists; in such a case, the teenagers could feel unloved, while Papa X may feel stifled by his children's insistence that he call home (where they are sitting at the edge of their gold-leafed chairs) every two hours "just 'ashan nettamen 'alek!" [just so we can make sure you're ok]. This example was a bit ironic, as the roles have been reversed—at least in terms of today's Egyptian family.

Abandoning irony, however, we find that the broad category encompassing most Egyptian traits is, indeed, collectivism; this cultural orientation is responsible for a number of lesser cultural syndromes and practices—including communication style. Since cultural
orientation involves attitudes (that lead to committing or suppressing actions), whereas communication style involves actions (that may be influenced by attitudes), these dimensions remain separate and distinct within the study; apart from explaining both cultural orientations in greater detail, this section also identifies the multiple domains of cultural and social practice that are influenced by collectivism—and threatened by its opposite, individualism.

It should be noted that because the study’s demographic of interest has traditionally subscribed to collectivism, it is that cultural orientation to which the section is devoted; furthermore, the "Egyptian version" of the dimensions under review—identification by family or religion, the collectivist cultural orientation (and those cultural syndromes it is responsible for), and the forthcoming communication style subcategory of high context communication—all represent a significant portion of Egyptian culture that has been woven so intricately into the fabric of that society that breaches of convention are often blamed upon Westernization before anything else; for example, a 22-year-old Egyptian immigrant who now speaks of his own image, his own self-esteem, and "doing what works for me" in a direct, low context manner may have his "Egyptianness" called into question by more traditional relatives (who likely shake their heads and sigh that el wad et’ Amrak [the boy became Americanized]). It is, of course, true that the "new generation" of Egyptians (mid-teens to late-twenties) has (in general) been exposed to "Western" culture more than their parents had at the same age, but it is also true that most or all of that new generation are at least familiar with the customs and mentalities that still surround them. The point here is that an abandonment of "the Egyptian way"—by a person who has always kept it, anyway—is almost automatically interpreted as "cultural" in nature, and is sometimes viewed as a betrayal.

On the other hand, while an American’s "unclear" communication (marked by spiral logic or indirectness) and "enmeshed relationships" might be interpreted by other Americans as "rambling" and "clingingness" (or just plain weirdness) respectively, it is almost certain that none of those other Americans would ever accuse the clinging rambler of being "less American"—even if the American in question had just returned from a year-long mission trip to Egypt. The point here is that culture is probably one of the last things that would occur to an American attempting to explain a change in (or just plain "strange") behavior, and would not signal a betrayal of family or "Americanness" in the least.

This is a very important difference to note, because it may seem quite odd to non-Egyptian readers that the communication dimensions could become such insurmountable obstacles to the "acculturation" of immigrant Egyptians; it is, therefore, helpful to keep in mind that an abandonment of the "Egyptian way" could be perceived as a great transgression against the Egyptian emphasis upon image and honor—especially since many Arabs feel that adopting technological or cultural innovations (the internet and individualism, respectively) automatically signifies acceptance of the moral code belonging to the innovation’s country of origin (Nydell, 2002).

Shifting to the larger notion of the collective, T. E. Lawrence once wrote that "Arabs believe in persons, not in institutions" (1926, p. 24). This is only true if one realizes that to Arabs (and Egyptians), each person is merely part of an all-encompassing institution: the
family. Arabs take membership, its privileges, and the responsibilities thereof, very seriously (Nydell, 2002). Thus, as in any collectivist culture, Egyptians (and Arabs) are concerned with the protection of honor, image, and connections.

Unlike some other collectivist cultures, however, Arab honor is, as previously mentioned, largely derived from the perceived innocence of female members (Wilson, 2006, p. 92). To this end, Arabs and Egyptians are cautious about meetings between the sexes, making sure to "avoid situations where they would be alone together, even for a short time," as it is considered "improper to be in a room together with the door closed, to go out on a date as a couple, or to travel together, even on a short daytime trip" (Nydell, 2002, p. 64). Familiarity (or the impression thereof) leads to the assumption of lax moral standards, as might the appearance of a single female of marriageable age in a culture where marriage is "expected of everyone" (p. 51)—even though sexual trysts are actually relatively difficult to arrange in a country where "unmarried couples simply do not live with one another" (Wilson, 2006, p. 92).

Egyptians, unsurprisingly, inherit their family's social status; changing social class is, for example, quite difficult (Nydell, 2002, pp 85-87). Families defend one another, not because of affection, but because a mark against one's family translates into a mark against oneself. In addition to this, high-class Arabs tend to limit their socialization to those in their class, marking an orientation of high power distance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Nydell, 2002). Hofstede and Hofstede write that following rituals is just as important to the collective as is financial support (2005, p. 88), and that mate selection is a "crucial event" for collectivist societies; this is because they view marriages as taking place between families, not individuals (p. 99). Collectivism also gives preference to hiring relatives of owner and employees, as opposed to individualistic societies' fear and dislike of nepotism (p. 100).

With respect to the formation of collective identities, Tedlock and Mannheim (1995) write that the process is dialogic in nature. Regarding the transmission of those qualities that form the type of personality most valued by the collective, the "process that links developing individuals to their cultural contexts" is called enculturation (Berry et al., 1992, p. 271). Enculturation, Miller asserts, is a function of collectivism, as it allows one to learn the boundaries of the collective mindset by repetition and exposure to them; acculturation, on the other hand, refers to learning a new culture (2007).

Since "culture is to society what memory is to individuals" (Kluckhohn, 1954), it is unsurprising that the Middle East's history of nomadic tribes and Bedouins still informs the cultures and traditions there; the maintenance of the "tribe's" image—otherwise known as "family honor"—demands very specific behaviors for every occasion. One way of accomplishing this includes a set of guidelines that are "bred in the collectivist family," so that each extension of the collective instinctively automatically avoids shame (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 89) while protecting "face" (Ho, 1976; Hu, 1944).

Condon and Yousef actually consider one of Middle Eastern society's "primary cultural values" to be a "preoccupation with the concept of face, façades, and appearances" (1975, p. 160), which causes Arabs to rely heavily upon facework as well as
context (Goffman, 1967) and indirectness (Holtgraves, 1997) to protect face and avoid shame.

Face, defined as "a mask that changes depending on the audience and the social interaction," (Goffman, 1967) both protects and enhances the image and reputation of the collective within society. An Egyptian striving to maintain or protect the collective face may exaggerate, deny, or fabricate facts (Nydell, 2002, p. 45); he or she may also use these same deceptive strategies to save the face of others.

This is not because of an excessive concern for feelings, however; rather, it is due to the fact that a failure to protect the face of another is regarded as a breach of protocol, and often poisons future interactions with the person, their family, and the set of personal connections that they potentially bring to the relationship (Nydell, 2002). Moreover, many collectivist cultures consider deception correct or "moral" when done to protect the in-group (Triandis 2002; Triandis et al, 2001). Westerners may, on these grounds, believe Easterners to be insincere, dishonest, or phony (Nydell, 2002); Goffman, however, does not exonerate Westerners from face-related deception, writing that individualists in the West engage in a manipulative "information game" of their own, a "potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery" that allows individuals real or imagined control over the way they are perceived by others (Goffman, 1959, p. 8).

One particular face-saving strategy used by many collectivist cultures and most Middle Eastern countries is high context communication; in this communication style, the speaker uses euphemisms, symbols, signals, codes, or seemingly unrelated comments, while the listener interprets them based on their cultural background (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In successful high context communication, the speaker and listener exchange accurate underlying messages and information without compromising the face or honor of anyone involved. For example, in Egypt, a middle-aged woman may approach a young woman she's never met or seen around and ask for assistance—not because she requires it but because she's identified the girl as a potential spouse for her son or nephew. This high context message achieves the goal of making contact while protecting the face of the woman's family (just in case the girl is married or uninterested) as well as that of the young woman (just in case she has a horrible speaking voice or turns out to be unsuitable).

In addition to the aforementioned array of behaviors associated with collectivism is a set of what Triandis (2002) calls "cultural syndromes." The particular syndromes that Egyptian culture has been "diagnosed with" include the simple, tight, diffuse (Triandis, 2002), vertical (Ting Toomey, 1999; Triandis, 2002), and high-power-distance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) orientations; additionally, writes Triandis, Arab and/or Middle Eastern cultures are usually based upon ascription and are instrumental, emotionally suppressive, and polychronic (Triandis, 2002) in nature.

Simple (not to be confused with simplistic) cultures are based on models of clans or villages; these cultures do not have many types of jobs, they are not wealthy, and the people tend to have relationships that might be described as tightly-knit—though not necessarily out of affection (Triandis, 2002). Tight cultures are those with rigid laws in
place, and strict punishment for transgressors. Diffuse cultures associate everything with personal feelings; for example, saying "I disagree" or "I am not fond of that sweater" are commensurate with telling an Egyptian "I do not like you." The vertical dimension refers to the fact that power is generally accepted to be a factor in social and occupational life; the higher the status, the more rights they get—and, by extension, the more happiness and privilege they feel entitled to (Triandis, 2002). Likewise, countries high in power distance do not encourage interaction with or closeness between the classes; for example, a traditional Egyptian learning that Bill Gates had just married a cashier at Publix would likely be astounded and disapproving at the economic disparity separating the newlyweds. In a related matter, Egyptian society is said to be ascriptionist, as it places people into social classes based on their birth more than their own achievements; Nydell (2002) actually notes that it can take two or three generations to "raise" the profile of one’s family.

Instrumentality refers to the Egyptian trait of taking whatever opportunities they can, while emotional suppression is in place to protect honor and keep people from being seen as "loose," but also to protect face (in the case of snubs or unequal regard). The polychronic orientation is to do with time, which Egyptians generally manage to stretch to fit all their tasks for the day, though some or all of these tasks may remain unfinished by day's end. Appointments are not kept, and people are often late; this does not suggest disrespect for Western clock-watchers; rather, Egyptians love to be productive and cannot sit still (in America they'd be classified as 'workaholics').

Finally, Egyptians are high in uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), since they dislike ambiguous situations. This is most ironic, since Egyptians generally keep everyone waiting for them, and since they prefer to use indirectness in order to save face. Then again, some Egyptians are battling this culture-bound tardiness and ambiguous communication style, on the grounds that it is "backward" as well as inconsiderate, leading to a questioning of what Egyptian culture is in the first place.

As cultural orientation—and the syndromes related to it—have been discussed in this section, the next one discusses the third and final communication dimension: communication style.

**Third Dimension: Communication Styles**

Egyptians, as previously mentioned, value respect, image, and tact, among other things. One common communication style that maintains the integrity of a family’s image as "respect-worthy" involves the use of codes. The style is known as high context communication; it, together with the indirect style of communication, forms the dissertation's category of "covert communication," while their opposites—low context and direct communication—make up the "overt communication" category. Both categories are discussed below—beginning with the former.
Covert Communication: High Context and Indirect Communication

According to Hofstede & Hofstede (2005), an act of high context communication is defined as:

one in which little has to be said or written because most of the information is either in the physical environment or supposed to be known by the persons involved, while very little is in the coded, explicit part of the message” (p. 89).

This coded information—used in high context communication (HCC) but not indirect communication—represents the main distinction between both styles; otherwise, they are quite similar. This distinction is further discussed in the current section, which is devoted to the description of covert communication.

As previously mentioned, high context communication can only be successfully and accurately carried out if both parties are familiar with the same code; an example of HCC is the superstitious Arab preference for using "tired" to mean "sick," or "the disease" to denote cancer (Nydell, 2002, p.122). Most Egyptians would understand both words immediately, but while it is possible for a non-code-sharer to divine that "tired" was used to mean "ill," it is also very likely that an American might misunderstand an Egyptian friend’s declaration that their mutual friend has recently succumbed to "The Disease," and incorrectly deduce that the disease in question is actually AIDS. It is equally likely for an American man to be unaware of the fact that when his young Egyptian colleague said "I'd like to come over for tea this week," he was really saying "I caught a glimpse of your daughter last week, and there's a strong possibility that I will propose to her!".

On the other hand, indirect communication may be accomplished in several manners—among them insinuation and euphemism (Holdcroft, 1976)—that do not rely upon specific shared codes, and which may use environmental cues; for example, any person possessing an iota of perception would (hopefully) be able to deduce that a guest—who has flopped inelegantly onto an unsuspecting sofa, turned the closest magazine into a makeshift fan, and loudly declared "MY, but it's a hot day! Heavens, could that be cotton in my mouth?"—is "indirectly" asking for a glass of water, lemonade, iced tea, or the like. While some might not immediately understand that the guest was actually asking for a cold beverage (as opposed to just stating his discomfort), nothing in this example requires any form of great wisdom or knowledge to decipher the indirectly-phrased message. This does not mean that indirect messages are always so easily-deciphered; for example, a girl who has asked her cousin for a critique of her new Easter dress may be told that "hon, I think we need to go back to the mall" for any number of reasons. Nonverbal cues notwithstanding, the cousin might have been trying to say "that's too short for church!" or "that's too short for those legs..." or "I thought we said you'd stop wearing things that made you look like a double-wide?" or even "wow, is that an ugly dress, or what?". Likewise, she could have meant "we have to get you another dress, because this one's my new favorite, and I'm officially stealing it from
you," or "why are you dressed like Mother Superior crossed with a schoolmarm?" So the simple, eleven-word utterance could, theoretically, be meant as a compliment or not, it could be targeting the figure or the dress, and could be referring to the dress’s attractiveness, figure-flattery, modesty, and/or appropriateness (or lack thereof). Therefore, while indirect communication does not use shared codes that require deciphering, it may still require deciphering; if the cousins have previously created a code in which the eleven-word sentence means "we need to go back to the mall and hug the salesperson for suggesting this dress!", then the exchange is considered high context communication. Thus, while the line separating the similar styles is thin, there is a line separating them.

That said, it is important to realize several facts regarding the separation and similarity between HCC and indirectness: first, that those engaging in high context communication do not necessarily have to belong to the same culture, as long as each party is using the same cultural frame of reference and/or communication style; for example, an Egyptian immigrant may feel quite capable and/or "at home" speaking with a retired military man who spent twenty years in Alexandria—not only because of his flawless Arabic, but also because he could send and receive messages in HCC with the best of them.

Second, it is certainly possible for failed communication to occur between two people from the same culture—whether because they are using dissimilar styles of communication (high context to low) or because each person has a different lexicon of codes; for example, one Egyptian may ask a new member of her church "what’s your son’s name again?" and feel frustrated when the newbie doesn’t fire back the name and a cheeky "what about your daughter?".

Third, it is sometimes possible for people from two cultures (each having their own different set of codes) to engage in partially-successful or even totally successful communication; for instance, a Korean professor may communicate with Egyptian students more easily and accurately than he expected, due to similar communication styles and other cultural elements.

Fourth, a person’s culture, nationality, and/or appearance hold/s no guarantee that he or she follows the communication style of their (suspected) origin; for example, an Egyptian American female attending her first Coptic liturgy may find herself cornered by several potential mothers-in-law that she’s never met, one boldly requesting a photo of the young lady, another sneakily engineering a group photo, while a third is manufacturing a plot to run into and then befriend her; the young lady may be confused by these behaviors if she hasn’t been exposed to Egyptians before (though, she may, of course, be perfectly familiar with these tactics, but unwilling to go along with them).

Fifth and finally, attempts to accommodate to someone “other”—by adopting the communication style that "other" is expected to have—may backfire if both have gotten the same idea; for instance, an Egyptian male and an Egyptian American female at a dinner party where classic Egyptian music is playing may have the following conversation:
Male: "Oh how I love Abdel Halim Hafez! I haven't heard his voice since I left Egypt a few months ago!"

Female: "Yeah, the melody is beautiful! Too bad I do not understand half of what he's saying, my Arabic is abominable."

Male: "Shall I translate it for you, then?"

The young lady may take his offer at face value, and accept his assistance; the man, however, may take her declaration of bad language skills as a ploy to broach the subject being sung about (usually love, whether rhapsody or lamentation) and indicate her interest in him. Of course, this is just one worst-case scenario; perhaps she really is interested, and has merely used a tactic she knows he would understand in order to gain his attention. Or perhaps he realizes that she's never left the country or dealt with Egyptians before and does not read between the lines as he would with an Egyptian girl. Another worst-case scenario would find each of them secretly love-struck and communicating in the manner of the other, thus failing to make their intentions known.

In sum, subscribing to similar communication styles does not guarantee successful communication—just as subscribing to dissimilar styles does not automatically mean failed communication; as this section has contrasted two similar styles, so will the next, which is devoted to "overt" communication.

*Overt Communication: Low Context and Direct Communication*

As mentioned in the previous section, high context and indirect communication styles are quite similar—so much so that both styles could logically be combined into the category of covert communication. Each style has an opposite, however; these opposites—which combine to form the "overt" communication style—are outlined in this section. Following the previous section's layout, this one also begins with low context communication (LCC) and then moves to directness.

As can be deduced by logic and reason, the opposite of "using codes" is "not using codes." Low context communication is, of course, the latter; likewise, as indirect communication employs euphemism and insinuation and innuendo (Holdcroft, 1976) to "go around in circles" or "soften the blow," so, too, is direct communication that style's opposite.

It should be noted that it is more difficult to differentiate between these styles of overt communication; this is because while the covert styles are separated by actions, these overt styles are separated by a lack of the aforementioned actions. In other words, while HCC and indirectness may each place a veil over what is being said, LCC and directness are veil-free, and much more difficult to differentiate between; one helpful sign is that low context messages are not necessarily direct (i.e. they can be indirect), though direct messages are necessarily low context. For example, if a student used LCC to find out why she received 38 per cent on an exam given by a teacher who hates and despises her, she might say "I noticed my uncharacteristically low grade on the last
exam; could there be a mistake in the grading forms?”, whereas the direct style may begin with the first half of the previous statement, and then replace the second half with a spirited "I would like to see my exam,” or even an "I know you have had it in for me since the first day of class.” In the first statement, she is not directly asking to see the test, and neither is she stating that she knows how the teacher feels about her; in the second statement, she has made a direct request; in the third statement, she directly states her perception. So while it is possible to differentiate some comments, it’s quite tedious and subjective, as well (not that the covert styles are any less so).

As before, various combinations of styles may result in hindered or helped communication between similar or different people; furthermore, some might prefer to speak and listen in just one style (HCC vs. indirect, or HCC vs. LCC), some may alternate between two similar styles or two opposing styles, some may use all the styles as situations warrant, and some might even have different preferences for speaking and listening.

As this section has discussed low context and direct communication—also known as the overt styles of communication—the only remaining section in this chapter is its summary.

Summary

In sum, as the nature of culture is rethought and redesigned, so, too, are acculturation models and strategies, leading to such questions as 'How might 'acculturation' (i.e. 'being acculturated') be defined within the multi-stranded dialogical model of acculturation?"

The next chapter provides detailed descriptions of the methods in which this question (and others like it) may be answered.
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODS

Introduction

As previously mentioned, the study had two general purposes, which were to:

1) Expand upon the dialogical model of acculturation, and
2) Reveal the current cultural climates common among Christians in Egypt and in the diaspora—regardless of where they were born and raised.

These general purposes were broken down into three narrower goals, including:

1) An exploration of the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,
2) An understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt or the diaspora), as well as
3) A discovery of participants’ manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).

These goals were reached by asking three main research questions:

RQ1—What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?
RQ2a—What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?
RQ2b—How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?
RQ3—How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the "three communication dimensions" (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?

As the previous chapters have set forth the rationale, contexts, and theoretical concepts behind the study, this chapter features the dissertation’s practical aspects, namely the methods used to reach the above-stated goals and purposes.
This chapter is divided into four parts; the first includes a discussion of qualitative research in general, as well as the details of methods used in this study; the second part covers the dissertation’s demographic of interest, followed by a third part dealing with questions asked of participants; the fourth part then recounts the plan of analysis, including the specific methods used.

**Qualitative Methods of Data Collection**

The methods used to collect data in any study may inhibit or promote responses; they may, also, alter the types or content of data that could or would have otherwise been shared or harvested. For this reason, data collection methods must be chosen with care, and tailored to the topics and demographics of interest.

This section examines qualitative data collection methods, researcher roles and effects, ensuring validity within qualitative research, and successful methods I’ve borrowed from similar studies.

**Qualitative Methods of Data Collection**

Qualitative data has long been revered for its "thickness" and "richness" (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 313). To this end, a number of data collection methods have become available to the qualitative researcher; some of these methods are ethnography, observation, interview, questionnaire, and textual analysis.

Ethnographies are very useful in the study of cultural phenomena, due to their holistic and immersive qualities (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Stainback and Stainback, 1988). Observations, too, are effective in the study of culture, and their ability to gain insight into "deviant and hidden activities" or to "see through the eyes of another" within a context-sensitive environment (Bryman & Bell, 2007) would add interest to almost any study.

On the other hand, some activities are impossible to observe, or have a greater likelihood of triggering researcher effects, leading a majority of researchers to instead use qualitative interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Patton, 1987). Several variations of the standard qualitative interview exist, including the unstructured, semi-structured, topical, open-ended, feminist, focus group, cultural, life story, oral history and psychosocial interviews (Rapley, 2004).

Despite the diverse methods of execution, however, every variation of the qualitative interview primarily seeks an understanding of the respondent (McNamara, 1999); this is generally accomplished through learning about "understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 2). Frey, Botan & Kreps (2000) advise that this information is easier to obtain when interviewers are "similar in crucial ways" to their population of study (p. 217), citing as an example the research of B. S. Lee, a Holocaust survivor who interviewed other survivors: "Being a survivor myself facilitated my empathy and the sensitivity to know when not to probe or be too intrusive" (Lee, 1988, p. 75).
Unstructured interviews and oral histories are similar in execution, but have slightly different secondary goals; researchers using unstructured interviews often use the lack of structure as a means of finding out what topics or subtopics are of central importance to their respondents, whereas oral histories—considered a form of rhetorical criticism (Foss, 1989)—are relied upon to capture "a variety of forms of life" (Fontana & Frey, p. 79). Gluck and Patai (1991) write that oral histories—whose modern renaissance began with Allan Nevins' 1948 Oral History Project at Columbia University (Starr, 1984, p. 4)—have been "claimed" by feminists as a technique to "bring forth the history of women in a culture that has traditionally relied on masculine interpretations" (Fontana & Frey, p. 79), demonstrating some women's refusal "to be rendered historically voiceless any longer," and battling the perhaps-unintended silencing by "creating a new history—using our own voices and experiences" (Gluck, 1984, p. 222). McMahan & Rogers (1994), however, consider the oral history interview to be a "form of conversation" whose "generic function is to transmit a culture by word or mouth" (p. 3); either way, a strength of this method is that impressions and experiences are recollected by the person who lived them (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000, p. 231).

Questionnaires share the strength of capturing information directly from the primary source, though their format makes it possible for the participant to complete a questionnaire without the direct involvement of a researcher. While questionnaires are the most-frequently used method in quantitative research (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000, p. 99) they are sometimes used to "elicit messages that textual analysts…and some naturalistic researchers" use in their qualitative analyses. Questionnaires may use self-reports and/or others' reports to investigate their chosen topics; self-reports "ascertain respondents' beliefs, attitudes…values" and frequencies of behavior, while others' reports "ask people to describe other people" (p. 96).

Questions appearing in questionnaires may be arranged in the tunnel, funnel, or inverted funnel question formats; the tunnel format presents questions in a "straight series of similarly organized questions," while the funnel format gradually moves from broad to specific questions (p. 101). The inverted-funnel format begins with specific "low-risk, closed, fixed-choice" questions that gradually move into more probing questions; this format is indicated in the use of "very personal or taboo topics" (p. 102). Such topics may, nonetheless, present problems, however, due to social desirability bias, or the subject's tendency to answer a question in a manner that she or he feels is acceptable (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000, p. 96; Furnham, 1986), though this tendency may be less pronounced in an anonymous questionnaire than it might be in an interview.

Written or visual texts also provide much fodder for analysis, though Frey, Botan, & Kreps (2000, p. 225) warn that "describing the communication embedded in a text is not as easy as it might seem because there is not a single meaning of a text" or even a "single perspective from which to interpret it"; they go on to cite Lindkvist (1981), who suggests that the "meaning of a text can be identified with the producer, the consumer, or the interpreter of a text" (p. 23). Textual analysis—defined as the description and interpretation of "characteristics of a recorded or visual message" (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p. 225)—may, for example, focus upon transcripts (from
interviews or open-ended questionnaires) or outputs (such as diaries or song lyrics) of communication (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p. 227; Patton, 1987).

While each of the aforementioned methods offers benefits to the researcher studying culture—particularly a historically-under-represented population within a culture—certain methods lent themselves to researching the communication dimensions of acculturation (identification, cultural orientation, communication style) examined by this study. Qualitative methods, additionally, were best for the sensitive and complex issues under consideration in this study, due to the emphasis on participants' points of view, the flexibility to follow up on certain questions or change their order as the situation required, the tolerance or encouragement of "going off on tangents," the freedom to adjust emphases as issues emerge, and the possibility of capturing rich data—in the participants' own words (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The richness of data from the under-represented Christian Egyptian demographic has afforded the study a fascinating—and rare—glimpse into this mesmerizing population.

As previously mentioned, ethnographies or observations might seem to be the most logical choices for cultural inquiry; this study, however, had a specific set of concerns that benefited from a more flexible and less intrusive method of inquiry, which was qualitative inquiry's most used method—the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews—which Bryman (2004) identifies as the "two main types" of qualitative interviews—did, indeed, fit in very well with the research goals of this study, particularly due to the fact that the dissertation examined Egyptians; this is because Egyptians often use indirect communication styles, high context messages, and spiral logic, possibly resulting in lengthier—but more layered—responses (Althen, 1988; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Nydell, 2002). Semi-structured interviews also proved beneficial in placing particular actions into context. For example, a thirty-year-old widow interviewed for the researcher's last formal pilot study (2008) was very open about her life, justifying her infidelity and late husband's subsequent suicide by explaining her strict upbringing, her hasty engagement and marriage to a stranger, and her new husband's violence and contributing mental illness; it is clear that her detailed story created a very different impression than would have emerged had she responded in the affirmative to closed-ended questions asking "Did you have a salon marriage?" and "Have you been unfaithful to your spouse?".

Due to the fact that I am Egyptian American, some participants seemed to feel freer to mention certain things that they would not have mentioned to a "real" Egyptian or a "real" American; this is an example of making the interviewer an "integral part of the investigation" (Jacob, 1988), transforming the synchronous interviews into "negotiated texts" (Bryman and Bell, 2005). My background is, therefore, yet another reason that qualitative methods were best for this study—and this demographic—though it should be mentioned that my own background did, I suspect, hinder participants from being completely honest, necessitating an additional method of inquiry that was able to (hopefully) counteract any researcher effects and/or social desirability bias (see below for a more detailed discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of my membership in the demographic of interest).
In sum, the interviews were conducted in three ways: online, through Yahoo! Messenger; face-to-face, with the interview video-taped; and online, without my involvement. The first and second methods comprised the “synchronous” interviews, while the “asynchronous” interviews were those completed without my involvement. Thirteen people granted synchronous online interviews, twenty-seven consented to face-to-face video-taped interviews, and eighteen filled out the asynchronous version. It should be noted that all of the questions on the asynchronous version were asked of all three groups, though the synchronous interviews also included various follow-up questions that could not be asked of asynchronous participants; a copy of the entire asynchronous version appears in the appendix.

The descriptive questionnaire was the second method used; this format increased the efficiency of data collection and management, while the anonymity of the questionnaire’s inquiry into sensitive topics yielded particularly insightful results that could not have been captured during an interview. The use of descriptive questionnaires to corroborate and triangulate the data also strengthened the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; Wolcott, 1990); to this end, the study made use of an inverted-funnel-format descriptive questionnaire that gave participants an opportunity to “warm up” with untroubling topics (communication dimensions) before shifting towards more sensitive subjects (the way these dimensions manifest themselves within their own lives). The items were both direct and indirect, involving scenarios as well as straightforward questions; response types included multiple choice–multiple response, multiple choice–single response, and short answer. The questionnaires were administered online, and were completely anonymous in nature, though the usernames (previously called “meaningful passwords”) they provided were linked to their internet protocol address (where available); this linkage did not provide me with any names or other data, but served to warn me when more than one questionnaire was completed from the same internet protocol address, as in the case of several participants whose entries “timed out,” forcing them to begin again, even though they were (for example) half finished. In this way, I was able to avoid counting the same questionnaire twice.

The questionnaires included several “short essay” type questions covering the same topics that the interview questions did; while this may seem like “overkill,” it was through this repetition that internal triangulation was attained—in the case of those completing both interviews and questionnaires, anyway. Since qualitative studies generally have an even greater need for corroboration and validation than do quantitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Denzin, 1978), it was necessary to undertake these measures. A copy of the descriptive questionnaire is included in the appendix.

Questions in both interviews and questionnaires corresponded with seven of the nine types identified by Kvale (1996), which are the introducing, follow-up, probing, specifying, direct, indirect, and interpreting questions; since both structuring questions and silence are closer to stage directions than question types, they were not used. The types of information sought from participants varied; following Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 24-27), narratives, accounts, and “fronts” (acceptable behavior projected to others for their benefit) were solicited. Other types of information sought included values, beliefs,
behaviors, roles, relationships, places, and emotions (Bryman & Bell, 2007), again in both interviews as well as questionnaires.

The third method of data collection involved public blogs (Warnick, 1998), which provided insight into the similar demographic of Muslim Egyptians; the documents reviewed also provided an opportunity to compare and contrast Christians and Muslims in similar situations.

As the methods of data collection have been recounted, the discussion turns to researcher roles and effects.

*Researcher Roles and Effects*

While the researcher's role is always "understanding," Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 77) pose a question of great importance to researchers conducting interviews: how do I present myself? They discuss various options, such as "dressing down" or presenting oneself as a "learner," and warn that despite a person's "best efforts to the contrary," a researcher may, as John Johnson (1976) found out, be perceived as a "spy."

This was certainly an issue in my case! For example, I may have been perceived—by interviewees or questionnaire-takers alike—as any number of things, depending on the various amounts of information had; those realizing that I was born and raised in the States may have been impressed enough with Americans to exaggerate or omit certain facts. Alternately, they may have felt comfortable enough to confess certain things that a born-and-raised Egyptian would cringe at. Egyptian Americans realizing that I speak flawless Bahri-dialect Arabic may have assumed that I am an immigrant and chosen to emphasize their "Americanness" and/or "Egyptianness" accordingly; or as a respondent from a 2006 pilot study put it, "sorry, I thought you'd be all judgmental about that...I thought you were a FOB!" (FOB refers to a recent immigrant who is "fresh off the boat"). On the other hand, those familiar with my activities in human rights may have (erroneously) decided that I was a spy for the Egyptian government.

Unfortunately, such effects were impossible to prevent or account for in a standardized manner. Additionally, the Hawthorne Effect—defined as changes in a participant's behavior due to the knowledge that the behavior is being observed (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1991, p. 121)—may have occurred during face-to-face interviews. Egyptians are, however, generally accustomed to being "on display," and so this may not have been a great issue.

Other dimensions said to prevent or enhance trust and rapport include the researcher's gender, sexuality, and class (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 85). Many scholars feel that answering a subject's questions about the researcher's life or experiences is to be avoided (p. 86), though others realize that some groups prefer transparency; for example, the Arab women interviewed by Schely-Newman were more inclined to respond honestly when they saw that she was pregnant, since motherhood was covered by the interviews. Schely-Newman's upbringing in Tunisia (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 1991, p. 279) also played a key role in the development of rapport; or, as she puts it:
Interviewees wanted to establish my identity—where did I reside, from where did my family emigrate, was I married, to whom, and did I have children—before and while addressing issues I raised...these elements of identity...are more important in this culture than professional affiliation or research interest. (Schely-Newman, 1995, p. 177)

And, indeed, several interviewees informed me that they’d checked my past writings out before responding to my invitation, while others made it very clear that it was their pleasure to help a member of my family, though they would not have otherwise helped (or so they claimed).

Now that researcher effects have been discussed, we turn to the ensuring of validity.

Ensuring Validity

A priority of this study was the validation of qualitative data through corroboration (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). One manner of achieving this is triangulation, or the "convergence of data" from multiple sources of data collection (Denzin, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1984). This may be accomplished through mixed-method design (qualitative and quantitative) or by using several types of data collection methods (all qualitative or quantitative); successfully executed, triangulation results in a more complete depiction of the attitude, situation or culture in question.

Having said that, it should be noted that this study’s design was not mixed-method, despite the use of a questionnaire and an interview; this is because the questionnaire is not quantitative in nature, but more so, because interviews and questionnaire responses were not necessarily and automatically linked to one another. In other words, while some participants completed both questionnaire and interview on the same day, some did not; and while some granted interviews, others shunned the notion of real-time interview through online chatting, preferring, instead, the asynchronous format. In both cases, participants were asked to provide the same username, so that their responses could be linked together.

In sum, information was collected by three methods: the aforementioned interviews, descriptive questionnaires, and document reviews. While individual sources did not always match—that is, while no blog authors were interviewed, and while some interviewees did not fill out questionnaires—the data came from people in the same general group, allowing me to assemble a multi-faceted, multi-directional "quilt" that revealed the presence of several common elements—and several disparities.

Finally, though some interviewees were unable to fill out questionnaires, I was able to incorporate several questionnaire questions (notably the scenarios) in a majority of the synchronous interviews; I do not wish to imply that I counted those "impromptu" or "unofficial" responses to the additional questions within the numbers cited below, but some responses are quoted.

In sum, the response sets that were verifiably linked triangulated data between certain participants' sets of responses, strengthening the research, while the review of
pertinent documents provided further triangulation, corroboration, and validation of the responses made within interview and questionnaire segments, accomplishing the study's goal of ensuring validity.

This three-pronged approach was, as previously mentioned, borrowed from Sherif (1999b) who executed a study not unlike this one; hers, however, focused on Muslim Egyptians and their attitudes on the role of marriage, while this one was primarily concerned with the acculturation of Christian Egyptians.

Studies other than Sherif's have, however, also influenced the layout of this dissertation; these studies and their contributions are discussed in the next section.

**Qualitative Studies Examining Similar Populations**

Having already established the problematic nature of Easterners' acculturation into Western countries, many researchers have turned scholarly attention to the specific nationalities or ethnicities that seem to be having the most difficulty, as well as those factors that most-commonly contribute to such issues within a particular population. For example, while South Asians often have acculturation issues in Western cultures, it is attributed to collectivism, tradition, or other cultural factors (Kurien, 2005), investigations into the thoughts and beliefs of Pakistani immigrants and their Western-born children reveal that, like some Arab Americans, it is their religion—Islam—that often "hinders" their "successful" acculturation (Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002). This should not imply that they or others would particularly choose "successful" acculturation at the cost of religious devotion, however; furthermore, as Hooglund & Aswad (1987) have suggested, Christian Arabs that have fled their homelands in order to escape religious persecution may find life in the US "less challenging" (cited in Faragallah et al., 1997), though Faragallah et. al (1997) report that Christianity, together with "longer residence, younger age at immigration, having not visited the homeland" were found in their study to be "associated with greater acculturation into the US as well as greater life satisfaction, but with reduced family satisfaction." They do note, however, that Muslims were not found to be "more traditional" than were Christians.

In any case, studies on these and other Eastern-Western populations and similar topics of interest reveal many trends that seem to reach across religious, ethnic, and national lines; the interest factor of such studies notwithstanding, the particular methods used by their researchers are useful to note. In this section, relevant studies are briefly summarized, and their relevant elements of research identified.

Ajrouch’s 2004 research on gender and Arab American adolescents utilized focus group interviews to examine ten adolescent Arab Americans in Dearborn, Michigan; important findings of the study included 1) "the perception that being American is equated with a girl who is morally suspect," and the fact that 2) "the extent to which religion underscores the ideals of appropriate behavior...the word 'ayb, or shameful, invokes religious doctrine [whereas] haram signifies something that is religiously prohibited." The analysis used to arrive at these and other conclusions involved "detailed reading," followed by theme-identifying and connection-drawing between themes ("boater" vs. white) and subthemes (religion, restriction, chastity, language, caring, and dating); these strategies
(detailed reading, theme-identifying, and connection-drawing) were incorporated into the dissertation.

Amin and Bassusi’s (2003) study on young, wage-working, Egyptian women’s attitudes primarily uses in-depth single interviews to paint a picture of participants, but also relies upon statistical data from 20,000 Egyptians to create reference points; the reference points were used in the assessment of "where participants were" in relation to the 20,000 other women, both in circumstances and opinions. The women interviewed were selected randomly; many of them indicated that love matches were silly, overrated, or intrinsically flawed, and that women were a commodity. One interviewee even revealed that her mother called women "buffalos with value...who had to be sold before they lost value." The value of this article is its authors’ use of existing data (as opposed to data generated for the study) to create reference points (like which city had the most female workers, and how opinions in that town may have been skewed due to that fact, etc.). The use of reference points to map out extreme cases is a strategy that created a context for the dissertation; for example, while the literature on Arabs and Egyptians would suggest that they prefer to use high context communication, many participants in this study indicated the exact opposite, highlighting the departure of current trends (however isolated) from the "reference point" noted in older literature; therefore, following Amin and Bassusi’s strategy may lead to a reframing of the picture of the "typical" Egyptian, perhaps resulting in the eventual redefinition of "Egyptian culture" that will push traditional Egyptians to the "extreme" end of the spectrum, and the currently "extreme" Egyptians to the forefront.

Netting (2006) also focused on the mate-selection process when she qualitatively interviewed 27 non-Muslim Indo-Canadian youth who had never been married. Her one-on-one discussions were called "intensive interviews," and her method of obtaining respondents was a snowball sample; a "thematic analysis" was used, and she ultimately assigned subjects into one of three negotiation categories: traditionalists, rebels, and negotiators (which were the biggest group). Netting’s analysis style was also of use to the dissertation, particularly her pattern of organization; of greatest use was her method of extracting pertinent slivers of lived experience from amidst a sea of words and using them to first clearly illustrate her participants’ individual struggles, then using several unrelated but similar struggles to elucidate an underlying process. And, of course, her "intensive interviews" and snowball sample were undertaken by the dissertation.

The next study is also to do with arranged marriages, but those of Muslim Pakistani women; Zaidi and Shuraydi (2002) use unstructured interviews to capture attitudes of 20 women between the ages of 16 and 30. These second-generation women were born to immigrant parents in southern Ontario and the United States. Language, culture, and religion were identified as general obstacles to acculturation; marriage was defined as a "problematic act," and the 20 respondents were divided into Groups A (15) and B (four and not five, inexplicably). Those in Group A did not want arranged marriages, while those in Group B—which included two 16-year-olds—claimed to not mind or actually want arranged marriages. Five themes emerged and were organized in a 2x5 table summarizing each group’s mentality. The methods of organization—those of groups and tables—not only appear in the plans for this study, but formed the structure of my last pilot study.
Maira affords similar treatment to Indian American youth, in her 1999 research on the "remix" or "bhangra" subculture of New York. In the study, college students' performance of culture is examined through their choices of music and fashion; "intensive interviews" with 35 second-generation Indian Americans provide insight into the world of "Indian parties," as well as the "virgin/whore dichotomy," and the tendency for Indian Americans (at least those in the study) to "have more respect for African Americans than for whites." Of use to this dissertation is the focus on an unremarkable, common event—a party—rather than a monumental, singular decision like marriage; this emphasis on the relatively "mundane" makes a place for blog postings to be included in this study’s document review.

The final entry in this section is Kurien’s (2005) examination of "being young, brown, and Hindu." Kurien’s study, like those previously mentioned, focuses on identity struggles of second-generation South Asian Americans, though in a different context—that of cultural and political Hinduism. Interviews were conducted in two segments; the first discussed the Hindu organization each participant belonged to, and how he or she "felt about it," while the second dealt with the subject’s upbringing and acculturation history. Many interviewees revealed anger over the closeting of Hinduism that arose in response to racist comments made by whites; another source of anger was some Hindus’ "constant drawing of parallels between Hinduism and Judeo-Christian traditions," which triggered participants’ ire because such parallel-drawing indicated a "need to validate Indian culture" (by "drawing western parallels") due to "Indian self-hatred." Messageboards sponsored by one of the Hindu groups represented in the study confirmed these findings and revealed additional participant turmoil over racial and political/religious relations. The inclusion of online events in Kurien’s analysis became central to my plan, inspiring the review of blog postings, which triangulated and confirmed the dissertation’s findings and, furthermore, revealed additional and/or divergent perspectives within the data collected for this study.

As the last section has provided general information on this study’s chosen methods, and as the current section has discussed plans used by other researchers during their investigations into similar populations, the next one covers the types and numbers of participants on which the aforementioned methods and strategies were used.

Participants

A study’s topics of interest and methods of data collection are, of course, central to any scholar’s research, but so, too, are the populations of interest and methods of participant collection.

This section discusses both of these participant-related issues, beginning with the "main" population of interest, then moving to the "supplementary" populations; following these are discussions of how participants and documents were obtained.
Christian Egyptians

While the overall population of Christians in Egypt has dwindled over the centuries, the people themselves have persevered, whether in Egypt—where they live with or battle against the religious persecution they are often subjected to—or in the diaspora.

For the sake of this study, "the diaspora" referred to is the general "non-Egyptian" one, though as it turned out, most participants living outside of Egypt lived in "Western" countries (two live in South Africa, four live in other Arabic-speaking countries, and one lives in an East Asian country); individuals whose interviews and/or questionnaires were included and analyzed in this research included those Christian Egyptians born in Egypt and living there, those born in Egypt and living in the diaspora, as well as diaspora-born individuals having at least one Egyptian parent; and among the bloggers, all but one had lived in Egypt full time for at least fifteen years, with some currently living in the diaspora, and others still living in Egypt.

Christians weren't the only Egyptians who participated, however; the following section discusses the other populations represented in the study.

Non-Christian Egyptians and Other Populations

While it was initially hoped that blogs from similar populations could be examined, it became very clear very soon that the frequency of slang or terminology requiring translation would have added significant time and expense to the current study, due to my unfamiliarity with certain Arabic dialects (Moroccan and Syrian, for example) and total lack of knowledge of non-Arabic languages (Urdu, Hindi, Farsi, et cetera); therefore, because of chronological and financial restraints, all blogs reviewed were written by Egyptians living in various parts of the world, and all bloggers (except for one) are Muslim.

With regard to the participants who "actively" contributed—that is, those completing questionnaires and/or interviews—the numbers cited in Part II only reflect those Egyptian Christians who did, indeed, actively complete one or both of this study’s instruments and sign a consent form; that said, I have included several quotes that were provided in other manners, because I strongly believe that a failure to do so would have been both irresponsible and inexcusable.

For example, if out-of-towner Sarah came up to me at church one day (during her yearly visit), enthusing that she’d completed both instruments online that weekend and launching into a ten-minute speech on a question that particularly confused/vexed/amused her, it is very likely that I mentioned her response in the appropriate chapter, but did not include her in the tally of people purporting to feel the same way; as situations like this happened quite frequently, I felt compelled to "mention but not tally" such people because it was very important to me that the number of "official" (consent-form-signing) participants was accurately recorded. My preoccupation with accuracy stemmed from the fact that I spoke, chatted online, or "hung out" with over five hundred Egyptians—some of whom did not participate in the study at all—during the data collection period (late October, 2009 to mid-January, 2010).
Egyptians were not the only people to participate, however; several people from other Arabic-speaking nations granted interviews and/or completed questionnaires. These responses—while fascinating and useful—were neither quoted nor tallied in the study; neither were the informal responses of fifty students attending either a two-year-college in Georgia or a four-year-university in Florida, although it should be noted that the trends reflected by the college students were briefly compared to those arising from the responses of Egyptian participants in Chapter Seven.

The reason I have not included these responses is, very simply, the fact that including other groups revealed certain differences between them and Egyptians, or certain similarities or trends, even. It was most exciting to note, for example, the fact that social rituals of people identifying as "Southerners" seemed almost to mirror those of "traditional" Egyptians, in terms of graciousness, respect, and communication style; also, that five of six South Koreans completing both instruments (questionnaire and interview) did so in a manner that corresponded perfectly to those of "traditional" Egyptians (i.e., 100 per cent of their responses were identical).

At the same time, however, such investigations were neither approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB, though all non-Egyptians did electronically or physically sign a consent form) nor relevant ("technically") to the scope of this study, though I do plan to follow up on these and other trends at a later date.

As the demographics of interest and participation have been identified, the discussion now addresses the number of people involved—and the way these people were identified.

Sample Size and Type

While Creswell and Plano Clark (2003) write that only "small numbers…four to ten" are needed for qualitative research involving interviews that border on case studies (judging by the pilot study, even "brief" interviews amounted to 27 single-spaced pages), I had hoped for at least three times that range; all told, 55 Egyptians actually clicked on the consent form during the entire data collection period.

Of those, only 32 questionnaires were completed; five additional ones were only "partially" completed, and three more contained demographic responses that seemed "off-kilter" somehow (i.e. indicating that they were both male and female); the total of questionnaires with usable data is, thus, 40—though, due to the aforementioned discrepancies, I do not count them among the number of questionnaire-takers. In other words, most of my references are to "the 32 questionnaire-takers," except when I include pertinent responses from any of the other participants.

Apart from the 40 questionnaire-takers, there were a total of 70 interviews granted (27 of them were video interviews, 20 were online synchronous, and 23 online asynchronous) and eight blogs reviewed, resulting in a grand total of 118 participants. Sixteen participants, however, used the same username to complete both instruments (one questionnaire and one online interview, whether synchronous or asynchronous); to avoid an artificial inflation of participant representation, I have deducted sixteen from the grand total. And, of course, the eight "off-kilter" questionnaire-takers are deducted
from the grand total, resulting in the 94 participants to which I refer to a majority of the time. The appendix includes a master list of all participants, and indicates which participants were removed (due to discrepancies or inflation-avoiding); for the present, blog-handles (nicknames) and “adjusted” usernames are provided, though they may be removed following the dissertation’s defense (for the sake of anonymity).

The main type of sample used was the “mixed purposive sample,” which includes eleven of the types identified by Patton (1990, pp. 182-183); these types were the extreme, intensity, maximum variation, homogenous, typical, stratified purposive, snowball, criterion, opportunistic, random purposive, and convenience samples. These types were chosen because of my interest in a wide range of realities, including (and, perhaps, especially) those that deviated from the norm (extreme and intensity types), and those most representative of their group (maximum variation, homogenous, and typical types); noting differences due to gender, denomination, or class was also of interest (stratified purposive type), though having some tie to Egypt (criterion type) was of equal importance. Finally, while anyone with access to a computer with internet connection had an equal opportunity to take the questionnaire (random purposive type)—so long as they heard about the study, anyway—it was very helpful to receive recommendations and/or participation from present contacts (snowball type), people who were “stumbled upon” (opportunistic type), or already known (convenience type).

As sample size and type have been explained, the discussion turns to the specific strategies used to obtain participants.

*Obtaining Participants*

Very simply, participants were either recruited through the efforts of family members and friends or through my own efforts; all recruiting was done either face-to-face, online, or by phone.

The physical "hunting grounds" included churches, religious conferences, and the homes of social contacts where I and my associates (parents, sisters, cousins and friends in Egypt, relatives throughout America) "happened to be," resulting in a convenience-based first step of obtaining leads on suitable participants; during this first step, the research was mentioned to as many people as possible. Email addresses were collected, and business cards (with the researcher’s email addresses, phone numbers, survey website) were distributed. All people in the first step were asked to mention the study to others and pass along one of the several extra business cards they were given.

The second step consisted of following up on leads generated by the first step, via emails, Myspace/Facebook postings, and "away messages" targeted to fellow Egyptians. The postings are included in Appendix C.

Online recruitment involved the first and second steps as above, but with contacts made through Facebook, Myspace, and email. The advertisements took the form of the note above, and were not sent unsolicited (i.e., to perfect strangers), but to present contacts, leads, and those responding to the advertisements. Present online "buddies" were informed of my research through the use of targeted "away messages" within a Yahoo! Messenger screenname created specifically for this study (sallybishai at
of obtaining participants, to have current researchers asked ethnographies online; the blog postings involved descriptions of the whole saga (from finding participants to realizing I’d confused people with the word “password,” et cetera) and provided more information, while the video note was an out-and-out request for participants, and an explanation of the more arcane elements of the study (such as my desire for participants to fill out both instruments rather than just one). These methods were prompted by dozens of email responses to my original email; some of these responses asked me technical questions (“which one should I fill out first?”) while others asked for clarification of certain questions included in the instruments. Some, of course, asked me all sorts of questions that were covered in the consent form, and two eventual participants commented on the length of the consent form (while a third—who did not go on to participate—asked why a consent form even needed to be used). Over a dozen eventual participants phoned me (or various relatives of mine) with similar questions, and a great many people (more than forty) contacted me in order to tell me the number of email addresses they’d forwarded my original mail to, to wish me the best in my research, and/or to ask me to keep them informed of my findings and future research.

All in all, I learned three things from this experience; first, I should not have posted the adverts or sent the emails out until the video note and blog postings were online; second, I should have shortened the consent form and, instead, provided a comprehensive list of concisely-answered, frequently-asked questions; third, I should have brought potential participants in “from the ground floor,” instead of “coldly” (i.e. by impersonal form letter) presenting them the fait accompli of a set of instruments they felt unconnected to. While I got more than enough responses—and excellent ones, at that—to make this study a success (in my own eyes, anyway!), I sincerely hope that my manner did not offend any participants or potential participants.

In sum, the “snowball” alluded to in the sample began by contacting new and current friends or contacts, with the goals of both securing their participation as well as obtaining leads from them. As the method of obtaining participants has been recounted, the discussion turns to the method of obtaining documents.

Obtaining Documents

With regard to the "non-active participants"—those bloggers whose weblogs were reviewed—it should first be noted that the past decade has allowed creative researchers to develop, use, and validate new, experimental methods of presenting ethnographies; some of these include poetry, fiction, and drama (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. xi). Bicultural writers, artists, and “every-day people” have, likewise, have begun presenting their ranges of experience in those same manners, creating unofficial autoethnographies every time they note their observations or perceptions; some of these
notations—public blog postings—have provided the dissertation with valuable fodder for analysis.

This section addresses the requirements for inclusion of blogs, and the rationale for my decisions concerning those requirements.

Following Kurien's (2005) investigation of Hindu organization messageboards, this study examined other online documents—weblogs, or "blogs"—as long as each met three requirements: first, that the blogger's life, thoughts, and/or perceptions were included in their posts. In other words, the blog postings comprising the entire weblog could not be restricted to straight "reporting," and needed to show some sort of bias—of action or attitude—even if the bias was only reflected in anecdotes or "confessions." For example, blogs with a majority of postings that "just" shared links or articles or Youtube videos would not meet the requirement, but posts sharing the information and then commenting upon the information would.

The second requirement was that at least one posting on the blog featured one of the dissertation's topics of interest; these topics were 1) acculturation (in general), 2) one of the three communication dimensions (identification or identity, cultural orientation, and/or communication style)—either in general or as they impacted and/or were impacted by Egyptian culture, and/or 3) cultural trends specific to Egypt, the Egyptian diaspora, or their group/s of membership (like "Muslim Arab Americans," for example). Acceptable titles included "Why I never want to marry an Egyptian," or "Torn in two," while unacceptable titles included "How to build a jewelry armoire in Egypt" or "My favorite American films of all time."

The third requirement was actually a restriction; basically, blogs reviewed could not be devoted to journal-esque goings-on about personal problems that may or may not have had anything to do with culture. In other words, if the blogger devoted significant masses of verbiage to complaining about his annoying boss and unsympathetic wife, this would not be acceptable—unless he specifically noted that his boss was annoying because he was too "old-school Egyptian" for his own good, or that his "Western" wife was unsympathetic due to her cultural paradigm.

With regard to populations of note, as previously mentioned, only one blogger identified as Christian; his blog appeared in order to provide additional insight and triangulation to the responses from Christian participants and Muslim bloggers. And the non-Christian Egyptians were included to confirm Coptic claims and reveal distinctions between the religious communities—with respect to acculturation issues, attitudes, dreams, tensions, and practices. Having established the parameters of population, the discussion now addresses the process of locating documents.

The three main methods of location were personal referrals (in the case of the one Christian blogger, whom I'd met online several years ago), Google searches (using neutral or negative search terms like "Egyptian blogger," "culture clash Egyptian," and "bicultural Egyptian"), and the "blog-roll snowball" (which is my term for the process of clicking on one blog's links in order to find other blogs, whose blog-rolls—or "links to other blogs"—are then followed, as well), which, all told, resulted in a pool of over one hundred possible blogs.
It should be noted that some of the blogs in the latter two categories arose from the original plan set out in the early stages of this dissertation; at that time, the topic of interest was actually Egypt’s salon marriage, and Google searches for "Egyptian blog marriage" or "salon marriage discussion" yielded over two hundred articles and/or blog postings. Additionally, over a dozen "million-hit blogs" resulted in leads to blogs of bicultural misery (including some of the blogs reviewed in the study), though none of the famous blogs who'd unwittingly referred me to "acceptable" blogs were included in the study.

In any case, the latter two methods (Google search and blog-roll snowball) have ensured that the group of bloggers is not a representative one; in other words, there might be twenty Christian bloggers for every five Muslims "in real life," as opposed to the 90% representation of Muslim bloggers in this study, and while almost all of bloggers reported the same few challenges to their acculturation—and sanity—there is no guarantee that their woes are wide-spread among Egyptians.

Regarding time-frame, the earliest blog postings included were written in 2005 and the latest blog postings included were posted in early January of 2010, though some blogs didn’t begin until 2007 or 2008, while others began in 2006 and ended one or two years later. While the separate analysis of each blogger would have gone far beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that note that all blogs included were reviewed from first to last; in other words, whether or not a particular post was relevant to the study, it was read more than once, reviewed for themes and topics, and compared or contrasted (where appropriate) with similar postings in that blog or in other blogs.

Finally, while Arabic-language blogs would likely have been quite revealing, only those blogs written in English and/or less than 50% transliterated Arabic were included in this study’s analysis; this is because the time, expense, and effort involved in having these documents professionally translated would have greatly taxed my schedule, budget (which was completely out-of-pocket), and resources.

As this section has elucidated the populations of interest, as well as criteria for their inclusion in the study and strategies used to recruit them, the following section outlines the information sought from each population, including a general overview of the process, its strengths and weaknesses, and this study’s execution plan.

Data Collected

Research Questions

As previously mentioned, my research questions asked:

RQ1—What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?

RQ2a—What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?

RQ2b—How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?
RQ3—How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the “three communication dimensions” (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?

Each of these questions addressed a specific concern; in this section, the concerns are further explained.

The first question, RQ1, not only targeted the various strategies of identity-negotiation and acculturation, but also the differences and/or similarities between participants within and without Egypt.

The second question focused upon the positive, negative, and neutral issues experienced by Egyptians worldwide, while the subquestion (2b) sought the various fashions in which participants “dealt with” the negative issues; as before, it was hoped that comparisons and/or contrasts could be made between participants in Egypt and the diaspora, though the question’s true focus was upon cultural orientation and, to a lesser extent, identity-formation. And, as will be noted in Part II, communication style (the third communication dimension) was mentioned quite frequently in response to the second question and subquestion.

The third question, RQ3, was designed to uncover what participants’ dialogical models "looked like" with respect to each of the three communication dimensions; in other words, I was interested in identifying the various conflicts within each of those areas, and learning "which side won" most of the time.

Now that the research questions and surrounding elements have been highlighted, the interview and questionnaire questions dealing with and inspired by the research questions shall be reviewed, followed by a review of information sought within the reviewed documents.

Questionnaire and Interview Questions

Since this study is one of the few to deal with the dialogical model of acculturation from a communication perspective, participants’ "handling" of the three communication dimensions played a large role within my investigation into their acculturation strategies. This section defines each of the three dimensions, then states which questions corresponded to each one (see appendix for both instruments)

Following Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb’s 1997 study on Arab American acculturation, the first dimension in the dissertation was identification, defined in as the extent to which a person identifies—or wishes to be identified—with a certain culture (Faragallah et al, 1997); as previously mentioned, "identity" is also used in the study (where appropriate), though the “official” title of the first dimension is the former, due to its frequent usage in the studies I’ve drawn from.

The first several questions in the questionnaire were concerned with discovering which cultures participants identified with (Q1-Q2), and whether they identified (Q3-Q4) more with one culture than the other (as in Berry’s separation or assimilation), both cultures (as in Berry’s integration), or neither culture (as in Berry’s marginalization); these questions were structured in such a manner that the various cultures (whether
offered via checkbox, or written in by participants) are orthogonal, allowing outcomes of "both" (Berry's integration) or "neither" (Berry's marginalization). Both sets of questions also included spaces for "write-in" comments.

It should be noted that in order to triangulate and verify one participant's answer against her or his previously-given answers, each of the three communication dimensions appears in more than one question within the questionnaire, and makes at least one reappearance within the interview; for example, Question 1 within the interview features identification as well.

The second and third dimensions had more specific directions to go in, with regard to the traditional Egyptian forms of cultural orientation (collectivism vs. individualism) and communication style (high context vs. low context), namely collectivism and high context communication, respectively; this is because the literature on Egyptian and "Arab" culture has always specified that Egyptians (and Arabic-speakers) are collectivists who prefer high context communication and a certain moral code (for the sake of this study, "traditionalism").

Three sets of "original" mini-scales were, therefore, hoped to confirm or deny these previously-held beliefs, by ascertaining participants' tendencies to use or prefer these things; in the first set of these "scale" questions, communication styles (low context communication, high context communication, respectively) were supposed to be detected. The scales contained some original items, and some items that originated in Gudykunst's scale of high context communication; some of the "borrowed" items were modified due to semantic or syntactical issues that caused a bit of confusion when tested with Egyptian immigrants.

The second set of "scales" examined cultural orientation (individualism, collectivism, respectively), and the third set was supposed to "measure" how "traditional" a participant was, with regard to the upbringing of children and the virginity of females (both "traditionally" hot-button issues with Egyptians). It should be noted that, while this process appears to be quantitative in nature, the "scores" were supposed to serve as descriptive reference points, rather than formal declarations of each participants' position on each particular "scale."

The reader has likely noticed the phrase "supposed to" several times now, regarding these scales; this qualification has been made with good reason, namely because those very same scales did not actually accomplish the task that they were supposed to! At first, I had no idea whatsoever of what the problem could be, so I started at the very beginning and examined every possibility.

In my original plan, participants would fill out each of the six "scales," and I'd tally up the numbers—1 for "no/never," 3 for "sometimes," and 5 for "yes/always"—and compare the scores to my painstakingly-constructed blurb titled "what your score means." That part worked fine; each scale had either six, seven, or eight items, so the minimum score was always six, seven, or eight, while the uppermost scores were 30, 35, or 40 (respectively). Furthermore, the scales were, indeed, "weighted" such that participants marking 5 ("always") for every answer would get a result of "very," while participants staying closer to 1 ("no/never") would get a "not" result; so the issue was not
a function of my scale construction, for each scale did, indeed, yield valid and reliable results when taken by Western participants (assuming I knew these Westerners as well as I thought I did).

Another possible issue that occurred to me was the notion of allowing a duplication of extremes; that is, the same individual could be (according to the scales) "very collectivist" as well as "very individualist." This is because I wrote "orthogonality" (unconnectedness or distinctness, in this context) into the system, by separating each end of a dimension's spectrum, making it possible to obtain a "high" overall score in both scales. This orthogonality of cultural influence was and is a key element of the study, because the dialogical model’s key element is the unrestricted access to neither, either, or both Egyptian and non-Egyptian mentalities or strategies. The issue had naught to do with problematic duplications, however, as several African American, Latin American, American Jewish, and Italian American "unofficial" participants received "high/high" scores in more than one dimension (particularly cultural orientation).

After working on interview translation and transcription for several hours, my mind had "rested" enough that I could identify the actual issue as "culture shift"; in the first variation, participants seemed to stick to either one or five (never/always, respectively) for certain scales, or have answers evenly distributed (more or less) between ones and fives. This seemed very odd to me, until I realized that today’s Egyptian culture bears little resemblance to previous versions (in some cases, anyway), and some high school or college students (even in Egypt) may never have been exposed to a high context message or collectivist clash in their lives; so in this case, cultural shift refers to "moving away from the 'traditional' Egyptian way."

The second variation had some participants selecting ONLY threes; this case was easier to figure out once I read the comments many left about the "vagueness" or "ambiguity" of one question or another (scale and non-scale); this "trend" demonstrates the opposite of the previous type of cultural shift, in that "only-threes" were clinging to another facet of the "traditional Egyptian way," which Triandis would call "cultural tightness," wherein the society in question has a different rule for every possible situation (Triandis, 2002).

The last non-scenario inquiry in the questionnaire was a checkbox question dealing with cultural conflict (Q5); the scenario-based questions examined cultural orientation (Questions 1, 2, 5, and 7), and communication style (Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9).

The interview questions were not scenario-based, and asked "what would you do?" in a more straightforward manner; the topics broached included: identification (1), acculturation strategies (1, 3), cultural orientation (2, 7), cultural anxiety (4), dreams and goals (5), "the dialogical" (6), and communication style (8).

Having covered the questions and their theoretical underpinnings, we now discuss the mining of data from the blogs included in this study.
Document Data-Mining

As a previous section has established the inclusion criteria for blogs, we may not discuss the step-by-step protocol for the dissertation’s document review, which included:

1) Finding documents matching inclusion criteria.
2) Saving relevant documents and noting all relevant demographic information.
3) Saving a duplicate of the original file, and highlighting anything to do with biculturalism, cultural conflicts, conflictedness in general, then filling out a questionnaire (on paper) based upon the material written in the blog. (These were not counted among the 34 questionnaires, of course).
4) Doing a "detailed reading" (following Ajrouch, 2004) by going through all threads in order to identify themes (following Netting, 2006), then noting all varying viewpoints (i.e. traditional, conservative, religious, etc.) and emerging sub-themes (following Ajrouch, 2004) and, finally, organizing them all by group (following Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002) and reference point (Amin & Bassusi, 2003).
5) Finally, studying specific and master lists of themes and subthemes until patterns or theories emerge, with respect to communication styles, cultural orientations, identifications, actions, attitudes, and/or conflicts.

As these steps have been recounted, the discussion shifts to the data collection techniques used in this study.

Specific Techniques of Data Collection

To meet the goals of data collection, several technologies were utilized: internet-based synchronous and asynchronous communication programs, which enabled the online interviews to take place, while video cameras will capture interviews with those willing and able to appear on film.

In this section, the aforementioned data collection techniques are explained in greater detail.

Internet-Based Synchronous Communication: Online Chats

The qualitative, in-depth interviews were conducted through Internet chats via Yahoo! Messenger (Gaiser & Schreiner, 2009). This format worked the best, in terms of being able to ask follow-up questions and learn what was on the participants’ minds, though fewer people were willing and/or able to devote several hours to chatting online. All in all, twelve participants granted me online interviews, with an average interview-time of 1.5 hours; the shortest was 37 minutes, the longest at one stretch was six hours, and some participants initiated more than one conversation (regarding the dissertation data).

I saved the unedited conversations as .doc files, and also cut and pasted relevant responses into the asynchronous form below, in order to streamline the editing process (as some interviews totaled over 100 single-spaced pages in Microsoft Word). Additionally, I took notes on paper (or laptop, where necessary), in order to remember questions I wanted to ask later, and also to record my impressions of the participant’s mood, favorite topics, tangents, et
cetera. All in all, these conversations worked very well for me, ensuring my ability to ask follow-up questions, and saving me from dozens or hundreds of pages of typing.

Some people, however, were unable to find me online at their preferred times (and they’d neglected to indicate what time they wanted to meet up), and had to resort to the asynchronous interview which is discussed in the next section.

**Internet-Based Asynchronous Communication: SurveyMonkey.com**

SurveyMonkey.com, a site offering survey-building software through free and paid accounts, was (and still is) my method of choice for online surveys or questionnaires. Questionnaire and interview questions were entered and saved in separate files, followed by the completion of a streamlined process designed to "collect" participants through SurveyMonkey links. In this case, participants clicked on one of two links—the first appearing in emails and posts, the second appearing on one of my websites (www.xculturemag.com)—and then selected between completing the questionnaire and the "alternate format" of the interview (i.e., an asynchronous version of the same questions I asked participants on Yahoo! Messenger); I set up both instruments (the questionnaire and the alternate/asynchronous interview) to loop back to www.xculturemag.com so that participants would have the opportunity (and a reminder) to take whichever instrument they hadn’t yet completed.

There were two "average" times of completion for the questionnaires: twenty minutes and seventy-five minutes; there were also two average times of completion for the asynchronous interviews: eight minutes and one hour; some responses were concise and rich, while others "richly" rambled. In other words, regardless of time spent or words typed, these responses were, in most cases, just as relevant and revealing as were the usually-lengthier (and sometimes more-tangential) responses granted in the synchronous interviews.

But interviews didn’t just happen online; some took place face-to-face, as the next section will recount.

**Audiovisual Capture: Video-Camera**

Egyptians willing to appear on camera were much less rare than I’d feared; in 90 per cent of the video-taped interviews, participants informed me that I didn’t need to hide their faces or voices, while the final ten per cent said I could capture their voices—but only if I turned the camera on their shoulder or ear or shadow.

This type of interview was an excellent resource, providing me with a wealth of information in a relatively short period of time; adding to the efficiency of the format was the fact that I’d conducted well over three dozen videotaped interviews since the early 2000s, each lasting close to or over an hour. Past interviewees have been authors of note, presidents of international organizations, politicians—and, in most cases, Egyptians.

Interviews for the dissertation went even more smoothly, as participants often seemed consumed with sharing every single story, opinion, and sagacity about the topics we discussed, resulting in interviews that averaged three hours. The tapes were
backed up to hard drive, burned to DVD, and transcribed via laptop during multiple viewings (of each interview); transcriptions were then subjected to the same procedure as synchronous interviews were, resulting in a consistent format between interview types. This whole process was rather time-consuming, tedious, and "hand/wrist-unfriendly," but the richness of data was unmatched by any other format; of course, that very richness which so delighted me in January became the bane of my existence in February, as I put together a first draft of the data chapters. Very difficult, it was, to wade through (or "weed") twenty or thirty pages, knowing full well that I could only share one brief quotation from the lot.

Nonetheless, I was and am very pleased with the transcripts of these video interviews; actually, the transcribed conversations were not the only tangible remnants of the interviews, for I also took notes on paper (as I did in the synchronous online interviews); the notes here were a bit more detailed, and included comments I wanted to follow up on, questions that suddenly came to me, unique questions I asked the current participant (and not others), make-shift "time-stamps" indicating when one response ended and another began, and my own impressions of the participant, as well as those themes and issues that arose from their oration.

All in all, this was a very successful format that I would have no problem revisiting in future research.

As this discussion of video interviews has concluded the current section's coverage of data collection techniques, the following section is devoted to the techniques that were used to analyze the data collected by the aforementioned techniques.

**Techniques of Data Analysis**

As the previous section has outlined techniques of data collection, this section features the twin stages of data preparation and analysis.

*Data Preparation*

Data were prepared according to respective methods of collection. In all cases except video interviews, preparation began with a preliminary review of each text-based document (including transcripts of Yahoo! Messenger interviews, output files of asynchronous interviews and questionnaires, and blogs that had been saved as .doc files) in order to verify completeness and proper sequence.

I then translated any Arabic or French phrases or tangents into English, and saved the entire transcription and/or translation of one document as a new file in three different locations (including a folder named after the participant’s username), under the original filename which was amended by a 111 at the end (for example, sallybishai would become sallybishai111); this indicated that the file was not the original file, that it was the complete but otherwise unedited document, and that it was saved in three different locations.

Following this, I saved a fourth copy in a desktop folder created expressly for that purpose; this fourth copy was marked with an X (at the end of the new filename, i.e.
sallybishai would become sallybishaiX). The X told me I could delete, highlight, or otherwise edit, without worrying that I was losing data (as would have happened had the "edited" file been the original).

Finally, any of my own notes about the interview/participant/blog/blogger were transcribed and saved in three places, including the folder named after the participant’s username, and a folder dedicated to my observations.

In the case of filmed interviews, the audio tracks were first transcribed precisely in the language used by the participant, then translated (where necessary) and filed alongside the person’s file. The reason I took the extra step of transcribing and then translating was that I wanted to be able to show the written transcript to translation-assisters without compromising the confidentiality of any participant—even if they hadn’t actually used their name or shown their face on film. It should be noted that my observations on video interviews often included an empirical listing of the participant’s more notable non-verbal cues, my own questions, impressions, and observations, as well as documenting data like time-stamps, number of tapes used, date or dates of interview, location, and any other people present at the interviews. From that point on, the English-language transcripts were treated in the same manner as the documents above.

Following the aforementioned data preparation came the stage of cleaning the data. I did this in two main ways; first, I took the X file and highlighted the most relevant bits in yellow, saving it with the same filename, but amended with a 223 at the end of it (so file sallybishaiX would have become sallybishaiX223), denoting that it contained highlighting, that it was the second version of the "prepared" file, that it was saved in three places, and that I was still working on it. Once the file was completely highlighted and annotated with themes or other notes, the name would be amended with a 777 at the end, denoting that it was finished (so sallybishaiX223 would become sallybishaiX223777); I do, by the way, realize how unwieldy such filenames must seem, but I came up with this system in the 1990s, when I was a poor college student earning pocket money as a fashion photographer. During those days, I had to edit large batches of photos in a matter of hours, but I was often quite undecided about whether to remove a laugh-line or leave it in, whether a shot looked better in black and white or selenium or sepia; thankfully, this system allowed me to quickly identify photos that had been modified and what had been done to each, with regard to size, color, saturation, warmth or coolness, cropping or not, et cetera. Furthermore, I could easily find the most recent (and, thus, "best") incarnations, due to their rather lengthy filenames—just as I could easily find the most-recent and complete 777 files during the data cleaning stage.

But can you imagine, dear reader, that after all of this hassle and hullabaloo, I realized that I had made almost no progress whatsoever? This was because the 139-page interview was still 139 pages—even if I was much better acquainted with every one of those pages, and even if I now knew which quotes were screaming to be quoted in my dissertation, and which themes refused to be silenced. And so, I decided that actually removing the un-highlighted material would be ok—after all, I did still have the 111 file to refer to, should the need arise—and hopefully result in a printout that would be a bit less cumbersome to carry around.
So I went through the files and excised quite a bit of each one, renaming it with
an 11 at the very end; in some cases, only one or two pages remained, in others, forty or
fifty (of 500 or 600). But upon printing out the first 11 file (well, X22377711, actually), I
realized that I was "back to Square One," for the remnants were in chronological order,
and often jumped from one topic to the next; this was only a problem because I had no
contextual information or categories to indicate just what the person really meant. In
other words, if a blogger wrote "my mom is so mean! She stole my ice cream cone from
me!", she could have meant that Mommie Dearest was not-so-dear due to constant
criticisms and/or lectures of the famous "how will you ever get married if you don't lay
off the desserts, slim down, and shape up??!!" brand name, but she could have also
meant that her mother was lazy, only snatching the caloric confection because she didn't
want to get up and get her own; she could also have meant that her mother didn't want
her to spoil her appetite for dinner, or that money was tight that month, and the
daughter's constant snacking wasn't helping the situation.

So I had to find a new way to mind the rapidly-proliferating data; thankfully, the
idea hit me on the head soon after. Very basically, it involved the creation of a secure,
online database that could be accessed from whatever city or state I happened to be in; I
used Surveymonkey.com to construct the data-entry form, and entered each of the
themes I was looking for (acculturation, communication, collectivism, et cetera)—and
some themes that had begun to climb out of the data.

At the end of that day, I had written a dozen forms; one was a 30-page (!) terror
that reduced every blog into its building-block state; one was a six-question marvel that	abulated the famous "scale" questions and coughed up a "diagnosis." The last one I'd
written—and the simplest—turned out to be the best for my purposes; the form was just
three pages long: one page recorded factual data (like name, blog title, faith of blogger,
current residence) via checkboxes, one recorded my impressions about certain aspects of
the blog and blogger, and one contained a handful of empty boxes, each labeled with an
important term (like conflict, Egyptian culture, biculturalism). I set it up in a loop, so
that finishing one survey would bring up an empty copy.

Using this form, it took me less than one hour to summarize 1500 pages of the 13
blogs; all the pertinent quotes and themes I'd identified were now arranged by topic,
and could be printed by topic or by blogger. Furthermore, the checkbox question
allowed me to swiftly create a graphical representation of themes, demographics, or any
other thing. Of course, I'd already spent a significant stretch of time highlighting and
excising (manually removing usernames from Yahoo! conversations was a bit of a
nightmare, I must confess), but all in all, the "form" method of data organization served
me quite well at that point—and at later points in the analysis, hence my recounting of
the method's discovery.

Now that the multi-phased process of data preparation has been revealed, we
may discuss the method of data analysis.
Data Analysis

As we approach the end of Part I, a final topic must be addressed—that of data analysis. This section begins with a brief review of qualitative data analysis, then discusses the analysis methods undertaken in this study.

As filmmakers, critics, and scholars have argued, the metaphor of a bricoleur is useful to those considering data analysis; this is because the most effective method of analysis is often tailored to fit the specific pieces or types of information that have been gathered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

In any case, the first major step is an identification of "recurring regularities" (Guba, 1978); these may appear within the texts of interest, but Miles and Huberman (1994) counsel that "reflective remarks" and "raw field notes" may unlock what the texts themselves cannot. These keys to analysis may, in fact, "swim into awareness" through one of many streams, including the tone of relationships between participant and researcher, "second thoughts" about what the participant was "really saying," or doubts as to the validity of a subject's responses (p. 66).

Keeping these things in mind as I finalized the data preparation stage, I began a "transcript-based analysis" (Morgan, 1998) soon after, keeping alert to patterns of behavior, central themes (like "fear of disloyalty to family") or categories (of people or of practices, for example) that emerged from any and all elements of a participant's file.

The analysis type used to accomplish this was a subset of grounded theory, or GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Jorgensen, 1989; Scott, 1995); GT stresses "the discovery of theory from data—systematically obtained and analyzed" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The subset that I used is called analytic induction (AI), which is considered a "principle technique" of GT (Bowen, 2006).

AI involves the induction of "laws from a deep analysis of experimentally isolated instances" (Znaniecki, 1934) as well as the identification of "patterns, themes, and categories of analysis," all of which should "come from the data," emerging from it instead of arising from the quantitative method of logical deduction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that generally involves the formation of a theory or hypothesis "prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1980).

Analysis of the information sometimes differed according to method of data collection; in the case of qualitative interviews, the transcripts were read and re-read—following Zaidi and Shuraydi (2002)—and "dissected" until every possible theme and subtheme was noted. Some questions kept in mind whilst reading responses included the following (whose elements of interest are noted in capital letters):

1. What cultures, media preferences/likes/dislikes were mentioned? (IDENTITY)
2. What were their feelings about biculturality and/or changing cultures of residence? (CONFLICTED IDENTITY)
3. From their comments, did their communication seem more "high context" or "low context" or both? (COMMUNICATION STYLE)
4. From their comments, did they seem individualistic or collectivistic, both, or
neither? (CULTURAL ORIENTATION)
5. What were some examples/stories they shared about these things?
6. Did they make any mention of experiencing confusion, closeting, conflicts, or
any other sort of distress tied to cultural things? Have they ever sought or
received professional help and/or medication for any of these things? If so,
did such strategies work? (NEGATIVE DIALOGICAL STATE)

For purposes of "fact-checking," various responses from the same respondent
were compared against one another (this was facilitated by printing out the instrument
or instruments taken by each person); additionally, I compared each participant's
response to all other responses given to the same question (this task was simplified by
printing out all responses to one question). In other words, responses were compared for
respondent effects as well as question and/or researcher effects. This approach was also
quite useful in the analyses of those qualitative responses given in the descriptive
questionnaires.

Shifting now to the infamous "scale" questions, it should be noted that while I
cannot, in good conscience, make any claims about participants' most-subscribed-to or
preferred communication styles and/or cultural orientations—based on those "scale"
questions, anyway—the comments typed into each scale's optional fields were most
insightful, shedding light on certain facets of one or more of the communication
dimensions "measured" in the scales; furthermore, some of the questionnaire-takers and
most of the asynchronous interviewees did mention their vexation with various
communication styles and cultural orientations. Responses of both types (comments and
"vexations") were, again, compared with those of other participants, and also checked
against the participant's other responses.

Blog postings, having "open-endedness" in common with the qualitative
responses made in questionnaires and interviews, do, nonetheless, differ from the
questions; this is because the blogs are not negotiated texts. In other words, I have
neither asked questions of nor made comments to the bloggers—on their blogs,
anyway, though I did email Fattractive with a request for an interview (three months
later, no response); and, as previously mentioned, I have been on good terms with
Midiane since 2001 or 2002, though my doctoral studies have kept me offline for the past
several years, making it unlikely that any of his posts were inspired by our
conversations. Therefore, I have not impacted the bloggers' writings in any way, though
it should be noted that my biases do emerge in my selection of included blogs, as well as
the inclusion criteria thereof, not to mention those postings and/or quotes I've chosen to
feature in Part II, and those themes that have spoken loudly enough that they, too, were
featured in Part II.

That said, it should also be noted that the analysis method afforded such
postings did greatly differ from the aforementioned method to which qualitative
responses were subjected; the questions kept in mind during analyses of the blog
postings are:
1. Who is this person? (DEMOGRAPHIC)
2. What is their blog generally about? (THEME)
3. What is their usual tone and/or outlook? (MOOD)
4. What cultures, media preferences/likes/dislikes are mentioned? (IDENTITY)
5. What are their feelings about biculturality and/or changing cultures that they live in and/or are tied to? (CONFLICTED IDENTITY)
6. From their comments, does their communication seem more "high context" or "low context" or both? (COMMUNICATION STYLE)
7. From their comments, do they seem individualistic or collectivistic, both, or neither? (CULTURAL ORIENTATION)
8. What are some examples/stories they share about these things?
9. Did they make any mention of experiencing confusion, closeting, conflicts, or any other sort of distress tied to cultural things? Have they ever sought or received professional help and/or medication for any of these things? If so, did such strategies work? (NEGATIVE DIALOGICAL STATE)

It should be noted that Questions 1-3 (just above) were NOT deciding factors in the overall analysis of a particular posting; in other words, I did not decide that someone was miserable based upon their words (for example, because they said "I hate my life" or because they spent three pages ranting and railing about how horrible something was), since 1) "miserable" means different things to different people (so does "happy," for that matter), 2) because some people are happiest when they’re ranting and raving, and 3) because without nonverbal cues, it’s difficult to tell what a person really meant (i.e. "bad," which can mean "unpleasant," according to the dictionary, or "cool," according to Michael Jackson’s classic song).

I have, nonetheless, included the questions, due to my belief that the "investigatory" nature of said questions will always provide insight into the context surrounding the postings most-heavily drawn-from. Such context is important to note, if only for the purpose of noting it.

The analyses described above have facilitated the construction of several preliminary theories and categories; once I’d arrived at these theories (which climbed out of the data) I began to build models (or modify existing ones), which were then tested, adjusted, re-tested, adjusted, and re-tested; as of now, there are several theories that have stood up to three rounds of informal testing, including higher and lower context communication, Identity Accommodation Theory, Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome, "successful" acculturation, and, of course, the Negative Dialogical State. Due to the constraints of the dissertation (page limits, for example), only one of these will be proposed in Part II.

Regardless of which model is proposed, it is my sincerest hope that the participants who provided inspiration and support for these theories will somehow benefit from them.
As Part I is drawing to a close, a summary of the past four chapters reminds us of the philosophical, theoretical, conceptual, and practical issues the provide a foundation for the data at hand.

**Summary**

Chapter One presented a discussion centered around the various challenges faced by immigrants—particularly "Easterners," and especially "Arabs." Following this, the dissertation's two general purposes were stated; they included

1) Expanding upon the dialogical model of acculturation, and
2) Revealing the current cultural climates common among Christians in Egypt and in the diaspora—regardless of where they were born and raised.

These general purposes were divided into three narrower goals, which included:

1) An exploration of the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,
2) An understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt or the diaspora), as well as
3) A discovery of participants' manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).

These goals were, in part, accomplished by asking three main research questions:

RQ1—What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?
RQ2a—What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?
RQ2b—How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?
RQ3—How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the "three communication dimensions" (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?

A study designed to meet these goals and answer these questions was then introduced; it involved qualitative methods of inquiry that would facilitate an examination of three communication dimensions. This examination would, according to Chapter One, focus upon the underrepresented population of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and in the diaspora.
Chapter Two then introduced the literature surrounding Egypt, the "Middle East," and its opposite, the "Western Way," while Chapter Three presented theoretical concepts of acculturation, identity-formation, and the three communication dimensions.

Finally, this chapter brought us to the present, recounting all the particulars of the now-completed study, from qualitative methods to specific data collection techniques, from techniques of data preparation to methods of analysis.

As Part I ends, the focus shifts to the data chapters in Part II.
PART II
CHAPTER FIVE
IDENTIFICATION

Introduction

While it is true that many cultures—whether religious, racial, ethnic, or regional, among others—vary in elements, traditions, and attitudes (among others), it is also true that certain things transcend mere culture, and affect (or are affected by) humans on a deeper (or at least different) level.

For example, most humans appreciate music to some extent, but some cultures privilege soprano squawking, while others hold yodeling, chanting, or warbling (!) in higher esteem; additionally, various cultures go about creating music in different ways—in one, "it just ain't music" without percussion; in another, percussion is considered hideous and harsh, and unilaterally avoided in favor of stringed accompaniment; in a third, instruments are shunned altogether, and emphasis is placed on the human voice.

Accordingly, while different cultures have often created their own instruments throughout history, some of those instruments resemble one another but sound quite different, even though their similarities give them the potential to sound very similar; an example of this can be seen (and heard) in three stringed instruments: the mandolin, lute, and oud. Each is played somewhat differently in order to bring out its own distinctive characteristics; on the other hand, the three do sound similar when played "straight."

Stepping away from music and toward identity, we see the same principles at work; traditionally, Egyptian culture has privileged collectivism, while the U.S. favored individualism, though both cultural orientations are to do with the same subject: family relationships. Additionally, Egyptians have long prided themselves upon their emphasis upon relationships and their matchless ability to do twenty things at once (even if the tasks aren't all completed by day's end), while "the American way" still preaches efficiency, productivity, and a job well done.

And though verbal and nonverbal communication acts are used by each culture, the same communication act may actually mean something very different in Egypt as it does in America, just as two sets of communication acts (specific to Egyptian and American cultures, respectively) may send the same message.

As acculturation is often affected by incompatible or unfamiliar privilegings, processes, and outcomes, it became necessary to examine the topic in light of a construct resulting from all of these things and also met the goals of research, which included:

1) exploring acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,
2) obtaining an understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt and the diaspora), as well as

3) ascertaining participants' manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).

This chapter's focus is the first of those dimensions, identification; the section below presents data—edited only for relevance and length—related to this dimension, followed by a discussion of emergent themes. The chapter ends with a conclusion, which addresses the three research questions—as impacted by identity.

Data

Cultural Spaces and Identifications

As stated in Chapter Three, identification is defined as the extent to which a person identifies—or wishes to be identified—with a certain culture (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997); related to this is the notion of cultural spaces, or the "social and cultural contexts in which our identity forms" (Martin & Nakayama, 2009, p. 267). In this section, we examine the cultural spaces and identifications commonly and uncommonly defined by participants.

Unsurprisingly, most of the 32 questionnaire-takers identified, defined, and/or combined their culture/s of influence in different manners; for example, while nearly half (14) of the 32 main questionnaire-takers responded to the short-answer question "What culture do you identify with NOW?" by providing some variant or other of the hyphenated term appropriate to their own details (Egyptian-American, Australian-Egyptian, British/Egyptian, etc.), the other half put down slightly or significantly more-detailed cultural recipes. Some of these were:

1. My own culture, which is mostly Christian with some American and some more Egyptian in it
2. mixture of so many cultures, only if agree with bible
3. Mixed between American and Egyptian
4. None! I made one of my own..
5. Both, Egyptian and American
6. Egyptian, American, "Egyptian-American" (distinct from each one)
7. With Egyptians I feel more western, with westerners I feel more Egyptian
8. European, Egyptian to a certain extent
9. misfit, not-really Egyptian, not-really American, both, neither, outsider, frustrated, trapped.
10. Egyptian Culture, not so Islamic, My Family culture (Christian Culture) not so American
11. American Christian, with Egyptian background
12. Egyptian-Western
13. Presbiterian American, Middleeast Protostant
14. Egyptian immigrant to north America

A few participants qualified their responses, providing the reasons for their decisions; "Since I am in college," wrote Farawla, "I associate myself more with my American side than my Egyptian side," while Fiona proclaimed her culture to be American, since "I like it more because it is not judgmental, and does not force specific behaviors." But as Maxxi Priest—a "conservative American Coptic Christian I guess," who "may be more American than FOB...more FOB than American."—asked, "who cares? The point is we're all brothers and sisters."

Whether immigrants or Egyptians (or humans, for that matter) agree with Maxxi's sentiment, however, it should be noted that all of the cultural recipes above are actually identifications held by participants, and that only some of them refer to "cultural spaces." Furthermore, while multiple participants dubbed their cultural identities either "American-Egyptian" or "Egyptian-American," it was very clear that each of the participants in question had a significantly different concept of the cultures in mind when he or she used the hyphenation; this is where the notion of cultural space enters the picture, as our identities take shape in response to the "cultural meanings created in...physical homes and neighborhoods," and not the places themselves (Martin & Nakayama, 2009, p. 267).

For example, while two participants in their early twenties wrote that they were "Egyptian American," one speaks Arabic fluently, lives with her parents, and told me that every year of her life has included one month in Egypt, but the other indicated that she's never been interested in learning Arabic or visiting Egypt, and that she moved out of her parents' home "the moment I could, legally." The first young lady, additionally, was brought up to "fear and avoid American thoughts and acts" and "make the best of any situation," while the second was taught to "be who I wanted to be, never let anyone keep me down, and never take 'no!' for an answer."

Thus, while different participants indicated the same "identification" or "identity," their identities were not truly the same (even if their identifications were)—due to the variations in the cultural spaces that shaped those identities.

Moreover, while several participants referred to an amalgamated identity (see the first four responses above), some of their later responses indicated a distinct conflict within the identities they claimed, and the cultural space/s they occupied—or, more accurately, the identities and cultural space/s they described as "claiming" and "occupying" them.

The next section discusses this conflict, and the effects of being caught in the crossfire.

_Caught In The Crossfire_

Despite Maxxi Priest's unifying sentiment above, some participants indicated feelings that were decidedly non-familial; in this section, these less-than-warm feelings

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2 Refers to recent immigrants who seem “Fresh off the boat,” whether they moved last month or last decade.
are further explored, with regard to Egyptians, their culture, and the mixed emotions and/or divided loyalties that frequently arose in response to them.

While mixed emotions were commonly mentioned, they were not always associated with "true" misery—at least, not the sort that has a person leaving the country and culture and never looking back; blogger Fattractive, for example, never came across as truly miserable or seriously conflicted in her blog—which stated that she found Egypt to be "a fascinating place. I love love love it, and hate hate hate it." Her main conflicts seemed to be 1) her "weight problem," which held her back, even though she is an independently wealthy millionaire with a PhD, who also happens to consider herself a devout Muslim of ravishing physical beauty (from the neck up, anyway), and 2) the fact that she is single (due to problem #1), and frequently gets "bummed out" when her friends get married and/or pregnant. In both cases, she is "torn" between marrying "just anyone"—which she says is possible (i.e. she can find men who will "accept" her) but out of the question (as she is highly selective)—and "torn" between happiness for her friends and sadness for herself.

Then again, these are not cultural issues that are exclusive to Egyptians; furthermore, while her blog often points out her yearly twelve-country travel itinerary, she’s never lived in an entirely new place, away from family, friends, and familiar things. Others, however, have done, and wrote of experiencing a tug-of-war between the cultural extremes; Gameela, for instance, shared that

I have a hard time fitting in neither Christian Egyptian culture nor American Culture. I do not feel that I am pure part of either of them, but may be I am in between.

Others mentioned that they don’t know "who I really am...Egyptian, American, what?" and experience confusion about "what I can do without rocking the boat," as college student Demiana shared.

And while DemoGurl claimed that "I myself have not really struggled with anything cultural," she also continued that

I know my older siblings have (younger have not, though). I know that Egyptians generally struggle with marriage/dating, being "themselves" without shaming their families, restrictions for women (more than men), climbing to the top (even just intellectually, it’s not about money so much as it is about "success" and being the "best"), etc.

According to DemoGurl, then, the struggles seem to circle around the external controls and societal conventions set forth by Egyptian culture; Kelly took the thought one step further, revealing one common strategy of negotiating identity:

Some Egyptian Americans have identity complexes because they don’t fit into any box in America. I know a few Egyptian kids who were born in
the U.S. who just conform to whatever is the minority culture they’ve been most exposed to (Hispanic in New Jersey or Black in Chicago, etc).

UKPeter’s outlook seems to be the precise opposite of Kelly’s friends; the young man admitted that he is exceedingly thankful for all the blessings God gave me, thankful I wasn’t born in Egypt, but thankful that I was born to an Egyptian family. This doesn’t mean it was always easy to fit in or stay pure in this society of filthy morals, but that’s another story!

In a different question, Peter shared that his commitment to "the classic Egyptian way” sometimes causes rifts with host-land natives, who think he feels ”culturally superior to them because I have morals, live a different way, and am confident in who I am.” All in all, though, he reported that he has "no worries, no complaints on the cultural front!”

Philosophically-minded Ibrahim revealed a similar mentality of non-negative dichotomous identity:

I used to wonder to myself, "Where do I fit in?” But then, like Edward Saïd, I thought "Huh! Is being ‘out of place’ necessarily a bad thing?” That was really my "Eureka Moment," and my life...changed to the better then.

These "Eureka Moments” don’t always result in peace and positivity, however, as demonstrated by blogger Midiane; the following snippet is only one of many related passages posted on his blog (and referred to throughout the dissertation).

I hate being raised without a culture or home. I hate being raised as a nothing, a wanderer, a cultural and social mutt...I will always be this freak of nature, the type you piss or spit on when you walk by BECAUSE YOU’RE JUST SO FUCKING WEIRD.

It should be noted that Midiane has identified himself (several times, in several blog postings) as a “third-culture kid.” This term refers to the fact that he’s lived in several different countries; third-culture kids—also called "global nomads” (Martin & Nakayama, 2009, p. 202)—often spend short periods of time in each of those countries, robbing them of a firm cultural foundation.

Participant El Massry [The Egyptian] expressed similar feelings on his own identity as a third-culture kid, sharing a bit about the reason behind his own lack of a firm foundation in the Egyptian culture that is printed on his DNA—and in his heart:
I always feel left out...my parents don’t think it’s worth explaining to me things...so when things happen... I don’t understand... I don’t get support... cuz “ana khawaga” [I am a foreigner] and it doesn’t matter and I end up frustrated... they send mixed signals... they don’t want to make an effort... but they get angry when I don’t act Egyptian.

Thus, the cultural crossfire isn’t always "Egyptian" versus "Western"; as Midiane and El Massry have demonstrated, conflicts can also occur when people (like the parents of both gentlemen) born and raised in Egypt send mixed signals (i.e. "try harder, already!") and "you’re trying too hard, get over it, already!") to the children they’ve raised in various lands, or when they (the parents) act like cultural gatekeepers, grand arbiters of all things Egyptian, dispensers of the coveted "Not-a-Wannabe-Egyptian" award.

But confusion as to "who I am" and "what I can do," mixed emotions over "not fitting in," and clashes with disapproving host-land natives and/or "real" Egyptians who have set themselves up as "withholders of culture" are only some of the "crossfires" mentioned by participants; other conflicts included those arising in response to some immigrants’ "culture shock" upon returning "home" and noticing the mental and moral "renovations" that happened while they were away.

The next section features a discussion on this trend of conflicts over cultural shift.

*Cultural Shift*

Culture is but one of many warring elements that may negatively impact a person, her family, or the whole community—if conflicts and confusion aren’t properly handled, anyway; the forward march of time is another prominent factor that sometimes works with—or against—culture.

This section—devoted to the negatively-perceived interplay between time and culture—is effectively introduced (and summarized) in the words of Magda, a fifty-two year old surgeon who has lived in the States since she was twenty-six: "Egypt has changed, it’s not the Egypt I left, I don’t fit there or here," she declared, in response to the interview question asking "What do you like and dislike about your culture?".

Participant Tanya would agree with Magda’s sentiment that "now, there’s no place CALLED home, not for me, not anymore," though Tanya’s response to the same question is more specific about the cause of her distress; the forty-something engineer did, in fact, cite several "culture-shockers," including the "new" familiarity between the sexes:

The first culture shock is that I went back home for a wedding, it turned out that the culture was now... that the girls could talk to guys. The culture changed.... They were alone in a room, talking, and even if it was 30 years later and they’re engaged, it’s just... I was shocked.. I don’t have another word to say. I kept thinking, ‘why are they sitting alone talking together?’ I mean, I was really shocked. Then when I see the wedding of that girl and also another one, the girls are showing so much skin, that’s
another culture shock. Especially, they're Christians...bass [but] they want yealedo el west [to copy the West] and they only copied the bad things.

Tanya was decidedly more optimistic about the cultural shift of Egyptian culture in the diaspora, however:

When I went to France for a meeting recently, there were young men I saw 30 years ago...when I was a young lady...I was proper, I'd never go talk to them without my brother or father present. But when I went on the trip, I was very outgoing, I went up to them and said hi, and didn't think anything of it. How they must think I've changed, that I joked and wasn't standoffish (in an attempt to be proper.) I was, of course, with hubby and brother and uncle, but I could have approached them even were I alone. Their wives were there, though, so that was a safety net, maybe I won't talk so much if they didn't have their wives with them. So I am different now. But I didn't hug them (I hugged their wives...) they probably think I'm westernized. But not that westernized. Asl there's' nothing wrong with taking the best out of every culture. But sadly the Egyptians back home don't know the limit...in trying to "fit in" with the west, they now went too far.

So Tanya's issue—which echoed throughout several responses from other participants—seems to be one of change and/or "Westernization" (in general) and morality (in particular).

Basil, in a less-expansive response to the same question (which is the only one featured in this section), unwittingly affirmed Tanya's notion: "just as Islam dyed over the prior Roman influence in Egypt, so, too, did the western influence grow to stain Egypt now." Anecdotal "evidence" of this "Western stain" was supplied by Mrs. Schaeffer, an immigrant from Egypt, who wrote about

the openness between men and women...what I seen on TV is really...the shows are open, what they talk about is now featuring love, sex and marriage, which in my time wasn't heard of. Women used to be very polite, ladylike, now they can talk openly about these sensitive issues. They're westernized. Very westernized. It's coz of this that the divorce rate increased sky high [in Egypt].

Another trend that distressed Mrs. Schaeffer was the fact that

This one girl, related to me, she had some kids 40 years young er than I am. She said "come here, grandson, this is my niece. His name is Mina. Mina, this is Sally." Not AUNT Sally, but SALLY. How dare she? She said
"See? We are like you now, we can call people by their first name... we're not "motakhereen, e7na... weselna [dated/behind the times...we've...arrived]." No no no, I said to her, this is just because people are intermarried (like Brady Bunch) and divorcing to much...they don’t know what to call them. It’s very important that you know this isn’t what all Egyptian feels, by the way and...may be a function of class, age, etc.

So in Mrs. Schaeffer’s case, the most distressing shifts involved a transgression of the societal codes she remembered, and the accompanying failure to recognize status, to pay tribute to "who I am" (as in the case of her relative).

Melkiya, a thirty-something who has finally returned to Egypt after leaving and returning several times, wonders if "parents still think that Egypt is 'all that' in it's present state," sharing that:

I too long for the Egypt that older Egyptians talk about. That Egypt seems like a fairytale now and those that lived a generation or two ago are now lost, in their own country. Change is constant and usually for the better overall, but...

Blogger Carmen, who often writes of "the whipping nostalgia that [singer] Dalida\(^3\) always, ALWAYS conjures up," had a volcanic reaction when one of her readers claimed that the blogger was in love with an illusory Egypt to such an extent that she ended up insulting the "real-life" version of her own country: "Don’t give me that crap about bad-mouthing my country," she began, declaring that "people like you" who "refuse to air your dirty laundry" were ultimately what kept things from changing. I do NOT badmouth Egypt day in and out. I have badmouthed the shit that happened to me there. You can be proud of an Egypt that allows its men to physically harass women and make people feel like they’re nothing, but I won’t...I’m proud of an Egypt that was and pray day in and out that it returns to that time.

Tanya doesn’t deny that yesterday’s Egypt was a "rough place for many people," but expresses her longing for "my home...even if it wasn’t always daisies and roses." She continues, confessing that "part of the problem in my life" is that:

now between 50-60 years old...it’s hard for me to learn the new culture, or accept it, or approve it. Like the frog that you put into the pot with hot

\(^3\) An Italian-Egyptian singer who was raised in Egypt; she is said to have reached the pinnacle of her success in 1978, when she released a record of Arabic-language songs. She committed suicide less than ten years later, but her songs “Salma ya Salama,” “Helwa ya Balady,” and especially “Ahsan Nass” live on in the hearts and minds of Egyptians everywhere.
water, he will jump out, but if you put it in the cold water that heated up, he won't have any idea what is going on...until it's too late...I'm in limbo. I don't belong here or there. The Egypt that I've known before [was] in the 50s-early 70s..

Fahima, an immigrant in her early sixties, might agree—though not due to feelings of confusion or even longing for the home she once knew; sighing that "I don't like what America became," she explained that her dislike stems from the fact that "it's not as conservative and nice as when I first moved here [in the 1960's]."

In sum, things have changed everywhere—in the Egypt they escaped from, in the diaspora they escaped to; or, as Dr. Magda put it, "I can't say [what I am, culturally] because 'Egyptian' doesn't mean Egyptian anymore, and 'American' doesn't mean American anymore."

As both somewhat-sad and seriously-sorrowful thoughts of yesterday have been presented in this section, the discussion now moves in a happier direction—the expression of faith as some participants' "true" cultural identity.

**Faith as a Site of Cultural Identity**

The last section introduced instances and circumstances of cultural shift; some participants expressed that they had no interest in pinning their hopes of affiliation to a rapidly-changing culture, however. This section features an "alternate" identification that many participants expressed—an identity I can only call "the faithful."

I've chosen that label for three reasons: first, because this prominent trend appeared in all three "major" religious groups represented (Protestant/Evangelical, Coptic Orthodox, and Muslim); second, because people who view faith as "a relationship, more than mere ritual or religion," would strongly object to being inaccurately labeled as "the religious," and likely wouldn't appreciate labels like "the pious" or the devout, as both could be perceived as mocking or "holier-than-thou"; third, because the term "believer"—often used by Christians—is inaccurate on two counts, since A) even the devil and his minions "believe" in God's power and majesty (even though they hate Him), and B) any human may, likewise, believe with his brain but identify with culture also and/or instead.

On the other hand, according to the "faithful" participants, their faith-based "master status" supercedes even family name and culture of origin. Glenda, for example, wondered "what's the big deal about Egypt? I don't' know why some young people in America feel so [much like leaves] torn away from the tree here," declaring that the youth in question "should be happy to avoid the trouble we had," noting that "if you're asking me what culture I identify with, it's Christian."

Anna, a counselor, provided one explanation for this generation's questing diasporic youth:

You see, they cling to the Egyptian culture, even the bad things, because even the bad things of Egyptian culture are still Egyptian; so when they
pick up the language of the streets and think it's cute, they are equally happy to identify with even that bad thing, because then at least they belong, they're part of the culture, and they feel secure...just like the abused wife who is more scared of being alone than she is from her husband's fist...the most well-adjusted Egyptian youth I've met all have deep relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Katkota would concur with Anna's diagnosis and prescription, having thanked God "that I grew up in a family that gave me confidence in myself and my religion, so I don't have to fit in with whichever culture I am in." 7elwa feels the same way, explaining that since she is a "Christian, my values come from Jesus and His word. My loyalty is to God, not to Egyptian culture," a sentiment further echoed by Miss Mini, who stipulated that "I have to be truthful and faithful to God first, then to my family." Fortyish Fiona, an immigrant, also lends her voice to this choir of the faithful, explaining that:

I really like the Christian culture, i.e. what is in the Bible. I have mixture of nationalities inside me in addition to Egyptian and American and I only take what I think is good from these 2 and reject the rest, specially if they oppose the culture of the bible and I have a very special taste culture that you will have a hard time to name it any culture name but (a Christian culture).

Korva, almost twenty years younger and raised in several North American locations, currently agrees with Fiona's sentiment, though she didn't always:

For all this time, up until this year really, I took my cues from Egyptian culture and my family, but now I decided it's really my religion that is in the forefront of my life...this makes the decision of what to do easy...the execution of it is difficult, most obviously, which I'm finding out the hard way...staying away from the things I had, or would like to have, material things (it is haram), men and women (romantic relationships could lead to extramarital sex, which the Scripture tells us is wrong), drinking and drugs (I am very fond of 'transcending' and chocolate only takes you so far), 'sayaa'ah' (heavy makeup and revealing slutty clothing can make you look hot, which maybe will get you married, but then you maybe aren't respected, and you surely displease The Lord).

Blogger Midiane has written about his struggles with Orthodoxy, and his walk with the Heavenly Father; the biggest conflict with his system of belief seems to be its connection with Egyptians. For example, he writes of wanting to serve God in a simple way, then having his attempts sabotaged by "well-meaning" Egyptians who try to push
him into more prestigious (but less-spiritual) tasks; he also writes of having negative feelings about Orthodoxy due to its connection with Copts.

Other participants have also voiced or expressed that connection, with some seeking it out in order to feel "more Egyptian," and others repelled from it because they wanted to escape "Egyptianness."

Of course, even though all "active" participants indicated their Christianity, all of the bloggers (apart from Midiane) were born Muslim. Fattractive, for example, has always (on her blog) identified first and foremost as a Muslimah; here she rhapsodizes over one of her favorite holidays, "takbeerat el-Eid," which she explains as consisting "basically [of] Muslims reciting praises to Allah," continuing that:

Faith is such a hard thing to describe. The closest I can describe my feelings when I hear the takbir is that my heart feels fit to burst–like there's so much joy and awe and happiness at the feeling of unity I want to jump up and down like a kid.

On another occasion, the blogger replies to a member of her audience who has suggested that she belonged to "Fattractivism" rather than Islam:

The beauty of Islam is that aside from the pillars and some clear right and wrongs, almost everything is open to interpretation...As humans, our nafs will always desire that which, if we're following any religion, we cannot have. We can however, live a life within its parameters that we enjoy. And only God will judge us.

Bloggers Ghawayesh and Carmen were less emotional about Islam, but defended their actions as not-anti-Islamic due to the interpretability of that faith (according to them). At the other end of the spectrum—but no less enthralled with his current faith—is Professor Amin, who recounts that:

I was born as a Moslem...I lived as a Moslem for over 20 years, I experienced everything Moslem...before I found the light of the truth. My family was...they had a bad reaction, they were against me, I suffered so much, especially from my dad. 17 months imprisoned, beaten, tortured worse than you hear on the news, far worse. If you want a description of all that, then this interview will need another 40 years. But I loved this suffering. As long as I was suffering, my love to our Lord was very deep and got deeper. Why did I convert? It's very simple. I was looking for love. Real love. I was looking for the real me and real love, and I found it in the Bible, through the blessed words and the blessed message of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now...my identity, my only identity, is in Him!
In sum, many participants shaped themselves to their perceptions of God’s Word, finding their identity in Him; some tied faith and culture together, seeking or evading it due to that connection. A few Muslim participants mentioned their happiness over the fact that they could "shape" or interpret their scriptures as they pleased. Several participants mentioned the emotional benefits of their faith.

Some participants identified themselves a bit differently, though, claiming religious affiliation instead of faith; the next section discusses this trend.

Religious Affiliation as a Site of Cultural Identity: "THE COPTIC PROBLEM"

"The Coptic problem is one of identity, because the Copts maintained their identity throughout history." These words were spoken to me in 2006, by Michael Meunier, president of the U.S. Copts Association; it wasn’t until I collected data for my dissertation, however, that I realized just how true his words were—and why.

Each of the participants referenced in this section shared anecdotes or observations supporting the notion that "persecution only makes us cling more tightly to something." In this case, it's religious identity, and while a majority of the participants in this section belong the Coptic Orthodox Church, several Protestants’ tales also appear here, as do the commentaries of two Muslim bloggers on the "problem" of being both Christian and Egyptian.

The discussion of religious identity begins with "Mr. X," a well-known Muslim professor who agreed to several "informal interviews"—as long as I preserved his anonymity; these informal interviews included several rounds of discussion (or soliloquy) about the current debate over "Coptic identity." He revealed that he has:


got into some "mini-battle" over "Who is the True Copt" and some answers included, all Massrys [Egyptians], Christian Massrys only, Copt Orth only.. lots of bad blood over the ancient Arab Invasion and the British Invasion, or "White Invasion" that stole from the Coptic Fold a minority who became Protestant.

This professor spent several hours trying to convince me that he was "actually just as much of a Copt as you are, young Sally," and he did convince me—that the "persecution" he felt about his membership as a "Copt" made him cling more tightly to that notion, anyway; I have seen other Egyptians enact the same pattern, whether they were Protestants claiming "Copticity," second-generationers performing "Fob-ness" (where "Fob" refers to being "fresh off the boat"—and looking/acting it), or Fobs strainig toward "Westernness."

Another professor, this one Coptic Orthodox, informed me that if I asked any Copt to open his heart and "reveal the issues experienced and the ensuing sorrow," then "he will open that vault for you, if you are lucky. Or if you aren't lucky, if you get my meaning." Akhenaton expounded upon the sorrow many Egyptians felt, explaining that
Copts always have an underlying sorrow, because they are strangers in their own land...the sa3eed is even worse for Copts...all Copts, are "aghrab fi baladhom" [strangers in their own land]...It is commonly known that most of those who left Egypt and moved to the diaspora are the cream of the crop.

Muslim blogger Ghawayesh seems to agree, writing that there is a "tsunami of people emigrating, especially the Christians and the highly-educated." She notes that the "demography of Egypt is changing dramatically and it's all because of what's going on." What's going on, Mr. Bambino clarified, is that

Inequality rules Egypt, both Christian to Muslim, and Woman to Man. Egyptians are attacked under different pretexts. The cops look the other way, even hurt Copts themselves...Vigilante justice is only punished when carried about by Christians.

Some, like our friend the Muslim professor, believe that "it's not just the people identifying as Christians that suffered, it's all Egyptians," and that "We all suffered, and we always will, that's just how Egypt has been through most history and will always be...you could say it goes with the territory, hah."

UKPeter would disagree, having counseled me that "if anyone tells you 'Copts aren't persecuted, they just have problems,' they are playing semantics. And if they said 'there is no discrimination,' they are lying outright." RobertN, providing just one example of the many problems he's faced as a Christian Egyptian, opined that his "main struggle was due to religious reasons...being a Coptic Christian...having a Christian family name," and Glenda's relatives apparently did, as well; she notes that

I know that many in my family had problems because of our faith (Christians are terrorized in workplace, for example, my brother was denied tenure ship in university there, and a cousin wasn't allowed to practice surgery unless he converted, this was many years ago though and not sure it still happens, but I have heard stories).

Forty-something professor Basil provided a similar synopsis of the situation, reporting that "government positions, FBI, anything important...professors, leadership.. all closed off to us. How would that make you feel?" Equally important, Michel claims, is the manner in which this is accomplished; for instance, "they use excuses like 'you're single' or 'you're too tall' instead of saying 'you're a Christian.' I am hoping that this is just a bad memory and now it's changed..."

Professor Basil, however, has clear memories of a job hunt that happened just a few years ago:
Many companies have signs posted—even today—saying "No Christians Allowed Here" or "Christians Need Not Apply." Did you get that? Like a dog who isn't allowed into the kitchen, and you know how Egyptians feel about animals. Speaking of dogs and animals, I have also seen signs that say the same thing, only in a different way. "No Dogs Allowed." And we are, of course, the dogs. We Christians—"ahl el Ketab" [people of the Book]—are said to be apes and pigs by the other ketab [book, referring to the Kor'an], if you get my meaning.

Another interviewee, Wad7elewa, shared a similar incident that had occurred to his father in Egypt "before I was even born...which was a miracle. Being born, I mean," since "they [potential employers] kicked it up a notch and beat him up pretty bad," resulting in a physician’s belief that "he could never have kids...and he couldn't for the first decade," but as it turned out, "here I am—a miracle! But can you see why we stay away? Why we don't help out? The Egyptian Copts don't want us to interfere, anyway," he surmised, finishing that "if we kick up disturbances there, we're safe, but as they often tell us, THEY have to live through what WE instigated."

ZealandZealot369—provoked by accusations that "we're disloyal to Egypt...for abandoning her, and seeking 'the high life' externally," and also "disloyal to our brothers...by leaving them to 'rot' in a cultural climate that indeed does seem rotten!"—set the record straight about his "traitorous flight," first lamenting about the fact that he was torn from his homeland, then asserting that "we do and always will identify first as Copts! we did not leave because we hated Egypt," he continued, clarifying that "we left because of the day in, day out persecution" doled out by the very "people who were supposed to be protecting us, feeding us, taking good care of us." In such a climate, he wrote, "all of us would sink, no one could help no one out...no worries, though, we're in an advantageous position now," he proclaimed, pledging that "we will do all those things, protecting, feeding, and taking good care of our brothers back home," from the diaspora, "even if they believe our efforts to aggravate the situation...we do this until the day we can return and live as true brothers with those who drove us out!"

UKPeter doesn't believe that help from the diaspora is unwelcome, however: "I wish you could see how grateful they are for our help," whether assistance takes the form of "political stuff, money, influence, whatever."

In sum, the identification of "Copt" is a loaded one; to some, it means "Christian," to others it means "Egyptian." To some it means unity, to others division. To some it suggests "suffering," to others, "fighting." In any case—or in all of them—one thing is clear: that the "Coptic Problem" will not disappear until "Coptic identity" does.

As the various facets of this thorny issue have been presented, the discussion becomes one of analysis, rather than one of data-presentation; the next section, then, is dedicated to a further analysis of the aforementioned themes, and the presentation of three more abstract themes.
Discussion

Thus far, the chapter has presented data organized by theme, and "cluttered" with the least amount of bias or framing possible; in this section, I dig a bit deeper, providing my own interpretations, based upon additional data in participants' dossiers, literature on Arabic-speakers, and/or my own knowledge of the culture.

The current section actually consists of two main discussions; the first reassesses and expounds upon the five "top-level" (or readily-apparent) themes already presented in the chapter, and the second uncovers additional themes hidden beneath the surface data.

"Top-Level" Themes of Identification, Revisited

As mentioned above, five themes have already been identified in this chapter; emerging from the "obvious" or "top-soil" level of data provided by participants, these themes were "cultural spaces and identifications," "caught in the crossfire," "cultural shift," "faith as a site of cultural identity," and "religious affiliation as a site of cultural identity: the Coptic problem." In this section, the themes are discussed in light of one observation suggested by them all.

It should first be noted that the two biggest issues of identity were 1) an inability to answer the question "who am I?", and 2) an inability to "live out" the answer to the same question.

With regard to the first challenge, people didn't know who they were due to various factors, such as having too many desirable or undesirable cultural influences to choose from; these cases could be likened to entering a pastry story and receiving a voucher for one free dessert, where the former instance equated to the declaration that "there are so many nice desserts, how can I choose just one?", whereas the latter could be demonstrated in the lament that "this is a no-win situation, for each dessert is moldy and stale!". Other factors included cultural constructs or stereotypes that were accepted, swallowed whole, and digested automatically, without consideration or chewing ("no, I don't particularly like éclairs, but I did eat this whole box of them...and have an additional five lbs. to show for it!"), as well as brushes with "cultural conditional approval," which is my term for "holding a person's Egyptianness (or Americanness, etc.) over their head." People who didn't know who they were may have gotten caught in a cultural crossfire—between one culture and another, or between themselves and relatives or colleagues belonging to different cultural orientations and/or using different communication styles.

With regard to the second challenge, people who were unable to live out who they were may have experienced this restriction due to various elements, including cultural orientation ("sorry, Johnny, we can't let you become a female impersonator in Port Said, we'd have our mortgage cancelled in a heartbeat!") and cultural shift ("is there a particular reason you didn't greet my boss with a big hug and kiss? It's the standard greeting nowadays, get with the program!").

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I wish to shift gears for a moment, and discuss the notions of identification and cultural space; first of all, it was very obvious that people conceptualized the "American" and "Western" and "Egyptian" versions of each notion in very different ways; furthermore, certain actions or behaviors or preferences may have screamed "Egyptian" to one, and "American" to another. Likewise, one person's conception of "the late 1970s" or "the ideal Egyptian man" or "a good Christian woman" or even "cultural conflict" likely differs—if slightly—from another's conceptions of the same notions; by the same token, Mr. E might cringe at the thought of meeting a "good Christian woman," while Mr. S cringes at the thought of never meeting her.

My observation was, therefore, that people defined things in different ways; the thought is alarmingly basic, I realize, but it took me several think-throughs before I understood the path that my brain was trying to articulate. Basically, people (not just Egyptians or immigrants) do, indeed, define things in different ways, and different things are perceived or classified relative to the subjectively-defined things in question.

But just as people define, perceive, and classify things in different ways, so, too, do they use things in different ways; for example, one person may use a fork to spear Brussels sprouts or new potatoes, while another uses the "dinnerware" to comb her waist-length tresses. Likewise, one Egyptian American may complain that his parents are too restrictive for his own sanity, another may complain that her parents "don't care enough" to "protect" her; so, "Egyptian Americanness" is not only (potentially) different in the way it's defined, but in the way it's perceived and used—particularly when our perceptions and preferred uses do not match those of our loved ones and others around us, and regardless of their nationalities.

Therefore, cultural conflicts and problems of identity aren't as much about the different definitions of culture—or the subsequently different perceptions and uses thereof—as they are about the insecurity that may arise from the different uses stemming from different perceptions.

In other words, a person's "successful" identity formation—and, by extension, cultural adaptation—seems contingent upon a shared understanding of contexts and a sense of "security" (i.e. "they love me and are acting in my best interests, even if I hate their actions") established in her or his cultural space; for example, if Joe Jr. feels that his immigrant parents are strict or "overprotective" about going out at night due to excessive concerns of what the neighbors might think, then he may not shoulder the restrictions as gracefully as he might if he knew that they were actually thinking of the young man's safety. He may wonder "How can they say they love me if they don't trust me?" and fail to realize that "we do trust him to make good decisions—didn't we raise him well? But it's the other people we can't trust. Maybe someone will put drugs in his drink, maybe he will encounter a criminal or drunk driver in the darkness." Of course, it could very well be that they don't trust him—perhaps he's stepped out of line before—or that harm will stay away from him—maybe he's a gullible trouble-magnet; it could also be that his flamboyant style of dress would, indeed, make the neighbors suspect all sorts of things—which might, in Egypt, result in community ostracism of the whole family.
The point here is that when immigrants and their children (or immigrants and their non-immigrant spouses, or bicultural people, et cetera) fully realize all of the reasons behind one contested behavior or another, they can agree to disagree (i.e. "ok, well, I don’t agree, but at least I know you’re not just ‘on my case’ for the fun of it").

This is a very important point, because it (partially) explains why some participants seemed to have so much trouble dealing with situations—such as constructing and/or living their identities—that their friends or other relatives found trouble-free; in other words, I believe that these untroubled friends and/or relatives had remained or become untroubled because they were "on the same page" with the members of their inner circles, or the people they most-frequently dealt with. They understood each other—from motivation to perception to usage—and that understanding was more important than agreement. For example, DemoGurl, the vegetarian, self-professed "Liberal hippie" whose escapades appear in the next chapter, wrote that "my relatives know that we don’t have much in common anymore, and even though I know they’re against my beliefs, I know they’re not against me."

On the other hand, there were certain storms that "understanding" and "security" did not weather with any abundance; for example, while the loving support of her family may have comforted her, and while her brain accepted the consequences of the selectivity she refused to abandon, Fattractive’s sadness over being unable to take on two identities that she very much wanted to—those of "wife" and "mother"—was unaffected; likewise undiminished was Midiane’s great displeasure over being a "cultural mutt"—even though many would consider such an individual to be "cosmopolitan," due to his diverse cultural efficiency; and similarly unquenched was the fiery insistence of Mr. X, the Muslim professor, that "our blood is the same, I am a Copt, as you are!"—even when counseled (by others, not me) that "yes, I understand why you think you’re a Copt, but I disagree," or "yes, sure, you’re a Copt. We’re all Copts!".

In sum, I believe that the aforementioned "understanding" and "security" are not universal cures for life’s challenges, but vital to the resolution of identity confusion, and conflicts between relatives (and people in general) or cultural options (though it should be noted that the notion of a support system does reappear in the coming chapters).

Now that the previously-presented themes have been further examined, this section addresses the second half of the discussion, which was not suggested by what participants said but how they said it.

The themes below include Terms of Endearment, The Name Game, and Vive la Difference.

Uncovered Theme: Terms of Endearment

People often use terms of inclusion to indicate their membership in a group; an immigrant from Luxor, for example, may tell a new friend that "Applebee’s is our favorite restaurant!", or inform the friend that "back in Egypt, we would have been having an afternoon nap around this time." Both statements cast the Egyptian in a group, whether familial or national. People also indicate their distance from a group through exclusionary terms; for example, our friend from Luxor may quirk an eyebrow
at her friend’s dubious method of preparing seafood, and comment that "you Floridians have a very interesting way of cleaning fish!".

Neither term is necessarily a conclusive statement of identity (who a person is), though each may be used to indicate a person’s identification with a group—or her desire to be perceived as a member of such.

In this chapter, we examine the various terms of exclusion and inclusion used by participants as they referred to themselves, their identifications, and others.

It should first be noted that most of the participants on which this theme is based were interviewed "in person," which may or may not have had anything to do with the terms they used, or the fact that they used terms at all. This is because Egyptians tend to provide well-structured answers—stunning in their spiral logic, and replete with the repetition that "we" use in order to convince our audience that we are in earnest; a function (or common result) of this circular process involves the copious use of examples—whether true anecdotes or illustrative scenarios. Some of these examples are, invariably, stories that have happened to the speaker—who is, thus, more likely to use inclusionary and/or exclusionary terms, since the proceedings did happen to him or her.

That noted, we focus upon the theme; some participants were happy to call themselves "only" American or Australian or British, while others kept switching between "we Americans" and "we Egyptians," without mentioning cultural conflicts. For example, Basil, a professor who was tortured in an Egyptian jail for "being the only Christian on duty when a prisoner escaped," used the phrase "our country" several times during his interview—at times referring to the U.S., and at other times referring to Egypt. His interview made no mention of conflict based upon either culture; rather, it was sadness at the religious conflict "between brothers, Christian and Muslim," that tinged every word he spoke during our hour-long conversation. And Michael, a physician, used "we" when speaking of people living in Egypt, the United States, and the UK—all countries he’d lived in for several years.

Neither of these gentlemen—or any others who’d spent their first twenty (or more) years in Egypt—hinted at conflicts of identity based upon a multiplicity of cultures, though some of them expressed displeasure at the direction of Egyptian culture, "Western morals," or "modern life in general." This may be traced back to their respective ages (mid-forties to sixties), their ages at immigration, or the fact that they were all raised "the Egyptian way" (i.e. there aren’t really many choices of career, spouse, etc. and since life is hard on everyone, everyone hunkers down and "keeps on truckin," despite society’s violent ups and downs)—or something else entirely.

Some of them also spoke or wrote of cultural issues they’d escaped themselves, but witnessed in others, including youth with "identity complexes," an entire generation of "those kids" who wander "wherever the wind blows them," and thirty-somethings who "still don’t know who they are, really."

In terms of patterns among this group, it appeared that those who spent their formative years in only one place used words of inclusion (we, us, our) or even exclusion (they, you) when discussing either of their cultures; conversely, those who had not spent their formative years in one place almost never used words of inclusion when
discussing "their" cultures; for instance, El Masrpy wrote of Egyptian culture as "it," and blogger Carmen of Diasporic Discontent phrased her critiques and praises about "Egyptians" and "Americans" in precisely that manner: "Egyptians are the most racist people alive," for example, and "Americans are lazy capitalists." There were, however, some uses of exclusionary terms, as when blogger Midiane wrote "I hate them" about Egyptians and "they're racist" about South Africans.

As terms of inclusion and exclusion have been covered, and a micro-theory presented, the discussion now turns to the theme of naming.

Uncovered Theme: The Name Game

Several centuries ago, Shakespeare's Juliet asked "what's in a name?" for the first time; she answered her own question with wisdom beyond her years, saying "that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" and reaffirming her love for Romeo, since "'tis but thy name that is my enemy." At the other end of the philosophical spectrum, but just a few decades ago, rock act Petra made a similar inquiry: "What's in a name that the demons flee? What's in a name that the captives go free? What's in a name that every knee should bow?"

They, like Juliet, answered their own question; unlike Juliet, however, the hard rocking Christians did not deny the significance of a name. Of course, they were talking about the name of Jesus, Whose very Name brims with "power and glory, forever and ever," or so believe many Christians, all demons, and Petra.

While I certainly believe that only one Name has that sort of power, I can appreciate the logic of Juliet's argument. On the other hand, I can't bring myself to completely agree with the young Ms. Capulet; yes, it is true that a new name would not change a rose's sweet fragrance (even if the new name was "pterodactyl-breath") but a lovely and accomplished young lady's suitability as my brother's wife would, were her name go from Mary to Khadija, for example. Or if her religious identity went from Christian to Muslim. The point here is that in some cases, a name is arbitrarily assigned and means almost nothing, but in other cases, the name signifies a designation or decision that does hold significance. Several such categories made themselves known throughout the research. In order of frequency (but not significance), they were Usernames, Relativity, and Resurfacing; it should be noted that the data supporting these themes are included here (as opposed to earlier in the "data section" of the chapter) due to the relative smallness (or non-generalisability) of the themes mentioned. In other words, while the forthcoming themes or trends certainly came out in the responses of some participants, it could be that the trends are relatively uncommon, in which case, I did the right thing by not including the forthcoming data in the "data section"; by the same token, it could be that a confound blocked my notice of the same theme in another participant—or that participants had, but did not provide, any "evidence" of the theme or trend in their responses. In other words, they could, indeed, belong in the categories of one theme or another, but have not provided data that I would have counted as "evidence."
Either way, these themes are still conjecture, on my part, until the study can be replicated. Until then, we turn to the task of outlining the themes.

Beginning with "usernames"—which were once called "meaningful passwords," until I learned that the term "password" had frightened some potential participants—I should first note that participants (apart from one set, noted below) were not assigned usernames, and, in accordance with instructions following the consent forms, created their own; I should also note (quite sadly) that it did not initially occur to me that usernames could present an additional analysis opportunity.

In any case, five of the first seven female participants had somehow selected usernames related to beauty. I did, of course, consider the possibilities that 1) the participants could all have been related, 2) they could have agreed to use the same "subject area" beforehand, 3) all five participants were actually the same person, and 4) that the similarity was the mere result of happenstance. In any case, other patterns soon made themselves known, hence this entire portion of the discussion.

The biggest category of usernames was, interestingly enough, that of Identity; subcategories were "Beauty," "Nationalism," and "Cultural Journeys."

Beginning with the "beautiful" participants, over a dozen of them chose variations on "Gameela" or "Helwa," and blogger Fattractive explains that her name means that she is "attractive, despite her girth," though it should be noted that a blogging nickname is often used to sum up the blog's "main idea" or the blogger's "master status" in order to "sell" the blog to readers (not always, but often), while a participant's temporary username (in this study) would never be linked to her or his "real" name or identity. For the record, all usernames have been changed—though their "subject area" remains the same ("Roseanne" might become "Yasmeena"), but bloggernames have not. Nonetheless, as any selection—intended for private or public usage alike—may be indicative of identifications, I consider both blogging names and usernames to be relevant to this section, which now moves to the next subcategory: "Nationalism."

In this group were several participants who included Egypt in their username, and another four who opted to include their "other" culture instead (i.e. "UKPeter," "AussieGuy" and "NYCgal," though these usernames are equivalent substitutions, in order to protect the identities of anyone who used their actual screenname).

Finally, under the "Cultural Journeys" category appeared usernames built upon such words as "outsider," "wanderer," "warrior," and "seeker." Key informant DemoGurl hinted that she attended cultural demonstrations ("demos"), while blogger Ghawayesh explained that "Ghewayesh means bracelets. In my context it symbolizes the cuffs of my culture," adding that "I don't know if I like them or hate them."

Moving on to the second main category of names, participants in the next group named themselves after flora; these fruity and flowery names included Warda, Zahra, FulFulFul, Farawl, and Mrs. Magnolia). No fauna were represented, probably because it is a great insult to liken an Egyptian to an animal, even a cute one like a koala.

The last main group was comprised of usernames based upon Christianity, including several variations on Jesus Christ, as well as participants' relationships with
our Lord (i.e. God'sDaughter, God'sGirl777, iamsaved), and a few related to Orthodox clergy (bishop99, GBUShenouda, iLuvKirollos).

The bulk of the "miscellaneous" category came from unauthorized variations on my name (SallyBishai, Sally Beshay, etc.), random "password-type" words (survey, password, letmeinnow, etc.), and "names." I say "names" because more than a dozen people used names, whether first names or last names, and in all but a few cases, I am unsure as to whether the names are "on the level" (i.e., if I used "sally" or "sally b.") or just substitutes used as usernames; in order to protect participant confidentiality, however, I have altered these names, as well.

The rest of the participants were interviewed face-to-face; I refer to them throughout the manuscript by non-identifying nicknames created by me—though in hindsight, I realize that it would have been more interesting to have them create usernames also.

The second naming issue, "Relativity," refers to a tendency I noticed in nine immigrants above 50 years of age and four adult "children" who had either immigrated or never lived in Egypt; very simply, these participants used the word "girl" (or "bent" or even "bett," which is the slang pronunciation of the same word) when discussing unmarried females (even in their 30s), and often avoided using a person's name—even if they knew it very well—in order to refer to them by their relation to a parent or relative. Some examples include "ebn Viola" [Viola's son] or "okht Ezzat" [Ezzat's sister].

This phenomenon may be related to one of two notions introduced in Chapters One and Two; the first stated that marriage was required to bring "personhood" about, and the second explained that women's identity is dependent upon that of their male relatives' identity. Despite the fact that I've borne witness to multiple instances of each of these theories—both in Egypt and in the States—I don't believe that my participants used the labels they did (solely) due to these theories; this is because most of the occurrences I witnessed during my research for this study did not correspond with unmarried status or male relatives. In other words, even married women and males were referred to by their older relatives, leading me to believe that this "theory of relativity" must be a result of habit on the part of my participants, since the only real "tie" that bound these instances together was the participants' native fluency in the Arabic language.

As no single participant of the thirteen discussed in this section is acquainted with every one of the other twelve, I have discounted the possibility that these people have all picked up the same habit from one another; it could, of course, be a cultural relic, but then what of the four people under fifty years of age and those that have never lived in Egypt?

I do have a theory that accounts for these "loose ends," though I won't be able to verify it until late April of this year (when I will again meet several of the participants in question); very simply, I believe that the "over-50s," each of whom immigrated to the States before 1980 (with the exception of one 72-year-old who came over in the early 1990s) brought the habit over from Egypt. For one reason or another, none of these people have lost the habit; furthermore, the immigrant "adult children" did not leave
Egypt at such a young age as to be insensible of the phenomenon—leading me to believe that the habit just "came over" with them—while the other two youngsters (unrelated to one another), who have never lived in Egypt, both indicated that their parents were decidedly more Egyptian than North American, with respect to culture. This leads me to believe that the youngsters learned the alleged habit through a vicarious acquisition of a cultural relic that they could only have observed around their families; it should be noted that I doubt that their families were purposely "enculturating" their children to label people a certain way, as it would be highly irregular (and inconvenient) to do so—especially since children already absorb and replicate behaviors and attitudes through such processes as modeling and social learning (making the alleged highly-irregular-but-nondead purposeful enculturation quite redundant).

Shifting finally to the last naming issue, "Resurfacing" refers to the significance one blogger and two participants placed on their names. Very briefly, the participant Korva announced that she refused to change her name after marriage, as "my name is my CV, it's who I am, where I came from, who I'll always be even if I divorced, God forbid." This line is loaded with three interesting points; first, that her name represents or encompasses her identity; second, that it proves her membership in or devotion to her family of origin; third, that her pre-wedding accomplishments are known by her current name, and she doesn't want to lose the name recognition there; it could also be inferred that she considers her own identity of past and present to be more valuable than the potentially-future one as a wife, or as the wife of "Mr. X." The only reason I refrain from adding a fifth possible reason—that of taking the father's first name as one's last name (I would be Sally Samy, not Sally Bishai, in that case)—is because she was raised in the U.S. and Canada and has never subscribed to that pattern; a sixth reason I grappled with before deciding against suggesting it as a possibility is a question asked by many feminists today: "Why should I change my name to my husband's? Why not the reverse?" From my conversations with Korva, I got the impression that it's more about loyalty to and solidarity with her family of origin than an actual shunning of her new family; her name, in other words, was a safe and familiar place that housed all of the elements she wanted to hold near to her.

The other two participants, however, viewed their birth-names as oppressive, baggage-ridden, and explosive—labels to be escaped from, not embraced. Anna, a counselor, was speaking of her troubled and tumultuous childhood, during which she made a brief mention of how she'd changed her name several times:

Sometimes it was a variation on the name on my birth certificate, or a play on my last name, then other times it was a word I identified with at the time. It wasn't that I was changing who I actually was, but being able to access new groups of people...also to escape from groups I'd shared too much with...I've always talked too much and there's nothing easier than picking up and moving to a new address, figuratively speaking. I suppose you could say I put on and take off identities at the drop of a hat...but don't they always say that all the worlds' a stage? [emphases mine]
The reader will note the lines I've italicized, and the words I've underlined; the former style was used to highlight the points of analysis (to follow), while the latter was done to draw attention to four sub-themes—change and escape, together with two other themes I've dubbed "function of change" and "comfort level of change."

With regard to change, Anna has clearly stated that she wasn't changing who she was, though the line immediately preceding her declaration mentions that some of her chosen names were based upon words she "identified with at the time." This is a significant point, because it implies that 1) her identifications changed over time, and 2) "she"—that is, her identity—was not "actually" changing. I believe this to be an indication of the dialogical model's presence. The second theme, escape, was also addressed quite clearly in the passage above; in it, Anna unequivocally states that she used new identities in order to escape from trouble she'd wrought—even if it was just the trouble of embarrassment. The next theme, function of change, is also addressed in the same utterance about escaping from her loquaciousness (which she later describes as a "fundamental Egyptian trait," rather than a personality trait unique to her); in addition to this function of "escaping," she also mentions using a new identity to gain entry to new groups, though it is unclear whether she means to "hang around the doorway" of the groups she enters, or whether she will "make herself at home" and actually join the group. It is also unclear whether "identities" are, indeed, what she "put[s] on...at the drop of a hat"; by that, I wonder if they are, truly, aspects of her personality that "come out to play," as per the dialogical model—or if they are personas, created or enacted in order to gain entry into the aforementioned groups. In any case, the final theme—that of comfort-level concerning the change—is answered twice; first, in the declaration that "there is nothing easier than" her identity-switcheroo, and second, that she does so "at the drop of a hat," which reaffirms the previous declaration.

Some might find Anna's stated "ease" of "becoming" or "putting on" other identities to be alarming or slimy—the act of a sociopath or a compulsive liar. But don't most people behave differently with the many people in their lives? One may say "I love you" to both daughter and husband, but she may be referring to different sorts of love; in fact, the "I love you" said to her husband before the wedding (unless they're proper Egyptians, of course) and after sixteen years of "blissful" married life (complete with child-rearing tiffs, mother-in-law battles, and work-related woes) likely differ to a great extent. Furthermore, isn't the dialogical model all about mixing and moving (Hermans, 1994), positioning and repositioning? It is, as will be seen again and again in the coming pages and chapters.

Midiane has also revealed his use of the name-changing strategy; the blogger, whose current moniker is self-chosen, previously went by the name Misteka, another self-chosen name. In the following passage, he explains his rationale for—and feelings about—both changes:

Recently... I decided to embrace Midiane as my name to all except people at my dayjob and my family. I chose it soon after I moved back here [his parents' home]...I had started using it because I wanted to avoid
contractual issues with my then employer for my private work. I put it on my business cards and asked people to use it when dealing with me. It got confusing when I would have met someone, using my birth name, and now I'm telling them, no no, it's Midiane to you. I found it hard to assert myself for a very long time to get people to use this name. *It was equally hard to get myself to welcome it as my name rather than an impostor....As much as I wanted to use it, it got me thinking about my birth name. I don't feel all that comfortable with it. In the name lies too many memories of all shades and intensities, of teasing, ridicule, failure, weakness, and nightmares. It brings me to face the literal meanings and etymologies behind it. And I am simply not comfortable with it. When I was in middle school, I was teased mercilessly about it. Unfortunately, in Swedish, my name is the same word as landmine. It got so bad that I wanted to change it to David. Anything but the original, I begged my parents. They shrugged it off and I took the struggle to my inner life of thoughts and dreams...I have always flirted with nicknames or alternate names. It seemed easy and therapeutic to escape that way. In ways, using Midiane is in the same vein but not fully. The most recent flirtation, which blew into a full-blown attempt, was Misteka. And to that, I'll never return...I learned a lot through the Misteka name phase, mostly about Egyptian culture and that my identity concerns are far from addressed. A name chosen didn't help me get any closer or feel any more settled. I'm still the same guy who can't put in a value in the "Hometown" field in my Facebook profile. I'm now more assertive and strong-minded about using Midiane. The main reason lies in that Midiane is not rooted in a phase or fad. It is not rooted in a rebellion or flirtation with a culture I want to court to resolve my identity wanderings. When people ask me the reasoning behind the name, it's the stock but meaningful answer made of two parts. It's a contraction of my full birthname...Midiane is not another personality nor a hanger on which I hang my dreams of the person I want to be. Midiane is not some catchy name to lure clients nor make easy friends nor attract immediate fame. Midiane is me, reconfigured for success in life...And who is Midiane? The guy that you know already and also Midiane is a filmmaker, writer, vocalist, technologist, novice theologian, novice intellectual, novice academic, and musician. Oudist-to-be, son, brother, citizen, and traveller. (emphases mine)

As before, my analysis of the passage is followed by the identification of themes, ending with a comparison and contrast between Midiane’s posting and Anna’s interview.

First of all, I find it fascinating that the blogger's name appeared ten times amidst the 499 words that comprise this passage (edited down by me from the original post’s 891 words); if I hadn’t had so many conversations with Midiane, I might guess that the
frequency of his name-usage above was intended to ingrain "Midiane" into the reader's brain—as well as his own mind. I have had that many conversations with "M" over the years, however (enough that I am finding it quite difficult to make the switch to "Midiane," though I am trying) and so I know that the frequency is more a function of his writing style than any ulterior motives to subliminally persuade the reading audience. He does, however, conclude by writing that there is "nothing dramatic or momentous about this post," that its purpose is to "explain, not hard sell" those people who "think that it's pointless to have a different name than your birthname."

With regard to the theme of change, Midiane has written that he’s the same person—with the same problems—under a different name; accordingly, the "escape" he sought through a name-change was an escape from a birth-name he’s never liked, one fraught with bad memories, laden with unending baggage of the emotional sort. He even referred to such escapes—with which he’d previously "flirted," prior to the Misteka Project and prior to Midiane—as "therapeutic." This escape from negativity is the main function of Midiane's transformation, though he does also mention that the name is still "me...reconfigured for success in life," suggesting that there might, indeed, be an element of transformation signaled by the new name. Finally, Midiane's initial comfort level with the new name seems to have been much more difficult at first—both in terms of his assertiveness with convincing others to use the name, and in terms of his own ability to "welcome it" as his own name, rather than decriing it as an "imposter." The post does, however, assure readers that his assertiveness and "welcoming ability" have blossomed.

With regard to the comparison between both "transformers," there is one point that must be clarified before anything else can be said: while Anna indicates a change of name before mentioning her strategy of donning "identities" or personas—which may have been rooted in truth, or fantasy, or both—her answer suggests that the underlying change is one of personality, demeanor, and (perhaps) identification. On the other hand, it is the changed name that seems central to Midiane’s enacting of the switching strategy, rather than a change of his personality. Of course, this analysis is based upon 1000 words from Midiane, and less than a hundred from Anna, though it would be most interesting to devote more research to this area. For now, I offer some more analysis of these two intelligent individuals.

First of all, it appears as though each views the change as a positive (or non-negative) step; I did get the impression, however, that identities shed following Anna’s flights from impulsive intimacies were efficiently and emotionlessly cast off—abandoned irrevocably, forgotten before the (figurative) ink was dry on her latest ID card, whereas Midiane wrote of being just as unable to indicate his hometown (immediately following the change), since "a name chosen didn't help me get any closer or feel any more settled." In other words, where his problems displayed loyalty to the blogger—clinging to him regardless of name—hers disappeared without a trace.

Another difference to do with their respective uses of the "name game" strategy arises from the length of time each has allotted to the new personality; for example, where she indicates that the changes are or were frequent, his post suggests a desired
permanence. It’s also interesting to note that this "take" on changing names and/or identities is, for Anna, one of necessity—an unending necessity—while the latter half of Midiane’s post is dedicated to the affirmation of his carefully-chosen name; what’s interesting about this dichotomy is that their upbringings were equally dichotomous (according to her interview and his blog), as are their ultimate uses and/or goals of name-changing or identity-donning. In Midiane’s case, the blogger frequently mentions the sometimes-emotional and physical distance from his family, their lack of support for him, their withheld approval of his goals—and the accompanying refusal to recognize the validity of his Egyptianness; in direct contrast to Midiane’s situation, several snippets of Anna’s interview point to an old-fashioned Egyptian upbringing, complete with restrictions, punishments, daily scolding for her "rebellious Americanism," and a "support that strangled."

Thus, despite their differences in circumstance, each has enacted the same strategy, though to different ends, and with different outcomes; namely, her freedom from restriction—or "commitment" to one "identity"—and his new source of permanence and stability—despite "identity concerns [that] are far from addressed" (when he posted the entry, anyway).

In conclusion, different people viewed names in different fashions; some names invoked a concept ("beauty") or place (UK, Zealnd, Egypt) they identified with, others referred to a journey ("warrior" or "traveler") or commitment ("iluvJesus") in their lives. Some participants used different names (i.e. "relativity") to refer to others, while other participants used different names to refer to themselves.

Now that the trends arising from the interplay between names and identity have been discussed at length, the chapter’s final theme—that of difference—is presented.

**Uncovered Theme: Vive la Difference**

Some people long to distinguish themselves from the crowd; they seek attention, recognition, and acceptance from others. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who want nothing to do with attention; their greatest wish is that of fitting in with others.

Whether the "wannabe-wallflowers" want to be wallflowers in order to feel like "one of the gang" or to prevent any possibility of criticism or rejection is something I cannot answer; likewise, I can’t address whether "spotlight-seekers" seek the spotlight in order to convince themselves that they’re "good enough," or merely to ensure their own success in this competitive world.

I can, however, address an interesting—but unsurprising—trend suggested by several participants. In this section, we discuss "difference," the third main theme to emerge from the data, though it should be noted that neither instrument contained any form of question that touched upon a topic that related even remotely to "difference." In other words, every participant featured in this section mentioned their alleged "difference" within contexts they’d built, and of their own free will. That said, the analysis begins.
First of all, four of the 32 questionnaire-takers mentioned their alleged difference at least three times, and another seven made one or two mentions of their differences; these eleven, it should be noted, all used words rooted in "difference"—i.e. "different," "differs," "differing," apart from one participant, who said "aren't like me"—in conjunction with Egyptians, or society in general. Very interestingly enough, apart from one case (DemoGurl), all of the "different" participants indicated that they were immigrants. Some of the exclusionary phrases appeared within specific explanations; for example, Gameela shared that

People do not believe me when I talk because they just think I am trying to be polite as they do, but the fact is that I am different. Even though I have the Egyptian culture in me, I always says what I mean.

In this case, Gameela's non-conformity was the stated difference; that is, she wasn't saying "I'm better than Egyptians," but "Egyptians do this, and I do that." The next comment—typed into the field beneath the High Context "scale" in DemoGurl's questionnaire—is more about her uniqueness than anything else:

I wanna mention that my parents think I am not good at reading between the lines, but people really do like to invite me to places because I'm different than other Egyptians

Egyptian readers will recognize the implicit jibe in this comment that basically says "Egyptians are phonies who never mean their hospitalities to other Egyptians, except with me, because I'm nothing like Egyptians and, therefore, so delightful that nobody could help but want to hang out with me!". Ironically, some of DemoGurl's other responses sketch her as "more Egyptian than Egyptians who never left Egypt."

Other such mentions appeared within the "Which culture do you identify with NOW?" and "What do you like and dislike about your cultures?" questions, though the phrases below were usually thrown into the introductions or conclusions of the lengthier responses.

Some of these phrases included Tanya's assertion that "I am different than other Egyptians," Miss Mini's belief that "Other Egyptians aren't like me," Vanilla Bean's discovery that "I really am very very different from all Egyptians and all Americans and so on," and Gameela's sentiment that "I found myself really really different from most Egyptians and most American friends."

I should mention that at first, such similarities as those between Vanilla Bean's and Gameela's sentiments troubled me, suggesting that one person had filled the questionnaire out twice (this has always been a suspicion of mine, as Egyptians can sometimes wish to be helpful, though a check of ip addresses assured me that most participants were in different towns, states, and countries, even); upon further consideration, however, I realized that some Egyptians translate their intended speech from Arabic to English, resulting in similarities (such as when we say "open the light," a
direct translation of "eftahi el nour," as opposed to the apparently-more-correct "turn on the light").

It isn't clear whether the use of exclusionary verbiage in such cases was to do with the fact that they truly ARE different from others (perhaps one of them is naturally platinum blonde, which would, indeed, be different than most Egyptians), though Gameela increased my curiosity by asserting several times that "I am not saying that I am perfect, but completely different."

It is also unclear whether these participants meant that they FEEL different, either in terms of being an "outsider," or else "better" or "worse," though another participant who is not counted in the eleven participants above provided a succinct clue that other participants had only hinted at: "With Egyptians I feel more western, with westerners I feel more Egyptian." Neither this immigrant participant nor the "different" ones above would have been pleased to read Anna’s analysis that

everyone claims to be "different from other Egyptians," but their idea of different is the same ("Western"), making all the "nonconformists" very similar to one another, and conforming to the same thing...the Western idea.

She continues, explaining that

Back home, foreign schools are kinda big deal, and because of the exclusiveness and cost only, it's not that they learned English better that is the big deal. Very silly mentality.

Latifa concurs, sharing that "There's this perception of aganeb [foreigners] as being so great and classy, but the people that think that have never walked the streets of Podunkville, USA!"

Not all participants born, raised, and living in Egypt were so "brainwashed" by 'o'dat el khawaga [the foreigner's complex], though; MG, for example, once stated that "I'd never live in your country, Sally," while global citizen Amir quite seriously asked me whether there were "like, white hicks waiting on the side of the road with hacksaws ready to kill brown people?"

As the three "hidden" themes of identity have been revealed and discussed, the final section in this chapter addresses the three research questions, as they relate to identity.

Conclusion

As stated in Chapter Three, identification is defined as the extent to which a person identifies—or wishes to be identified—with a certain culture (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997); the dimension has already been used by many in their explorations of acculturation, including Richardson (1967), Padilla (1980), and Henry
(2003). Measures of identification have also been used in studies of Arabic-speakers’ acculturation, such as those by Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb (1997), Kulczyzsky & Lobo (2002), and Wald & Williams (2005), though these and others are generally quantitative studies which explore identity and/or acculturation through questions of practice (“How often do you listen to Arabic music?”) and/or preference (“How frequently would you like to eat dinner in an Arabic restaurant?”).

Participant identifications—as related to their performed and/or constructed identities—were also used in this study of Christian Arabic-speakers (from Egypt); this section provides identity-based answers to the three research questions.

As previously stated, participant responses to instruments’ questions of identification spoke to more than one research question; conversely, some responses to non-identification questions provided insight into participants’ identifications.

The first research question asked "What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?".

Some of the strategies were “anti-strategies”; that is, participants didn’t seem to give much thought to who they were, they just "were." Others decided upon one thing—their faith, their family, their nationality—and made most or all of their decisions based upon that membership. Some participants tailored their identities to the people they were with—often based upon their like or dislike of them—either by emphasizing similarities or differences.

Apart from “just” using acculturation strategies to negotiate identities, however, 16 interviewees indicated that their identities were shaped by outcomes (perceived “successes” and “failures”) of acculturation, while another seven participants reported that various aspects of identity seemed to help or hinder processes of acculturation in their own lives, or in the lives of others.

In sum, not only did participants speak and write of identity-negotiation through acculturation strategies, but acculturation outcomes, as well; the outcomes of acculturation were also impacted by facets of identity. Thus, while each participant’s set of circumstances was unique, the data suggest that the connection between acculturation and identity is bidirectional; in other words, acculturation and identity each occupy one end of a two-way street, in which neither end was particularly privileged (across the 94-participant "board," anyway).

The second research question asked "What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?" while a related sub-question wondered "How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?"

A positive "issue" of identity was the security of knowing "who I am," but more-commonly mentioned were negative issues, such as the distress of "not knowing," or of knowing and being unable to live that identity—for whatever reason. In the case of the latter, a "major-influence-misalignment" was often to blame. Other negative issues of identity arose from an unrequited desire to feel "more Egyptian" (or "more non-
Egyptian” in some cases), or to be accepted as such; the issue here was often related to the denial or "cultural-conditional acceptance” of a “full” member of the culture in question.

In response to the sub-question asking how they negotiated such tensions, participants frequently reported "giving up," "trying too hard," redefining "Egyptian-ness," and/or creating their own culture.

The third and final research question set out in Chapter One asked "How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the ‘three communication dimensions’ (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?” With regard to this chapter’s dimension of interest—identification—manifestations included two particular "syndromes" that, combined, appeared in at least twenty per cent of each participant source-type (seven of 32 questionnaire-takers, twelve of 27 interviewees, and three of eight bloggers): the Negative Dialogical State (NDS) and Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome (CFS); the former generally seemed to mimic clinical depression—from emotional disinterest or distress to specific physical symptoms—but was necessarily caused by cultural issues, most notably conflicts and confusion, though closeting was also mentioned. The reason I consider NDS a manifestation or outcome of the Dialogical Model (DM) and not clinical depression is that neither counseling nor medications (prescription or otherwise) seemed capable of improving participants’ situations, though "coming clean" (about closeting) or "coming to an understanding" or even "working out the issue" often vanquished NDS immediately—so long as the parties at the other end of these discussions or confessions were the same parties whose disapproval (or other behavior) had caused the issue in the first place.

Some participants’ regard for and/or desire to identify with one culture or another seemed to "fluctuate" based upon factors other than "current company"; I have named this condition Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome (CFS). Distinctly different from the aforementioned strategy of consciously or unconsciously "tailoring" one’s identity, CFS actually seemed to "happen" to participants, and is, thus, more about the way an individual feels (i.e. loves or hates) about a particular membership or identification than it is about "coming across" as "more Egyptian" (or "less North American," etc.) to other people.

Manifestations of CFS—which did seem to appear in 17 cases—sometimes resembled bipolar disorder ("manic depression"), but instead of "mood swings," CFS people would "swing" from obsessed-with-Egyptian-culture to can’t-stand-Egypt, and/or from can’t-stand-the-US to thank-GOD-for-the-US! in the blink of an eye—or over weeks or months, even.

Further research may reveal whether CFS and NDS (which were comorbid in just six cases) are related, but for now—as I’d only consider five of the 17 CFS participants "classic cases" of CFS, I will refrain from discussing it as comprehensively as I have discussed (and will discuss) NDS.
As we've seen in this chapter, participants defined similar concepts in different manners, and identified with various combinations of the concepts they’d constructed based on their own cultural spaces.

In the following chapter, we examine the second communication dimension, that of Cultural Orientation.
CHAPTER SIX
CULTURAL ORIENTATION

Introduction

In the last chapter, participants' strategies and issues of identifying "who" they are were discussed; in this chapter, the focus shifts to the invisible environment that enables us to be—or restricts us from being—who we are: our Cultural Orientation.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Collectivism and Individualism are the two ends of the cultural orientation spectrum; in collectivism, family goals and wishes take precedence over personal goals and wishes, and any transgression by one member taints the whole family. Individualism, on the other hand, emphasizes a person's own welfare over the goals of his family and, unlike the "guilt or glory by association" that is a hallmark of collectivism, an individualistic family would not share the successes or failures of a family member.

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this study is to:

1) explore the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,
2) obtain an understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt and the diaspora), as well as
3) ascertain participants' manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions.

As before, the chapter begins with the data, then moves to a discussion of emergent themes relating to cultural orientation, and ends with a concluding section, which contains a summary of the chapter's findings, as they relate to the dissertation's three research questions.

Sticking Together

Cardiologist Dr. Khagoul summed up the Egyptian culture in one word: "close." He expounded upon his concise definition, adding that "I like the warm emotions" shared between relatives and neighbors, whose relationships he described as "important and protective." The good doctor was only one of many (54 of 94 total participants) to express his admiration for or happiness with the Egyptian practice of "sticking together," otherwise known as the collectivist cultural orientation; in this section, other participants' attitudes toward collectivism are revealed.

Mrs. Gedeeda shared the main reason she carefully cultivated the Egyptian relationships in her diasporic life: "I like the social part of the Egyptian culture...you can
never be lonely. If you have problems you will always find someone to go to.” Miss Mini’s comments suggested her agreement with that sentiment, particularly that:

Egyptian culture is more about family and there is a closeness and camaraderie between relatives there that I haven’t seen here. Also the family provides an exceptional support system that Americans and brits seem unaware is possible...American culture seems dismissive of authority and cold and anti-family at times.

QueenB, like the aforementioned participants, also indicated her appreciation for the "Egyptian generosity, family togetherness," as well as their all-pervasive "sense of humor," while Farawla shared her love of a very similar set of qualities, namely "the Egyptian element of family and togetherness," adding that she felt as though

some Americans do not have a solid sense of "family" and do not stick by their family like they should...I may not agree with some of the methods of having/disciplining children but family is very important.

Rounding out the praise for this cultural element is Maha, who stated simply and powerfully that "I like the Egyptian because I like to feel that I belong to my family.” Gameela, at the other end of the spectrum, seemed to prefer the way that friends and family "in the American culture...call you before they come and visit instead of just dropping on [you] suddenly.”

With regard to the wills of the family versus the will of self, Ms. 777 responded to a question asking "how would you tell your family about a decision they disapproved of?" by stating that she "would have to convince them and explain to them and try to show them my way," conceding that "at the end I would have to make them happy and sacrifice my happiness.” Fiona placed an equal emphasis on family discussion, sharing that "I...hope to convince them” of her opinions, since "family members are the closest to one another,” specifying that they should also "support one another no matter what.”

Another manifestation of "sticking together” was that of family status; Elizabella made an argument for the emphasis on asl we fasl [origin and class] writing that she and her friend one day saw her potential sister-in-law "walking on the roof, I said, what is this insanity? It was morning, she had gone shopping but then she...did that. That’s why we say that you have to look at the family,” she offers, before assuring me that she quickly sent the would-be suitor on his way after the attempted suicide. DJ, an Egyptian youth currently attending a North American college, confessed that one of the things he missed about his homeland was "the prestige of social status... sometimes I almost want to say, but never do, in America -- Do you know who I am?? lol, believe me I am not a horrible person, its just how we were raised.”

Anna’s critique of "asl we fasl” was that:
everyone claims to have come from a "good family," none of that mentality of "I had a modest beginning, but pulled myself up from my bootstraps and made good!" but if you really think about it and look at their family trees—never mind the family trees, even! Just think about the fact that everyone claims a noble birth, but...that is mathematically impossible.

Shifting to the emotional side of collectivism, QueenB reported that moving to a college two states away "is probably problematic because we would miss each other," but that her parents would "probably want me to get the best education I can, so they would support me." 7elwa had a similar view, sighing that she "wouldn't like to abandon them," though "they will push me to go but they will be very sad for the first few weeks," warning that "if something goes wrong (I became metamrka [Americanized]) they will then blame the move and the freedom."

Collectivism and the Sandwich Generation

Moving to the practical issues related to collectivism—which appeared in 92 of 94 participants’ comments, as opposed to the 23 comments mentioning individualism—many immigrants today belong to the "sandwich generation," a situation in which they find themselves torn between the twin challenges of being good parents to their children (under eighteen) whilst caring for (or at least worrying about) the welfare of their own parents.

While this challenge is certainly not unique to Egyptians, over half (19 of 32) of the questionnaire-taking participants responded to at least one question (generally the "dis/likes of culture" and "cultural struggles" questions) by mentioning about their struggles with that situation, elucidating varying concerns and sorrows they had. Some, for example, expressed displeasure at the fact that financial necessity often forced families to splinter, at least in the geographical sense; as Mr. Maxxxi Priest informed me, many Egyptians:

had to either immigrate or at least spend few years in gulf countries to earn enough money to be able to get married..etc. The most painful is to leave family behind and live torn apart and feeling guilty not to care for them in their old age

Shura would agree, blaming the economy of recent years on making "young people [have] to immigrate leaving family behind," while Henri complained of "trying to find a job in the same city where one is born to be able to live near parents," since "Egyptians find it so difficult to leave their parents or change environment." And Dr. Hani simply stated that "I think one must always help his parents or siblings."

Another issue steeped in cultural orientation and pragmatics also elicited quite a number of write-in comments below the Individualism and Collectivism "scales." The issue—that of supporting and/or caring for elderly parents—appeared in several
"Individualism" items ("If my parents decide upon an establishment of assisted living when they are unable to care for themselves, I would have no problem accepting their decision/plans" and "It is not my duty to financially support my parents when they are old," for example) and several "Collectivism" items (including "It is my duty to financially support my parents when they are old" and "I should take my parents into my home when they are unable to care for themselves"), as well. Very briefly, over half (19) of the 32 participants completing the questionnaire provided comments specific to these issues. For example, one participant wrote that "if my parents want assisted living when they are old I would let them have it but I would prefer taking care of them myself," which was echoed again in Tanya’s comment, which stated that "if I can trust the assisting living place to offer more than I can offer my parents, or to protect them more than me, then sure I will go for it. (but if?)." Dr. Khagoul concurred, stating that "to reiterate, I would like to be able to help my parents if they needed my help and I would like them to live with me not in a nursing home." Another participant was even more pragmatic, admitting that "I should take care of my parents, since one day I will be in the same situation."

Two participants shared their distress over real-life situations with their parents and assisted living; God’s Girl777 lamented that

I took in my ill dad but couldn’t care for him, it was humiliating for him bc I was still the little girl in his eyes, pride issue or not, he was not comfortable and asked to go to a nursing home.

Fiona, likewise, recollected that her "dad had to be placed in a nursing home, he choose it himself, and I was devistated, but couldn’t do much about it."

Shifting the focus from elderly parents to teenaged children, several participants shared the following responses to the question asking whether an all-expenses-paid move away from home for college would be problematic. Ms. 777 wrote from experience, sharing that:

This actually happened to me, but since I was still 17 yrs old as a freshman in college, my parents did not feel that it was ok for me to move away. I lost the sclarship, and made up for it by swimming for my state school at home with my family.

Tina, who immigrated to North America, stated that moving away would, indeed, be problematic, since "they would not be able to keep an eye out for me and would probably worry about my safety and decisions," while 7elwa simply indicated that "yes it would be."

Fiona shared that when she was 18, "my parents trusted me much more than my other siblings and sent me [to] far states to do things," though the possibility of her own

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4 If she can be sure that the institution would, indeed, take better care of her relative, that is.
daughter receiving the same opportunity to move across state lines for college was different; as she informed me, "yes it is problematic and I intend to move and live near that far state college to be with my daughter, I even would like to join college again with my daughter." UKPeter's response was similar; as he explained, "my parents would have said no, I would have wanted to go. they would either deny my attendance there or move with me." And QueenB plainly stated that the situation would be problematic, as "I'd be leaving home and that's unacceptable to them. Even if I did manage to convince them, there would be a very high expectation to return home immediately after finishing college and for all holidays."

Several additional responses mirroring the above were given, though there were also some answers representing the other end of the spectrum; eight of the 32 questionnaire takers simply typed variations of "no" ("no," "NO," "NOOOO!", and "nope," for example) to indicate that such a move would not be problematic, a few made celebratory remarks, such as "woohoo, freedom!" and "I can love them from far away, but for now it's FREEDOM, BAYBAY!" Three participants gave somewhat pragmatic responses reflecting that "sure it would be hard, but it's all paid for," which was even more succinctly echoed by one participant, who noted that "scholarships = money, money = good thing, therefore scholarship = happy parents."

As the various sentiments surrounding "sticking together"—and being separated by distance or circumstance—have been discussed, the next section discusses the notion of casting a "bad reflection" on one's family.

_A Bad Reflection?_

While the emotions and pragmatic considerations associated with collectivism often present Egyptians with both benefits and drawbacks, there is an aspect of the collective that isn't so much a benefit or drawback as it is a reality: family image. In this section, we examine several "bad reflections" of family image commonly mentioned by participants.

When asked about hiding aspects of their lives from family members and/or other Egyptians (in the questionnaire's "culture and conflict" checkbox question), some participants wanted to "set the record straight" about a few things; Dr. Khagoul, for instance, wrote that "I want to note that I do not have any desire to do any bad things that can badly reflect my family (drinking, philandering, smoking, drugs, gambling, etcetera)," while Tanya, who elsewhere mentioned the importance of checking out a family's medical history before marrying into it, stated that "there is nothing that I can think of right now that I would want to be involved in and that would my family look bad in the same time." Fiona asserted that "I was raised the right way and so I don't have anything to be ashamed of, my life is an open book for anyone who is interested," Katkota reported that "I haven't ever done something that is so off limits" that her family would be shamed, and LuvUJesus99 told me that she lived a "good life, an open life...maybe I'm not proud of every moment but I can be proud that at least I take responsibility for it and don't try to hide anything." Her comment may not have pleased
Ms. 777, who complained that "alot of Egyptians care what others think of them," mentioning that "there is a lot of pride in our culture."

Egyptian college student and sojourner DJ attributed that pride to the fact that Egyptians are hypocrites who "do the worst in their homes, and condemn people on the streets who do the same thing. The difference is one was caught lol," but Korva wasn't able to laugh it off so easily, specifying that in Egyptian societies worldwide, "people judge people for doing the same thing they do, but in their/my case it's ok," continuing that "if someone else did it they're bad or atheist or slutty etc...Egyptian double standard strikes again." RobertN had quite an explanation for the alleged hypocrisy, linking it with politics and enthusing that

From State Security to talk in the streets or around church, there's no relief from the constant "Big Brother feeling." Any little thing you do can come back to haunt you! Frowning at someone or failing to smile could result in hurt feelings and perhaps some social setbacks, or something bigger, like being arrested over nothing. Except it's not nothing, because at the heart of everything—that fear that makes us suspicious of those in the community, that they can turn us in over something silly—it's because we're Copts....not everyone even is so religious or has a big faith, but it's still there, in our National Identification Card....We live in a climate that fosters fear, paranoia, depression, mistrust. And even those who leave will have those emotions in their soul until the day they die.

Anna might agree with part of RobertN's lecture, as she wrote that "hypocrisy in Egypt is all about making sure you look respectable," which is accomplished, according to her, "when I criticize someone else for something 'bad,' then it's as though I am condemning that action," serving as "an evidence that 'hey, I am respectable.'"

Fattractive’s blog also took up the issue with a posting where she expressed her "wish that society expectations meant squat," lamenting that "unfortunately they still kind of do" matter. It wasn't just the specter of societal expectations that could affect family image, however, for another participant declared that she didn't at all care for the convention of "3aib"/inappropriate. I consider myself very conservative but sometimes I don't understand when Egyptians will tell you this is 3aib. Why is it 3aib to walk down the street in PJ's? Why is it 3aib to not wear pantyhose in a formal event? There are some traditions that everybody conforms to for absolutely no compelling reason.

Her issue with the convention wasn't just the mindless conformity with unnecessary rituals, though, and neither was Kelly, who called followers of such "sheep. Every last one of them." Finally, DemoGurl announced that

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If I did things that really were wrong, I would hide them from family. I would also hide things that they thought wrong--from them. But drinking and dating casually isn't the same as cheating and stealing!!

Her strategy wasn't about protecting family image, however, but about protecting her own interests. As we've examined the notions of hiding questionable or "badly reflecting" activities—and avoiding them altogether, due to disinterest in them or "good upbringing"—as well as hypocrisy and 'ayb, the discussion turns to family involvement.

**Family Involvement**

Different people have different reasons for maintaining different relationships; for example, some seek marriage in order to "attain personhood" or "legitimate children," while others view the relationship as a domestic partnership, an answer to loneliness, or a guaranteed date for their church's annual Fourth of July picnic. Likewise, some seek friendships for the emotional support they (potentially) offer, while others prefer the more practical side of friendship (like going to the gym together). This section focuses upon the various aspects of family involvement discussed by participants.

As previously mentioned, half of the descriptive questionnaire's questions were specific and scenario-based; one of them asked participants how they would go about buying a car if they still lived with their parents. Some, like Dr. Hani, bluntly stated that "I do not have to take permission," but qualified his statement by advising that "it is important to counsel other family members (parents, sister, brother). After all, they may look at things from a different angle." Fiona would agree, sharing that

When I lived with my parents (and sometimes even now), I will involve my parents and show them the pros and cons of everything and they will have many opinions and then I usually make the decision and they have been supportive with my major decisions (even if it wasn't exactly their wish).

Vanilla Bean, likewise, wrote that

I always involved my parents. I would always let them know of my options (for schools/jobs/cars) and they usually try to think with me but then I make my decision and they are usually supportive even if I decided against their opinions.

And Gameela informed me that her parents gave me the freedom to make such choices alone. I was glad to receive the advice from parents. I liked to hear from other people their
opinions, but most of the time I take my own decision on my own after all (after prayer and studying all circumstances).

The answers given by these three ladies were almost identical in content; it is interesting to note that they are all Protestant Egyptian Americans between forty-five and fifty-five. The response provided by Korva—another Protestant who is approximately twenty years younger—followed the same general pattern, and included her reasoning as to why family involvement was so important to her:

it’s not about their permission or about their approval, it’s making them feel (and rightly so) that they are a part of my life, and that their opinion counts and matters to me...they care about this because they spent so long trying to help me become 'a person' and education, social stuff, marriage, etc so it would be like slapping them in the face to exclude them.

7elwa said that she’d mention it to her parents "so I have their blessings," while Dr. Khagoul wrote that in terms of "buying a car , I make the decision alone," noting that "getting married is totally different , one must have the approval of his family."

Not all participants agreed with that sentiment, however, as evidenced by several "non-negative" responses to another question; the scenario in question asked people to "pretend your brother has just walked in, caroling 'I'm engaged,'" specifying that "this is the first you've heard" of his being in a serious relationship.

This handful of participants' responses ranged from "wow!" to "OK" to various jubilations and/or congratulatory phrases; Dr. Cinnamon, however, revealed an ulterior motive for his congratulations:

Other people may get angry and say: Why did not you inform us ahead of time? Betrayer? But, in my case I would have said "Hallelujah, alf mabrook"=thousand congratulations. (cause I wanted him to leave, the sooner, the better).

QueenB's logic differed from Dr. Cinnamon's, but she indicated that she would be equally untroubled by the thought of a sudden engagement, writing that

I would be surprised that he didn't ask my opinion ahead of time but I would not be upset because I would assume he had his own good reasons for not consulting me (such as waiting to see if the relationship would pan out before raising the family’s hopes).

Apart from the responses in this "Non-Negative" category (including the two "logic-revealing" responses from Dr. Cinnamon and QueenB, and the aforementioned answers of "congrats!" and "OK" and "So happy for ya") were the categories of
Curiosity, "Insanity?" and "Betrayal!" which appear in the table below; frequencies of each category appear immediately after their titles.
Table 1: Responses to the "T��itorous Brother" question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curiosity/8</th>
<th>Insanity?/6</th>
<th>Betrayal!/12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>who is she</td>
<td>Congrats, are you sure?!</td>
<td>what? when? how? I would get upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um, NO!!! Wait, who is she??</td>
<td>Are you crazy, what have you done.</td>
<td>If I approve, then I'd be happy, after being slightly miffed (we are close and I'd view it as a betrayal), but if I don't approve then I'd most likely lie low for a while to check out who the beeyotch was and then try to trip her up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To whom congrats bro...who is the lucky girl????</td>
<td>'you are a freak and I have nothing further to do with you, so don't come crying to me when it turned out that your floozy didn't work out right.' if it's my son, I will disown him on the spot.</td>
<td>WHAT?!?!?!?!?!?! probably in shocked amazement. Then I would yell at him for not telling me earlier since we talk all the time. Then I would want to meet her and decide for myself if she was good enough for him (and he was good enough for her). If I didn't like her he would know my feelings about the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is good to let us know who is she do we know her</td>
<td>disowned</td>
<td>How come we never met the girl? Who is she? You can't just marry some girl we never met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be so happy, congratulate him, ask if he need any financial help, and of course ask who he had engaged to and her family</td>
<td>oh my God..... you're dead...you didn't tell mom and dad first</td>
<td>Congrats, shouldn't you have told us earlier?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse me? Who is the lucky duck?</td>
<td>Are you joking? Is it serious?</td>
<td>How could ou hide this from your family and shared it with an outsider(even though this will be your spouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wow! who is it?</td>
<td></td>
<td>YOU bastard, u didnt tell me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Irrespective of participants’ geographical locations, over half (18) of the 32 questionnaire-takers indicated that their first response to the "engaged brother" situation above would be somewhat negative (these responses populate the Insanity? and Betrayal! categories); I mention location in order to demonstrate that the mentalities (in this case, collectivism) we’ve absorbed from our early surroundings and/or families aren’t so easily abandoned, whether we want to or not, and even if we’re far from "home" and family.

But some participants indicated that they would rather abandon the collectivist way, or adapt it to fit their chosen lifestyles; the section below is devoted to this intra- and interpersonal tug-of-war between collectivism and individualism.

**Negotiating Between Collectivism And Individualism**

As previously mentioned, many participants seemed to have intense "love-hate" relationships with various cultural elements traditionally considered "Egyptian," and cultural orientation was no different. For instance, while some participants indicated that they felt "safe and secure" due to collectivistic tendencies, not every participant did; and while some felt "stifled" by the collective, not every "hater" was completely against it.

In this section, participant sentiment surrounding cultural orientation—and the often-cacophonous clashes thereof—are revealed. The journey toward these patterns begins with the thorny issue of family relationships.

Miss Mini’s gentle sigh that “Life is difficult, especially if you wish to please everyone" pierces the cultural commotion as effectively as DJ’ s roar that "u can just get too close u know... too too close.. and u wanna say back offf!!" Mrs. Magnolia might agree, confiding that "though I like relationships...speaking Arabic with people," she finds relationships with Egyptians "draining...sometimes." Helwa might also agree, having declared that even though she "loved the Egyptian culture in the close family life" and how "you can dpend on them during hard times," she is not too fond of "the other side of this, it leaves you feeling shackled, no freedom individuality." Interviewee BintHelwa—who has been working for many years, and lives with her parents—was equally displeased with the roller-coaster ride called "collectivism,” ranting that

Mummti hat ganennnney! Naharda "el bett kheyba, el7a2ha!" w'bokra, "emshi, seebi el beyt w'emshi ya bett enty! Wenty ma3ana mesh hatenga7y abaaaaadan!" rabety el NAMASH...matesbetooy 3ala kelma ba2a ya nass! [My mom will drive me mad! Today, she says "the girl is failing, rescue her!" and tomorrow it’s "leave, leave the house and go, young lady! While you’re with us, you will never ever succeed!" She made freckles grow on my skin...why don't you all choose one side and stick to it already, people!!]

Moving from the general dichotomy of sentiments surrounding closely-knit relationships to the more-specific push and pull of familial influence in the diaspora, a
majority of participants' responses indicated that acculturation issues often stemmed from the fear that becoming "more American will necessarily result in becoming less Egyptian and...decrease the loyalty to the family," as Anna wrote. For example, immigrant Dr. Khagoul theorized that

because of culture, Egyptians hold back on feelings, etc... But then when culture changes around them (immigrate, etc...), they swing too far and think they're too free to do anything, without learning responsibility... Or with families, when they immigrate, the gap between them and the kids become huge, and because they're so worried about their kids and new culture, they 'lock them up', but then they discover later that they should trust the kids... and figure out how to explore the new culture together...

Melkiya incredulously stated that she "never really understood the cultures that move here only to hang on desperately to what they left" and also "force it on their children," adding that a greek friend had sent her rebellious daughter to "back home" to Greece, where the girl was "forced to get married...but that didn't turn out well at all," concluding with a "wish that they could understand what they are doing to their children. It doesn't benefit them to feel like outcasts in the country that they are living in."

What Melkiya is referring to is the same "all-or-none" tendency Dr. Khagoul mentioned above; some immigrants, for example, cling mutinously to the way they were raised in Egypt, overcompensating for the "loose morals in the West," to quote Dr. Cinnamon, who felt very strongly that "these things lead to children who don't know which way is up," and who can "blow any way the wind blows them if they are not rooted in good morals and raised properly." Another strategy used by some immigrant parents was recounted by blogger Carmen, who shared that

Although we had been living in America for quite some time, I never felt like I fit in. My family always made it a priority to remind me that I was not American and that I had to avoid falling into the trap of becoming one. We're here to take the good and leave the bad, my father would say.

Her aunt wasn't quite so diplomatic, however, and Carmen recollected the manner in which that relative

always mocked me during my summers in Egypt when I'd mention anything about American culture. "Culture? Homa el Amrikan 3andohom culture aslan?" (Do Americans even have a culture?) Americans ate hot dogs and hamburgers, had no history to speak of, and were fat and stupid.
She shared another remembrance of the same aunt, writing that when she and her brother were asked where we came from, we both replied, "New York". My aunt frowned and immediately corrected us, "You're Egyptian!!" As if one couldn't be both an Egyptian and a New Yorker. Obviously this did much to tear my identity into bits.

While the passage above may seem "misplaced" in a chapter on cultural orientation, the entire posting (as many on Carmen's blog) is more about collectivism—and her struggles therewith—than about knowing "who she was."

For instance, in another post, she responded to a claim of disloyalty to Egypt by asserting that "I honestly don't think that YOU have the slightest idea of what assimilation is," adding that she had "NEVER attempted to cut my ties with my nation," and "am fiercely proud of my heritage and have never once denied it," clarifying that to her, "Assimilation does not mean cutting ties with your country"—although that's precisely what it means in both the Unidimensional Model and Berry's fourfold model. In fact, the concept she describes actually corresponds perfectly with Berry's integration as well as the dialogical model; nonetheless, her description of the concept continues with a declaration that

it also doesn't mean holding on to it for dear life without allowing outside influences in. It doesn't mean xenophobia. My "Egyptian-ness" has seeped into everything I do here. I've bought new perspectives to everything here and it's allowed me to create a rich hybrid identity.

Her "Egyptian-ness," however, wasn't enough to prevent a violent splintering of her family, brought about by the Muslim blogger's desire to marry R, a non-Muslim. Her mother, for example, took Carmen's choice of spouse as a betrayal, and "hasn't spoken to me since June," which was months earlier than the post's date. She continued about the alleged betrayal, admitting that

We've gotten into loud screaming matches a couple of times between then and now, but she refuses to acknowledge me as a daughter anymore. My aunt hasn't cut me out, but I kinda wish she would. She's horrible! If I hear one more bigoted comment come out of her holier-than-thou mouth I swear I'll cut her tongue off. My father has proven to be much more agreeable, but only after R said he would nominally convert. I explained to my father why I did not want R to convert, why I believed it to be unnecessary and hypocritical. He listened to me but told me that sixty years of indoctrination could not let him believe the way I believed. He didn't tell me I was wrong...he left room for individual interpretation but repeated one of his favorite quotes, "you can't teach an old dog new
tricks”. "Do this for me", he said, "and then live life any way you want". I hate compromising my principles but I’ve really got to pick and choose my battles right now...

Shura would likely congratulate Carmen’s father, but advise her mother that "Immigrating into a different culture doesn’t mean you have to cut loose the identity of your original country. You suppose to enrich your adopted country’s culture with your vast richness of your heritage." As long as the family’s image isn’t affected, anyway; addressing this, and in response to the question asking for a list of struggles faced by participants and their peers, QueenB fretted that her friends with immigrant backgrounds (African, Arab, Indian, etc.) usually have an extra set of difficulties–family and social pressure and cultural pressure. The friends usually want to plan out their own lives a certain way but struggle because their family wants to force them to do things according to the parents’ home culture.

And American Egyptian Farawla’s response to the same question also revealed that she has often struggled through becoming an individual and an adult and having my parents think of me as an adult, not their child. As a female, in my family, everyone believes they have to protect me and shelter me from any little danger. I want to please my family and listen and obey them, but I still want to have my own experiences and adventures, therefore I have had an interesting time balancing my family’s desire and my adventuresome spirit. Several of my female American friends do not have this issue of the families need for protection. They are allowed to be adults and do what they want even if it is dangerous.

Other Egyptians in the diaspora have experienced similar challenges during their attempted navigations between the "me-orientation" and the "we-orientation." For example, Miss Mini guesses that "if I had decided to marry a non-Christian especially a Muslim man," her family may not have survived, because even though she was "not sure what could have happened there," it most likely "would have been ugly."

Mrs. Magnolia’s situation prior to immigration and marriage was a bit more "fraught," as she told me, responding to the question dealing with "telling your family about a decision they would not approve of" by explaining her family’s system:

dating, they will disown me. married, they will have me killed. profession that is bad or immoral to them (like dancer, actress, musician) they could disown, lecture, or kill, depending on their mood. if it is dangerous, like skydive, they will lecture me lel sob7 [until the morning]
and then wash their hands from me. (they will try to stop caring about me just in case I die, this is just to protect their hearts and I take it to mean that they love me that much more, although I used to think they were just being controlling and sadistic, though Egyptians are fond of controllingness and sadisticness.

Helwa, also a married immigrant, responded to the same question with a synopsis of the manner in which she and her parents handled (and still do) any differences of opinion:

My parents may voice their opinion about someone or something they don't approve of and in our family we 'd have long discussions about it but in the end I think they would respect my opinion even if different from theirs. The only exception to that is if I had decided to marry a Muslim man. They would never be supportive of that, I don't think.

Vanilla Bean elucidated the family dynamics of a situation where her best friend whose parents are both physicians (and wanted her to be one), decided to do economics for undergrad and then PhD in philosophy of religion. Her parents voiced their opinion especially about her grad school. They told her she will not make money with such a major and that it would be a waste of years. The father even invited me for lunch (only me and him) to convince me to convince my friend to find another major. But in the end she was independent from them (she was married at that point and had a job). She did it anyway and they just had to become ok with it or at least pretend to be.

Fiona, on the other hand, confessed that "They will not be happy and I think I will not have the courage to do it if they disapprove," while Korva plainly stated that, in telling her family about a decision they would likely disapprove of she’d "have to be ready for the final thing, the disowning,” though "in my case that won't happen because our values match and I am grateful I won't have to tell them anything bad like that.”

Now that the "top-level" themes of sticking together, collectivism and the sandwich generation, bad reflections, family involvement, and negotiating between collectivism and individualism have been presented, these and other themes are further discussed in the next section.

Discussion

The previous section covered several "top-level" themes of cultural orientation; this section reveals and discusses a less-obvious but broader theme that arose: protecting
family image. The discussion also revisits the traitorous brother question, and is followed with a chapter conclusion.

Uncovered Theme: Protecting Family Image With "Respectability-Reinforcing Comments"

A definitive theme arising from this dimension's data was that of protection; this is because comments and relatively lengthy explanations were offered by almost all of the participants, in one form or fashion, regarding one topic or several that could, theoretically, taint the reputation of their family of origin. The current section focuses upon a particular manifestation of this protection: family image.

One example of this protection is drawn from the comments elicited by the questionnaire's "nursing home" question; the very fact that more than half of the 32 questionnaire-takers would, as previously mentioned, trouble themselves to type up comments—particularly in the cases of those generally providing rather "sparse" comments and/or qualitative responses, or in the cases of participants who did not make any other "write-in" comments (i.e. under the six "scale" questions)—tells me that the nursing home issue is close to their hearts. This may be due to guilt over a past situation, fear over a current or future situation, genuine affection for their parents, or even the simple desire to establish the fact that they were, indeed, raised well; the reader will, of course, recall the significance Egyptians place upon a "proper upbringing."

Another example of write-in comments "supporting" my belief that most participants cared greatly about how their families were perceived comes from the "scale" on "Egyptian tradition," which contained several items that dealt with dating, "morality," and "virginity." The sheer number of comments defining "dating" or stipulating that premarital sex was considered "unacceptable" suggests to me that the participants indicating a "dating is ok, virginity is her own business" mentality in their "scale" nonetheless cared enough about their own (or family's) reputation that they took the time to explain just what they meant by "dating." Similarly, even participants with "scores" indicating "traditionality" (anti-dating, anti-baby-sitting, virginity a "family affair") also provided definitions or stipulations. Of course, as before, people may have completed the questionnaires in a more "socially acceptable" manner (due to fears of non-anonymity or possible breaches of confidentiality) than their lives would suggest, but that is beyond the scope of this discussion.

A third example of the respectability-reinforcing comment is drawn from the responses accompanying the "checkbox question" about cultural conflicts. Very simply, even though many participants failed to place a check beside one or both statements about feeling the need to "hide certain things from" family and other Egyptians—indicating that they did not feel the need to hide anything—they often went on to leave comments stating that they had nothing to hide, or that they were not interested in anything that would need to be hidden (see the "bad reflection" section above for specific examples).

I have a hunch that some of these participants interpreted that the question was asking about sexual and/or substance-related issues; it, therefore, makes perfect sense for an Egyptian man who considers himself "ragel beity" [a man of the house?] and
"ragel mohtarem" [a respectable man]—since he avoids extramarital affairs, films and publications of a "racy" nature, as well as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs—to have indicated (through the omission of checking the boxes about "hiding certain things") that he did not do anything that required hiding. I have focused upon males in my analysis above, by the way, because every single participant who "reinforced his respectability" through an additional write-in was, in fact, male.

On the other hand, another group of participants, comprised of males and females, did check one or both boxes, and also provided some form of explanation as to what they meant (as noted throughout the data section above); within this group, I feel a distinct possibility that the "hiding" they referred to when checking the box/es may have dealt with family illnesses or secrets, thereby indicating a necessity of hiding things from a culture enmeshed to the point of discomfort, one that could be considered "too collectivist for its own good." I base my conjecture upon the fact that all the people who checked one or both boxes and provided a comment also gave negative responses about the "closeness" in their questionnaires or interviews (though I do realize that examining participants' responses as a "whole," and conducting analyses of all participants separately, that is, with significantly more depth per participant, is beyond the scope of this study). For example, Mayflower9's response to the "What do you like and dislike about your cultures?" included a line about preferring U.S. culture, since there was much less prevalence of a person "putting his nose in your business," and Latifa's response to the same question stated that while she loved speaking her language again, interactions with Egyptians could get "stifling." And DJ indicated that though he appreciated the warmth that characterized many Egyptians, there was a point where the warmth could burn a person; as he put it, "u can just get too close u know... too too close... and u wanna say back offf!!!"

Now that the discussion about protecting family image via respectability-reinforcing comment has ended, we revisit the "traitorous brother" question.

The Traitorous Brother Question, Revisited

As noted in the data section above, the "traitorous brother" question drew quite a number of telling responses; in this section, I offer some alternate explanations for those responses.

First of all, it must be noted that there are several hidden variables that may have confounded the result; for example, while one may offer congratulations or a hug, it does not necessarily follow that he is happy about the news. And just because a person asks "who is it?" or "why didn't you tell me?" doesn't mean that she puts any value on the "credentials" of her new sister-in-law. The interesting (but, admittedly, expected) theme that most strongly showed itself was that of betrayal; some participants felt betrayed because they associated involvement (in the "keeping someone informed" sense) with closeness, i.e. "if he cared about me, I wouldn't have been out of the loop," but others seemed to read deception into it, i.e. "we talk all the time, so if I didn't hear about it and it didn't just happen this morning, then he's either been lying or hiding something," the latter of which may (or may not) go back to the notion of closeness.
Yet another form of betrayal was mentioned alongside involvement, but a different sort of involvement than merely keeping someone informed; rather, it was a notion all collectivists are familiar with, that of "approval," to which a sudden and as-yet-unapproved-of selection of spouse would likely suggest a "betrayal" of authority, as the individual had gone "over the heads" of his parents, or else "broken a rule."

Therefore, due to the tangled threads surrounding the possibilities here—threads that could easily be untangled through further discussion with participants, and through a question or series of questions phrased more precisely—I will refrain from concluding that the participants in the "betrayal" category are automatically and necessarily "collectivists," just as I will refrain from grouping those with such responses as "Congratulations.. So happy for ya.." and "OK" and "What a surprise!" into the "individualist" category.

Now that the theme of protecting family through additional comments has been covered, and the "traitorous brother" question revisited, the discussion section draws to an end, and the chapter's final section—the conclusion—begins.

Conclusion

This final section in Chapter Six contains the three research questions, which have been answered in regard to cultural orientation.

As in the last chapter, participant responses to questions of cultural orientation (CO) addressed more than one research question; conversely, responses to several non-CO questions provided insight into the cultural orientations of participants. Answers of both types are incorporated into this discussion, while responses that either intersected with another dimension or "took more steps" to address the research questions are mentioned briefly, then discussed more expansively in Chapter Eight.

Another thing borrowed from the last chapter is the fact that (literally) dozens of themes, topics, and "findings" about cultural orientation were removed from this final draft; this is because the excised sections totaled over five hundred additional pages. Nonetheless, some of the findings most-closely connected to the themes in this chapter are summarized below,

The first question asked "What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?". Many of the strategies mentioned showed quite a connection with cultural orientation; some of them focused solely upon identity-negotiation (who am I?), while others delved into the linkage between identity-formation and activity-negotiation (what can I do?).

Either way, participants reported giving up their own dreams, trying to convince their families to accept their dreams, compromising their own dreams, lying to relatives about certain details and/or omitting some or all details of certain things, cutting off communication with anyone who disapproved of them, creating physical distance between themselves and the disapprovers, avoiding mention of the disapproved-of dreams/activities but being willing to discuss them if need be, and being completely open.
The activities and/or "dreams" prompting the use of these strategies ranged from eating carbs to drinking alcohol, from having boy/girlfriends to being engaged to the "wrong type of person," from being an atheist to being gay, and from seeking full-time work as an artist to being an artist at all.

It may seem as though some of the strategies listed would be better-suited to the chapter on communication style, but these various ways of dealing with family members belong in this chapter about family members; furthermore, it may seem erroneous to answer a question of specifics (acculturation strategies) with a general, somewhat unwieldy, theoretical category (cultural orientation).

The fact is, however, that participants did not write about one collectivism, or seven, or twenty-three. Rather, it seemed as though each participant had his or her own formulation of the construct—even those seven (of 94 total) participants who otherwise identified themselves as individualists—though very few participants actually used the words "individualism" or "collectivism."

Very simply, collectivism was both defined and enacted diversely—from family to family and (frequently) from one family member to another; this diversity of conceptualization often led to interpersonal and intra-family conflicts regarding the "correct" composition and maintenance of a "support system."

I believe that these conflicts stemmed from two issues: the aforementioned different definitions (and, therefore, expectations) of collectivism, and the varying levels of commitment to those differently-defined constructions. An example of the first case is that some participants stated or hinted that collectivism referred to all "blood relatives," while others seemed to equate the term with parents and siblings, spouse and children, any relative at all ("blood" or not), or "family of choice" (aka "dear friends"); likewise, positive concepts associated with collectivism included loyalty, caring, protection, love, affection, comfort, and support, as well as the importance placed upon the welfare—or happiness—of family members, while the negative concepts included nagging (!), oppression, and strangulation. It should be noted that the concepts above were assigned to either "positive" or "negative" categories based upon their denotative meanings (dictionary definition) and not the way participants felt about them; this is because participants' feelings about collectivism are discussed below, but also because an empirical description ("nagging") is less likely to change than is a feeling about a description ("he's nagging, so he must care about me" vs. "I can't stand all this nagging!").

With regard to issues arising from various levels of commitment, some interpersonal conflicts took place between Egyptian friends with different ideas about friendship, while others surrounded friendships with non-Egyptians.

A frequently-appearing example affecting both types of relationship arose from the fact that Egyptian relatives and close friends have, traditionally, communicated every day "asahan nettamen 'alekom [so we can be reassured about you all]/so we can make sure you're alright"], leading non-callers and/or non-phone-answerers to be accused of "not caring" on two levels: first, that "you don't care enough to let me know you're ok," and second, "you don't care enough about me to ask whether I'm dead or alive."
In addition to their myriad of variously-defined and unevenly-adopted collectivisms, participants also viewed the notion of support systems through different lenses. Some were blissfully happy with their "built-in" support system, and neither sought nor allowed the presence of "outsiders," while others—equally happy with their collectives—did not reject outsiders. Some expressed an unadulterated love or hatred for their families, while many—particularly those belonging to intergenerational collectives—experienced mixed emotions. Some felt the need to distance themselves geographically—but not emotionally—while others severed most or all family connections; I keep using the words "collective" and "family" interchangeably, and up until the last sentence, they were, indeed, interchangeable. The fact is, however, that a few participants did attempt to or inadvertently create their own support systems—whether through friendships or romantic relationships—and others were happy with any support system that "came through" for them, while some participants wrote that they could only be "okay" if things were also "okay" with their families.

The second question asked "What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?" while a related sub-question wondered "How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?"

Commonly-mentioned goals and wishes were support, approval, freedom, familial peace, and the security of a network that "really did care." As before, wishes were vastly outweighed by cultural tensions and anxieties related to collectivism; some of these were the "inability to be myself" around family members, the inability to live "out in the open" around Egyptians, the fact that a relative's shenanigans could "come back to bite" a participant, the feeling of loneliness that followed disconnection from the support system, and the lack of ability to "vent properly." As before, some of these tensions were resolved through the creation of alternate support systems, the acceptance that "this is as much involvement as I'm gonna get from the family," or the "giving in" to family demands (to the detriment of participants' own dreams).

The third and final research question set out in Chapter One asked "How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?". I didn't actually get this answer right on the first try. Or the second. Or the third...

The problem was my fervent desire for clear categories, into which all participants would neatly fit. The categories were, unsurprisingly, "Collectivist" and "Individualist." My first inkling of trouble arose from the supremely unbalanced categories: 87 collectivists, and 7 "individualists." When I realized that the alleged individualists seemed to have collectivist streaks (of varying size), I decided to go to Plan B: the creation of an intermediate "hybrid" category. Once I set up a system to determine who the "pure" collectivists were, however, I had to admit defeat—for there were no "pure" collectivists! To complicate matters, the seven alleged individualists had now been foisted upon the same hybrid category. So this catch-all category ended up
with 94 participants, each one deviating from the "purest" versions of collectivism and individualism in some small way—whether in their "scales" or comments or "formal responses"—leaving the other two categories empty.

Just as I was looking around for a towel to "throw in," however, it occurred to me that I had gone about the challenge wearing an unbelievably dense set of blinders; I wrenched them away from my eyes, re-donned my "all-culture" lens, and finally saw an answer that made perfect sense; very basically, the various ways in which participants defined, enacted, and used "collectivism" were this dimension's manifestation of the dialogical model, as were the strategies and attempted negotiations described above.

As this section devoted to the answering of research questions—in light of cultural orientation—has ended, so does the chapter, which presented data that spawned the themes of sticking together, collectivism and the sandwich generation, bad reflections, family involvement, and negotiating between collectivism and individualism. The final data chapter follows; its focus is on the third communication dimension: communication style.
CHAPTER SEVEN
COMMUNICATION STYLES

Introduction

Imagine two editors of CommRoxxMagg’s weekly edition; at one extreme is Mr. M, whose habit of phrasing requests and critiques in "too tactful" a manner often ends in frustration and unfinished work when colleagues don’t understand what he really means, while at the other extreme is Ms. K, who tends to speak in "too blunt" a manner, offending employees and clients alike. Both characters are unhappy with the frequently-recurring outcomes, especially since the communication issues in their professional lives tend to follow them into their personal lives.

Now imagine that these editors—Mr. Mikhail and Ms. Kleopatra—are Egyptians living in North America; Mr. M was born to immigrants, while Ms. K moved to the States when she was twenty-four. Despite the obvious differences in situation, each wants the same thing: a successful navigation between the two cultures dealt with on a daily basis. Furthermore, while the cultural dimension plays a different role in each editor’s problem—possibly to varying degrees—it is, quite possibly, equally or even more susceptible to the problem.

In other words, the problem of Mr. M and Ms. K is not necessarily caused by their interculturality as much as it likely affects their interculturality, particularly their cultural adaptation; as mentioned in Chapter Three, the success or failure of communication with people of a different group (particularly that of host-land natives) may greatly impact an immigrant’s (or second-generation’s) acculturation. This is precisely why the scholarly study of communication styles is so important. One style that has frequently appeared in communication research these past several decades is high context communication (HCC); many researchers have, for example, found HCC to be the dominant style of communication amongst Arabic-speakers (Hall, 1976) and Low Context Communication (LCC) to be dominant in "Western" countries (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Nydell, 2002, p. 122; Ting Toomey, 2001; Triandis, 2003). It is worth noting that indirect communication—which bears enough resemblance to HCC that the two have formed a partnership (for the sake of this study), dubbed "covert" communication—has not been featured in research examining Arabic-speakers.

The discrepancy between these styles may hinder acculturation, regardless of were one was born and/or raised; it can, for example, increase the "distance" between an Egyptian immigrant and others, including his U.S.-born son, his Swiss wife, and his seventh-generation-Floridian next-door-neighbor—assuming the immigrant does, indeed, tend to use HCC while the others do not. This stipulation must be made because
the dominance of HCC—still used by many Arabic-speakers and preferred by some—has been challenged, at least within the data collected for the dissertation.

This chapter—which includes a data section, discussion, and conclusion—identifies several of HCC’s “challengers,” including “direct” and “indirect” communication, as well as an expansion of Hall’s original models (HCC and LCC).

As before, the data section is restricted to “top-level” (or “raw”) data which has only been edited for relevance and length, and organized by topic; this “empirical” section is followed by the discussion section, where previously-hidden themes arising from the data are discussed, as are participant communication styles and their implications—which readers may or may not agree with. To address this, I’ve included brief snippets of data in order to both illustrate and support “my take” on the themes mentioned. This chapter’s conclusion, finally, addresses the three research questions in light of the data introduced below.

Data

"Overt" vs. "Covert" Communication

As the significance of this potential problem has been established above, a brief review of this section’s featured communication styles would be helpful.

As explained in Chapter Three, the styles of Low Context Communication and Directness both involve "telling it like it is" using a minimum of "window dressing," though their major difference lies within the form of "window dressing" used (or not used) by each. This difference appears more clearly within the "opposites" of each style, namely High Context Communication and Indirectness, respectively; more specifically, Indirectness involves the "watering down" of a request or critique into a form that almost anyone could understand (in theory), while HCC "wraps up" that request or critique in a code that the listener must already be privy to in order to decode the message "correctly," or the way it was meant (Hall, 1976; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Despite these technical differences, I am including both sets of similar styles (LCC/DD, referred to below as "overt communication," and HCC/II, or "covert communication") in this thematic category, instead of creating one section for "direct vs. indirect" and another for "LCC vs. HCC"; this is because it is impossible to be certain that participants using the word "indirect" (and related terms) were not actually referring to acts of HCC.

Shifting to the data, many participants responded to the general question asking "What do you like and dislike about your cultures?" with specific comments about overt and covert communication styles.

Canadian immigrant R2D2, for instance, liked North Americans' "free expression," and disliked how Egyptians are "not always straight forward." Second-generation U.S. American (and "global nomad") Korva echoed the sentiment, telling me that she liked the fact that in the United States, "you can be direct without coming across as rude," adding that she did not like...
how you can’t be direct, not because I like directness but because I see the indirectness as a weakness or fear...people care too much about what others think, but if they don’t care, then they will be denied service or friendship, even here in the U.S. in Egyptian cultures.

Fiona simply stated that "I am direct," but complained that "I don't get it when people [from any nation] are going around the point to tell me something," and Gameela provided the following similar sentiments:

In Egyptian Culture, I do not like when people say something but they mean something else, or they do not really mean what they say. (Afraid to tell you the truth right away, thinking that this is the polite way and the opposite is considered rudeness). The reason I do not like it because: 1. People do not believe me when I talk because they just think I am trying to be polite as they do, but the fact is that I am different. Even though I have the Egyptian culture in me, I always says what I mean. It runs in my family back there. So, it cause much frustration. 2. When my fellow Egyptian speaks, it takes me much effort trying to figure out what they mean and if they really mean what they say or they mean the opposite and just trying to be polite according to their own belief...I like it when people [in the U.S.] speak directly about what they want and it's up to me to say Yes or No.

Also fond of the directness found in the U.S. was Dr. Cinnamon, who told me that "One thing I like about the Americans is that they keep to the fact, they're precise, to the point...get to the core of the problem and address it quickly." Anna mentioned liking the way that "in America and the western countries, people can have a [straight-forward] relationship...and don't have to rely on relatives and games to express interest," explaining that while she fully realized that "it was easier on the pride when everything was said in a 'code' that protected them from feeling rejected or looking that way" she was "just so sick and tired of the covert operations involved in finding an Egyptian husband the Egyptian way." And Rio, now living in North America, stated that with "Americans...it's easier to be honest." Shura wasn’t quite so sure that Egyptians always refrained from honesty, writing that "You know where you stand as people will let you know what they think," though he did not specify whether this "transparency" would manifest itself in words or demeanor, overtly or covertly, and offensively or inoffensively. And Mayflower9, confirming Hall's theory that "Arabs treat friends and strangers differently," confessed that she was "more direct with those closes to me," while Ms. 777 provided slightly more detail, explaining that her level of directness "depends on whom I'm with, family is different than friends which differs from people I don't get on with but must deal with.”

Finally, Korva (in a comment typed beneath the "demographic question") expressed a concern that several interviewees only hinted at: "I hope it’s ok to write
some Arabic words, some words only come across that way best," though it should be noted that many of her (and other participants') lapses into Arabic occurred whilst discussing taboo or uncomfortable issues—whether utterances were merely translations of "dancing around the subject" (like "el shahed yeftahm azdi eh..." [the listener would understand what I mean]) or actual high context or indirect references to those subjects ("ta'rafi eh ely byehsal le nass lema yekoon fi harb? Khosossan el mar'a...?" [do you know what happens to people when there's a war going on? Particularly the women?].

Shifting to the messages that participants seemed to read into the communication of others, DemoGurl used the write-in box below the "scale" of High Context Communication as an opportunity to address the 'ozooma merakbyya (or "invitation that is not intended to be accepted") with her comment that "I wanna mention that my parents think I am not good at reading between the lines, but people really do like to invite me to places." And Amir, informing me of the first time he met his then-future father-in-law, asked if I could believe that the man had "made me sit n talk for 1 hour before he offered me a glass of water?... I am not exaggerating.....wenabi," he swore, continuing that "it was highly odd...the first time to ever happen to me," surmising that "I think he first wanted to 'test' me."

Amir wasn't the only Egyptian to read an insult into the breach of Egyptian formalities, however; Mayflower9, for example, wrote about her

intense hatred for 'professional' emails that issue an order, as though I am subhuman and don't count for anything...what's wrong with a 'hey, how's the family?'

Several participants, additionally, complained about the fact that "Egyptians are, on the whole, rather sensitive" with "hearing something said plainly," and that some take everything as "criticism."

Miss Mini, an immigrant, revealed her feelings about the need to be circumspect, writing that "I hate the drama in Egyptian culture, creating scenario to get to the point or know something about you," while second-generation North American DemoGurl exclaimed that "I hate how you have to candy coat everything with Egyptians or risk offending them!!!"

In expounding upon his "likes and dislikes" about Egyptian culture, Dr. Cinnamon confirmed that "Egyptians get offended very easily," sharing that his strategy for "dealing with them" included:

bend[ing] backwards to put things tactfully, in a mild form that will avoid hurting their feelings and also accomplish my goal, even if my goal is just to help the other person with something.

UKPeter might agree, having shared a similar strategy within his response to the question on telling relatives about a relatively-small issue of known disapproval: "I'd
probably use some diplomacy, to get to the subject.” Shura’s response was similar to those of Dr. Cinnamon and UKPeter: “yes I would [tell them] but in a subtle nice way…Egyptians are so sensitive.”

All in all, thirty-one participants (interviewees and questionnaire-takers) mentioned their dislike of the traditional Egyptian “covert” styles of communication and/or their like of the "overt" styles of communication, and nine participants mentioned Egyptian "sensitivity.” The next section examines this "sensitivity" more closely, within different contexts, and as it helps—and hurts—acculturation.

**Sensitivity**

While the "sensitivity" mentioned in the last section was the sort that took offense, not all mentions of or references to "sensitivity" were necessarily negative; for example, a methodical byproduct of Egyptian "sensitivity" showed itself in two places on the questionnaire: beneath the "scales" of high- and low-context communication, and within the responses elicited by a variety of the scenario-based questions.

This sensitivity—often directed at nonverbal cues—was indicated in every one of the seven write-in comment left under the communication "scales," including Glenda’s: "With Egyptians, a simple sentence can have a thousand meanings...depending on gestures, tone, the look in their eyes," as well as "the way they phrase something, what order did they say something in...all of it matters so...be sensitive to it all," because "many wars between loved ones or strangers began from failing to pay attention to something right in front of your nose.” Glenda’s advice reminds one of the reason communication—between any people, but especially those who differ in significant ways—can so easily fail; and, as mentioned in Chapter Three, failed communication often interferes with "successful" acculturation.

Glenda wasn’t the only one of the seven to provide advice about decoding: Flowerchile, for example, wrote that "words are usually accompanied with tone of voice, gestures etc... to decide the real meaning," while Shura affirmed that "words are as important as the demeanor, have to be together," and another participant noted that "Words and Demeanor equal my impression!" As Tanya noted, however, "it IS possible to overthink what someone said or looked like...sometimes people say/do a thing without thinking, and you just keep wondering 'what did that smile mean???'" This may result in "conflicts sometimes...I think 'are they talking as American now, or as Egyptian?' and it complicates things to try and deduce in a diff ways."

In any case, some participants felt that their increased sensitivity to nonverbal cues or various nuances of communication gave them an "edge...even if I am constantly thinking at least I have those options before me...not all people have that option," wrote Anna, who likened her mind to a "computer that makes sense of all the facts that I’m presented with." Likewise, even Dr. Cinnamon—who had already emphasized his "optimistic outlook and...giving the benefit of the doubt"—was very clear that "sometimes Egyptians will tell you something without explicitly saying it...I like to be alert to that possibility."
Moving along to the second location of "sensitivity," three scenario-based questions provided particularly insightful comments about sensitivity, with regard to the manner in which something is said to them and the manner they would handle an issue of great "sensitivity."

**The "Tea" Question**

As previously mentioned, several scenario-based questions were used; the first question had participants imagine being in a house other than their own, and having an urge for tea ("shai"); they were then asked whether and how they would obtain the tea. Apart from one person claiming that "I do not get urges for tea anymore," 35 participants provided responses forming the eight categories appearing below.


**Table 2: First set of responses to the "Tea" question**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say Nothing/4</th>
<th>Ask For Tea/7</th>
<th>Ask/Get/2</th>
<th>Ask For Water/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing.</td>
<td>Ask the host politely if I can have some tea.</td>
<td>ask if they have any tea and go find it in the kitchen..</td>
<td>I would probably ask politely if I could have a glass of water,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unless they offer, I wouldn't say anything.</td>
<td>asking for some tea</td>
<td></td>
<td>I can gently ask someone for water, but nothing else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn't accept refreshments at a house other than my own</td>
<td>ask for a cup of tea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd clamp down on any bodily need until I'm on home soil</td>
<td>simple ask nicely for them to make me that cup of tea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on when this urge comes, if we are on our way out, I would not ask, otherwise I would.</td>
<td>ask for it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>politely ask for it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The second table contains conditional and "process-based" responses, where the former categories are "Depends on Relationship" and "Depends + Explanation," and the latter categories are "Would You?" and "Shenanigans." The reader should here note that a discussion of all eight categories—and thematic elements emerging from the data—appears in the discussion section of this chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depends On Relationship/9</th>
<th>Depends + Explanation/5</th>
<th>Would You? 3</th>
<th>Shenanigans 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If we are not close and just met, I will not ask for anything.</td>
<td>kindly ask 'may I trouble you for some water to take my medicine with?' I would not mention a drink otherwise unless they offered.</td>
<td>I ask for it or suggest: is anyone for tea?</td>
<td>I will ask another close relative to ask for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I knew them already, then I'd go help myself.</td>
<td>it will vary: - If I am closer to her and if I sense that she is generous, I will ask for it right away. - If I do not know her very well, I may not ask at all. - But if I am badly hurt and feel dying from thirst, I will not hesitate to ask right away; whether she is close to me or far. whether I know her or do not know her.</td>
<td>Ask if anyone wants and volunteer to make it</td>
<td>skillfully wend my way to drinking (topic of discussion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be I will ask for it, depends on how close they are to me.</td>
<td>Recently met...wait till they offer, but that's depending on how hospitable they are. Sometimes, they make it so inviting, that you can ask for what you right away.</td>
<td>&quot;I am thirsty, I'll get some soda. Do you want any?&quot;</td>
<td>... I'd do the Egyptian thing and steer the convo into that direction, or else skipping out on the drink altogether,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we recently met, I would politely ask for it, if we are close, I would get it myself</td>
<td>If I knew the host from previous experiences and knew where things were in his/her house I would get up and begin making it myself. If I didn't know them very well I would mention it to them and ask where they keep their tea/cups/coffee (etc) and then probably get up and make it myself. I am very self sufficient. If the host/hostess was uncomfortable with me doing this I would let him/her do it for me.</td>
<td>I would get up and get it myself.</td>
<td>I will start by asking for water to drink and in 15 min I will ask if I can boil water and put the tea bag I have in my purse for emergency assuming at this point the host will offer me tea or coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if I am close to the host I would ask and probably then go get what I want. If recently met, I would ask and wait for the response, so if the host does not mind I would go and get it(from the fridge...etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I change depending on if they're close or not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my action will change depending if I am close to them or not.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It depends on who's house I am at...someone very close to me..politely ask for tea. If it is not, I will keep quiet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it is a close friend I would ask her or even go make it myself. If it is someone I just met, I will wait for her to ask; if she didn't I wait until home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The scenario-based questions that follow differ from the "Tea" question above, with regard to what sort of responses participants were asked to provide; more specifically, the above question (like the "traitorous brother" question in the preceding chapter) asked what participants would do or say in a certain situation, whereas the "praise God" and "you’re so articulate!" questions below asked how participants would interpret phrases said to them in a specific situation or context.

The "Praise God" and "You’re So Articulate!" Questions

The "praise God" question asked participants to imagine that an Egyptian workplace colleague had first asked after the participant, and then responded to the participant’s "fine, how are you?" with a response of "alhamdulilah," which is Arabic for "praise be to God." The question specifically sought the participant’s analysis of what the colleague meant by his response of "alhamdulilah." Each of the 30 responses fit into one of six categories; I considered three of the categories "low context," and three of them "high context."
Table 4: Low Context Responses to the "Praise God" Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Context</th>
<th>Low Context</th>
<th>Low Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DENOTATIVE/2</td>
<td>CONNOTATIVE/9</td>
<td>INTERPRETIVE/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I'm doing alright
- freindly gesture, no problem
- He is happy that I am doing well and he is doing well.
- I take it well...it's usual to say that for Egyptian...it's a good positive thing, even when they do it mindlessly
- "Alhamdulilah" = praise be to God
- "Alhamdulilah" = praise be to God
- As long as I understand the meaning nop.
- Usually it means everything is fine.
- he is fine
- Being friendly
- I am good
- I take it to mean he is following the usual Egyptian formalities and I have not really learned how he's doing.
- very good to say God's name
- Job done, move on
- He responded to my question the way he felt more comfortable or natural with
- they are just being polite.. just giving the right answer to the right question
- He is in a good connection with his Egyptian roots

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Table 5: High Context Responses to the "Praise God" Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Context</th>
<th>High Context</th>
<th>High Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTIVE/3</td>
<td>NONVERBAL-DEPENDENT/5</td>
<td>INTERPRETIVE/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he's trying to be/seem religious but maybe he had an issue he wants to be coaxed into sharing.</td>
<td>Good (that you are OK) but it also depend on the tone of voice. if there is ergnecy in the voice it means I will be able to take what ever he is going to tell me; or if the voice is moking it will mean that he is glad I will not give him hard time with my bad mood.</td>
<td>he obviously had a problem showing that the person is concerned Something is wrong and he is covering it up not doin too well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| he/she is trying to make further conversation with me, and get my attention | it is preferable to get used to culture and language of the country he lives | Depends on the tone. Depends on tone and eye gazing/ expression, but usually I'd take it to mean that "God is praised, even though things aren't great."
 | it depends how he said it | Depends on the grimace, it either tells me: "I'm really fine" or "I'm not but need you to inquire deeper" or "I'm not fine but don't want to talk about it". The reaction to either one of the latter 2 is determined by the depth of the relationship. |

The final scenario-based question featured in this chapter asked participants to first imagine that they are college students chatting with an American professor of theirs; the question then informs them that the professor has commented that, "Gosh, you're just so articulate!". Participants were then to indicate what they took her comment to mean. Each of the question’s 34 fell into one of the same six categories introduced in the "praise God" question above; examples are included in the second row.
### Table 6: Low Context Responses to the "You're So Articulate" Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Context DENOTATIVE/9</th>
<th>Low Context CONNOTATIVE/8</th>
<th>Low Context INTERPRETIVE/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bias-free dictionary definition; I am well-spoken, I am articulate.</td>
<td>The definition of ___ is positive. She called me ___. Therefore, it is a compliment.&quot;</td>
<td>She likes me, she admires me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to find the proper word for the situation</td>
<td>a compliment and descriptive</td>
<td>she admires my intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My words are clear enough for he ear and brain..</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>she is pleased with my articularity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she thins I am this way</td>
<td>I am good person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just that: I am articulate!</td>
<td>I'm doing a good job and be proude of myself that someone noticed my good work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are precise,likes details</td>
<td>a praise, something good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good in expression</td>
<td>I think before I talk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm able to communicate well</td>
<td>flattering as it means I have good command of english</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am so articulate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to the other students in our class or that the professor has had, I speak using larger words, more complete sentences, and no slang vernacular.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table continues with similar responses for the other contexts.*
Table 7: High Context Responses to the "Articulate" Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Context</th>
<th>High Context</th>
<th>High Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTIVE/2</td>
<td>NONVERBAL</td>
<td>INTERPRETIVE/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DEPENDENT/4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **She wants me to be quiet.**  
  Depends on nonverbal cues.

- **She wants me to shut it**  
  Depends on knowledge of her personality and communication skills.  
  That I speak well (unless the tone of voice is sarcastic)

- **Taking it the wrong/reverse way, sarcastically, or just "reading into it."**  
  she is saying I talk too much  
  I'm articulate and expressive and he/she is not crazy happy about the fact  
  a bit of cretesiem

- **She could be saying it sarcastically or trying to get me to shut up!!!**  
  Depending on her voice  
  My english is good !!! :-D  
  .. unless my professor said it in a flurtacious way :-D

- **Something is wrong with the way I say things, it just sounds different to him/her**  
  They think I am articulate for my race and gender (Egyptian and female). It is not a compliment.

- **In my case, she's saying that I really am articulate, though it might mean she's jealous that I'm so well spoken.**

- **She is frustrated**

- **You are blabbermouth**

- **You’re not like all the other brown people who have shit for brains and can't put together a sentence without sounding like Bin Laden**
The third question to directly address communication is drawn from the interview; the question asked participants how they would tell a relative about a big—and potentially sensitive—decision that went against the relative’s wishes.

Some, like Dr. Khagoul, expressed their feelings or attitudes surrounding the imminent communication; the good doctor, for example, stated that there would be "no problem telling them," while Fiona admitted to "some trepidation, though I wouldn't do anything they disapproved of."

Others instead referred to their communication style when telling relatives something difficult; Dr. Hani, for example, plainly stated that "I would be very direct in telling them," while Vanilla Bean shared that she would, indeed, "tell them and know we'll get into a heated conversation," reflecting that "it's ok...I will just hear their objection to it (in a very long conversation) which is ok, I can deal with that."

Conversely, Ms. 777 confessed that she would "probably put off telling them," and Farawla surmised that she "wouldn't tell my parents about the small decisions that they disapprove about, the big ones I would probably tell them in time." Other conditional responses included one by Korva, who stated that it "depends on if it's a secret or not," and one by God's Girl777, who explained that it just "depends on how big the issue. If it was a big life-changing issue, I would bring up the subject carefully but frankly, "though if it was just "a variety of smaller issues, I would probably not bring it up at all (to avoid conflict over silly things)."

Rio was a bit more specific on what issues she censored, confiding that if the issue had to do with "marriage and dating I would probably not rush to ask the parents if you know what I mean :)"

So whether the "sensitivity" alluded to was that of communication cues they deciphered or sent—and whether the topics themselves contributed an additional layer of "sensitivity" to a situation—it is clear that many participants had many viewpoints on many different types of sensitivity.

The next section presents a strategy many Egyptians use to protect—or heal—themselves from insensitivity.

Venting

As established in the preceding sections, participants used various communication styles to deal with the situations presented to them in the questionnaire and interview; in this section, the motivations and functions of "venting" are discussed. As before, I mention this topic due to the far-reaching implications and complications that may be realized in Egyptians and others who do not understand something I first mentioned in Chapters Two and Three.

This "something" was written by Patai (1973) concerning "the adult Arab," and explained the common "need" to make "statements which express threats, demands, or intentions" that he has no actual intention of carrying out, "but which once uttered, relax emotional tension, give psychological relief" (pp. 60, 64-65), arising from the "psychologically conditioned substitution of words for action." This "verbal statement... (especially when it is uttered repeatedly and exaggeratedly) achieves such
important" that the individual is liberated from the "pressure to engage in any act aimed at realizing the verbalized goal."

Patai was, of course, talking about venting expressly done in situations where action was required, or at least, appropriate. The participants I reference below, however, not only used the strategy of venting to accomplish certain goals, but also as evidence to support (or convince themselves of) certain notions that they had.

Very basically, a significant part of many participants’ desired or actual support systems included the space and freedom to vent. Venting, which was used in several ways, was, nonetheless often just that: a venting of their woes, with no desire to actually "work out" the issue. For example, blogger Fallen Essence wrote that Z, her fiancé, "supported me as much as he can. He’s not good at things like that. He’s not the best listener. He always wants to solve things, can’t shut up and just let me vent."

Kelly shared that "even though my mom always starts with 'ok, 1, 2, 3, this is how we fix the problem,' my dad lets me get it off my chest, and I feel better at that point." Korva confessed that "even if a problem was fixed, I would still want to carry on and get all that junk out of my soul." And Anna commented that "my mom likes to yell to feel better about something," but that her father "always thinks she's yelling AT him instead of yelling about something else IN FRONT OF HIM...then there is a month of silence," she adds, "though it is not a peaceful silence."

In addition to venting sessions with loved ones, some participants also made great use of the "venting technology" available today: the blog. Every single blogger "participating" in this study had several "rants" in their blogs, though it was clear that each blogger’s venting served a different purpose.

Some bloggers for cathartic purposes, like one self-proclaimed "AmeriCopt" (who has asked to remain a mere "participant" and not "blogger participant," and who has also asked me to maintain anonymity of the blog's name, medium, and topic) told me that blogging anonymously is vastly helpful, can't tell you how much. I can say and write things there that get on my nerves, and no one knows who I am...some people I know would be disheartened to stay completely anonymous, holding no sway and being like Dickinson’s ‘nobody’ all the time...well, I prefer it that way, I even make it a point to avoid comments made on the blog so the benefit of venting freely wouldn’t be compromised by judgmental comments that set me off again...I—I mean 'me,' the real me....I don't want 'readers,' because I'd made the mistake once of 'coming out' as 'that blogger,' to a person growing more special to me...had to start over later in the game...a shame really.

Midiane and Carmen also posted rather frequently (but not particularly anonymously) about recurring cultural clashes for their own psychological relief; this was accomplished by the documentation and spiritual eviction of those very tales and
details so richly feeding their fury, which sometimes resulted in validation from others that their situations "really are that bad."

As Midiane once explained, "my original blog on Blogger was the place of my continued and pained outpourings. I would write and write until it hurt," he continued, describing part of the pain as "feeling so empty having confided in the Web," where "the only response you get would be Your post has been successfully published!" Hardly empathic listening," he concluded. Months later, however, Midiane disavowed his above statement, making it quite plain that "I'm here to write, not to vent or seek strength for my pain. There are no answers to my pain," he wrote, "and there are no people to ask for help," he finished.

Despite the blogger's disavowal of venting, I believe that it is precisely his "not-venteing" that lends his "writing" such power to move the reader (at least this reader); furthermore, I am convinced that lacking the outlet provided by his blog, he would have suffered even more than he did during those periods of time which he has referred to as "wilderness episodes" and being "back to black again."

Blogger Ghawayesh's postings are generally less about her emotional state and more about her opinion of countries and cultures, particularly Egypt and the States; one of her favorite topics is the inequality women are "subjected to." In one post, for example, she declared that

I do not know ONE female in Egypt who wasn't sexually harassed. As a child of 5, I was molested by one of the guards (very old man) of the sporting club my family went to. As a teenager, I was harassed and abused by an older cousin and another relative. As a student, I ONCE got onto a public bus and you know the rest of the story (Please hold this thought.. Isn't it sad that you know the rest of the story?). At work (in Egypt), I was almost raped by my boss...Thankfully nothing major happened, but it did definitely leave its marks on me. I get attacks of "unexplained"(roll eyes bel2awy!) anger at the mention of men and women and relations in Egypt. Now my two younger sisters got their boobs and genitals touched and squeezed at least once a week on regular basis, until one of them landed in depression and refused to leave the house and doesn't even open the door to anyone who is suspected to [wear trousers].

The team bloggers at Asrar el Banat often covered the same subject; in one posting, one of the "Banat" [girls] wondered if she had

done something really heinous as a child because I am certainly being avenged against. I have to walk by 6 cars of Central Security Soldiers to get to my office building. I'm a conservative dresser (not that that's a criteria in their eyes) but during those cursed moments I pass by their vehicle I manage to extract all kinds of comments, whistling, cursing,
passes, hit-ons and god knows what else. I mean COME ON. You are there for my protection!!! What have you left for the professional pervert out there???? GOOD GOD people... GET A LIFE!

In another posting, the same young lady shared that

I was waiting at the intersection for [the police] to stop those passing from the perpendicular street so we can pass..& I heard a traffic guy from behind me tell another next to me to stop that street so we can pass. The latter guy said with a huge grin "Mesh hawa2af la7ad ma teegy haga helwa." (translation: I wont stop the street until something pretty comes.) I didn't get it at first, until I saw him stop the street & let us pass only when a car came driven by a woman who appeared to have dyed blonde hair & a fair complexion! As I passed, I saw him stand next to her & talk..I wonder what was said! So isn't this just dandy! Our traffic is organized according to the wish of traffic men to see pretty women! Ahh heaven! (Gurrr)

As with Ghawayesh, the focus was on making her outrage (over cultural happenings) known more than gaining advice about or sympathy for her own problems. Other bloggers, such as Fattractive and Fallen Essence, actively solicited comments about their every-day struggles, entreatng the reading audiences to share their own similar experiences, and asking "what you all would do in this particular case if you were me." Fallen Essence didn't merely write in order to gain advice, however, once posting that while she "did not create this blog for anyone but myself [since] comments and such help me gain more insight to the situation," she was "so dissapointed how no one really reads my blogs. There are more important things in the world and better blogs but i feel like the girl in hs no one wanted to hang out with. *sigh*." The posting garnered 46 supportive comments, some from million-hit bloggers like Sandmonkey; following the posting, the frequency of advising comments increased.

Blogger Carmen wasn't able to find any answers that improved the family situation over her impending marriage to R, the Dominican Catholic, but many comments were, nonetheless, offered in response to her copious details and extended rants about various interrelated topics; in one post, for example, she wrote about the rocky relationship with her mother, and how the inability to discuss food processors and china patterns with her mother was "frustrating," because

at 32 I DO NOT want to have momma issues. But here I am, full of them. I have panic attacks at least once a month and those are NO JOKE. My chest tightens and I struggle to breathe. It really is a frightening experience. I wake up every day scared because I have no idea when another attack is going to hit. Ugh.
Another day, she wrote of her attempts to "stave off depression, despair, and violence," adding that

I've had really, really strong urges recently to punch my mother in the face...she hasn't done anything, but I just feel like punching her...I'm sure the feeling is mutual.

On yet another day and in another post, she shared with readers that

My mother and my aunt have really, really disappointed me. They refuse to even listen to me, and my aunt last week went on an anti-Latino rant that would have made Newt Gingrich proud. My mother and I are still not really talking, even though I've tried to break the ice several times.

And another post was dedicated to an amalgam of subjects, from fears to health to strategy:

I hate the nighttime. It's at night that everything hurts so much more. The emotional pain becomes amplified and starts manifesting itself physically; it's when the tears flow harder and the convulsions and shakes start. It's when the self-doubt threatens to creep in. When the fight just seems to be too hard and throwing in the towel becomes incredibly appealing. It's when I have my breakdowns. I can't stand the nighttime. My mother is proving herself to be very difficult. While I wasn't expecting her to embrace my decision, what I DEFINITELY did not expect was the cruelty that she has been throwing at me. I honestly thought that if I gave her enough space and time to process all this we'd be able to have a fruitful discussion in which we could talk about things as adults. But it seems that the more time I give her, the more time she has to become mean, unreasonable, and unnecessarily cruel. She's fighting dirty and is resorting to tactics that are disappointing me in her.

Apart from using posts to vent about her situation, she also vented about her lack of ability to vent "in real life" with anyone but the cause of her family's ire, R—the Dominican Catholic fiancé who had "converted" to Islam (on paper) in order to please the blogger's family:

Poor R. He bore this time with much dignity. How it must have felt knowing your woman is always unhappy and you can't do a single thing about it. How it must feel "changing" your religion when you're so secure in your own. I got really nasty with him at times and am sure attempted to push him away...
R's willingness to stay, work through the issues, and bear the venting convinced Carmen that she had chosen wisely; likewise, other participants inadvertently suggested that the vent was an opportunity to be comforted, that allowing someone to "cry on their shoulder" was a sign that they cared. Midiane, for example, wrote about how he would usually "wake up every morning and go to sleep every night wondering when will I get a hug of reassurance, arms giving warmth, allowing me to weep or even just tear up on a shoulder," unsure of when—or "if ever"—he would be "understood, listened, and cherished by someone in the flesh."

QueenB, responding to the question asking what participants thought of a fiancé who'd forgotten how their cousin died, expressed her feelings about the almost-reverse of the notion that "venting = caring," writing that if "his tone is casual [it] would probably would make me angry/hurt," adding that the very "fact he can't remember how she died also would confirm that I do not know him well enough to get married to him."

Mrs. Gedeeda expressed a similar thought from a different angle in her response as to what she loved about Egyptian culture: "I like the social part of the Egyptian culture...you can never be lonely. If you have problems you will always find someone to go to." Miss Mini's comments suggested her agreement with that sentiment, particularly that

Egyptian culture is more about family and there is a closeness and camaraderie between relatives there that I haven't seen here. also the family provides an exceptional support system that Americans and Brits seem unaware is possible... American culture seems dismissive of authority and cold and anti-family at times.

And blogger Fattractive didn't so much "vent" (for the sake of "getting it off her chest") as she did "mention her woes and sorrows" to her sympathetic and supportive audience members, who were responsible for leaving upwards of fifty "comforting" comments on postings like the following:

Sometimes, on days like today, I feel confused. I've always believed that environment plays a humongous role in how we turn out to be, way more than our genes. Nurture beats nature in my book. And at the end of the day, the truth is that most women in Egypt have been raised to think that marriage and babies and home are their lot in life, and that unless you have the hubby and kids—regardless of what kind of wife or mother you are—then your life hasn't really started, and you'll never really be successful. So on a day like today, when I really really hate my job, and I've just received news from one friend that she's getting engaged and from another that she's giving birth today, all I want to do is crawl under my blanket, watch old episodes of Buffy the Vampire slayer, and drink an oreo milkshake. On days when I'm tired of work, I can't seem to stop—no matter how hard I reprimand myself—the following thought from
forming: "why are you doing this? putting yourself through all this hassle when you don't need to? Why can't you live a life of leisure since you can, and spend your life socializing so you can find a husband?" I know, it's revolting...

The need for a support system whose "kiss would make it all better" was also evident in the writings of several participants; Amir, for example, messaged me one evening as I was cleaning data, and I tore myself away from the tedious and labor-intensive task in order to devote my attention to the conversation. His "presenting problem" was an anxiety or sense of hopelessness about finding a wife: "r there girls out there whom would marrya guy like me?" he began, exhorting me to "please be honest." After a mini-lecture on the importance of being loyal and true to oneself—even at the expense of friendship, and only as long as one's first loyalty was to God—I dispensed several satchels of sage suggestions surrounding the subject of seeking a suitable, soul-matable sister from the Saiid. I got the impression, however, that the true issue went far deeper than the quest for his one and true soul mate; after additional discussion, that underlying issue finally emerged: "I feel really alone right now," he confided—despite living with the "built-in support system" of his parents and siblings. "I really need an alternate support structure.. cuz I wont mak it [any longer]...ive already seena lot of my life crumble this year cuz I had nowhere else to go."

Blogger Midiane freely expressed his need for a support system, though the following passage made it clear that he wasn't willing to settle for an "alternate support structure." As he put it,

I can't give up on the concept of having a barely functional family. I can't just rely on myself. Not because I can't.I don't want to. I tried it before, have seen it in others, and don't want that. At all. ... I will accept the unacceptable... I don't see any other way around it. I won't stick around anymore and wait for something to change towards a more agreeable state for me.I don't know what's the consequence of accepting the unacceptable if I won't be doing the whole "myself and God only" thing. But with my family? I give up. Really give up. Nothing will ever change. They won't change. I will follow their rules at home and listen passively, react to them and proact when I have to. Otherwise, default plan of action is withdraw, become a hermit and rock up for dinner to eat and be treated like a child.

A few other participants also mentioned the significance of having a "support system like steel" that they could vent to, revealing strategies for avoiding misery despite the tumultuous states of their own "built-in" support systems; DJ, for example, told me that he tried to "keep a good circle of trust friends here in America," noting that "I am in no contact with anyone Egypt except for one person who is just u know casual." And Mr. Bambino gave a careless shrug of his shoulders as he advised me that "you just
gotta stop caring what they think, Sally. The only way you can be happy is do your own thing, and to hell with anyone in your way. If they involved, great. If not, great."

Unfortunately for several of the new and old friends who contributed to my study, this stoppage of caring and contact with family was not an option—for whatever reason. DemoGurl, for example, used the questionnaire to "tattle" on her younger sister, who accepted tuition from their parents—even as she "snuck around" with "this one guy that they wouldn't approve of for lots of reasons." DemoGurl hasn't told her parents, however, because "it's like I'm scratching her back, but she's scratching mine...we both live the way we want, and run interference for each other as needed." And Jacob, a deacon by day and party guy by night, only troubles himself to "guarde my famly's reputation coz if are image failes, I will get less perkes and benefites."

Other participants were less "mercenary," and likely would have agreed with Mayflower9, who confessed to requiring "constant emotional support" from her parents, sharing that

I call them for everything, we talk ten times a day, they probably got tired of me! Wish they lived closer. But really I feel safe with them on the line...I'd be devastated if we had a big fight.

As previously mentioned, several participants did become devastated by the constant fighting in their families, or else the cultural clashes they witnessed or faced in their lives; I was honored that so many of these participants trusted me with the specifics of their situations—situations which appear in this chapter rather than Chapter Six (Cultural Orientation) due to the emphasis upon venting.

Interestingly, instead of wanting to "hog" the discussion and focus on venting or presenting their own problems, every single one of them asked me what I would do in a similar situation, what I had done in the past, and, in some cases, whether they were out of line for wanting what they wanted. Some of these conversations went on for hours, with a few spanning several sessions; these dialogues led me to a final observation: very simply, some participants indicated that by venting and discussing (i.e. a very loud and sometimes dramatic conversation), they could (for whatever reason) work things out more efficiently than through other means, such as venting or discussion alone.

Amir, for example, asked me "whats the situation with your parents? abt ur writing...projects...and how do u deal with it?" on the Night of Data-Cleaning; the question, I should clarify, was to do with the fact that many of my interests are artistic and/or non-medical (and Egyptians generally consider medicine or engineering more successful than arts and non-sciences). My response was a half-serious caution that "you really don't wanna know, hah," to which he assured me that "I do.... trust me." I tried to give the most condensed version I was capable of formulating; but it amounted to over twenty single-spaced pages, not counting Amir's insightful and sensitive follow-up questions. A few nights later, I caught him online again; my salutation was somewhat utilitarian: "Did my pep talk the other day help at all?" As soon as he began to type I could discern some differences in him. "It did," he began, "you really gave me hope.....
been thinking about marriage n the future with more hope.....not as much anxiety." He explained further, finishing with a proclamation that "I'm done feeling sorry for myself... time to move on!"

After a similar conversation with another new friend, I was told "sall.... uve really helped me tonight.. to tell me theres people out there like me .. seriously." This other new friend continued, reiterating that he'd "been in a real bad place about marriage, Egyptian society," but saying that he didn't "feel as nihilistic about the whole thing anymore."

And DJ, likewise, made sure to inform me that "u know sally...our culture is very cruel and judgemental," concluding that our conversation had "helped more that therapy...it's just so nice to know someone has a similar experience."

In summary, venting was revealed to serve several purposes, including:
1) Shifting the emotional burden, or getting an issue "off of one's chest,"
2) Providing an opportunity to be comforted,
3) Making the upset party feel that someone cared about them, due to the "permission to vent,"
4) Facilitating discussions where problems could efficiently be solved,
5) Soliciting and/or sharing of similar experiences, which resulted in solidarity as well as suggestions.

As venting, the last of this chapter's "top-level" themes, has been presented in this section, the next is devoted to a discussion of uncovered themes and revisited scenario questions.

Discussion

The previous section provided responses to both general and scenario-based questions asked of the participants. This section provides an analysis and discussion of the hidden themes which have arisen from the data in this chapter, including meta-communication, euphemism, and venting.

Uncovered Theme: Meta-Communication

The study of communication has always fascinated me; from verbal and non-verbal cues to encoding and decoding styles, from the interpersonal to the intercultural, every centimeter of the discipline has proven delightful. Delightful, too, is the thought that new sub-fields are constantly being proposed; one of these subfields—not at all new, but "new to me," anyway—is that of meta-communication.

The last time I even heard the term was in 2004, during my first semester as a doctoral student. I wrote down every one of the professor's words—beginning with "Meta-communication is communication about communication...talking about talking, if you like"—and promptly forgot about it. Nearly six years later, during the data collection stage of the dissertation I was finally writing, the word popped back into my brain; what had prompted it was the observation that dozens of participants had spoken
(and written) about styles of speaking (and writing) that they liked and didn’t like. In this section, those responses are analysed and discussed.

As previously mentioned, certain questions were specifically designed to explore participants’ communication styles in particular situations; while grateful for and pleased by the often-thorough responses to said questions, I must confess that another set of responses—containing gratuitously-made communications about communication, i.e. "meta-communication"—were the most pleasant of surprises.

Apart from my delight over such revealing comments, however, I also found it quite significant that over 80 per cent of participants mentioned Egyptian (and/or non-Egyptian) communication styles of their own volition; this trend was made evident in the first half of the data section above, where comments about communication teemed—even though the main question eliciting those comments merely asked participants to list the things they did and didn’t like about their Egyptian and non-Egyptian cultures, with no mention of communication at all.

While it is fully possible that some participants delved into communication styles in direct response to the study’s title—listed in the consent form as “Culture, Collectivism, and Communication”—the similarities (i.e. sensitivity, indirectness, etc.) between responses, the fact that some face-to-face participants signed their consent forms without having closely read them (as they later confessed), and the knowledge I’ve gained from years of unofficial “participant observation” have lead me to believe that participants’ comments were (for the most part) in earnest.

That said, it seems as though some facets of Egyptian communication result in at least some annoyance or distress in most of the participants—whether due to “mere” frustration or an actual reduction in functioning and/or acculturation. On the other hand, while many also mentioned liking the straight-forwardness found in North America and Australia (among others), they also mentioned that “Westerners seem cold,” “don’t have emotions, I think,” “don’t respect anything,” or “just plain don’t seem to care,” in contrast to Egyptians, who ”have a heart,” “care about the important things,” and are “not a cold people.”

I mention this in conjunction with the several interesting comments about Egyptians being sensitive and easy-to-offend, as I witnessed not one but several instances of Egyptian umbrage (thirteen, actually) during my face-to-face interviews, arising from the “brusqueness,” “rudeness,” and “obvious coldness” of service-people, acquaintances, and church-goers “of non-Egyptian descent” who were living or working in Florida at the time; speaking as an impartial observer committed to viewing the thirteen situations without any cultural lenses whatsoever (or, perhaps, all of them), I must say that in twelve of the aforementioned cases, the behaviors condemned as “rude” would rather be considered “efficient” or “professional” by those committing the “crimes,” and that in all thirteen cases, the Egyptians in question seemed to read “disrespect,” and/or a “failure to appreciate ‘who I am,’” and/or a suspicion that “they just don’t seem to care about me” into the allegedly rude behavior.

My point in referring to these tales is not that North Americans (or “Americanized” Egyptians) are rude, that Egyptians can’t communicate, or that
Egyptians don’t know their own minds, but rather that the thirteen tales had several things in common:

1) Each culture—very generally speaking—had its own definitions of rudeness, "professionalism," and "direct communication,"

2) Preferences for or prejudices against particular communication styles of encoding and decoding (including directness, low-context communication, etc.) were orthogonal (independent of one another), and neither predictors of nor (necessarily) "attached" to one another; in other words, a participant’s responses or behaviors may have revealed a preference for speaking directly and "simply," but a prejudice against being spoken to in such a direct manner. Additionally,

3) Just because an Egyptian claimed to dislike indirectness, high context communication, etc. does not mean that they automatically refrained from decoding or even encoding messages in that manner,

4) Each of the thirteen Egyptians equated the way they were communicated to and/or treated with the way the "rude person" felt about and/or perceived them, and

5) Some of the participants equated the behavior of the "rude person" with that person’s lack of social status and/or good upbringing.

The first point is a bit of ethnocentrism-battling “common sense” that lifelong students of intercultural relations—or the human condition—will likely recognize. And the incongruence (discrepancy or "non-matching" between two things) in the second and third points—between one person’s encoding and decoding preferences, and between those preferences and the encoding/decoding actually done by the person, respectively—is neither restricted to Egyptians, nor a function of that nationality; so why have I even mentioned it in a dissertation about Egyptians and a section on their communication? After all, whether Egyptian or not, the incongruence outlined in points two and three doesn’t really seem serious enough to result in actual problems (other than "mere" annoyance); but it is, at times, quite serious, especially when the "success" of a person’s acculturation is at least partially dependent upon an ability to communicate with others in the host-land—whether these "others" are fellow Egyptians, immigrants from other countries, or natives of the host-land.

When a person is constantly forced to communicate in a manner found confusing, unpleasant, or stressful, resentment, bitterness, and anger can build up against specific people, or else against the cultures they belong to and/or represent; Midiane’s unsuccessful online conversation with a relative, for example, resulted in a passionate post (see Chapter Five) about the blogger’s hatred for Egypt, Egyptians, and Egyptian culture.

Furthermore, as relationships may suffer or fail, so, too, may the health of those in the relationships, as demonstrated in Carmen’s saga; this is all in addition to the
inherent stress of living amidst two cultures in one place and feeling like an outsider in both.

Of course, the ill effects of chronically unsuccessful (or "merely" uncomfortable) communication aren't restricted to immigrants, the bicultural, and/or their children; fellow immigrants from the homeland or from other countries are affected, as are the host-land's natives. This goes back to the rationale originally discussed in much of Chapter One (and part of Chapter Two); in those pages, I mentioned the conflicts between various groups in order to establish the importance of increasing the amount of scholarly attention paid to acculturation in general, and Egyptians in particular. And because so many participants mentioned them, it is only fitting that they be mentioned again in this chapter on communication style.

Briefly touching upon the final points mentioned above, both four and five support the notion that some or many Egyptians do, indeed, belong to a "diffuse" cultural orientation (Triandis, 2003), as mentioned in Chapter Three. Points four and five also provide additional support for both increasing scholarly attention to the specific issue and increasing or initiating efforts to provide intercultural training to everyone that shares a geographical space—regardless of how long they've lived there.

As the freely-offered and greatly-varying communications about communication have been covered, the discussion shifts to the three scenario-based questions.

_The "Tea Question," Revisited_

Just as patterns arose from the meta-communication above, so, too, did they arise from the responses to the three scenarios to follow; this section examines in greater detail the responses to the "Tea Question," which asked participants to state what they would do to obtain a cup of tea (or other beverage) in a non-relative's home. Responses fell into eight categories, which I've arranged into two main groups.

The first group I consider "low-context." The categories in this group are "Say Nothing," "Ask for Tea," "Ask/Get," and "Ask for Water," all of which are said/done (or not) in a straight-forward manner not requiring interpretation to be understood. Those who said nothing to the host may have done so for any number of reasons; perhaps they didn't have any urge for refreshments, perhaps they were shy or embarrassed, perhaps they were raised that way; they may even, as QueenB suggested, have wanted to avoid coming across as "greedy." (Or, as Glenda and Tanya put it, _feg’aneen_, which could be translated as "starving to death" crossed with "a person who spends several hours at Golden Corral.")

Those in the "Ask for Tea" category said they would ask for tea, but three of the seven in this category mentioned that the would ask "nicely" or "politely," as did both respondents in the "Ask for Water" category. Perhaps some of the five (total) "politeness-mentioners" likely feared that if they asked, it would offend the host, as though the participant was calling them stingy or inhospitable; had they specified that their usages were, indeed, related to the avoidance of casting aspersions upon the host, these participants would have found their responses in the "High Context Interpretive" category instead, due to the focus on "coming across" instead of (or together with)
obtaining a refreshment. The remaining category’s participants both asked their hosts about tea for significantly different reasons—one to determine whether the host even had any tea around the house, while the other asked in order to learn whether the host would mind if she made the tea herself.

The second group’s responses contained two categories each of “conditional” and “process-based” responses, where the former categories were ”Depends on Relationship” and ”Depends + Explanation,” and the latter categories were ”Would Anyone Else?” and ”Shenanigans.” The first category of responses was based upon how well they knew the host; some participants only mentioned what they would do in either case (of closeness to the host, or a lack thereof), while others mentioned what they’d do in each situation. Two of the nine responses in this category contained the word “politely,” bringing the total of ”politeness-mentioners” to seven out of the 18 in those three categories; this means that over one-third of participants who ”asked” (for tea or water) emphasized the angle of ”politeness,” which strengthens my suspicion that they did not want to come across as boorish (or greedy). Additionally, some of the people who indicated that they’d get it themselves seemed to indicate that they would do so out of closeness to the host, while others answered as though not getting tea themselves necessarily meant that they were lazy.

The next category of participant responses included five relatively-lengthy responses (three sentences or more, as opposed to the one-sentence average), each containing one or more interesting point. Two of the responses referred to asking the host for water as ”troubling them,” and two of them mentioned the hospitality or generosity of the host. Additionally, three responses referred to the participants who’d written them; for example, Farawla called herself ”self sufficient,” Fiona used her physical state as a point of reference (in terms of how she’d ask for water, and if she’d ask at all), and QueenB said she did not want to ”seem greedy,” additionally using the phrase ”trouble them for some water.”

The last two sets of responses in the ”high context, process-based” group consisted of three participants who indicated that they’d announce their desire for a drink alongside an offer to get everyone else a drink, too, and another four who were lumped into a category entitled ”shenanigans,” due to the fact that none of the four responses bore any resemblance to the other three—except in the fact that there was a convoluted process involved (whether conning relatives into helping out, or using spiral logic to arrive at the topic of drinking).

All in all, the strongest potential patterns—which are recounted below—each make sense; due, however, to the original question’s relatively imprecise language—which, I believe, kept responses from neatly fitting into categories of ”true” collectivism/individualism, or ”pure” HCC/LCC (among others)—I do not include these patterns in Chapter Eight’s discussion of communication style, though I did feel compelled to include the question in this chapter’s discussion, due to the various cultural conclusions (or potential patterns) I’ve drawn from these data. These include:
1) The participants who indicated that "not getting up myself = laziness" were both the children of immigrants who reported never having lived in Egypt,

2) Every participant linking the quality of "generosity" with an invitation was an immigrant over 40,

3) Almost every participant that used a word of politeness or troubling in his or her response was an immigrant,

4) Linking "greediness" (being "feg’aneen") to asking for anything (or anything but water) was mostly done by immigrants, and

5) Feeling greater freedom to "help oneself" when at the home of a loved one was much more common in immigrants, though "getting it myself"—regardless of relationship—was only reported by children of immigrants.

The first point seems rooted in "individualism," the middle three correspond with "typical Egyptian behavior," while the last is just one more instance of Hall’s belief that "Arabs make a big distinction between friends and strangers" (Hall, 1962). This section, as previously noted, is included due its cultural revelation rather than its theoretical contribution, though it also serves as an illustration of the variations of perception and thought between those differing in generation or place of upbringing; needless to say, these differences may themselves complicate acculturation.

Having reached the end of the Tea question’s responses, the responses of the "Praise God" and "Articulate" questions are now examined.

The "Praise God" and "You’re So Articulate!" Questions, Revisited

As previously mentioned, the two scenario-based questions in this section differ from the "Tea question" above, and instead ask how participants would interpret phrases said to them in a specific situation or context. The reader will recall that each set of responses was aggregated into two tables ("Higher" and "Lower" context) appearing in the data section; within the "praise God" question, the most frequently-appearing types of responses were Low Context Connotative (9) and Low Context Interpretive (7), whereas the "articulate" question’s highest frequencies were Low Context Denotative (9) and High Context Interpretive (9).

Before analyzing what these responses mean in comparison to one another, however, I believe that a glance at the chart below will establish the importance of even studying such questions; the 32 responses of Egyptian participants are shown in black, while those given by the fifty non-Egyptian and non-Arabic speaking students (or "unofficial" participants) are shown in vertical and diagonal stripes.

The two groups of "unofficial" participants consisted of 30 students (including five South Koreans) attending a four-year-university and ranging between 19 and 25 years of age, and 20 students attending a two-year-college in Georgia and ranging between 18 and 57 years of age; in this chart, the numbers at the left are frequencies (not percentages).
The chart above illustrates the great disparity between specific groups; for example, apart from the "unsure" category created for those "unofficial" participants who did not know what "articulate" meant (despite having the definition written on their forms and on the classroom’s dry-erase board), every category contained at least one Egyptian’s response, while two categories were avoided completely by Georgia students; in other words, the group of Egyptians demonstrated a wider range of responses than did the Georgia students (or the Florida ones, for that matter). Furthermore, the disproportionate numbers between Georgian and Egyptian participants notwithstanding, it would appear that the former group’s most-frequent response was that of Low Context Connotative, while the latter group was not only bi-modal but only one short of being tri-modal.

Figure 1: Responses to the "Articulate" question; Egyptians vs. students
The chart above might complicate things, however; for example, while it shows interesting trends within groups—like the way twelve Georgia students "read" a compliment of some sort into the "articulate" comment, and only two decoded the comment in the "dictionary" sense, whereas the Florida group preferred the "dictionary definition" of articulate more than they did the connotative, but showed a more-even distribution between the two responses than did the Georgia group—differences between non-Egyptian groups are less important for our immediate purposes than are differences (or similarities) between Egyptians and non-Egyptian groups.

Therefore, the chart below shows only two groups—Egyptians and non-Egyptian college students—and illustrates their similarities and differences by percentage; actually, it should be noted that all numbers appearing in this second chart are percentages.

Figure 2: Responses to the "Articulate" question; Egyptians vs. Non-Egyptians
Some of the findings revealed above include:

1) The fact that 28 per cent of each group indicated their use of the Low Context Denotative style
2) The fact that nearly twice as many non-Egyptians as Egyptians (percentage-wise) decoded the comment using the Low Context Connotative style, and
3) The fact that nearly twice as many Egyptians as non-Egyptians (percentage-wise) used the High Context Interpretive style to read a "negative" meaning into the comment.

Many other fascinating findings arising within and between groups presented themselves during the course of the research (particularly findings related to South Korean vs. Egyptian participants), but they go beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, I believe the information and brief comparison of groups above strengthens the argument that differences in culture oftentimes result in significant differences between communication styles; these differences may, of course, help or hurt the cultural adaptation or acculturation of bicultural or non-native people in the diaspora, ultimately affecting (for good or ill) the natives of the host-land.

Refocusing now upon the "official" participants (our original group of Egyptians), precisely half (16) of the 32 questionnaire-takers' responses to the "praise God" question indicated that they weren't sure how the colleague was (7), or else thought he was doing fine (9), while just under one-third of participants (9) took the American professor's comment neutrally, another almost-third believed it to be a "diss" (whether against them personally or against Egyptians/Arabic-speakers), and eight took it to be a compliment. I call this observation "interesting" because it provides some support (albeit minimal) for the "mashi halak mentality," which may be interpreted as "keep on truckin."

In other words, instead of troubling themselves to ponder what the colleague's and professor's words meant, they took the two most obvious routes; that is, in the case of the colleague, they accepted his response and that was that. In the professor's case, her comment was taken (to an almost-identical degree, though not by the same exact group of participants) as either a positive, negative, or neutral statement, rather than examined for nonverbal cues, hidden meanings, et cetera.

I thought it was equally interesting that, despite the fact that over half the participants felt betrayed by the "traitorous brother" and half indicated that their tea-seeking behavior depended largely upon their relationship with the host, only one response from the 64 total (32 "praise God" and 32 "articulate") mentioned that a judgment depended on the "depth of relationship" between the participant and the colleague. This may also support Hall's notion (mentioned in Chapter Three) that "Arabs make a big distinction between friends and strangers" (Hall, 1962) and would provide an explanation as to why over half of the responses to the "tea" and "brother" questions
were so much longer than were the responses to the "praise God" and "articulate" questions.

The marked disparity between answer-lengths could also be a function of participants’ "selective attention" to themes or relationships or topics of interest; for example, the word "brother" usually equates to "family," and so there was likely more "at stake" to them than there was regarding a random colleague (not specified as a friend) and teacher (not specified as a favorite teacher).

Despite the paltry number of responses in the "High Context Nonverbal-Dependent" category (nine total out of the 64 represented by both questions, see figure below), precisely half of the participants provided involved responses (with various stipulations and circumstances) to the "tea" question above; to me this is evidence supporting Triandis’s (2003) notion that tight cultures have rules for every possible situation.

Figure 3: Responses to the "Praise God" and "Articulate" questions
At the same time, it's important to mention that participants' roles within scenarios may also greatly impact the sorts of answer they could or would give. For example, there are only so many possibilities that generally occur to a person when s/he considers questions (of minimal to moderate importance) asking "what does this behavior mean to you?" or "how would you interpret this?". When s/he is asked "what would you do?", however, the situation takes on a decidedly different dynamic; s/he goes from being the lens through which something is seen (or the computer with which it's interpreted) to the thing being seen, the information being interpreted. Her (or his) role becomes a starring one, with seemingly endless possibilities—particularly as the number of variables increases. Furthermore, his (or her) personality, preferences, prejudices, and personal histories all—to varying extents—influence the decisions s/he makes.

For instance, many people would be delighted to receive a voucher for an all-expenses-paid trip (for four!) to New York City, where the itinerary features a Broadway musical, dinner at the most exclusive and expensive restaurant in the city, and a three-day stay at the highest-rated spa in the country. Some people might be less than thrilled however; consider a man who gets migraines from loud music or traffic, a woman who's been told that one more absence from work will earn her a pink slip, a socialist vegan activist who is horrified that the over-priced restaurant serves both sushi and porterhouse steaks, and a college student who has learned that the spa is owned and operated by his first love—and her new husband. This is to say nothing of the people who would view the offer as "too good to be true," or the people who already live in New York City; and if it turned out that "winners" had to pay the taxes on the trip’s value, some might think $200 was excessive, while others might consider it a pittance (in comparison to what they were getting).

In the same manner, I believe that participants providing similar responses may not necessarily have done so for the same reasons, whereas participants with dissimilar responses may have near-identical mentalities—even if they read the somewhat confusingly-worded questions in different ways. The reliability and validity of responses notwithstanding, however, it should be noted that the scenario-based questions (the current ones as well as those unmentioned in this manuscript) did serve the dissertation very well, in their elicitation of the responses that have expanded upon Hall’s High and Low Context Communication, yielding a total of six new sub-categories which are defined and discussed in Chapter Eight.

Before the new "Higher" and "Lower" Context Communication styles can be outlined, however, several additional themes must be discussed in this chapter; next up is Euphemism.

Uncovered Theme: High Context Communication and Euphemism

Moving to the widely-known pattern of "putting things in a milder form" in order to avoid offending others, I noted several instances where participants used euphemisms to refer to something negative; this came as no surprise, as Nydell (2002), Patai (1973), Wilson (2006), and Zayan (2008) have all made mention of the Arabic-
speaker’s tendency to refer to certain things in order to avoid saying them. In this section, I first describe the four types of "euphemism" I noticed, and then mention one trend that seems to have arisen in direct opposition to the euphemistic style.

I must first explain that the data below are included within this "discussion" section because they all (with only three exceptions) appeared as ways of saying a response, rather than comprising the response itself. In other words, I am focusing on the delivery here and not the content that was delivered.

The method or style of delivery (or communication) is just as important to note as is the content, at least for the purpose of the dissertation; this is because of the great potential for "failed communication" between people of different cultures—whether those cultures are based upon region and language, generation, or a combination of these and other co-cultures—in the face of phrases or non-verbals that confuse the uninitiated or come across "the wrong way." In any case, several empirical examples are included below in order to illustrate the theme.

Several types of euphemisms were noted during video interviews with 13 different people (four of whom spoke to me more than once on camera, and all of whom were over 45 years of age), and in a handful of online interviews (synchronous and asynchronous).

The most frequently-appearing type was the superstitious kind that Nydell wrote about in her Understanding Arabs (2002); ten participants referred to relatives that had "passed on" using such euphemisms as "they left," "he wasn’t there anymore," "her address changed, now she lives in my heart," and "they really were very Godly, may He rest their souls." Four participants said "the disease" or "el marad el wehesh" (the bad illness/disease) to refer to cancer, and two referred to suicides by saying "she...did that" and 'amalet 'ely 'amaleto... [she did what she did].

The second main type of euphemism-usage was fully non-verbal. Every single participant I spoke with face-to-face used one or more of the following to express uncomfortable topics (such as death, immorality, tragic or difficult situations): trailing off (purposely leaving a sentence unfinished), sweeping eyes or head to one side whilst making a backward nod (like the "Lebanese no," only without the "tsk," this "nod" was usually done to indicate "out of control" or "insane" or "uncaring" etc.), and/or waggling eyebrows.

The third main type of euphemism involved using Arabic words in the manner English-speakers often use "whatever." Participants generally used ya’ni [like/meaning], el beta’ [the thing], and sahebna [our friend]; the last is significant because it was used by nine participants when they were discussing enemies or people they weren’t fond of, and during one of the interviews, a culturally-disconnected half-Egyptian grad student got rather agitated every time his mother’s mortal enemy was referred to using sahibetna (the female form of "our friend") and "habebitna" (the female form of "our beloved" or "our dearest").

The last form of euphemism does not differ too greatly from the second category—at least with regard to format—though I believe the motivation was quite different. Very simply, five different gentlemen referred to various violent crimes and
tragedies using various indirect phrases. One described a young Christian girl's brutal posthumous attack as "elly hassal hassal..." [what happened, happened], while averting his eyes from mine. Another of the men was informing me about Coptic history and Islam's entrance into Egypt: "And the clashes, they were so brutal," lectured Mr. Michel, continuing that "they converted everyone they could, by the threats, and by the Egyptian women...I'm sure you know what happens in the wars, well it also happened in that case." Professor Basil also told me about a violent episode that happened to him when he was in the army, describing how Egyptian State Security officers strung him up by his ankles on an exposed pipe running through the ceiling and then beat his back and kidneys until he hemorrhaged from two locations. The euphemisms, particularly "the audience will understand me, I'm sure" and "if you know what I mean..." and "you understand me, right?" made appearances every time he discussed Christian-Muslim relations, body parts, and graphic violence. The reason I count these gentlemen as separate from the superstitious category above is precisely that: the people above were "covering up" out of superstition, while these gentlemen likely felt uncomfortable speaking of graphic and violent acts of torture and/or sexual assault on camera, and/or to a young lady who could have, in two of the cases, been their daughter, and/or to a female whose male relative/s they were acquainted with (to varying degrees).

I did, as previously mentioned, notice a trend directly opposing that of euphemistic communication, but in the younger generation, and often in U.S.-born Egyptians who had never lived in Egypt; the "strategy" was basically that of using the most graphic and hurtful language possible to make a point. I noticed the "trend" in several official and unofficial interviews and observations (a total of six youth, four "talking" with relatives and two grousing to me in a similar style) usually when a "child" in the late teens or early twenties was confronting (aka "lecturing") a parent about the parent's health, or when someone from the same "college-aged" demographic was discussing the "Coptic Cause" and the massacres that advocates of Christian Egyptians frequently cite as proof of inequality between Christians and Muslims in Egypt.

While I certainly wouldn't take the sarcastic, seemingly-embittered flow of graphic language dripping from the mouths of young AmeriCopts as evidence of an actual generation-wide trend (or perhaps it is more-closely related to generation than it is to culture), it does greatly concern me that even one young man would dare to speak this way to his father—especially in front of a stranger (me), and particularly within earshot of a running video-tape—but he wasn't the only youth to use this style of "tough love":

Ok, glutton, take your head out of the trough. Step away from the slop, piggy, your 200 prescription pills are waiting for you. What? You wanna finish that basket of big fat yeast rolls? [gesturing at an invisible basket of bread] Forget it, old man, you're the king of the big fat yeast rolls. Why don't you add some appetite suppressants to your blood pressure pills, your shots, your steroids, your breathing machine, Coumadin, Nicorette, Viagra, and the other fifty pills you gotta take every four hours, just to get
up in the morning. Golly gee, don't you sicken yourself? You sure sicken me. You obviously don't care about minding your health, so you must be asking for a bucket of worms to start chowing down on your skeleton. Go on, get out of here, go hang out with Alas, poor Yorick and Hamlet and all of those old dead dudes, they want your company more than I do. I'm outta here.”

It is quite true that the young man in question was speaking out of concern for his father's health (Papa had gone to an all-buffet restaurant and "made a day of it"), but it's also true that the young man was invisible to his father for over a week after the "lecture," and that feeling under-appreciated often drives Egyptian parents into Cold Wars, laments, rebellions, and giving up. even; respect, as mentioned in Chapter Two, counts for more than almost anything in the Egyptian psyche.

The lack of respect brimming from tirades similar to the above led another man to respond with a diatribe of his own:

Why should I take care of my health just to please rude and spoiled brats who obviously didn't absorb the good teachings I toiled and slaved over for years? Yalla, Rabena yakhodni ba2a w’ykhalasni menkom..mesh metrabyeen!” [Let's go/OK, may God take me already and deliver me from you all who haven't been raised properly!].

Whether or not this new type of "anti-euphemism" will eventually gain popularity among Egyptians remains to be seen (though it may already be popular), but until that time there are other forms of communication to examine, such as that of "communicating refusal by not-communicating," to which the next section is devoted.

Uncovered Theme: HCC—When No News is NOT Good News

This section's theme is rooted in yet another communication "behavior" that may prove disobliging to the immigrant in certain situations, and, consequently, in the immigrant's acculturation—the "behavior" of communicating refusal by refusing to communicate.

As previously mentioned, failed communication with anyone—friends or family members, colleagues or service-people—is frustrating enough without the additional complication of an intercultural dimension; the frustration level increases exponentially, however, when one failed attempt at intercultural communication becomes two, when instances become patterns that regularly interfere with successful acculturation. Communication attempts can just as easily fail from misunderstood actions as they can from misunderstood non-actions; and since some second-generationers and many host-land natives likely don't understand an Egyptian communication strategy that Michael Meunier told me about in a 2006 interview, speaking in reference to the Egyptian government (though it is equally applicable to non-governmental communication): "no answer means no."
The data in this section are not considered "top-level" data, due again to the fact that my forthcoming analysis is to do with the implications of a communication behavior (or "lack" thereof), rather than the topics addressed by the behavior (or lack thereof); as before, I have included some data to aid in illustrating this abstract notion of "communicating refusal by refusing to communicate."

To begin with, there was a large discrepancy between some of the data proffered by different source-types (bloggers vs. video interviews vs. asynchronous interviews, etc.); for example, a majority of video and/or face-to-face interviews veered into either discrimination and persecution in Egypt, faith and religiosity, or else the political climate in the U.S. and/or Egypt, while online synchronous interviews and blogs provided the most and best (and most troubling) data concerning issues of culture and identity. While it is likely impossible for any human to arrive at one overarching reason that completely and accurately accounts for all aspects and instances of this (or any) trend, there are certain reasons that do make a great deal of sense, in light of most or all of the known variables.

For example, while bloggers Carmen, Midiane, and Ghawayesh wrote quite often about their cultural conflicts, I would not hasten to assume that their troubles were any worse than those of Fattractive or Asrar el Banat, whose blogs did not contain very much at all in the way of cultural conflict, though they did feature critiques of Egyptian society; perhaps the latter did not feel comfortable "spilling their guts" in public forums, and perhaps their real-life cultural clashes did truly correspond with the proportion suggested by their blog’s number of postings on the topic (less than five per cent, in both cases). I have used these two blogs as counterpoints to the three above because of one very big discrepancy between both groups, that of the "proportion of posts about cultural clashes," though I must also make very clear another difference between the two groups: that of location; simply put, Carmen, Midiane, and Ghawayesh all live outside of Egypt now, and have spent varying amounts of time "back home." Carmen moved to New York when she was a child, Ghawayesh moved "after womanhood," while Midiane was born in Egypt and has spent his twenty-something years in half a dozen countries.

Shifting from the example to an actual instance of discrepancies between source-types, it was interesting to find that sexual harassment was not mentioned in any interviews or surveys, and only appeared in blogs, particularly those of Ghawayesh and Asrar el Banat. It should be noted that such mentions of harassment were not restricted to blogs written by females, though all of the bloggers did share a religion of birth, Islam. This may have been due to the fact that Christians are generally more likely to be questioned or arrested in general—but especially for criticizing Egyptian State Security—than are Muslims; it may also have been due to the fact that most of the blogger-participants still lived in Egypt, and were, therefore, more likely to witness such events in their daily lives.

A related point of interest is that three Egyptian participants in the diaspora (who had indicated that their membership fell into the age range of "45-59") left all virginity-related questions blank; it is, of course, possible that an oversight was to blame for these unanswered questions, though I believe it unlikely, because these "sensitive"
questions were the only ones left incomplete in these participants’ entire questionnaires. These participants may have skipped the items in question due to a belief that answering would indicate the participant’s acknowledgement of the question—which conservative participants may not have done; alternately, participants may have been concerned that kalam yetmesek ’alehom [their words could be held against them] whether their response indicated the traditionally "correct" mentality, or a more "modern" one.

It is also interesting to note that many females (and some males) on the popular "dating and friendship" website Arablounge.com have actually left similar and equally sensitive questions blank on their profiles. I first visited the site during the data collection stage of my Master's thesis project, and despite an absence of nearly eight years, I recently (if briefly) found that such questions meant to display members’ location on various continuums "measuring" sex drive, conservative nature, and even materialism are still frequently left blank; whether members avoid these questions due to "respectability," "hard-to-get-ness," or the desire to avoid leaving behind "evidence" of their "unacceptable" responses (which could taint their families, ruin their chances of marriage, etc.) is, of course, beyond the scope of this analysis, but the parallel between my data and the trend found within Arablounge is, at the very least, interesting to note.

At the other end of the spectrum, several questionnaire-takers and interviewees made it a point to not only address these issues, but also make an extended commentary about the state of morality in today's society (in Egypt and the diaspora alike). Consider the following comments typed in beneath the "scale" of "traditional Egyptian values" by almost half (13) of the 32 questionnaire-takers:
### Table 8: Write-In Comments Left Beneath the "Scale" of Traditional Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Lesson/4</th>
<th>The Limit/5</th>
<th>Case FOR Dating/2</th>
<th>The Bible Says.../2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unless the woman grew up in Egypt where her virginity is very important to her and her family, then loosing her virginity would sometimes (not always) indicates irresponsibility and promiscuity</td>
<td>After high school people can date without intimate relationship until they marry</td>
<td>again, Biblical views not cultural...I feel sometimes dating for fun is good for communication and self esteem, which is justifiable, as long as both understand that and skip the physical part of it.</td>
<td>I go with biblical views not cultural views, so I do believe impurity, not virginity which include wholesome thought process not just physical abstinence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginity is the best gift from woman to her husband upon official marriage, otherwise we call it &quot;illegaal marriaage&quot; or &quot;Disintegration and chaos and indiscipline&quot;</td>
<td>physical relationships should not be avoided before marriage ... sex should.</td>
<td>Normal social relations in public places like church is the best for girls and boys, avoiding sex</td>
<td>The last three questions should apply equally to males too. For Christians the bible is very specific to what extent to go. Inocent dating is ok.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if one of my sons or daughters did these things, they will instantly be disowned</td>
<td>I am okay with dating and boy/girlfriend before marraige, just not sex</td>
<td>If by dating a boy/girlfriend you mean just for fun, I disapprove of it. It you are talking about getting to know a future partner in a marriage minded environment, then yes I do approve of dating or else how will the couple get to know one another for a lifetime committment!!!!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to add that a woman's state of virginity is something that should matter to the future husband .. he must know that .... but he should be as loving and accepting... as in this changes nothing about his future wife</td>
<td>How am I going to learn about the man I'd like to eventually marry if I don't see what guys are like now? Not ready to marry NOW, by the way!!!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the reader will remember, participants frequently used the comment boxes below certain questions to reiterate or clarify their attitudes, beliefs, or circumstances; I don't believe that leaving a box blank is necessarily indicative of a participant's shyness any more than I suspect a commenter of necessarily "caring more" about a specific issue than did a non-commenter.
Another instance of "no answer means no" appeared in a handful of online synchronous interviews—and not because participants "clammed up" about certain questions (which only one interviewee did). The instance, mentioned by seven participants, was to do with khesam, otherwise known as "the silent treatment" or "Cold War." In this style, Egyptians will give the "cold shoulder" to someone in order to "punish them" for transgressing; the thing is, they never tell the transgressor why they're angry, or even that they're angry, which defeats the purpose of the punishment.

One example of this was found in Anna, who has been estranged from two relatives for several years now:

They just stopped talking to me one day, after a big fight at my aunt's house, and for a month, I was very very confused...but then my aunt told me that ____ was particularly upset by my probing questions about ____, and that they thought it was none of my business...she also told me that they'd been getting more and more mad about the situation as the weeks went by, like "doesn't she care that we're upset? Why isn't she coming to make it right again?" and told me that she told them "maybe she doesn't know what she did wrong? Maybe if you suggested it she would come around?" but they just said—according to her, yeah—that "if she doesn't know, we aren't going to tell her, if she doesn't have a conscience or a caring bone in her body, then God help her, but we did our part." I'm not sure what their part is, or if they did it, but...that's life I guess? Sad, isn't it, that I counsel people for a living, and I can't even solve my problems!

The issue here—as with Amir, as with Flowerchile, and as with a few others—is that the "Cold War" makes it impossible to learn what the problem was, effectively cutting off communication with those that could be most helpful to the bicultural individual in an unfamiliar or unwelcoming place.

All in all, while there did not seem to be any actual patterns—new or old—that revealed just who acknowledged what and why (or why not), I believe it is safe to say that participants of all types acknowledged and avoided things in different ways for different reasons.

This chapter has included several types of communication mentioned and used by participants, in different contexts and for different reasons. In the section below, results are summarized and discussed with respect to the three research questions.

Conclusion

A great many themes and concepts have been presented and discussed in this chapter; in this section, the study's three research questions are addressed in light of the information populating previous sections. As before, participant responses to questions of communication style spoke to more than one research question; conversely, some
responses to non-communication questions provided insight into the communication styles and preferences of participants.

The first question asked "What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?" Several participants indicated that the negotiation of their identities was hindered by issues of communication; some had issues with Egyptians, others with non-Egyptians; some of the issues were to do with disliking certain communication tendencies or styles, while others arose from confusion over what certain communications meant; and some participants reacted to awkward or failed communications by distancing themselves from the "problematic" populations while others threw themselves deeper into the population presenting them with problems.

The second question asked "What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?" while a related sub-question wondered "How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?" The main question was answered—quite conclusively, actually—by over two-thirds (81) of all 94 participants. Responses arrived in the form of write-in comments below the "scale" questions, or in the "cultural likes and dislikes" question, in the scenario-based questions and in the "how would you tell...?" question, in "cultural lessons" and anecdotes that began as tangents during interviews.

Some of the more common anxieties, conflicts, and tensions mentioned arose when participants' were subjected to the Egyptian tendencies of "going around the point" and/or "heaving words" at someone "as though they didn't have the power to hurt," while over half of the questionnaire-takers indicated their appreciation of the relative directness and low context communication attributed to "Americans" and "Westerners" (though other responses linked this "western directness" with "emotional coldness").

Several of the participants expressing at least one of the sentiments listed above indicated that their dislike of certain communication styles was rooted in confusion as to what the other person meant, or what communication style the other person was using; others "merely" suffered from frustration when experiencing communication styles they weren't fond of. Some of the communication-related wishes or desires frequently mentioned (or hinted at) by bloggers and "active participants" alike involved "venting," though participants did so in different ways, for different reasons.

An observation that greatly interested me was the not-uncommon "incongruence" between the word-density preferences of a single participant's roles as "speaker" and "listener," which could more-simply be described as a man who "wanted to get to the point when he was speaking, but hear more details when he was listening," or a woman who "preferred to give copious details but receive concise messages."

Shifting to the sub-question, some participants "solved" the particular problems associated with their "dislikes" by avoiding people who often committed the "sins" of communication so disliked, while others indicated that they had to "grin and bear it," or
at least "bear it." Participants also used "partial" and complete silence to deal with difficult situations; "partial" silence involved refraining from "telling all" (for whatever reason) and commonly appeared as either selective omission or euphemism, while complete silence often took the form of closeting certain things, or "ignoring" scandalous or difficult topics (again, for whatever reason).

With regard to the strategies participants reported using to negotiate particular cultural conflicts—that of telling their families about disapproved of or controversial decisions, for example—"directness" was mentioned as frequently as was "not telling them." Another "strategy" of managing cultural anxieties involved finding or creating an "alternative support system" which participants could, presumably, vent to/with; this intersection between collectivism and communication is revisited in Chapter Eight.

The third and final research question set out in Chapter One asked "How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the "three communication dimensions" (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?"

Very simply, the dialogical model of acculturation was evident in the tailoring of behaviors and communication to the specific cultures, persons, and/or situations in question; in other words, most participants indicated at some point that they did not adhere to a "one size fits all" approach to their encoding, decoding, and behavior. Some mentioned that nonverbal cues most strongly affected their message-decoding, while others confessed to treating their families and loved ones with more directness (or caring, consideration, cruelty, etc.) than they showed to "outsiders." Still others indicated that the factor deciding the path taken was found in the incongruence between their preferences for "more" or "less" words/messages as they alternated between the roles of speaker and listener—situational context notwithstanding.

The dialogical model of acculturation is, as mentioned in Chapter Three, rooted in a dialogue between various elements—cultural or otherwise; I believe that the dialogical model is, indeed, quite evident in the multiplicity of "deciding factors" leading (or not) to a particular communication style's usage within a particular situation. Furthermore, while my data confirmed Triandis's (2003) conjecture that tight cultures have rules for every situation, they led to distinctions between various responses in Hall's categories of "high" and "low" context communication; more specifically, while HCC relies upon shared codes and LCC avoids them, there are several types of code that appeared to impact communication, particularly the decoding of messages. Due to the multiplicity of possible codes and the potential for dynamic dialogue between them, I consider both Communication Style (in general), and the new styles of "Higher" and "Lower" Context Communication (in particular) to be manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation.

As the three research questions have now been addressed in light of Communication Style, this last data chapter comes to a close, and so does Part II.

The final third of this manuscript—Part III—contains two chapters; the first, Chapter Eight, provides yet more discussion on the themes presented and analysed in
Part II, and Chapter Nine discusses limitations of the study and makes suggestions for future research.
PART III
CHAPTER EIGHT
DISCUSSION

Introduction

The Story

This is a story about moving—moving to another place, or standing still while the world moves around you. It’s a story about changes—those you don’t want, those you can’t help, and those you can’t help wanting with all your heart.

It’s also a story of twos and ones—two viewpoints you try to squash together, two sides you’re torn between, two brothers battling over a single birthright. Two groups separated by one wall. One winner, one end result, one final product.

The thing about twos and ones, though, is that they each—or both—take on different meanings at different times; finding "just" two cans of Classic Coke in the refrigerator may horrify you beyond belief when seven snobbish sisters-in-law fill your living room, but if you’re house-sitting for your brother’s family and hanging out with their dogs and a good book, the pair of carb-filled cans may appear as a bonus. And while it is often said that "one is the loneliest number," it doesn’t have to be, for it can also represent unity or strength.

So it would seem that this story is one of multiplicities—in the form of mixed emotions, divided loyalties, double- and triple-standards, have-nots and have-a-lots—and the implications thereof.

To picture this more clearly, imagine that two large families—"have-a-lots" in financial resources, but "have-nots" in freedom—have one day found themselves in varying states of vexation over the double- and triple-standards that seemed to rule their home-land; swiftly deciding that relocation (aka "escape") was the only possible option, they made it happen. Upon arriving in their new homes, however, they found themselves experiencing mixed emotions about home- and host-land; one family’s life became a shrine to the culture they’d just escaped from, while the other family’s life became an altar to the culture they’d escaped to.

As the months moseyed and meandered, the members of each family "adapted" (or didn’t) in dissimilar ways; some made a conscious effort, others didn’t realize what was going on. A teenager became confused about who she "really" was, while her brother grew conflicted between what he would have done back home, what he could do in his new home, and what he knew he should do—regardless of location. One of the college-aged daughters vehemently and violently vacillated between living life "on her own terms" and wondering obsessively whether the liberation of her newest "true self" would get her into trouble with the family members here, whether it could get her entire
family into trouble "back home." And one of the forty-something immigrants was confounded by the way people in her host-land behaved, while her husband threw himself into the new culture with a reckless abandon that embarrassed his children.

Despite the distractions, discomfort, and dysfunction, the calendar continued to creep forward. Then one day—all of a sudden, it seemed—the calendar announced that their immigration date's tenth anniversary was just 48 hours away.

You may be wondering how the passage of time affected these families—if it helped them fit in better, get around easier, or gain the success they couldn't "back home." It would be easy for me to spend two seconds assuring you that every last one of them was "just fine," but then such fascinating questions of "how"—as in "how did they 'cope' at first?" or "how did they get to be 'fine'?"—are left unaddressed; it would be just as easy to report that they had all "grown out of" their initial acculturation styles, but then the questions of "why"—as in "why did each choose or gravitate toward his or her particular 'acculturation' style?" or "why did one 'happen' to grow out of it?" or "why did the same strategy work for one and not the other?"—also go unanswered.

Therefore, we must go forward (to the next section) in order to uncover the manners, motivations, and mistakes of the past, where we will learn both about those mistakes and, hopefully, from those mistakes in order to keep from repeating them.

As the current section has provided a general outline of the general story—in terms of cultural conflicts, factors commonly contributing to them, and some of the things "at stake"—the next three sections each focus on one of the three communication dimensions, as illuminated by this study’s participants; following this is a section on acculturation, and summary of the chapter.

**Findings**

The previous section has restated the importance of pursuing this dissertation's goals, which included an exploration of the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians, an understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt or the diaspora), and a discovery of participants' manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation gained through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).

As the data chapters have already addressed the study's research questions—in light of each chapter's (respective) dimension of interest—the three sections below each pick up where those chapters left off, beginning with a brief introduction, followed by a discussion of that dimension’s intersections with at least one of the two other dimensions, and ending with a summary.
Identification

Introduction

As stated in Chapter Three, identification is defined as the extent to which a person identifies—or wishes to be identified—with a certain culture (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997); it is a dimension that has commonly been used in explorations of acculturation, such as those conducted by Richardson (1967), Padilla (1980), and Henry (2003). Measures of identification have also been used in studies of Arabic-speakers’ acculturation, such as those by Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb (1997), Kulcyzsky & Lobo (2002), and Wald & Williams (2005), though studies like these are generally quantitative, exploring identity and/or acculturation through questions of practice ("How often do you watch Arabic-language films?") and/or preference ("How frequently would you speak Arabic if it were possible?").

Participant identifications—as related to their performed and/or constructed identities—were also used in this study of Christian Arabic-speakers (from Egypt); since Chapter Five has already provided a discussion of the three research questions—as illuminated by the first dimension of identity—this section is devoted to the intersections between identity and the other two dimensions of communication.

ID and Cultural Orientation

As Miss Mini told me, "life is difficult, especially when you want to please everyone." This is—by definition, anyway—particularly true in the case of collectivists, whose concern isn’t always so much about pleasing relatives as it is about scrupulously guarding the collective’s image around town; after all, the slightest hint of scandal surrounding just one member of a family can destroy the social standing and networks of the extended collective, potentially canceling social privileges or, perhaps, making it impossible for a distant cousin to marry into a respectable family.

Keeping this thought in the central-most place of my mental research-space, I became particularly vigilant for underlying messages of discontent over conflicts between identity and cultural orientation.

In the "question-follows-answer" manner made popular by the game-show Jeopardy!, several questions emerged from within participants' answers; some were specifically voiced, others hinted at. Some were stated by them, others extrapolated by me. These questions—meant to articulate the conflicts and confusion plaguing many participants (to varying degrees)—populate the table below, and are arranged according to theme; I’ve included a column with examples of the questions, drawn from the more prominently-mentioned cases in this dissertation. Interestingly, Bhatia’s previous work with South Asians (2004, 2008) revealed several questions similar to those in the "identity" category below, among them "Am I a ‘real’ Indian?".
Table 9: Questions of Confusion and/or Conflict Surrounding Participants’ Cultural Orientations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Identity**| Who am I? >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>  
Where do I fit in? >>>>>>>>  
What are the elements of me that it's OK to live? >>>>>>>>>>  
Will I ever be accepted for ME and not my affiliations? >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> | Midiane's sentiment that he was an outsider everywhere  
DJ's flirtation with the "Goth" scene  
Midiane's struggle for affirmation as an Egyptian |
| **Parents** | Can I make myself happy without making them sad/upset? >>>>>>>>  
Can I ever live up to their standards? >>>  
Can I ever escape from under the shadow of the "watchers" (whether Masry or relatives) >>>>  
Can I ever "be myself" without shaming them? >>>>> | Korva's early unhappiness over being unable to date  
Midiane/not "Egyptian" enough for his parents  
Carmen's parents’ refusal to accept her inter-faith relationship due to society  
El Massry's inability to come out of the closet as an artist; DJ's homosexuality |
| **Religion VS Culture** | Is it sin or 'ayb? >>>>>  
Am I upsetting God by doing this, or "just" making my family look bad?>>><>>>  
Do I even believe in God? >>>>  
Do I even subscribe to the religion I was born into?>>><>>>  
Do I disdain my parents' religion because it seems to frown upon a significant part of my life and/or soul?>>><>>>  
Do I disdain parents' religion because there parts of it seem archaic/don't make sense (in practice or scripture)? >>>> | Korva's conflict over dating  
Carmen's misery about marrying a non-Muslim  
DJ's spiritual journey  
Midiane's dislike for Orthodox clergy  
DJ's sexual identity  
Carmen's disdain for an Islam that keeps women out of the mosque |
These questions arose from participants falling into two main categories of identity issues: construction and living. Very basically, those in the first category found it difficult to answer the question "who am I?" while those in the second category knew who they were and what they were interested in—but were unable to "live" those identities due to family pressure, expectations, and/or various restrictions.

Though most participants fell into one group or the other, some fell into both; those participants falling into both categories often dealt with their issues by defining "Egyptian-ness" in their own ways. Some in the first category and a few in the second also dealt with the issue by "performing" particular identities in certain situations.

It should be noted that identities most frequently expressed were rooted in "faith" or religious affiliation, "flag," family, and "fun," in that order, where "faith" refers to a relationship with Jesus and/or reliance upon the Bible (as opposed to "religion," which here refers to "Christian Egyptian" or "Coptic Orthodox" in a political or "persecuted people" sense), where "flag" refers to land/s of birth, blood, upbringing, and/or passport, and where "fun" is taken to mean that a person set her or his goals above those of her or his family.

For example, Gameela and Shura—members of different denominations—would belong to the category of "faith," while Mr. Bambino's and RobertN’s devotion to the "Coptic Cause" would be called "religion," though they would actually be in the same group (in this case); and DJ’s omni-sexuality, Carmen's Dominican Catholic fiancé, and Korva’s dream of opening a shelter for domestically-mistreated women would all be categorized under "fun," because all three families disapproved of the decisions or facts or "dreams" that pleased these participants. Of course, it wasn't uncommon to find out that participants' responses to various questions (most notably those asking "which culture do you feel part of?" and "what do you like and dislike about your cultures?" and "where do you get your code of ethics from?") included combinations of identities that incorporated more than one of these categories.

While all participants indicated that they were "bicultural" or "culturally-multifaceted" to some extent, however, deep-seated and far-reaching problems of identity only appeared in two groups of participants: those faced with and/or subjected to what I've called "major-influence-misalignments" (MIM) and/or "cultural-conditional approval" (CCA).

The former group contained participants who had more than one "major influence" fighting for dominance; it is very important to note, however, that if those two or more major influences were aligned (i.e. not conflicting) or were not fighting for dominance (i.e., the individual was torn between two decisions, but not pulled apart by two factions) there was no problem. Thus, MIM is not necessarily about crossing family but about finding oneself torn between two weighty influences, or else shoved into a less-than-desirable choice without any say in the matter.

The latter condition, which accompanied some of the "worst" identity issues presenting among my participants, is called cultural-conditional approval (CCA); very basically, CCA refers to approval or regard that is based upon a person's membership in a culture or adherence to its guidelines. Whether or not the person is actually valued for
his or her membership (or adherence) is immaterial to the concept; similarly, one's membership (or adherence or preference) is—whether perceived or genuine—equally immaterial. This "immateriality" is one of the reasons that, as mentioned in Chapter One, I consider the entire concept of basing approval, regard, or preference on something beyond one's control to be so dangerous; apart from the possibility that the perceiver and/or "approver" is incorrect in her or his appraisal, there is also the very high possibility of causing lasting damage, such as the chronic and debilitating identity issues and/or insecurities found in some participants.

I do not wish to suggest that unconditional love is the only alternative to CCA, for many sets of Egyptian parents over the past several years have "set me straight" about its potential "dangers," which include "kids who think they can run wild and you always gotta forgive them, even if they hurt themselves or others" and the fact that causing children to feel "too secure in your love is just as bad as insecure...then you find yourself with kids and teens that just go wandering around wherever the wind blows them."

On the other hand, one can love unconditionally but still vocally and ardently disapprove of a decision made by the loved one; in other words, if my nephew marries an atheist, I won't suddenly hate him, but I may say "I wash my hands of you, I've done all I can," or even "sorry, but I don't ever want to see you again" (this is something "some" Egyptian parents threaten their children with, for various reasons and with various results). Moreover, there is a big difference between loving one's child/ren and "admitting" that they are members of a particular culture.

In any case, whether participants fell into one category, both, or neither, the overarching theme emerging from Identity's intersection with Cultural Orientation was one of acceptance—acceptance of "who I am" and "who I choose to be," acceptance irrespective of whether relatives approved of one's decisions and identity, acceptance despite an inability to conclusively answer the "Who am I?" question. Acceptance, furthermore, regardless of whether one raised the family's profile with his or her accomplishments, or shamed them with her or his shenanigans.

The previously-mentioned "question-follows-answer" outlook made popular by Jeopardy! yielded three additional words describing what participants hinted at feeling—and/or longing for—from their families: membership, belonging, and unconditional love; in the absence of a "built-in" support system—or, at least, what most participants felt it should offer—these participants sought alternative support systems. These surrogate families were constructed from many different "materials," including friends, neighbors, colleagues, random strangers, online chums, and God. People seeking alternate support systems—and some that didn't—often displayed Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome (CFS), the Negative Dialogical State of acculturation (NDS), or both (see the acculturation section in this chapter for more on each condition).

Now that the intersection between identity and cultural orientation has been explored, the third communication dimension enters the discussion.
Identification and Communication Style

While much of this dissertation has dealt with Egyptians in the diaspora, I was and still am very interested in the conflicts, "acculturation," and acculturative stress within Egypt—not just because of their variable yet significant impact upon Egyptians in the diaspora, but because societal change (in general) and Egyptian cultural shift (in particular) are both fascinating to me and important to several disciplines (and millions of people). The low turn-out of participants living there, however, gave me quite a bit of stress (initially), and has resulted in a rather uneven distribution of attention throughout the study; after all, how could I expect to find all the details, patterns, and verification I was hoping to from among the responses and blogs of just fifteen people—or "just" under 16 per cent of the 94 total participants? But then I realized that my stress was for naught: as it turned out, the data provided by them—and the information provided about them and other Egyptians (by those in the diaspora)—not only confirmed my "diaspora" results, but inspired their own set of findings, particularly in the intersection between Identification and Communication Style. This set of findings is the aforementioned discrepancy between speaking and listening preferences, the one illustrated by a man preferring to speak few words but hear many, and a woman who preferred to say many words but hear few. This was not the only finding, however; the remainder of this section summarizes several others that surfaced during the research.

As mentioned in Chapters One, Two, and Three, Egyptians all over the planet are experiencing different types of conflict than they may have expected fifteen years ago; at that time, the most frequently-experienced stressors were a daughter's purity or a son's academic success. Today, however, battles over such simple things as word choice or communication technology are not uncommon; complicating matters is the inconsistency and/or unpredictability of responses. For example, the use of first names between persons of dissimilar rank or age may be perceived as patronizing, offensive, or informal; likewise, invitations issued by text message may be seen as insulting or efficient; but a person may grow outraged at the latter situation and remain untroubled by the former.

As mentioned in Chapter Seven, all 94 participants indicated that their "sensitivities" (styles of speech and perception) varied based on one factor or another; for some, it was relationship, for others, it was power distance; for one group it was nonverbal behavior, for another, it was religious affiliation. Most participants also indicated that their communication acts were used in deliberate ways; venting, for example, served as a vehicle of psychological relief, a forum of problem-solving, an opportunity to be comforted, and/or an indicator of "caring." Indirect and high context forms of communication were condemned by some participants (due to their own impatience, their own uncertainty, or their dislike of drama and/or dishonesty), but championed by others who were not keen on being subjected to critical comments or disrespectful behavior—whether it was meant that way or not.

It is, in fact, "respect" that represents the over-arching theme in this intersection; specifically, that respect for "who I am" would be shown in others' communication with me—regardless of whether it was high or low context, and regardless of identity.
The words describing what participants hinted at feeling and requiring, with regard to the communication directed towards them (and "who I am"), include status, honor, reputation, pride, tribute, and, of course, respect.

**Summary of Identification**

As defined above, identification is the extent to which a person identifies—or wishes to be identified—with a certain culture (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997); this dimension has often been used by acculturation researchers, though usually in quantitative studies, and usually through questions of practice or preference.

With regard to identity's impact upon the acculturation of this study's participants, the data revealed a variety of acculturation strategies, including the conscious or unconscious "tailoring" of identity to those in attendance; Acculturation and Identity were, additionally, shown to connect bi-directionally. Issues of identity tended to arise from an inability to conclusively answer questions such as "who am I?" or an inability to live out the answer to that question. The Dialogical Model manifested itself negatively in two non-mutually-exclusive manners: the Negative Dialogical State and Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome.

An examination of the intersections between dimensions yielded specific themes; in the case of Identification and Cultural Orientation, the theme overarching—or underpinning—all others was that of acceptance; acceptance of a person’s identity and decisions to live that identity, irrespective of approval or performance (or the lack thereof). Complementary themes included the unconditional love, membership, and belonging tied to being accepted.

In the case of Identification's intersection with Communication Style, the overarching theme was one of respect; or, more specifically, that someone's respect for a participant's identity would be shown in communication interactions with the participant. Complementary themes of Identity and Communication Style included status, honor, reputation, pride, and tribute.

As this section on Identity draws to a close, the focus shifts to Cultural Orientation, the second communication dimension examined in this study.

**Cultural Orientation**

**Introduction**

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the two most popular words of cultural orientation are "collectivism" and "individualism." Collectivism—often illustrated with examples from the honor-conscious Arabic-speaking world—was described by Hall as a "functional interlocking complex" (1959, p. 112) where family goals take precedence over personal ones, while Individualism—often linked with the United States—emphasizes personal goals. This should not be taken to mean that collectivists love their families more, or that individualists are selfish, just that each system has different priorities for different reasons. These priorities—and the attempted managing thereof—are presented
in the next section, which discussed the interplay between Cultural Orientation and Identity.

Cultural Orientation and Identity

While the intersection of these two dimensions has been alluded to elsewhere in the manuscript, this section provides more detail about the aforementioned issues that have arisen from the intersection with identity.

As stated earlier, participants defined collectivism in numerous ways; certain threads made frequent reappearances within the constructions, however, regarding the individual's identity. These included the inter-connected issues of restriction, "millstones," individuation, strangulation, and support; as before, one participant could fall into all of the categories or none.

With regard to the first issue, restriction, thirty nine participants (more than one-third of the 94) indicated that they had currently or previously experienced some form of restriction that impacted their identity-construction, interfered with the "living" of that identity, or both. Restrictions were both "emotional" and physical in nature, frequently taking the form of guilt trips, appeals, threats, coercions, and "choice-removal" in the former case, while the parental tactics of withholding house or car keys, locking all doors after a certain time, "chauffeuring a person to death," and making it physically impossible to leave the house accomplished the latter case. Finally, while twenty-one of these participants indicated that their restriction came from a parent or guardian, the last eighteen—all married women—indicated that they somehow felt restricted by their marriage.

The participants belonging to the aptly-titled "millstone" category mentioned a very specific type of restriction that "weighed them down," at least in a figurative sense; this "millstone" hanging round their necks manifested itself in two ways: the first was a frustration with "guilt or glory by association"; that is, some were upset about being linked with a shady family member, while others expressed irritation that their "popularity" at school or church was primarily tied to their role as "little brother of everyone's fave student and deacon," as though their own identity was an afterthought or "tag-along." The second "millstone manifestation," a direct inversion of the first issue, presented as a participant's concern that some of their interests, associations, activities, and/or hidden elements of their identities would get back to their families, tainting family image, or bringing certain destruction to their carefully-created and -preserved social order.

Those in the category of individuation, or "becoming an individual," expressed various concerns over "being allowed to grow up." The two main reasons for this issue were those of being "treated like a child" and/or "being guilt-tripped," which participants mentioned in the specific context of "becoming themselves." In the former case, participants reported being "babied until I forgot how to pour a glass of water" and harboring "suspicions that I was deliberately not taught self-sufficiency so I would always have to go to them for help and advice," though most realized that "it's because they care, not because they're controlling"—even if it "doesn't always feel like they're just
being 'protective,' you know?". Other ways of "babying" didn't interfere with participants' maturity-gaining and identity-forming, and served to partially or completely obstruct the "living out" of the mature and "grown-up" identity, instead; some, for example, "had my decisions second-guessed...and third-guessed...and fourth..." and had to "learn to regain my confidence once more," while other participants "struggled through becoming an individual and an adult and having my parents think of me as an adult, not their child."

In the latter case of "guilt-tripping," participants wrote such things as "every time I leave the house, attempts are made to psych me into coming back sooner in case 'something happens' while I'm gone." Some adult "children" experienced individuation issues even after moving out or getting married, while three participants indicated that their fears surrounding these two life-events had kept them living "at home" voluntarily. Others, however, raced toward individuation, but encountered various hurdles thrown out by their parents. Some participants over forty-five mentioned that they could still observe the effects of their parents' "babying" and guilt-tripping, both in their own identities and in the parenting strategies they unconsciously or automatically use with their own children.

All told, certain types of collectivist loyalties and/or parenting strategies were reported to complicate the past and present processes of identity-formation and individuation in participants under thirty; those over forty-four confirmed the subsequent complications—and the propagation thereof.

This next category of strangulation extends the length and reinforces the strength of the yarn spun by the previously-described threads; it also diverges from the others, however, due to the fact that it is the first thread in this section not restricted to relatives, though the asphyxiating discussion does begin with them.

Very basically, the "sins" referred to above—babying, "protecting," and "help" offered by (usually) well-intentioned relatives—often seemed (to some participants) less like support and more like strangulation, though usually in a general "getting along" sense, as opposed to that of the "growing up" category preceding this one. Some in their twenties wrote that "they still treat me like a child," or "it is too much," or even that "they love without abandon and care as if I'm still in my mother's womb, but their care makes me gasp for air."

The dislike of collectivist mothering and smothering was not restricted to family relationships, however. For example, some participants—deciding, perhaps, that the social network required to accomplish anything in Egypt was superfluous outside of Egypt—expressed that they found the collectivist friendship to be draining, stifling, and "too close for comfort." Some of the reasons cited by participants were nosiness, interference, "Egyptian drama," hypocrisy, frustrating or painful communication, and "sensitivity to criticism."

Finally, "support," the last thread previewed in this section's introduction, may seem misplaced in this ever-lengthening yarn of complaints; it is not misplaced, however, because even though the past several threads have seemed "negative," and even though "support" would, on the surface, seem necessarily "positive," the fact is that
every one of these threads has provided a biased description of the same phenomenon. So while the category of "support" may correctly suggest some participants' perceptions that the collective was generally "stifling, but secure," or perhaps "secure, but stifling," the title also refers to another complaint embedded within the responses of eighty-four participants who bemoaned the disintegration of the collective; it should be noted, however, that eighteen of these eighty-four were speaking or writing of other collectives.

In any case, lamentations over collectivism’s demise addressed the general concept as well as specific executions thereof. A few "general" critiques, for example, focused upon the transfer of one person’s shame to all family members, and nineteen condemned the fact that family honor ultimately rested upon a daughter’s actual and perceived "virtue." Some expressed specific frustrations, such as the fact that "the new generation" ignored their families and pledged their loyalty, instead, to friends, while other participants grieved for the death of the "genuine, true friendship." Some participants likened Egypt to a collective, mourning the "breakup of the family, the Umma" [nation/mother], while several related collectivism to "the family of God" that had now "turned to a dysfunctional family, monophysite, meiphsite, protestant, Orthodox...all fighting one another...very very sad."

Overall, however, the most common element attributed to collectivism was that of "home"; the collective was implicitly described as a portable and dynamic embodiment of that construct, representing reassurance, comfort, dependability, protection, caring, safety, and security—not to mention a heavy coat of industrial-strength weatherproofing to guard against life’s frequent storms. But while many participants agreed upon the implicitly-generated definition of "what collectivism should be," quite a few expressed dismay over the fact that such a construct would be near-impossible to achieve today, whether because "women go to work now" or because "the western influence [grew] to stain Egypt now" or because "people just don’t care anymore."

Collectivism wasn’t the only side of cultural orientation mentioned, for individualism was specifically denounced by nine participants, particularly those who had issues forming or living their identities; very simply, these participants expressed "sadness that my family is so unconnected," a deep longing for a support system to "take me from caterpillar to butterfly, without judging the metamorphosis," and a desire for a "sense that we’re still connected, even though I technically don’t ‘need them’ anymore because I can pay bills and work and drive...but I will always need them!".

A total of thirteen interviewees gave detailed reports of families that were or would be unsupportive of their choices; these diasporic participants shared their various constructions of "alternate" support systems, citing individualism as "the only real option I have" because "I can do without the nagging 24/7," and "I guess I just like my space, you know?"

But I got the distinct impression that these participants needed the collective more than they realized, as evidenced by one inescapable fact (which I didn’t mention to them until much later in their respective interviews): the networks they constructed merely brought different characters into the same plot!
In other words, while they expressed frustration over their parents' "constant, overwhelming presence," and/or "interference" in their lives, they all mentioned their appreciation of friends who were "there for me 25 hours a day," and who would "call me out on my sh—er, crap. Sorry."

This intrigued me, so I investigated a bit more: "Wait, so what if your friends didn't approve of stuff you were into?" I typed, hoping I hadn't come across as a sarcastic brat. Three participants informed me that they'd chosen friends based on similar interests, and would, essentially, "dump the hobos if they flaked out on me," while others seemed baffled by the question: "They wouldn't do that, they're cool. And even if they did, they'd say their bit and that would be it, eh?". Most of the responses, however, involved variations on the notions that "if they objected that much, I'd start to wonder if they were right," and "even if I got irritated at them for butting-in, at least I'd know they cared about my well-being," not to mention the fact that "if they didn't try to pull me out of a well I'd jumped into myself, I'd assume they didn't care."

Other than the few "hobo-dumping" response above, none of the responses to my prying inquiries indicated to the tiniest degree that "individualist freedom" was what these participants really wanted. The responses, instead, suggested that participants would not only listen and possibly consider a divergent view, but that participants appreciated their friends' concern—even if it irritated them. This is a remarkably significant point, because apart from the hobo-dumpers—two-thirds of whom mentioned ending relationships (of all types) with people who'd "flaked out"—every one of the remaining ten participants in this group was willing extend more patience and tolerance to their "chosen families" (aka "friends") than to their actual families. To put it another way, these people didn't just "re-cast" the roles of main characters in their stories, they also treated the relatively-recent additions with more understanding than they could easily spare for the family members who spent countless hours, years, dollars (or gineh, quid, euros), and grey hairs upon.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to follow up on these issues as thoroughly as I'd hoped to in the relatively-brief interviews, but I have informed these participants to be on their guard for upcoming discussions of some length.

In the meantime, however, I have pieced together some of the implications of the above-mentioned discrepancies in treatment of "DNA-sharers" and "brothers of a different mother."

To begin with, if these participants found magic lamps with wish-granting genii, I don't for a moment believe that they would wish for "the perfect circle of friends." Their wishes would, I suspect, more likely involve a reduction of nagging and/or intolerance from their parents, or enough thickening of their own skin that they could listen to their parents' criticisms or simple suggestions without becoming wounded. I say this because these participants didn't and don't hate their families; some of them did, indeed, use those very words, but if they truly and simply hated their families, these legal adults—every one of them self-supporting and capable of going through life unassisted—could physically and/or emotionally abscond and the problem would be
over. Something is preventing that, however, and I plan on finding out what that "something" is, though not until after I earn the title of "Dr. Bishai."

In any case, I don't believe that these participants are individualists (not that labels count, except in their articulation of the selected or enacted strategy), and neither do I think that they would be particularly happy under that system; this is because the individualist mentality would have the participant caring far less—if at all—about their parents' blessing or approval, whereas the traditional collectivist mentality would have the participant caring far more about their parents' approval and/or welfare than about their own goals.

The best system for these participants would, therefore, seem to take the form of a middle ground, a hybrid of both cultural orientations, or, more specifically, a slightly "individualistic" version of the Egyptian support system, wherein families would accept and support them—even if they disapproved of the participants' decisions. The model might look like this:

Collectivist-------------------------Hybrid-------------------------------Individualist

**Figure 4: A bi-directional model of cultural orientation.**

But then, what of these three categories? Would they be broken into subcategories, and if so, how many would there be? Moreover, how would the system be represented in a model? The answer presented itself to me with remarkable swiftness one day: why not treat cultural orientation in the same way acculturation had been treated? That is, instead of sticking with a bidirectional model that offered the same limitations of being "too static" and "not sensitive enough," why not apply the notion of the dialogical to cultural orientation?

This Dialogical Model of Cultural Orientation would, then, be predicated upon multiplicity; collectivism and individualism would fit into it, as would atomism, allocentrism, idiocentrism, and any other way of managing relationships.
Figure 5: A dialogical model of cultural orientation

It may seem as though the naming or "diagnosing" of a person’s cultural orientation is unimportant, but nothing could be further than the truth, for a "diagnosis" identifies issues and prescribes a direction for one to research his issue.

As this section has explained and described the intersection between cultural orientation and identity, the next section provides a brief summary of this chapter.

Summary of Cultural Orientation

The study made it abundantly clear that a majority of participants both lived and defined "collectivism" in very different ways; some even indicated that they were quite or somewhat "individualistic" in nature, but managed to incorporate collectivistic elements into their "individual" lives.

Despite the scarcity of "purely" collectivist responses, however, almost all participants indicated their dependence upon (or the importance of) a support structure—whether "built-in" or "alternative."

That said, we turn to the last dimension—Communication Style.
Communication Style

Introduction

It is important to begin this section by revisiting one of one of Triandis's (2003) observations: that a culture as tight as the "traditional" Egyptian one is bound by as many rules, social conventions, and cultural lenses as there are situations to apply them to. Therefore, the responses to my questionnaire and interview questions should not be interpreted in only one way. In other words, just because a person indicated that they could "read a person like a book" and went by a person's demeanor rather than words doesn't mean that they would do so in every situation—or that the appraisal of their skill at doing so was even accurate, for that matter.

Also, a person's levels of education (or lack thereof), religiosity, economic and socio-economic status (among others) likely impact the way they encode and decode messages; while this is beyond the scope of both discussion and dissertation, the styles themselves are discussed in the next section, which is devoted to the intersection between Communication Style and Cultural Orientation.

Communication Style and Cultural Orientation

Two main effects emerged in this intersection: the first was to do with preserving social networks, while the second was to do with a function of those social networks, particularly the network of family.

Social networks were preserved and, in some cases, enhanced for one significant reason: "getting stuff done." In Egypt, knowing someone is the only (almost) guaranteed way to get a passport or driver's license within the same month; there is, of course, bribery galore, but as many Egyptians are unable to afford bread, much less bribes—of the financial type—the significance of the social network is propagated—in Egypt.

But most of my participants did not live in Egypt anymore (and some never had). Nonetheless, a vast majority of them complimented or tried to chat with non-Egyptian acquaintances, service-people, and colleagues—as they would have done in Egypt. Needless to say, rather than being charmed by the Egyptian sociability, many non-Egyptians appeared mystified by the chatter (according to the Egyptians in question, anyway); some even grew exceedingly cross, snapping things like "that's nice, but I really have to get on with my work now," or "uh...why should you care how the wife and kids are doing?" at the unsuspecting Egyptians.

Some non-Egyptians were (apparently) curious as to why it was impossible for their Egyptian friends to "stop messing around and get down to business," since "your friendly conversation isn't going to make the mailman give you your parcels any sooner."

In sum, while the necessitating reason for some communication behaviors was no longer necessary in the diaspora, the communication behaviors were brought over by some immigrants, and learned by some of their children—who propagated the same behaviors and, therefore, experienced the same "acculturation issues" their parents did,
causing a rift between the second-generation "kids" (mostly adults) and "real" Americans.

Another effect brought over by immigrants and learned by their children was the need or tendency to "vent." As previously mentioned, venting was seen or used as an opportunity to be comforted; being given permission to vent was equated with being cared for. Some participants indicated that their preferred strategy involved a "venting discussion," which consisted of "Talking it out to come up with a solution." Some of these discussions involved finding out what others had done, in order to learn from them, but also in order to feel that they were not the only ones to suffer from a similar situation.

The themes that participants hinted at valuing and/or longing for included relationships, helping, social networks, favors, and accomplishing.

**Summary of Communication Style**

In summary, social networks—and the Communication Styles and actions used to secure and maintain them—were shown to retain their significance outside of Egypt, and reappear within participants who had never even visited their parents' homeland. Venting was revealed to serve several purposes, including:

1) Shifting the emotional burden, or getting an issue "off of one's chest;"
2) Providing an opportunity to be comforted,
3) Getting and/or granting "permission to vent" was equated with "caring;"
4) Facilitating discussions where problems could efficiently be solved,
5) Soliciting and/or sharing of similar experiences, which both resulted in solidarity and options.

Words describing the emergent themes in this area included relationships, helping, social network, favors, and accomplishing.

As this section has elucidated the importance and variety of Communication Style upon acculturation, the discussion will, at last, turn to the latter.

**Acculturation**

**Introduction**

In Chapter One, questions of "how to acculturate" and "how much to acculturate" were introduced; later in the chapter, the negative possibilities and effects of "unsuccessful" acculturation were discussed, as related to both immigrants and host-land-natives. In this section, the three communication dimensions of interest are discussed as facilitators of—and barriers to—"successful" acculturation.

Acculturation, as previously mentioned, has flourished—despite its narrow, assimilationist beginnings—into a field that encompasses a wide array of unfamiliar situations, cultures of origin, and problems faced by acculturating individuals; theorists in the "field"—which borrows from anthropology, communication, education, health sciences, and psychology, to name a few—now address such issues that would have been condemned outright just one hundred years ago.
One of these "untraditional" issues that interest this budding acculturation theorist surround the notion of bicultural-identity-formation, for example, the way one recent immigrant interprets himself as "Other" while another believes that her new situation is "foreign."

We’ve already discussed those things at stake to Egyptians in such situations: the fears of shaming family members or "losing oneself" after mere experimentation, the conflict between what "should" be done in a certain situation, the actual and perceived "innocence" of female family members, even the "externally-controlled" situation of being physically unable to come and go as one pleases; we’ve also touched upon the few existing strategies that fail to work—whether because they are too general to help a population with such specific issues, or because that population is unaware of strategies available, or else too proud (Amer & Hovey, 2007) to seek them out (or admit that there’s a problem, even).

And so, while “acculturation” often presents challenges to many immigrants and their family members, the specific problem that has both inspired the dissertation and been addressed in it is the lack of practical solutions and coping strategies reflective of the significant chasm between Egyptian and non-Egyptian viewpoints, tailored to Egyptians in the diaspora, and made freely available to them.

Egyptians in the media—and in my study—have, as previously mentioned, spoken or written at length about themselves, or people known to them; the people of which they write are, indeed, quite able to function within their host countries, but unable to avoid various difficulties constructing their identities—including confusion or conflicts between their cultures’ notions of "acceptability." They—and other bicultural individuals from similar populations—write about the lives fraught with agony and despair (Zaidi & Shuraydi, 1999), the need to "closet" certain portions of their lives from those closest to them (Netting, 2006), the inability to make the simplest of decisions for fear of offense or retribution, among other things.

Therefore, these issues have informed the research questions addressed by the dissertation, and which are answered below.

The first question asked "What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?"

Some of these strategies included the conscious or unconscious tailoring of their identity or communication style to those they were with; some emphasized similarities, and others emphasized differences.

The second question asked "What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?" while a related sub-question wondered "How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?"

The underlying dreams and goals were acceptance—whether by family, society, or God; the tensions came from the failure to secure these goals, though in a minority of cases, participants had all that, and felt anxious that they couldn’t meet the more "real-
life” or "every-day” issues of marriage, children, work, and/or finances. Tensions were negotiated by closeting, distancing, lying, and giving up dreams—or relationships.

The third and final research question set out in Chapter One asked "How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the "three communication dimensions" (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?"

Participants seemed to enact the dialogical model in two ways; in the first, they altered their style of communication based upon the persons, cultures, or situations in question; in the second, their actual or projected identities—likes, dislikes, attitudes, etc.—were the elements to be altered in response to persons, cultures, or situations.

To put it another way, imagine a game of Tag, where you can only succeed if you follow the rules: 1) you have to "connect" (i.e. "tap" or "wallop" or "strike") another player to get a point, 2) you have to abide by the location and movement you were given at the start, and 3) you can only use the tools assigned to you.

The first enactment is like a man who has been instructed to stay in one place, feet planted firmly in the ground; to connect with the players dotting and crisscrossing the large field, his arms can only reach out or swing in different directions. The man does have some tools at his disposal, so he can evaluate every situation and select the most appropriate tool for each: a ruler in one case, a yardstick in another, perhaps; he uses the former to tap a nearby person on the shoulder, the latter to prod the legs of speedy passers-by a few feet away.

The second enactment, on the other hand, would instead be depicted as a woman who must move to others’ locations in order to connect with them; like the man, this woman also makes decisions as to the most appropriate tools for each connection, though the "tools" are, in fact, vehicles or methods of movement—cars, scooters, tap-dance, locomotion, dog-paddle—used to bring her to one location or another in the most effective or efficient manner possible.

So both individuals use tools to reach others, but the tools they use—and are able to use—are different; a car wouldn’t help the man, whose feet are rooted to one place; and neither ruler nor ten-foot-pole would help the woman, whose constant travel makes it rather unlikely that the instruments she’s swinging will connect with another player in the gigantic field.

The point here is not that one method is better or worse or more efficient than the other, but that there are different methods of connection, that players must actually "do" something to make a connection, that each method has benefits—and limitations—specific to itself.

This "enacting" is the complete opposite of "happening," which was an outcome of the dialogical model, and not a strategy; I call it "happening” because that’s precisely what happened to participants. In other words, they did not do anything to arrive at the outcomes, the outcomes just happened—as a result of strange (or common) situations, "bad luck,” or even bad decisions on their parts.

I noted two distinct outcomes or "happenings” in my participants: the Negative Dialogical State (NDS) and Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome (CFS). Both are discussed in
the next chapter, to which they are better-suited. Before we can take up that discussion, however, let us briefly review the proceedings of this chapter.

**Summary**

As discussed at length, the communication dimensions have, indeed, influenced acculturation in various ways, and different participants, likewise, perceived the effects of those influences based upon the different lenses they each selected to assist their "vision."

Also discussed was the observation that most aspects of participants’ lives were interconnected, and that many participants constructed their identities from different sources, they defined their cultural orientations in different manners, and used many communication styles to reach a relatively-small group of goals: acceptance, respect, and social networking.

So while this is a story about multiplicities, it has also turned out to be a story of interconnections—and the multiplicity of emotions surrounding them.

The following chapter provides a conclusion to this fascinating, exhilarating, and vastly stressful journey.
CHAPTER NINE
CONCLUSION

Introduction

The Case

As previously stated, this is a story about multiplicities, as well as the mixing, moving, changing, and rearranging often made necessary by multiple memberships; it's a story that some have proclaimed and others silenced, a story that's been told a thousand ways.

But it's not just a story; it is, rather, my opportunity to let some know that they're not alone, and others, how they can help.

The reader may recall that the dissertation was designed to:
1) Expand upon the dialogical model of acculturation, and
2) Reveal the current cultural climates common among Christians in Egypt and in the diaspora—regardless of where they were born and raised.

The reader may also recall that these general purposes were divided into three narrower goals, including

1) An exploration of the acculturation strategies of Christian Egyptians,
2) An understanding of current attitudes, anxieties, and/or "dreams" held by Christian Egyptians (living in Egypt or the diaspora), as well as
3) A discovery of participants' manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation through an examination of three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style).

These goals were, in part, accomplished by asking three main research questions (and one sub-question):

RQ1—What are the acculturation strategies that Egyptian Christians in Egypt and the diaspora use to negotiate their identities?
RQ2a—What are some of the positive (goals, wishes, desires, "dreams"), negative ("cultural anxieties," conflicts, tensions) and/or neutral issues in the lives of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora?
RQ2b—How do Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiate any tensions or conflicts associated with their own desires and/or cultural anxieties?

RQ3—How is the dialogical model of acculturation manifested in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora with respect to the "three communication dimensions" (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style)?

The points and questions above have been consolidated and rearranged by topic:

1) **The Dialogical Model Of Acculturation**: The Dialogical Model of Acculturation (DM) is an effective way of illustrating the polyphonies of Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora; THEREFORE, this study has endeavored to:
   a. Discover and describe participants' manifestations of the dialogical model of acculturation, with regard to the three communication dimensions (Identification, Cultural Orientation, and Communication Style), and
   b. Expand upon the Dialogical Model.

   HOWEVER, an effective expansion of the Dialogical Model is impossible without first addressing a fundamental issue within the existing acculturation literature, which follows:

2) **Acculturation**: Current definitions of the term "successful acculturation" are generally dependent upon particular theoretical formulations, thus limiting the word's usage in a broader sense; THEREFORE, this study has endeavored to:
   a. Explore and elucidate common "acculturation" strategies of Egyptians, and
   b. Redefine "successful acculturation" in a general and unbiased manner.

3) **Egyptians**: There is a dearth of scholarly literature focusing upon the acculturation, communication, and/or lifestyles of Christian Egyptians living in Egypt, as well as in the Diaspora; THEREFORE, this study has endeavored to:
   a. Describe and document common attitudes, anxieties, and dreams held by Christian Egyptians, and
   b. Document and detail common ways Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the diaspora negotiated tensions or conflicts associated with their own dreams and/or cultural anxieties.

   While these questions and concerns have already been addressed (to some extent) within the previous chapters, this final discussion addresses the issues within a broader and more generalizable context.

   In response to the conditional necessity described above, this chapter first addresses the issue of defining "acculturation" assessments (i.e. "successful," "failed," etc.), then shifts to a proposed expansion of the Dialogical Model of Acculturation;
following these theoretical matters is a discussion of the study’s limitations. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research, and a summary.

Defining Acculturation

A Gap in Acculturation Literature

This section revisits the aforementioned gap in acculturation literature, with regard to the various and conflicting definitions of "acculturation" assessment; the discussion begins with a restatement of the problem, then moves into the underlying reasons for the problem, and ends with a suggested solution and section summary.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Unidimensional and Bidimensional models of acculturation have each garnered several major critiques since their respective debuts in the 1960s and 1980s; there have also been dozens of lesser-known models suggested over the years—some of them refinements of better-known models, others completely original. Several of these models have been challenged, others ignored.

I must begin by stating that most of these models seem quite plausible "on their own," with regard to their various explications of the path leading to "acculturation." I must also state, however, that these models' destinations of "acculturation" don't always seem quite so plausible—with regard to the larger discussion of acculturation.

In other words, even though a model may accurately map out how a person "became" acculturated, it cannot indicate what this particular "acculturation" means without referencing its own definition of acculturation; this is because past and present definitions of acculturation (see Chapter Three for a thorough review) are based on certain assumptions that are either incorrect, or "no longer correct," as discussed below. So despite the glut of definitions, acculturation remains ambiguous, vague—undefined, for all intents and purposes.

A serious implication of this lack of definition is the related emptiness behind assessments such as "successful acculturation" or "failed cultural adaptation," unless used in direct concert with a particular model. For example, an assessment of "successful acculturation" would indicate "assimilation" in the UDM (Gordon, 1964) and "integration" in the BDM (Berry & Sam, 2001); likewise, a result of "assimilation" would be considered "great" in the UDM and "horrible" in the BDM, though neither assessment would be possible within the current DM, due to that model's "anything goes" mentality. On the other hand, while the three models (UDM, BDM, DM) share an inability to conclusively document (or predict) every single acculturation journey that's ever been embarked upon, each may, nonetheless, be quite valid in certain cases; this means that all acculturation models are valid—as long as they are valid in at least one case—or, to borrow the colloquialism "all roads lead to Rome." But if Rome is the target, it must be defined, in order to set it apart from all of the "not-Romes" on the map.

Thus, while I believe that a model detailing one person's acculturation process is as valuable as one that applies to millions, there must be an absolute definition of what "acculturation" is—and how to determine the "successes" and "failures" therein.
This inability to "absolutely" define acculturation is, I believe, rooted in the inaccurately-viewed elements of acculturation; I have used the word "inaccurate," but the term "Eurocentric" may be more fitting. (I do realize, of course, that some readers may bristle at the implications of my conjecture, and am hopeful that they will bear with me until this explanation is complete.)

Very simply, researchers have often written that the United States is prime example of an "efficient" and "monochronic" culture that prides itself on being productive and "getting to the point" (Althen, 1988; Hall, 1968; Hall, 1973), through communication acts described as "direct" and "low context" (Hall, 1968; Hall, 1973; Nydell, 2002; Triandis, 2003); such constructions "prominent in the western hemisphere" (Leake & Black, 2005) are said to be "atomistic" in nature (Shore, 1996), as they "view things in terms of their component parts" (Leake & Black, 2005).

This atomism, which has greatly influenced the thought processes and communication of people in the United States (Althen, 1988; Bhatia, 2004), has resulted in the notion of a "solid, unchanging core identity" (Althen, 1988), and an "acculturation" predicated upon that static formulation; the Unidimensional Model's initial popularity becomes more understandable in light of this assumption.

On the other hand, several Indian psychologists have written about the fluid, dynamic identity that is "very comforting to the Indian mind" (Sriram & Chaudhary, 2001), and how their negotiation of identity is a "constant process" (Bhatia, 2002); celebrated Arab-American Edward Said devoted much of his autobiography to the same topic, and a majority of the work produced by Netherlander Hubert Hermans (1994) has focused upon this "mixing and moving" between various facets of one's identity.

Therefore, if identity is accepted as an element of acculturation, and if identity is shown to be "not-static" in some populations, then it follows that the relatively "inert" Western models of acculturation do not apply to the populations in those countries—or, at least, to those members of the population adhering to the dominant mentality (in those countries).

To complicate matters, however, is the fact that those populations' emigrations are not uncommon; for example, one-fifth of U.S. citizens are immigrants (Bhatia, 2002); further complicating matters is the broader observation that the world is globalizing rapidly due to the increasing prevalence of "multinational citizens, diaspora communities, massive flows of transmigration and border crossings" (Hermans & Kempen, 1998), resulting in an outdated notion of acculturation—at least with regard to identity.

My research for this study revealed that that identity was not the only communication dimension subject to "mixing and moving" (Hermans, 1994), however; in fact, participants indicated shifts between various formulations of both cultural orientation and communication style. In the former case, participants often defined collectivism in more than one way, and enacted various collectivist and individualist strategies based upon specific contexts and situations; in the latter case, participants both shifted between "overt" (low-context and direct) and "covert" (high context and indirect)
communication (as situations warranted) and sometimes varied in their own word-density preferences.

In sum, biased and/or dynamic perceptions of the three communication dimensions that contribute to acculturation (and which have constituted my study) have suggested a need to redefine acculturation.

This study is not, however, the first to articulate this need; for example, answering the invitation issued by Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady (1991)—who called for a "culture-specific" acculturation—and Birman (1994)—who argued that acculturation theorists needed to appreciate and explain individual differences within the demands of different cultural and sociopolitical contexts—Bhatia (2002) has called for a re-working of acculturation, so that it may finally include "non-Western, Third World migrations."

I agree with all three points, hence my interest in the Dialogical Model; but, as previously mentioned, I believe it is equally important to define acculturation in a manner broad enough to encompass various models, but specific enough to differentiate between models of acculturation and those of identity-formation, for example.

As the need for redefinition has been detailed in this section, the discussion turns to the task of actually redefining acculturation.

Redefining Acculturation

With respect to the term "acculturation" or the state of being "acculturated," two facts must be noted: first, the word "acculturation" traditionally refers to a group of people (i.e. "Egyptians") while "transculturation" is the proper term for the adjustment of one person (i.e. "Sally"); as "acculturation" is used in a vast majority of recent literature, however (Bhatia, 2002), it will be less confusing to continue its use when referring to the adjustment process of both individuals and groups; second, a review of acculturation literature (see Chapter Three for more detail) indicated that various researchers have defined acculturation in very different manners (Rudmin, 2003; Ryder et al, 2000).

For example, as previously noted, the unidimensional or assimilationist model—which began to lose favor in the 1970s due to its lack of tolerance for diversity—defines an "acculturated" individual as one who has relinquished her home culture in favor of the host culture. That model was replaced by the bidimensional (BDM) or fourfold model shortly thereafter; the BDM assumes that immigrants consciously or subconsciously make decisions regarding their socialization and adjustment.

Acculturation is assessed by an immigrant’s YES/NO responses to each of two questions posed by Berry (1992): 1) Is it of value to maintain ties with the home culture? and 2) Is it of value to create ties with the host culture? Based upon this formulation, an individual in Berry’s separated state (answer pattern: YES, NO) is thought to shun interaction with members of the host culture, clinging mutinously to the customs of the homeland; this separated individual would also be considered "unacculturated" and in "poor mental health" due to greater amounts of acculturative stress (Koch & Bjerregaard, 2003). The figure below demonstrates the remaining options.
This is not to say that Berry’s model has gone unchallenged; quite the contrary, in fact, for the bidimensional model’s state of integration—long considered the "healthiest" option—has received criticism on philosophical grounds, and been "de-supported" by the research of Koch & Bjerregaard, Bhatia, and others (see Chapter 3 for an extended review and discussion of the model, including critiques of it).

One of the more notable arguments against the BDM has suggested that a "separated" individual may actually be quite pleased by the replication of her previous life and may not, thus, be concerned with her segregation from natives of the host culture (Koch & Bjerregaard, 2003) and/or the resulting lack of integration into the host-land. The bidimensional model does not, furthermore, address other factors influencing the "acculturation" of immigrants, including feelings about home and host cultures, conflicted loyalties, ability to function, and ease or difficulty thereof.

The polyphonic dialogical model—which does address these issues, or which, rather, "permits" those factors to be addressed—is incompatible with static "diagnoses" of the aforementioned states or levels of acculturation, though Bhatia (2002) uses elements of the bidimensional model to describe dialogical acculturation as "simultaneously holding positions of being assimilated, separated and marginalized." This acknowledgment of separate, sometimes-incompatible, attitudes or "selves" partially solves the dilemma of multiple loyalties heretofore felt but unacknowledged in
past acculturation models; "partially," because acknowledgment of the problem or situation does not actually address the problem itself, or how to solve it.

This study’s solution to that issue involved both constructions (fourfold and dialogical models)—beginning with the bidimensional/fourfold model, which was updated to create a new definition of acculturation; it should be noted that, while new questions are asked in the updated version, the eminently useful structure of the model is maintained. Acculturation is, therefore, evaluated in the same manner as the fourfold model—through the answering of two "yes/no" questions.

Examining and reexamining the responses of this study’s 94 participants, I observed that some could function—but seemed very uncomfortable in so doing—while others seemed comfortable, but encountered certain obstacles in their functioning; whether the discomfort was to do with morality, accent, acceptance, or any number of things, comfort level did, indeed, keep appearing and reappearing. So did functionality, though it should be noted that most cases of "not-functioning" were mentioned in reference to a participants' own past, or to relatives or friends who had or have recently immigrated. These "ingredients"—the levels of comfort and functionality—formed a basis for the new acculturation.

Building from this new acculturation (defined as "comfortable functionality"), Berry’s original questions became 1) Is the individual able to function? and 2) Is it a struggle to do so? The first question—which evaluates functionality—yields responses of "functional" (YES) and "not functional" (NO), while the second question—in evaluation of comfort—results in "comfortable" (YES) and "uncomfortable" (NO). The four possible outcomes of this updated fourfold model are those of Functional (YES/YES), Dysfunctional (NO/NO), Struggling (YES/NO) and Oblivious (NO/YES); careful examination of "corresponding" (identical) answer patterns within the original fourfold model will reveal the great difference between both models.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>COMFORTABLE</td>
<td>UNCOMFORTABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FUNCTIONAL</td>
<td>FUNCTIONAL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>STRUGGLING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>COMFORTABLE</td>
<td>UNCOMFORTABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNFUNCTIONAL</td>
<td>UNFUNCTIONAL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OBLIVIOUS</td>
<td>DYSFUNCTIONAL</td>
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**Figure 7: Updated Acculturation model.**

Since the dialogical self is present regardless of an individual’s location (or cultural makeup, for that matter), the questions do not refer to the host culture per se—as the same person may have mixed emotions about certain aspects of each culture affecting them—but they do refer to a specific moment in time; in other words, a person may be in the "oblivious" state one morning and the "dysfunctional" several hours later, after having a negative interaction that makes him or her realize the "true" state of things.

This dynamism is due to the influence of the Dialogical Model, and appears in other places; for example, each culture of influence may be felt or practiced in a multitude of ways, as evidenced by extremes like the "techno-brats" and "traditionalists" in Alexandria, or the "haves" and "have-nots" appearing throughout the United States.

Likewise, criteria for "satisfaction" and "success" vary from person to person; one immigrant bases her definition of these factors on the size of her bank account whereas another may, rather, define them by the number of days he’s had a Western co-worker join him for lunch. These disparities—which tended to skew assessments done through the original fourfold model—are not problematic to assessments achieved through the updated model; this is because it is more general and more dynamic than the original on which it is based. In fact, a mono-cultural individual (like an Egyptian who’s never left that country) could be evaluated with the updated model, with regard to his acculturation to the cultural shift surrounding him (though such evaluations are beyond the scope of this study).
As the updated model and accompanying "states" have provided a foundation for this study's conception of acculturation, I will briefly outline the new acculturation, and then discuss it in more detail.

To begin with, "acculturation" or "being acculturated" will, for the purposes of this dissertation, refer to "comfortable functionality" (the updated model's YES/YES, "functional" mode) within the location under review (the host land, if evaluating an immigrant), rather than the conscious or unconscious preference of neither, one, or both cultures, or the conscious choice "to acculturate." This is because mere preference does not necessarily correspond with successful adaptation, and neither does a conscious choice to do so. Likewise, "unacculturated" or "not acculturated" will refer to discomfort and lack of functioning (answer pattern NO/NO, or the "dysfunctional" mode), while modes with only one answer of YES (NO/YES, or "oblivious," and YES/NO, or "struggling") will be referred to as "semi-" or "somewhat" or "partially acculturated."

Therefore, regardless of the model (UDM, BDM, DM, et cetera) used to illustrate a person's acculturation journey, the updated model of acculturation works with them all; if a person did, indeed, abandon home culture and embrace host culture—as in the UDM or in the "assimilated" state of the BDM—and did, indeed, become proficient in functioning, and was not uncomfortable in so doing, he would be considered acculturated.

If the same person, however, embraced "assimilation" with both arms—but was just as unable to transact business or effectively communicate (i.e. Adel Imam's enthusiastic but bumbling character in the film Hello, America!), he would be considered "oblivious," and, therefore, only "partially-acculturated; and if the same exact individual became uncomfortable with his failed attempts, or with the changes required to become more proficient in the host culture, he'd be considered "dysfunctional."

I must be very clear about the fact that it is, indeed, possible to go from "dysfunctional" to "functional" to "struggling"—and back again; such is the nature of the model. But while the model's layout makes "diagnosis" very simple, and movement between states very natural, indeed, I believe a bidirectional representation is quite a bit more effective in illustrating the continuum.

As the figure below demonstrates, the two "semi-acculturated" states are in the same location, since neither is "better" than the other, though "oblivious" occupies the higher position, since the individual in that state is, at least, presumed to be experiencing less discomfort. In this representation, the "functional" state is situated at the right-hand side of the spectrum due to the fact that the English language goes from left to right, making the left side a "starting point."
Oblivious

Dysfunctional ↔   ___________________________  ➔ ➔ Functional

Struggling

Figure 8: Bidirectional representation of updated acculturation model.

Now that the general concept and models have been outlined, I wish to spend some time discussing the concept in more detail.

The "functional" descriptor is indicative of an individual’s familiarity with—and ability to carry out—the host culture’s customs (or lack thereof), as evidenced by tasks accomplished or interactions completed in a timely manner; an immigrant who intends to buy a $500 television but arrives at the electronics store with five one-dollar bills would not yet be considered "functional"—even if the TV is finally purchased through external intervention (the salesman’s call to the bank, or the fortuitous arrival of a helpful relative)—and neither would an immigrant attempting to bribe a police officer over a ten-dollar parking ticket (as is commonly done in Egypt).

The "comfort" descriptor, on the other hand, refers to an individual’s relative ease or difficulty in carrying out said tasks; for example, one veiled Muslim woman asked to remove her higab (veil) may be extremely uncomfortable in so doing—though not necessarily distressed—while another woman might feel no discomfort or "nakedness" whatsoever. Other examples include taking day trips or luncheons with coworkers of the opposite sex (Jailan, 2008), leaving children at off-campus child-care, or attempting conversations at the grocery store—each of which might inspire various levels of dread or delight, and discomfort or comfort.

And thus, acculturation—as indicated by the subjective indicator of comfort level, and the objective indicator of functionality—inverts the role of Berry’s questions; in other words, Berry’s questions, simplified and broken down, become foundational assumptions of the updated model: where Berry asked whether the creation of host-culture ties was desirable, this study simplifies it into "Do I want to succeed here?"; where Berry asked whether the immigrant placed value on his ties to the homeland, this study rephrases the query as "Are my memories of 'there' sabotaging my success 'here'?".

Thus phrased, most would agree that a majority of people desire success—however they define it, and regardless of location; most would, likewise, agree that memories of the homeland—whether positive or negative—are not easily forgotten.

Applying the "new" definition of acculturation to the "multi-voicedness" of the dialogical model of acculturation, however, reveals that an "acculturated" individual may be just as disapproving of or unconcerned with the host culture as the aforementioned separated individual, yet still do business or even socialize with those
from it; this means that other people may be unable to detect the immigrant’s level or state, as opposed to Berry’s model, where the states are usually obvious to outsiders.

The updated model, thus, assumes that the individual wants to succeed in the host culture, regardless of her personal feelings on that culture; this stance was also taken in a study by Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb (1997), who argued that it is very possible for a person to immigrate to a new country, "become acculturated to a large extent...and yet remain unsatisfied with it."

To sum up, then, an "acculturated individual" will, in this study, refer to one who has some level of knowledge about his host culture, and is thus able to function within that culture (i.e., an Egyptian immigrant who is able to send and receive messages with Americans, and who does not drive on the "wrong side" of the road), while an "unacculturated individual" is unable to function (i.e., an immigrant who has been fired from three jobs because he does not understand that women in America do not like to be pinched) within the host culture.

Furthermore, such "levels" of acculturation will refer to that ability to function—or the lack thereof—regardless of their personal feelings on the host culture’s practices (or answers to Berry’s questions); so the immigrant above (who does not drive on the wrong side of the road) is considered at least partially "acculturated," due to his ability to communicate with Americans, as well as his avoidance of being ticketed on the highway—even if he would prefer to drive on the "wrong" side of the road, and even if his answers to Berry’s questions above are YES and NO (indicating a "separated" state).

As distinctions between the fourfold and updated models have been made, and acculturation redefined in this section, the next reexamines the Dialogical Model of Acculturation.

**Expanding the Dialogical Model**

As mentioned in the previous section, Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady (1991) called for a "culture-specific" acculturation, and Birman (1994) argued that acculturation theorists needed to appreciate and explain individual differences within the demands of different cultural and sociopolitical contexts.

While the Dialogical Model beautifully lends itself to and represents the way many Indians and Egyptians (among others) construct their identities and navigate their lives, its "format" (or lack thereof) allows populations other than those from "non-Western, Third World" (Bhatia, 2002) countries to benefit from it, as well; but while the Dialogical Model’s flexibility allows culture-specific concerns to be addressed, I believe that it does not actually address them. In other words, while the plasticity of the current DM allows it to be used in a wide range of situations and contexts, it is that very plasticity that prevents the current model from actually making a difference in any of those situations.

Other factors that I find obstructive to the dialogical model’s success include the fact that there is no definition of "acculturation" (in the "being acculturated" sense), and neither is there an emotional compass attuned to the direction of an individual’s reaction
to various cultural navigations; to put it another way, it seems as though the current DM is a referee that says "ok, let's call this meeting to order! The first item on tonight's agenda is: next week's Homecoming dance—to go or not to go? That is the question! If Mr. Patrick Henry from Tuscaloosa and Mrs. Jiminy Cricket from Alexandria would please come on down, we can start the debate." The debate happens, and that's it; we don't know how the outcome of the debate impacts the individual's acculturation, and neither do we know how the individual feels about the outcome—or the debate itself. These are important elements to consider, since each is impacted by the dialogue—and since the dialogue is likely to impact each; in sum, I believe the inattention to both acculturative state and emotional reaction has resulted in two gaps.

This study, as mentioned in Chapter One, was designed to fill both of those gaps; based upon the insights and experiences of 94 questionnaire-takers, interviewees, and bloggers, a definition of "acculturation" was formulated and proposed above. That definition, simply put, sketches acculturation as a place of "comfortable functionality," where an acculturated individual can "get things done" within a culture ("functionality") without a huge or "undue" amount of upheaval ("discomfort")—where "undue" means "more than would 'normally' be expected in a similar situation."

"Comfort" should not be taken to mean that the individual is necessarily content or happy or comfortable with the cultural climate in which he or she lives, only that he or she is able to function within it.

Thus, the "new" definition of acculturation works with the DM without changing anything about the model; for example, a person who is unable to function and/or who is uncomfortable with a culture or situation would not be the hypothetical recipient of a low score on the "dialogical scale" (which is, again, hypothetical). In other words, a person's unawareness of the "voices" (choices, mentalities, or procedures) of his or her new (or old, for that matter) culture does not mean that he or she is "less dialogical" than a person who is more attuned to the new culture; it means, rather, that the person's "dialogue" has not yet expanded to include the new culture's voices.

This ability to work with the DM is a very important point, because current definitions of acculturation generally flow from one of the best-known definitions of the word, which states that "continuous first-hand contact" is responsible for "changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936); by that original definition, an immigrant who has lived a happy life "on his own terms" and remained immune to the host-land—despite the first-hand contact gained by spending fifty years there—is "unacculturated." Likewise, an Egyptian woman who has "learned" about Welsh culture through first-hand "contact" with Welsh media on her television and internet could be described as "acculturated" to the culture of Wales—even if she's never left Egypt or met a Welsh person.

Within this new "acculturation," however, the man is acculturated and the woman is merely "familiar with" the workings of Welsh society, which she is not required to function in (though she could, theoretically, "acculturate" easily to life in Wales). The first gap described above is therefore addressed, but the second remains; to that end, the discussion now shifts to the DM's lack of "emotional compass."
Very simply, the fluid and dynamic DM is fundamentally incompatible with a finite number of regimented and mutually-exclusive categories (such as Berry’s fourfold model, for example); that said, however, I believe that certain outcomes commonly (or "not-infrequently") encountered by people in culturally-fraught situations may be used as qualifying labels that are applied "as needed." One of these—the Negative Dialogical State (NDS)—arose while this study was being carried out; the section below explains the rationale and benefits of qualifying labels in general, and the NDS in particular.

Refining the Dialogical Model

Since so much has been written about the bidimensional model of acculturation, it would only seem natural to continue with what has proven so successful; there are, however, many things that the BDM does not account for, such as situation, mood, or stage of life (Ryder et al, 2000).

In a way, the DM fills those gaps, by acknowledging the shifts we all undergo from month to month and moment to moment.

On the other hand, the dialogical model seems to fall short of actually making a difference to immigrants. This is because it does not make a distinction between those who are benefiting from their (perhaps unconscious) adherence to the DM and those who constantly experience identity crises because of it, since the line between "dialogue" and "disagreement" is quite thin, easily-crossed, and "to be expected." In other words, the dialogical model reassures the immigrant that "It's only natural to experience tension as various influences fight for dominance," but does not help a person make decisions or exorcise feelings of conflict, trauma, and guilt.

The trauma, of course, arises from the common linkage of "change" with "disloyalty," a union which often leads many Arabic-speakers to believe that their ability to adjust to Western ways makes them less "Arab"—or more traitorous (Nydell, 2002). Furthermore, the Arab who has suffered through a tug-of-war between "traditional" and "modern" sensibilities will not be contented with a mere assurance or "diagnosis" confirming that he has, indeed, suffered; rather, he will want to talk about it, maybe even do something about it—even if those words or actions fail to resolve the issue to his liking. As Raphael Patai (1973), "threats, demands, or intentions...once uttered, relax emotional tension, give psychological relief" to the adult "Arab" (1973, 60, 64-5).

To this end, it may be useful to use a qualifying label to the immigrant's current experience of his polyphonic self; following Umaña-Taylor's addition of "affirmation" to Marcia's typology of cultural exploration and commitment, this particular qualifying label (regarding "emotional compass") would be selected from "positive" or "negative."

Selection of "positive" is indicative of a relatively well-adjusted (or at least "adaptive") state in which dialogues between voices occur without emotionally or mentally "crushing" the individual; the positive dialogical state is, then, what Hermans (1994, 2002) and Bhatia (2002, 2004) have been calling "dialogical acculturation" all along. It must be noted that the individual in this case may still be plagued with woes of significant weight, and/or faced with decisions of exceptional difficulty. In other words, the "positive dialogical state" label is not about the circumstances set before an individual, or the circumstances'
direct effects, or even the mood or outlook of the individual; rather, it is about the ability to
"hold up" under the pressure of being torn in two or more directions, without sliding into
dysfunction.

The negative dialogical state, on the other hand, represents a very particular place of
struggles, confusions, and conflicts so common to bicultural individuals; for example,
immigrant Tina wrote of realizing the several options open to her, each outcome as
undesirable as the next. Dating a young man she was fond of might make her happy, but it
would also have forced her to be secretive and perhaps deceptive to family members; not
dating the lad made her sad; and though she was offered an arranged marriage to another,
the very thought of doing so made her angry. Thus, she was torn between many options;
being thusly "torn" is, of course, a normal part of anyone's life, and certainly quite common
in the bicultural existence. But slipping into a state mimicking clinical depression (which
Tina did) over one decision (or a series of decisions) is neither normal nor healthy (as
further discussed below).

Calling her indecision "dialogical" would have nothing for the young lady, but
realizing she was experiencing the NDS and using that knowledge to formulate a specific
plan of action (or set of communication strategies) appropriate to the situation triggering it
would likely have been quite helpful; furthermore, "preventative training" may have helped
her parents—also immigrants—to avoid approaches of acculturation known to fail. It could
have, at the very least, provided them with information facilitating the detection of
"warning signs" in their daughter.

Moreover, Umaña-Taylor’s (2003) research suggests that using a "typology
classification may be useful for understanding how different components of ethnic identity
relate to outcome variables such as self-esteem,” and despite the fact that typologies are the
precise opposite of the multi-strandedness of the dialogical model, the classification of
common issues and isolation of factors contributing to them could, like the "qualifying
label," add efficiency to the battle against them, and suggest a direction for future research.

As the notion of "qualifying labels" has been explained, the discussion turns to a
specific label: that of the Negative Dialogical State.

The Negative Dialogical State of Acculturation

Introduction

Close your eyes and imagine a bathroom scale; now take a moment to consider
the procedure involved in using it: you step on, it lights up, it spits out your weight, it
goes back to sleep, then you step off and start cursing the half-dozen, gloriously-glazed
bits of dough you helped your co-worker celebrate his birthday with at Dunkin Donuts
last week. Do you curse the scale? Maybe…after all, it could be wrong, couldn’t it? But
no, this time the inflated number is, indeed, correlated with your caloric consumption.

The dialogical model of acculturation could be likened to that bathroom scale;
you have a decision to make, you plop the various considerations of culture and identity
onto it—Egyptian here, American there, college student in the corner—and it spits out a
decision. You may not like the decision, but you know why it was suggested.
Now close your eyes again; this time, imagine a bathroom scale in need of fresh batteries. The scale still lights up and spits out numbers, but the numbers are wrong. After a while, it even stops giving out wrong numbers; if the first scale was a metaphor illustrating the dialogical model, then this one is a portrait of the negative dialogical state of acculturation. The elements dumped onto the scale can't accurately be weighed, for the scale isn't functioning properly; it's not broken—and neither are the people afflicted with this condition—but something needs to change before it will work again, before they're ok again. In the scale's case, a set of new batteries will have the problem solved in under a minute; the solution to NDS is a bit more complicated, but it will work just as quickly—once the afflicted find out what "it" is...and what they're afflicted with, for that matter.

The problem isn't an ignorance of the dialogues; after all, the voices keep chattering at every turn, participating in conversations about various cultural options; the thing is, nothing is being said. Or if it is, it sounds like the conversations at the tower of Babel. Either way, the afflicted feel weighed-down. He's confused, she's conflict-ridden, and they both "closet" things. They feel unreasonable amounts of guilt, grief, and worry. They might even start to get sick all the time: headaches, aches and pains, digestive woes. Their families and friends suspect clinical depression, and they themselves are sure it's clinical depression. But Prozac doesn't work; neither do Paxil, Zoloft, Wellbutrin, or any of the other twenty "wonder drugs" they're put on. Counseling is just as "effective," and the only illegal substances that seem to help are those that knock them out for 14 hours at a time.

It certainly sounds like depression, doesn't it? The IV (1994) and IV-TR (2000) editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) would concur—but they'd be wrong.

As mentioned above, dialogues and disagreements between various cultural "voices" are inevitable in the bicultural; being "crushed" by such conversations isn't, however—especially when "traditional" treatments are completely ineffective against the "symptoms" that so-closely mimic clinical depression.

This section provides a detailed description of the original Negative Dialogical State—as manifested in the thirteen "afflicted" participants, and beginning with a sketch of NDS, followed by common triggers and links, and a discussion of why I believe NDS to be distinct from clinical depression.

_A Sketch of NDS_

Beginning with the "who" of NDS, participants I considered "afflicted" were immigrants, children of immigrants, and Egyptians in Egypt; four of the thirteen participants indicated that they had suffered from NDS in the past, while the remaining nine were currently "afflicted."

Twelve of the thirteen participants were under forty years of age when they experienced NDS—including two "past" sufferers who are now in their mid-forties—while the thirteenth participant is approaching her fiftieth birthday, and currently lives with her parents.
Not counted in the thirteen participants—but included as additional evidence nonetheless—are two additional diasporic Egyptians I’ve interviewed for my last pilot study (2008-2009) and one I got to chat with after the dissertation’s data collection was finished; I do, of course, identify them as "non-participants" in the sections below.

All thirteen participants had earned their four-year degrees, and some had professional degrees. Eight of them lived with parents, and three were married now. All thirteen had full-time jobs, though some of the participants were self-employed. Only two of the thirteen participants with NDS lived in Egypt.

Regardless of differences in circumstance, NDS-people all seemed to experience chronic issues of or with identity, self-esteem, and/or family. The issues (aka "challenges") were frequently accompanied by exceedingly unpleasant and/or disparate emotions regarding culture and, at times, religion; these issues were often—or, more accurately, "usually"—interconnected.

Very generally speaking, all thirteen cases of NDS were each triggered by one of two incompatibilities between their own interests and "normal" and/or acceptable Egyptian activities—whether the party at the other end of the conflict was a relative, Egyptian society, or God.

The first of these conflicts involved an inability to answer the "who am I?" question—whether due to confusion or "cultural-conditional approval." For example, Korva discussed her previous inability to decide "which me is the real me," and her various vacillations between the cultures of Egypt and several regions in North America, while Midiane wrote extensively of feeling like a "cultural mutt." Reading through his blog (over and over, for it is most compelling), I got the impression that his parents and other relatives were intent upon proving how un-Egyptian he was; his mother, for example, seemed to be a particularly rich source of this criticism, eliciting several posts like the following:

I laid in bed today, the tears starting to cradle in my eyes, hearing my mother talk to my sister. They then fell out of the cradle while taking a shower and getting ready for work. I hear my mother’s voice directed at me and I shudder. I shake. I’m terrified of her. I’m terrified that the next word will be silence, a dagger fired, disapproval, hard hurtful tones shot at me. Whenever she speaks, I am transfixed and am horrified.

On the other hand, Carmen wrote prolifically about her aunt’s attempts to remind her that she only lived in America, and that she was—would always be—Egyptian. But her aunt wasn’t the only one to lecture Carmen about cultural purity; as she puts it, "My family always made it a priority to remind me that I was not American and that I had to avoid falling into the trap of becoming one."

The second conflict involved some form of inability (i.e. internal or external controls) to "live" the identity that participants considered their "true" selves. For example, DJ was unable to "come out of the closet" about his sexuality, which he defined as "gay" and "omnisexual" at different points in the interview; the young man had no
confusion that he did belong to one or both of these "alternative" sexualities, but he was unable to live them out—or out in the open, anyway—in Egypt. To solve his problem, he moved to another country; this solution worked for other participants, as well—when it was possible.

Midiane's "impossible dream" came down to the very strategy that had solved DJ’s problems, that of moving out; he believes distance will prevent him from going mad amidst a sea of nagging and non-support:

I have to be forced to talk about trivial matters and topics, or topics that interest them. It’s become pretty obvious over the last couple of days. If it’s not a topic they can talk about, it’s either lectures or “advice”. I tell a story from London, an anecdote, something I did or achieved with regards to filmwork, or just a random thought, we somehow regress back into a child-adult relationship (instead of adult-adult, as I once dreamed) and it goes nowhere. This box I have to live in is inducing death.

Later, he writes that:

I always get treated and spoken to like a child, no matter how much I change or adapt my behavior upon their request or on my own accord. All I can feel is despair because I’ve run out of options. Confronting them doesn’t work, talking them through the process doesn’t work, ignoring them is not something I do, and trying to use humour or hyperbole just exacerbates everything.

A month later, he confesses that

I have no desire to do anything. The environment I come home to every day is one preoccupied with preservation and avoidance of all disturbances. At all and any costs. After a while, as I wasn't vigilant in countering this by writing, creating, struggling, because I gave up, the environment affects you and soon after, you're sucked clean of all your anima.

The blogger devotes another several posts to documenting the fallout from his desired escape, including the fact that his parents weren't enthusiastic about the plan: 'I'm being treated like I've betrayed or failed them. How can that be? How? I just want to move out to have my own place,” he writes, reporting that

On Monday night, I spoke to my parents about my desire and plans to move out. I might as well declared I’m now a homosexual Muslim. I was upset by what they said and how they said it, although I expected it. Expecting something doesn’t make you immune from the natural
emotional reactions to people and events. They didn’t understand me and they consequently embarked on a campaign to make sure any of my decisions seems stupid, harried, and ultimately going to permanently scar me. I was sure of my decision but now, I’m not. Not because they unlocked something in my awareness that makes me now want to live with them even more. They tapped into a well where all my self-doubt and self-anxiety lays still, rotting. Then, I go through the whole process of “Man, can’t they just support me once? Can’t they say I’ve done a good decision once?” Then, I still try to stay analytical. I go back quickly in my head and think about the last major decision I made – the one to move back. And then smaller ones since I’ve been here. I could see just one pattern emerging. If the decision doesn’t fit them or fit the idea they have of me or doesn’t align with their desires and plans, then it’s a decision that will get raped to death.

The passage above delves into the first “inability” from above, that of identity and self-esteem, which his parents have damaged at this point. Nonetheless, he asserts that:

I can’t give up on the concept of having a barely functional family. I can’t just rely on myself. Not because I can’t. I don’t want to. I tried it before, have seen it in others, and don’t want that. At all.

All in all, Midiane desire to move away was tied to his need to escape from being treated a certain way, and had naught to do with going behind his family’s back, or needing distance in order to live a dream that his parents disapproved of. Furthermore, despite the distance he needed to maintain his sanity, he expressed a genuine desire to cultivate a close relationship with his parents.

Carmen, on the other hand, didn’t want to move away from her parents’ house because she was restricted (as DJ was) or being treated a certain way (as Midiane), but because of a tension in the house, arising from her inter-faith engagement (to R, the Dominican Catholic). The blogger—who was in her early thirties when she wrote this—elucidates her feelings about the serious rift with her mother:

I’m trying hard to put it all in perspective. She’s grasping at straws and is beyond desperate. She’s afraid and confused. And everytime I get really angry I have to stop and remind myself that this is not the same woman who raised me...I am doing everything in my power to keep this woman in my life. To keep my parents in my life. I’m not allowing my mother to sever ties with me. I am letting her humiliate and degrade me, drag me through the fucking mud. And why don’t I leave? Why don’t I just pack my bags and go?...I stay after all this humiliation because I will do whatever it is that I can to prove to them that I value them, that I love
them, that I'm willing to fight for them just as much as I'm willing to fight for R.
Midiane, in his late twenties when the following snippet was written, was equally unwilling to "just give up" on his family; he explains that
Like a child, I want things to be OK with my family, I want them to accept and support my work and dream like it should be. And eventhough I pussyfoot in and out of caring about their approval, the solemn truth remains that I'm affected and angered by every one of their jibs or ribs at me about my work. I am annoyed and animated to anger by every small and big thing they pick on. I can lose myself for days, boiling over them and how they can do this or that to me. The day pass on and I achieve nothing. The boiling can swallow up any joy or positivity like the energy I felt today after meeting a producer for film work. Petty arguments with my father and I had to bury my face into the bed fabric to somehow unleash the flood of frustration.

Midiane's issue here is not one of being criticized, but one of being unsupported—and one of feeling as though his parents don't care enough about him to phrase their comments more kindly.

Now that the "basic" sketch of NDS has been provided, the discussion turns to the triggers and links appearing most commonly.

*Common Triggers and Links*

All thirteen cases of NDS had at least a few things in common, and several cases were practically identical. In this section, the common triggers and links are revealed.

The most common trigger of NDS was, far and away, a toxic family situation; relatives (usually parents) sometimes withheld approval based on culture, as in the cases of Midiane and El Massry—who "weren't Egyptian enough" for their parents (who were stingy with the cultural lessons they gave their offspring in the first place)—and in the cases of Carmen and Korva—who kept getting reminders that they were Egyptian and most definitely "NOT American!".

I was encouraged to be proud of my Egyptian-ness and squash anything American. And it worked. I never thought of myself as American. I was an Egyptian with a greencard who just so happened to live and go to school in America. I was an extremely proud Egyptian. Which was why I was so confused when people called me "the American girl" everytime I went back to Egypt. In Egypt, I was seen as American. In America, I was seen as Egyptian. I seemed to be able to assert my Egyptian identity much easier when I wasn't in Egypt.

Other times, parents smothered their children with one hand, and pushed them away with the other hand; an excellent example of this case arose after I'd finished the
research for this study, but I include it here because it is a classic case of the devilish, "dualistic" behavior. Very briefly, the girl in question was at her wit's end over the alternately tyrannical and childish behavior of her mother; as the young lady writes:

The other day, she is telling me "I am going to a dinner party next week, would you like to come along?" I become very happy, because I haven't seen any friends in a long time. I've been finishing up med school, you see. My final exam is this week, so I figure it will be ok to go. Then she backpedals some. "Well, I don't know if I really should bring you...people have been asking me about you, and I've been telling them that you're in medical school all this time." Now just imagine...I finished college in three years, not four. I am ahead of the game, even though I broke my arm two years ago and had to take some time off for physical therapy and recuperation. But she tells me that. She also says "Maybe I shouldn't even go, what if someone asks me about you? Then I will have to either make up a lie, or else admit that my daughter is a failure or stupid. And I can't lie, because I'm a Christian. And I can't let anyone think you're stupid, because your brother and sister aren't married yet." I'm thinking, Really, mom, you are a Christian? That's a surprise to me, I've always thought you were possessed by the devil, I keep thinking to myself, trying to cheer myself up, but I can't help it. I slam the phone down before I can give in to the temptation to curse her out...you see, I actually AM a Christian, and the Bible says "honor your father and mother." But I haven't even told you the worst part. After all this, I call my dad at work so I can complain a little bit, and what do you know? I get a voice mail a few minutes later...apparently she tried to call him, then me, and both lines were busy. So she leaves a voice mail, which I am almost afraid to open. In the whiniest voice I've ever heard, she simpers and complains that "oh, you don't love me, you love your father more than me, what kind of husband is he to gang up with his daughter against his own wife?" It is always ALWAYS like this! She does something mean and hurtful, and then she complains that no one wants to confide in her or hang out with her. Can she really blame us? We'd have to be clinically insane—or stupid!—to beg for that amount of abuse.

Apart from parental issues like the aforementioned, participants also seemed to be quite susceptible to flurries of attempted void-fillers; NDS people often sought inordinate amounts of money, fame, power, food, relationships, sex, gambling, and spending. Some also reported doing things that would shock others (like donning pink hair or piercings) or set them apart from the crowd (i.e. fashion-related things, uncommon hobbies); others secretly or openly identified with things that were dated (like old movies or hairstyles) or foreign (music or films in other languages) or abnormal (though not necessarily bad or deviant).
As previously mentioned, one of the commonly-appearing key issues seemed to be a lack of approval from parents or friends; for example, at least half wrote or spoke of feeling "not Egyptian enough to fit in," or "not American enough to fit in." They felt that their parents didn’t accept them, or that their parents’ approval seemed tied to how Egyptian or how American (or "Western") they acted.

Another thing that commonly appeared was that NDS people often seemed upset when people (especially friends) forgot something about them—whether birthday or country of origin, for example. For example, Midiane wonders:

Why don’t people listen to me when I say something? Why can’t they remember just basic information about me? Is it really that boring or useless for someone to remember where I’m from? What I do? Where I’ve been? Not just housemates I say hi to, this is even friends I’ve known for years. This is people who I meet and then have to repeat myself everytime I meet them. This is everybody and anybody I aspire to have meaningful contact with.

Another NDSer expressed a similar sentiment:

I recall once a very close friend asked me how old I had become a few days after my birthday. A year earlier she had celebrated my birthday on time and sent me a card and bought me a gift. You can imagine the message it sends out when I get a brief phone call many days after my birthday with a question of how old I’ve become. The call meant nothing to me and I wish she hadn’t even bothered. It was more painful to be wished a happy birthday carelessly and so late, than not to have been wished at all. It’s not that I want people to remember things about me, not at all...the inconsistency of care is what can hurt sometimes.

Many of the thirteen also hinted at an uncommonly strong need for a romantic relationship—and some seemed to feel that finding their own Prince/ss Charming would effectively end their misery; whether it would or not, I can’t say, but the sentiment leads me to believe that the need for "someone" was just another manifestation of trying to create an alternate support system, as discussed in Chapter Six. Midiane writes:

I’m sitting in this terminal called loneliness, every flight is not for me, every person offering a seat with them on their flight, and they’re doing it to cheat me in some way. I end up running away, trying new gates, sitting in different cafes, checking my tickets, getting ready for the flight, but the flight never comes. It’s a terminal for terminally lonely. It’s a safehouse for the easily led and manipulated.
Interestingly, males with NDS all seemed more interested with the emotional benefits of relationships than they did with the physical benefits; I do not mean that all (or even "any") men prefer physical relationships to emotional, I just found it interesting that every single male somehow hinted at the same notion. As Midiane illuminates:

Throughout the night, even before I went to dinner, I wasn't too excited. I was sullen. And that carried thru the rest of the night. Sitting in the restaurant, talking, eating, simmering in the dim lights and choice music...The walk home. The locked arms. The sitting on my couch talking for hours...the series of strange moments when I give in. I can remember my lips being lifeless and inanimate...Till the very end, the whole experience for me was pained....It's that context – the when, the whom, the why – that becomes really valuable and more desirable than just the experience...I want to hold out now for being with someone I can really be with, to experience all of last night with that person...waiting for that someone in the context of a relationship, with someone for the long haul, not just a night or a few times, is horrible.

This section has provided several examples of what NDS is; the next section provides examples of what NDS is not, both from my participants and from the literature.

What NDS Isn’t…and Why

The previous section has provided some additional detail to the sketch provided at the beginning of this main section on NDS; this section contributes shadows and light to the portrait, adding depth and scope to the nearly-completed image.

As mentioned above, some of the participants that clearly displayed NDS (up until their most recent postings) were bloggers Carmen and Midiane, while Anna and DJ indicated that their bouts of NDS had disappeared upon distancing themselves from family members. An unnamed participant indicated that marriage had eliminated NDS symptoms from her life—not because she was so blissfully happy with her relationship (which had actually ended in divorce), but because she had "become a person" in her parents’ eyes.

Korva and Amir seemed to get over their NDS after unexpected and/or especially powerful spiritual experiences, and El Massry (who is not counted among the 13) seemed more "cross" about cultural issues than "crushed" by them. The lady in her forties (who also asked to remain nameless) seemed restricted by her parents, but hinted that she was unable to leave them due to an unnamed impediment that meant she couldn’t marry; she was unwilling to further discuss whether the "impediment" meant that she actually couldn’t marry (like Jane Eyre’s leading man, Mr. Rochester, who secretly had a wife locked upstairs), or that no one appealed to her, or even that no one had expressed interest in marrying her.
Interestingly, many of the NDS participants insisted that they did, indeed, suffer from clinical depression (see appendix for an example). I say "interestingly" because Egyptian culture has never been a great supporter of the "condition." In fact, throughout the Arabic-speaking world, there are very few diagnoses of "depression." This is due to fatalism (Bishai, 2004; Nydell, 2002), pride, and/or concern over family image (Amer & Hovey, 2007; Nassar-McMillan, 2003), among others.

Researchers from other countries have their own critiques of the "disease," as well; for example, Parker (2001, 2007), an Australian, believes that "feelings" like sadness are medicalised in Western medicine, while Szasz, a Hungarian-American, believes that depression is a "metaphorical illness," and not a disease (Pilgrim, 1999). In agreement with this critique of the handling of depression is Karasz (2005), who writes that "what we call it—'disease,' 'disorder,' 'state of mind'—affects how we view, diagnose, and treat it."

I, too, agree that Western cultures tend to categorise many things (even natural phenomena like emotions) as diseases, that "depression" (and other "disorders") are over-medicalized, and that the way we label things may greatly impact the way we handle them.

To put it another way, Western medicine sees an excuse for medication in every corner; sad? Take a pill. Can't focus? Take another pill. Gone are the days when sadness was viewed as natural, when grief was dispelled by good long talks with trusted friends, when parents took the time to demonstrate that it was, indeed, possible to learn the skills of focusing and following through.

People today don't realize, however, that when pills are strewn about like candy—more generously than candy, actually, since candy is sugar-filled, since half of America's children have been "diagnosed" with ADHD, and since amphetamines are apparently better for five-year-olds than Sweet Tarts—children (and adults) are deprived of learning the very skills that could eliminate the issues altogether; furthermore, the "real issues" don't go anywhere.

Of course, if a person has an organic issue—that of a hormonal imbalance or a neurological issue that accounts for the disorder of mood or thought, then a drug is the only thing that could possibly help her out. But if she has a traumatic injury—a knife through the heart, perhaps—no pill on earth will fix her up; it might prolong her life, or prevent infection, or ease her pain, but until that blade is removed, she can never truly get well.

It is precisely for these reasons—the over-diagnosing and over-medicalizing of bogus "diseases," the under-preparation for "real life," and the complete ignorance (in the "ignoring" sense) of the issues "at the heart of" our biggest problems—that I believe so strongly that there is, indeed, a state like the one I've described in this chapter.

If I am wrong, my errors are semantic ones. But as Juliet once suggested, a rose by any other name would, indeed, smell as sweet; likewise, an NDS going by another name would be just as valid—and would address the aforementioned reasons I believe so strongly in the existence of the NDS. As I've established (what I believe to be) the
importance of the NDS, I now address the similarities between my notion and clinical depression.

As previously mentioned, NDS people experienced guilt, agitation, sadness, misery, confusion, lack of focus, tearfulness, and indifference, among others. These symptoms seem, at first glance, to indicate a psychiatric condition—whether clinical depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or even borderline personality disorder (DSM-IV-TR, 2004), all of them treated by prescription medication and/or therapy; neither treatment was reported to work, however, in any of the thirteen cases.

Another case of “not responding to medication” involves seven of the thirteen afflicted; this half of the group reported addiction to non-prescription drugs and/or abuse of prescription drugs, though none of these experiments in “self-medicating” vanquished the NDS. This is a very important point, because again, I do not believe that any of these participants actually did or does have a psychiatric condition—at least not one that can be treated by mere pharmaceuticals (or other substances).

It should be noted that teenagers and young adults—who often go through similar periods of adjustment as NDSers reported experiencing (well past their teenage years)—generally respond quite well to prescription drugs and "talking cures."

The difference between the two situations is that a teenager going through a similar struggle is necessarily going through a time of change or "development" in body, mind, and situation (Oppedal & Sam, 2002), whereas NDS-participants often experienced the state well into their thirties. Furthermore, while almost every NDS-person reported several physical symptoms, it is not at all common for otherwise-healthy teenagers or young adults to "randomly" experience certain physical symptoms together—with no underlying health issue.

Based upon the similarities of circumstances and symptoms between all thirteen NDS participants, and based upon the fact that time, prescription drugs, and "talking cures" like psychotherapy generally have a success rate of at least 75 per cent (NIMH, 2007) among the clinically depressed—and had a 0 per cent success rate among my thirteen participants—I firmly believe that NDS is 1) real, 2) distinct from clinical depression, 3) based on circumstances, 4) only "treatable" if the underlying issues are addressed, and 5) not likely to go away "on its own."

In summary, I believe that NDS is easily addressed, but that it must be addressed in order to leave "for good"—and for the good of every group that shares a nation, neighbourhood, or home.

As NDS has been discussed at length, the discussion now turns to the study’s limitations.

**Limitations**

As the study’s major finding, NDS, has been outlined in the previous section, the current section documents the study’s limitations.

The first main category of limitations is that of the sample; very simply, additional cases of similar data may have yielded further theoretical output, or at least more support for those theories arising from the current data.
Apart from a less-than-optimal sample size are the twin issues of participant quality and commitment. It is my belief that a larger amount of ultra-rich data would have been possible if more participants had belonged to the demographic of suffering; by this, I am referring to the as-yet-undefined group (be it young people, immigrants, "oldest children," or any other affiliation) with the greatest concentration of cultural conflicts, though I should note that my tiny group of 13 NDS people seemed bound by either living at home, or being single.

As earlier sections have noted, both NDS and Cultural Fluctuation Syndrome (CFS) appeared within and without Egypt, in participants belonging to every age-range under 60, in Christians and Muslims, the Orthodox and the Protestant, the firmly religious and the undecided, in the middle-class and the millionaires, in the bloggers and questionnaire-takers and interviewees; in so small a number of participants (94 total), the only tie that seemed to bind the "sufferers" was that of cultural conflict.

Moving on to participant commitment, I believe that participants who had genuinely wanted to take it—due to their own interest in communication, culture, and/or identity—and had not merely done so out of pity (though I am exceedingly grateful for all those who did participate, to whatever degree!) would have yielded additional data in the questionnaire’s and interview’s write-in questions. I am convinced of this due to the fact that every single non-blogger participant afflicted with my proposed cultural syndromes not only stayed far longer than the fifteen minutes originally promised (several interviews actually went on for three hours or more), but also made some comment about our conversation being "better than therapy" or helping them to "feel a whole lot better."

Whether those participants’ improved states resulted from the catharsis that often accompanies a venting session, from hope renewed by my suggestions and/or advice, or from the mere fact that I did fully understand, sympathize, and in some cases, empathize with their cultural woes, I cannot say. What I can say, however, is that the development of frameworks and theories and solutions can only be helped by additional cases and varying circumstances, hence my hope that future studies will be even more successful in locating "afflicted" individuals.

On the other hand, the fact that "only" 30 per cent or so of the participants indicated severe distress, closeting, conflict, and/or confusion may be indicative of a somewhat "representative" sample; in other words, perhaps these and other cultural issues are truly less prevalent (or of briefer duration) than the media and/or the afflicted seem to portray.

And with respect to the "quality" of participants, I must confess to having initially feared that the opinions voiced might represent a somewhat biased population—both due to self-selection and the snowball sample—but it turned out that most of the bloggers and several of the face-to-face interviewees actually were far enough removed from me that my fears of self-selection and "the snowball effect" were put to rest.

The second main category of limitations encompasses the questionnaires and interviews; very simply, more clarity and less "fluff" would have streamlined the entire
process. For example, both questions and directions could have been more concise and much less confusing; several participants actually made comments such as "I believe more people would respond if they were able to view the entire survey first," and "can we please go backward and forward?". I must confess that I did set the very first version of the questionnaire to "require answers," which forced several people to put in a false username in order to view the questionnaire, which they did not go on to complete.

Some people had issues with the instructions, as well; for example, my use of the term "meaningful password" suggested to some that I was asking for their email password, rather than a unique identifier that would be used to link their questionnaire and interview together. This necessitated a modification early on, and "meaningful password" then became "UNIQUE USERNAME," with the additional instructions that names be "non-identifying, easy-to-remember," and difficult for someone else to come up with.

With respect to the questionnaire’s checkbox-based questions ("check all that apply"), these worked quite well, though in some cases, I regretted allowing participants to check more than one response; for example, in the demographic question, two participants did not specify a gender, one checked male and female (!!), and another indicated both single and married (!!!), resulting in variable response counts that ranged from 31 to 35, though most questions were completed by 32.

The FLIP question (Name four of your favorite foods/entertainers/etc.) elicited some very interesting effects; some seemed to have little respect for it (as indicated by leaving the question blank, or typing SKIP), some filled it in "properly," and a few used it as an opportunity to "prove" how "Egyptian" or "Western" (or "global") they really were. One participant, for example, listed a dozen or more Egyptian and/or "Arab" singers, but later indicated that she didn't understand a word of Arabic; another participant's response was comprised of "Taco Bell, Wendy's, Whataburger, Fazoli's, Olive Garden, and Chilli's," then answered the "What do you like and dislike about your cultures?" questions with "I loooovvve Arabic food, when I can get it!" This may not seem very odd, but my young friend included his email address, and later emailed to ask whether I'd gotten his survey or not. As it turns out, I have run into this fellow several times (in church, dinner parties, etc.), and each time, he has made very dramatic declarations of how "deeeeeesgusssting!" he finds Arabic food. In his case and in the case of the aforementioned music aficionado, all I may be certain of is a discrepancy between the participant's own responses; on one hand, the FLIP question was designed to uncover identifications, and isn't it rather difficult to like something in theory but not in practice?

On the other hand, who am I to say that their attachments to cultural artifacts are less strong due to frequency, understanding, or a lack thereof? The point here is that, despite the use of "cultural artifacts" by several studies (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb; Hani Henry, etc.) to do with identification, I don't believe that this particular question was indicative of identification in any reliable—and perhaps valid—way.

In terms of the actual questions asked, I had several (17) participants make statements or express frustration regarding what I was "really asking." For example,
some complained that "I don't understand what is it that you want to know" or asked me to "hold on...I'm trying to understand what you're asking," while others commented that "the questions are a bit vague, would like some more details, please," and one very clever participant quoted my favorite play, Madrassat el Moshagbeen, asking "fein el so2al? FEEEIN EL so2AAAL??" [Where is the question??].

Several participants had issues with the "scale" questions, particularly those dedicated to Individualism/Collectivism and "Traditional" Egyptian morals; for example, the confusingly-worded questions about taking care of elderly parents or supporting relatives were met with comments from over half (19) of the 32 questionnaire-takers; most of the comments were variations on "I will take care of them" and "It is my duty to care for them, didn't they care for me?" though a few provided explanations such as "I wanted to care for them but my dad was so unhappy in his baby girl's house," and "I would have done that but they went to their Lord before that time came."

These comments may have been made due to the confusing nature of the question; one participant, for example, qualified his comment with a clarification that "double negative = positive." I believe, however, that the commenters wrote in their response not because they didn't understand the question, but because they wanted to underline their familial devotion.

Other "scale" questions eliciting comments from nearly (or over) half of the participants were the questions on "morality," as previously mentioned; comments included explanations that "dating is ok, but sex isn't," or similar remarks, as well as "warning-type" remarks, such as "if you spend time, you will grow close, and when you are close...where will you be?", though the latter comment was typed into another question altogether, oddly enough. I interpreted the comment to mean "avoid temptation, however innocent it may appear at first."

Slightly less prevalent were comments on the High/Low Context "scales," most of which critiqued Egyptian culture and/or communication. All in all, while much information was gleaned from participants' ratings and comments, I would not include "scales" in future studies unless the calculated scores "weighed more," result-wise.

With regard to the scenario-based questions, I believe the wording confounded my results. In the "traitorous brother" question, for example, I should not have asked "what would you say," but "how would you feel?".

In terms of the "tea" question, I believe that changing the scenario to read "You are visiting someone you recently met in their home. They have not yet offered you water/tea/etc. How do you interpret this? Do you ask for a drink? Why or why not?".

And with regard to the "how do you end phone conversations?" question, some took the question to mean "what is the very last word you would say just before hanging up," while others read it the way I meant it, which was "how would you bring a phone conversation to a close?" Of course, it is very possible that some participants actually do just say "bye" in the midst of their conversations and hang up.

Moving to the next limitation, I initially had quite a bit of trouble catching anyone online for an interview; some appeared online sporadically, some didn't seem to
show up at all, still others appeared under their own names. Finally, after two weeks of online hunting and nary a message, I got my first "bite." During the interview, which took place on Yahoo Messenger, I copied and pasted the young man’s responses into a form I’d created on SurveyMonkey.com for this purpose; by the end of nearly four hours, however, my hand had curled into the shape of a mouse, and refused to straighten out. Even worse was the fact that the chat transcript was almost fifty pages long (single-spaced), but my "form" couldn't work around the tangents in our conversation.

Thankfully, it didn’t take long for me to realize that I could offer this "private link" to potential participants, which I did, post-haste. This new "Asynchronous Interview" worked well; a week later I had eight completed, and by the end of the month, the number had doubled. I didn’t notice a few issues until later, however, and by then it was too late. The issues weren’t serious ones, but I’d definitely address them before replicating the study.

Very simply, participants needing clarification as to what I meant by a question were unable to get it; additionally, and slightly more seriously, was the fact that I was unable, due to the asynchronous nature of the "interview," to ask follow-up questions. In some cases, I did finally get to chat online with participants, and received the answers I sought, but this is certainly a limitation that I felt.

Another issue to do with the interview is that some participants seemed not to realize that I needed both sections completed, even when I said it very clearly several times. Thankfully, by the time I defended my prospectus, I had been persuaded to make optional the link between questionnaire and interview; this has allowed me to focus on the multiplicity of responses to various questions, rather than basing my interpretations upon entire case studies. That said, the case study method has proven invaluable to me during my analysis, both in terms of examining trends within a single participant, and trends between participants; furthermore, the case study method allowed me to accomplish more, despite having less data than I’d hoped for. A few of the case studies are included in the appendix, though they are abridged.

Some participants who would have made excellent case studies were unavailable to me, either because our friendship is public knowledge or because I felt like a scallywag "using" my friend (and/or his/her issues) for research purposes. In the first case, the fact that various friendships of mine are known (whether in the blogosphere, to family members, etc.) means that, unless some heavy editing of details was done, these people’s "confessions" would become immediately recognizable, especially in the cases where these friends are well-known or even celebrities in their communities; heavy editing might have obscured the issues or confounded the variables involved, however, and in these cases, I preferred to not use their stories—despite their eminent suitability for this study.

In the second case, most of these other "eminent friends" friends assured me that it was ok, that I could use their stories, but again, unless heavy editing was done, I would feel like a louse, even if my study would be more interesting and/or insightful. A handful of quotes from these friends were too good to resist, and I have indicated (by
omission) who these "non-participants" are within the data chapters. (Thankfully, I met the goal I'd set for participant numbers, and have not harmed the study by passing my friends over...this time around, anyway!)

Finally, and on the reverse end of this last issue, was the issue of anonymity; very simply, some seemed concerned about anonymity, to the point where they did not complete a questionnaire (or else they did and falsified details, which I could not prove, not that I would want to), or to the point that they actually put a disclaimer, such as "all of that stuff is true, but you will forgive me for changing somethings that I know you know about me!". Of course, this did not prevent me from guessing the clever participants' identities. Other participants provided real email addresses and/or signed their real names, as though intent on leaving their mark on the study. Some of these even had a "message" for me; one participant, for example, wished to let me know that my "thing about marrying only Engeeli's is kinda silly, I read you article about it couple years ago, and I think you are asking to be and old maid."

What this young man referred to was an article taken from a previous work (Bishai, 2004b), where I made the case for marrying someone with whom one shared those beliefs held closest to one's heart; the lad attempted to hide his identity by checking "Muslim" for his faith, but the way he spelled a particular phrase convinced me that it was an Orthodox youth who'd started an online discussion with me years ago about the very same topic. Since our conversations had been online, I also remembered with perfect clarity the way he misspelled my name, the salutations he favored, and the line of logic he always returned to.

In any case, as the limitations have been discussed, the conversation shifts to the directions suggested by this study.

New Directions: Suggestions for Future Research

The last section has addressed the greatest limitations experienced during this study, the current section offers several suggestions for future research.

During every stage of this dissertation—from prospectus to data collection to data analysis—myriad notions have suggested themselves to me. Some arrived in response to my findings, or else, the lack of a finding I'd expected. Some were the "next logical step" in a line of reasoning I'd pursued. But others came completely "out of left field," as they say. Many of these left-field notions are still simmering in my mind, but some are demanding inclusion in this chapter; therefore, I offer just a few of the potential research questions that continue to haunt me:

One of the most prominent subject areas that arose during this study was Faith; the following questions apply to my findings (i.e., NDS, CFS, communication styles/attitudes, et cetera), asking:

a. Is there a difference between Orthodox and Evangelicals?
b. Is there a difference between Christians and Muslims?
c. Which levels of "religiosity" seem to correlate most frequently with NDS, CFS, closeted, etc.?
Another area is culture; most obvious is my question as to whether it is possible that any of my proposed frameworks could apply to other "non-western" countries and, if so, which cultural elements or societal expectations seem to trigger the greatest distress in these similar populations.

In a related matter, I wonder whether the root problem exists in an NDS-person or in the way he or she was raised; for example, what if an individual experiencing the cultural clashes or confusion of NDS had been raised in Canada by Canadian parents and had never gone through a cultural conflict? Would she feel conflicted over something else? Alternately, are those experiencing physical symptoms more likely to fall prey to stressful situations, or do abnormally-stressful situations trigger some form of psychosomatic, even autoimmune, response?

These questions are all academic at this point, both because they go far beyond the scope of the study, and because I am neither a counselor nor a psychologist (though my undergraduate degree in psychology arose from my keen interest in the field—or was it the other way around?). Nonetheless, these questions and the remainder of suggestions below may prove helpful to future intercultural research—whether in communications, psychology, or any pertinent field.

Finally, with respect to the syndromes I’ve observed, I wonder if it is possible that there is a correlation between NDS and CFS, what that correlation is, and which direction such a correlation would seem to point; furthermore, I wonder if NDS is more about what individuals WANT to do and can’t, what they couldn’t be CAUGHT doing, if it surrounds the FACT that they have to closet certain things, or the fact that they’re confused about what they want in the first place.

So many questions, and so few answers…for now. Regardless of who actually finds the answers to these and others, it is my hope that solutions to such conflicts will arise in the very near future.
APPENDIX A
HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

-----Original Message-----
From: Human Subjects
To: SB Gerard FSU
Cc: fjordan@fsu.edu
Subject: Use of Human Subjects in Research - Approval Memorandum
Sent: Oct 19, 2009 3:02 PM

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 10/19/2009

To: Sally Bishai

Address: CONFIDENTIAL
Dept.: COMMUNICATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Collectivism, Courtship, and Communication: The Dialogical Acculturation of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and America

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal
related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 10/18/2010 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Felecia Jordan-Jackson, Advisor
HSC No. 2009.3078
APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

FSU Behavioral Consent Form
Collectivism, Conflict, and Communication: The Dialogical Acculturation of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the U.S.

You are invited to participate in a research study of culture and communication in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the U.S.

You were selected as a possible participant because you have at least one Egyptian parent and are a Christian 18 years of age or older.

We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Sally Bishai, a graduate student in the School of Communication at Florida State University, as part of her doctoral dissertation; 30 individuals are expected to participate in the research.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to identify the:

1) current culture of Christian Egyptians and Egyptian-Americans (in terms of both "conflicts" as well as "hopes and dreams"),

2) acculturation strategies used by members of both demographics, and

3) most common forms and styles of communication.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

1) Read and complete an online consent form.
2) Complete an anonymous online survey (10-15 minutes) about Egyptian culture, family responsibilities and expectations, communication, marriage ideals.
3) Complete an anonymous online interview (10-15 minutes) via Yahoo or MSN messenger.

NOTE: If you are willing to share for more than 15 minutes, we are happy to stay on as long as you’d like. Additionally, you may certainly schedule your interviews and surveys on DIFFERENT days, if this is better for you.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:
The study has two main risks:
First, the use of a computer keyboard has been linked with such maladies as carpal tunnel syndrome, and while it is not highly likely that such a condition would suddenly arise in direct response to the completion of this survey, it is important to realize that the risk exists.

Second, some individuals become agitated or upset when discussing culture, conflicts, family issues, and the like; for example, a question such as “What is your relationship like with your parents?” may bring up memories of family quarrels during the teenage years. In such a case, please feel free to indicate that you don’t wish to discuss the matter; and of course there is always the option of ending the interview if you wish.

There are no direct benefits to participation.

Compensation:
You will not receive payment for your participation.

Confidentiality:
First and foremost, it is vital that participants do not hint at their identity within the survey or interview; for example, if you are a good friend of the researcher, you should refrain from using the nickname that you usually call her by. This is because the integrity of the answers—and the entire study—rests upon the complete and total anonymity of the participant.

Nonetheless, the records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law.

In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to inadvertently identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with Sally Bishai. If
you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Sally Bishai. You may ask any question you have at this time; if you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact her at sallybishai@yahoo.com, sb04f@fsu.edu, or sally.bishai@xculturemag.com.

If you would like to contact the faculty advisors of the researcher, their information is:
Dr. Stephen McDowell—850.644.2276 or smcdowel@fsu.edu
Dr. Felecia Jordan-Jackson—850.644.8771 or fjordan@fsu.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

You may download a copy of this document at www.sallybishai.com (click on "consent form") for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers.

CHOOSE ONE: (Radio button.)

O I consent to participate in the study and begin the survey NOW (leads to the "password page," or Page 0 of survey)

O I can’t complete it at this minute, but I will be back soon (leads to a "thank you" page)

O I do NOT consent to participate in the study (leads back to a "thanks anyway" page)

Page 0: The Password Page

Please create a password for yourself using an English or Arabic word.

The word should NOT have any reference to your name or any identifiable characteristics, such as screenname, height, weight, hair or eye color, etc.
This is to ensure your total anonymity.

You should also put a sequence of numbers or letters that make your password difficult to guess; make sure to write it down, however, as you will need it again at the end of this survey, and again during your interview later.

Examples of Acceptable Passwords:
Helwa999
benzGrl123
MrAlgebraXYZ
EdgarAllanPOW
Blondie11235
XxKleopatraXx
Sa3aydaRock

Examples of Unacceptable Passwords:
Salsoola99
MrsYoussef321
xMimiLvsVerizonX
Sa3eediSally
GreenEyedGurl

Now that you've decided upon your password, please write it down and keep it handy. Then, type it here: _______

Ready to begin the survey?

**CHOSE ONE:** (Radio button.)

O YES, take me to Page 1 of the survey

O NO, I can't start the survey now, but I'll be back later (leads to "thank you" page which will only have those two words on it).
APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT MESSAGES

The online Facebook/Myspace postings read:

“Do you:

1.) Have at least one Egyptian parent?

And are you:
2.) 18 years of age or older?
3.) A Christian (by choice or birth)?

If your answers to all three questions are YES, then you’re eligible to participate in a study about Egyptian Christians. Please visit www.sallybishai.com for more information on the brief (but important) survey and interview. Many thanks, Sally Bishai.”

The emails read:

"One of your friends has suggested you as a possible participant in a study about Egyptian Christians.

Please visit www.sallybishai.com for more information on the brief (but important) survey and interview.

Many thanks, Sally Bishai.”
APPENDIX D
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

While the interviews took three main forms—synchronous face-to-face, synchronous online, asynchronous online—each included the questions included below; as mentioned in the manuscript, however, follow-up questions were possible in the synchronous interviews—but not in the asynchronous ones. The follow-up questions differed from one interview to the next, and are not included here (though they are available).

In any case, contained in this appendix is a series of screen-shots capturing the actual surveymonkey.com interface; apart from the condensed pagination, the question-numbering that only makes sense when each question is on its own page (as on the site), and the pastel shades used on the website (through no decision/fault of mine), the pages to follow are identical to those viewed by participants.
Qualitative Interview ALTERNATE Form

1. Before we begin...

I'm sorry we couldn't work out a "real-time" interview, but many thanks for taking the time to fill this out!

Please answer the following questions with respect to Egyptian society/culture in Egypt "way back when," or today, or whenever you choose--and reference the era of which you write as you're writing. In other words, "Anything is fine, just tell me what the 'anything' is so I can learn from you, and know what I'm learning about."

You may write also about the diasporic Egypt, about your own experiences, about media events you've seen or heard of..

If you've never gone through a particular thing (whether final exams or heartbreak or winning the lottery or immigrating, etc.), maybe you've seen others who HAVE--at your church, in your circle of friends, etc.

I'm basically looking for the cultural climate of then and now, and the way an Egyptian might communicate. So if you feel uncomfortable writing about your own life, teach me a bit about Egyptian culture... as you have experienced it, or witnessed.

(More specifically, since the above paragraph wasn't long enough, please do feel free to provide as much detail as you'd like for each question, including your own thoughts, analyses, ideas, explanations, etc., and/or what others have said or done, or what you feel they might do or say "if"...

(Translation: "A few sentences would be great, a few paragraphs would make my day, week, and month!" :)

2. Password Verification Page

Ok, remember your anonymous USERNAME from before? Great!

1. Please type the USERNAME here, exactly as you typed it previously (including capitalisation, spaces, numbers, etc.).

Remember, this is the only way I have to link your previously-finished survey with what you're about to write, so "spelling counts." If you forgot it, then you can type "FORGOT" and make up a new one, and mention your demographics (like, "MD, 30-44, single, Evangelical.")

3.

Make sure that you refrain from any references, names, etc. that could give away your identity!
Qualitative Interview ALTERNATE Form

1. In your survey, you were asked to indicate some cultures you felt a part of; what were they?

What elements of each culture do you like and DISlike (if any)? WHY do you like and dislike these elements?

4.

1. When you have a big decision—for example, which car to buy, which person to marry, etc.—do you make the decision alone?

If not, whose advice/counsel/opinion/permission do you seek (if any), and why?

5.

1. Egyptians (or Arabic-speakers) and Americans (or Westerners) may have, in the past, had different ideas about how to live life, what can be done, what should be done, etc.

How do YOU decide what to do or not do? (You can also share some observations of others you've come across.)

Is it easy or difficult for you to decide?

6.
**Qualitative Interview ALTERNATE Form**

1. **What are some things or issues that you or your friends have struggled through?** (Please indicate the cultures of each friend.)

   Have you noticed any particular struggles that some or many Egyptians or Arabic-speakers seem to have? I’m interested also in societal trends (in Egypt or the diaspora), so the more observations you can think of, the better!

   

7. **What are some hopes, desires, or “dreams” you or your friends may have?** For example, jobs, a family, etc. (Again, indicate cultures of each person.)

   What about those of Egyptians or Arabic-speakers you’ve observed?

   Are all of these things possible/difficult/impossible for YOU to attain? Why?
   What are the obstacles?

8. **Where do you draw your personal code of ethics from?**

9.
1. How would your parents/family take it if you married or dated someone they disapproved of, or chose a profession they weren't happy with? And how would you choose to tell them IF you knew that they were opposed?

(If you're already married, answer as though you were single again---but the same person you are today, and not the 'you' of years past. For example, if the question was about "college major," the Sally of today might say "hmm, psychology wasn't the best choice!" whereas the Sally of ten years ago thought "wow, this is the best major!". Sorry for all the instructions, but this---"communication about a touchy subject"---is one of the more important topics in my study! :) )

10.

1. **WOULD** you tell your parents and/or SPOUSE about a decision they did/would disapprove/disagree with? (This is any topic now, not just marriage... can be something as small as using low-fat vs. full-fat salad dressing!)

   **HOW** would you tell them about it? (If not, what alternate manner would you select to deal with the situation?)
APPENDIX E
DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

The descriptive questionnaires could only be completed asynchronously and online; two participants did ask if they could print out the questions, fill them out, and then fax or email the completed forms to me, but after learning of my desire for complete anonymity, both agreed that the online method would be more effective—and less labour-intensive.

This appendix contains a series of screen-shots capturing the actual Surveymonkey.com questionnaire interface; as before, the following pages are identical to those viewed by participants—apart from the page-breaks, the layout, and the delicate shades of spring green and baby blue that appeared in the actual online questionnaire.
Christian Egyptian SURVEY

CONSENT FORM

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: There has been a BIG CHANGE made to this survey since 8 am (EST) on 5 DEC 2009.

The change is only in the instructions and does NOT affect the content of the survey.

Very briefly, it's no longer called the PASSWCRD PAGE because the wording may have erroneously suggested that your EMAIL password be given! (More info on next page, but rest assured we are not asking for any sensitive information/passwords! :)

Apologies for the misunderstanding and on with the show!

----------

The Survey following the consent form should take you fifteen minutes or less, though please feel free to take longer and/or provide lengthy answers if you so choose.

PLEASE NOTE:

The Survey is Segment ONE in your participation, and I can only use data from participants who fill out BOTH segments (anonymously)!

Segment TWO--an online interview about culture--will take another fifteen minutes (today or at a later time, and can be filled on your own, or with me online).

FIRST, however, please review the consent form below; the form contains some detail on what the study is about, and what is gratefully expected of participants. (And I'm required to post it.)

Selecting YES indicates that you have consented to take part in the study.

Either way, a big THANK YOU for taking the time to check out my research and consider helping me! :}

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# Christian Egyptian SURVEY

**FSU BEHAVIORAL CONSENT FORM**

Collectivism, Conflict, and Communication: The Dialogical Acculturation of Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the U.S.

You are invited to participate in a research study of culture and communication in Christian Egyptians in Egypt and the U.S.

You were selected as a possible participant because you have at least one Egyptian parent and are a Christian 18 years of age or older.

We ask that you read this form and answer any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Sally Dishi, a graduate student in the School of Communication at Florida State University, as part of her doctoral dissertation; 30 individuals are expected to participate in the research.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The purpose of this study is to identify the:

1) current culture of Christian Egyptians and Egyptian-Americans (in terms of both "conflicts" as well as "hopes and dreams")

2) acculturation strategies used by members of both demographics, and

3) most common forms and styles of communication.

**PROCEDURES:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

1) Read and complete an online consent form.

2) Complete an anonymous online survey (10-15 minutes) about Egyptian culture, family responsibilities and expectations, communication, marriage ideals.

3) Complete an anonymous online interview (10-15 minutes) via Yahoo or MSN messenger. (If your screenname reveals your identity, alternate arrangements may be made for the interview, just let us know.)

**NOTE:** If you are willing to share for more than 15 minutes, we are happy to stay or as long as you’d like. Additionally, you may certainly schedule your interviews and surveys on DIFFERENT days, if this is better for you.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY:**

The study has two main risks:

First, the use of a computer keyboard has been linked with such maladies as carpal tunnel syndrome, and while it is not highly likely that such a condition would suddenly arise in direct response to the completion of this survey, it is important to realize that the risk exists.

Second, some individuals become agitated or upset when discussing culture, conflicts, family issues, and the like, for example, a question such as "What is your relationship like with your parents?" may bring up memories of family quarrels during the teenage years. In such a case, please feel free to indicate that you do not wish to discuss the matter; and of course there is always the option of ending the interview if you wish.

There are no direct benefits to participation.

**COMPENSATION:**

You will not receive payment for your participation.
Christian Egyptian SURVEY

CONFIDENTIALITY:
First and foremost, it is vital that participants do not hint at their identity within the survey or interview; for example, if you are a good friend of the researcher, you should refrain from using the nickname that you usually call her by. This is because the integrity of the answers—and the entire study—rests upon the complete and total anonymity of the participant.

Nonetheless, the records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law.

In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to inadvertently identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with Sally Bishai. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:
The researcher conducting this study is Sally Bishai. You may ask any question you have at this time; if you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact her at sallykischel@yahoo.com, sbishai@fcsu.edu, or sally.bishai@xculturemag.com.

If you would like to contact the faculty advisors of the researcher, their information is:
Dr. Stephen McDowell—850.644.2742 or smcdowell@fcsu.edu
Dr. Felicia Jordan-Jackson—850.644.8771 or fjordan@fcsu.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 310 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 216, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-0633, or by email at humanasubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

A pdf copy of this document is available for download at www.xculturemag.com (click on "consent form").

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers.

CHOOSE ONE:
- I consent to participate in the study and begin SEGMENT ONE, the Survey, NOW!
- I can't complete it at this minute, but I will be back soon.
- I do NOT consent to participate in the study.
Christian Egyptian SURVEY

The Anonymous ID Page

Please create an ANONYMOUS USERNAME for yourself using an English or Arabic word.

This should NOT be a password you commonly use, but it CAN be an email address or screenname that does NOT identify you.

This is so I can link your survey and upcoming interview/questionnaire responses together.

The word should NOT have any reference to your name or any identifiable characteristics, such as screenname, height, weight, hair or eye colour, etc.

***This is to ensure your total anonymity.***

You may wish to also put a sequence of numbers or letters that make your USERNAME difficult to guess; make sure to write it down, however, as you will need it again at the end of this survey, and again during your interview later.

This is so I won’t link your survey with another person who chose EgyptianGirl or JesusLover as their username!

Examples of Acceptable Passwords:
- Helwa999
- benziGr123
- MrAGeooraxY2Z
- EdgarAlaniPOW
- Blondie11235
- XxXlueopatraXx
- SaJaydaRock

Examples of Unacceptable USERNAMES:
- Salsoola99
- MrsYoussef321
- xMimiLv5VetonzX
- SaJeediSally

(Although if your name isn’t sally or youssef or mimi, they’re ok! :)

Once you’ve decided upon your ANONYMOUS USERNAME, please first write it down and keep it handy.

Then, simply TYPE it below.

Ready to begin the survey?

- YES, take me to Page 1 of the survey!
- No, I can’t start the survey now, but I’ll be back later
### Christian Egyptian SURVEY

#### Me, Myself, and I

This page is all about you—from culture to identity to the things you love.

**Check all that apply to you.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-20 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Born in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Born in Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raised in Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raised in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrant to America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrant to Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coptic Orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coptic Protestant/Evangelical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College student (now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduated from college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law/medical school (new)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work in the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live with relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live with spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend church less than 4x yearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend Arabic-speaking church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend American church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active in Arabic-speaking church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anything else you’d like to share?**


### Which cultures did you feel you were a part of WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?


### Which cultures do you feel you’re part of NOW?


263
Christian Egyptian SURVEY

For this question, please name four of your favourites for each category; if you do NOT read/watch/etc., please put "NA" (not applicable). If you wish to SKIP the question, however, please type SKIP.

A. Entertainers (four)
B. Foods (four)
C. Books/movies (four)
D. TV programs/blogs (four)
E. Hobbies (I need four, but you can add as many hobbies as you'd like to)

Check all that apply:

- [ ] Egyptian culture has had a positive impact on my life.
- [ ] Egyptian culture has had a negative impact on my life
- [ ] American culture has had a positive impact on my life
- [ ] American culture has had a negative impact on my life
- [ ] Egyptian culture and/or "the Egyptian way" has sometimes prevented me from doing some of the things I'd like to do
- [ ] I feel that I have to hide certain things in my life from other Egyptians because they wouldn't understand
- [ ] I seem to communicate differently with Americans than I do with Egyptians
- [ ] Some Egyptian Americans I've seen behave differently with Americans than they do with Egyptians
- [ ] I sometimes wish I was ONLY American
- [ ] I sometimes wish I was ONLY Egyptian
- [ ] I generally like having choices from each culture
- [ ] I am generally confused by having choices from each culture
- [ ] I hide things from my family to avoid repercussions
- [ ] If I stepped "out of line," I could be disowned/disowned
- [ ] None of these
Christian Egyptian SURVEY

The Ways I Communicate

This page is all about the ways you communicate with the people in your life.

**Generally speaking:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I prefer to avoid &quot;reading between the lines&quot; when communicating with others</th>
<th>Rarely/No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually/Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If someone makes me happy, I can (or do) tell them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone hurts my feelings, I can (or do) tell them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I need someone’s help, I am direct in my request</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone offers me something, I assume they mean it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I want something done, I clearly state it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person’s WORDS tell me more than their demeanor does</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Generally speaking:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I catch or to what others mean, even when they do not say something directly.</th>
<th>Rarely/No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually/Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can read another person “like a book.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to distinguish between a sincere invitation and one intended as a gesture of politeness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I &quot;drop hints&quot; as to what I want done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always strive for diplomacy in my critiques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person’s DEMENTOR tells me more than their words do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Christian Egyptian SURVEY**

**My Family Roles and Relationships**

**Generally speaking:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely/No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually/Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not share the blame in the bad decisions or failures of family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pursue my personal goals, even if family members disapprove with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disapprove of them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal possessions are mine and mine alone, unless I choose to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>share them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not share the status or success when a family member achieved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>something fabulous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that everyone is entitled to some privacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not my duty to help my parents or siblings out financially when</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they need it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not my duty to financially support my parents when they are old.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If my parents decide upon an establishment of assisted living when they</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are unable to care for themselves, I would have no problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepting their decision/plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Generally speaking:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely/No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I share the status, and/or benefits of a family member’s achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give up some of my goals in order to make my family happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share the credit for a family member’s achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is my duty to contribute financially to my parents and/or siblings, if</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they need it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid some activities or behaviors because they might make my family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is my duty to financially support my parents when they are old.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I should take my parents into my home when they are unable to care for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themselves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to protect my family’s image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Christian Egyptian SURVEY

## Miscellaneous

### Generally speaking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely/No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually/Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I approve of using non-relative baby-sitters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I approve of slumber parties with non-relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I approve of dating and/or boy/girlfriends (whether innocent, casual,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short-term, long-term, serious, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that a woman's &quot;state of virginity&quot; is her own business, not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her family's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that a woman's state of virginity is her own business, not her</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future husband's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify)

### Generally speaking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely/No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually/Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dating—or &quot;getting to know someone&quot; of the opposite sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(conversation, spending time in public places, etc.)—should be for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marriage-seeking purposes only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that dating should only occur when one is ready to marry (i.e.,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>not in high school)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Boy/girlfriends, and/or &quot;physical relationships&quot; should be avoided in the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unmarried</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify)
Christian Egyptian SURVEY

What Would You Do?

This page is all about what you WOULD do in certain situations; take as much or as little space as you need to share your decisions and/or thought process.

If you're not in college, don't have a job, or are already married, for example, answer the way you would handle that situation NOW, as the person you are TODAY. Please feel free to also share how you DID handle something that you've undergone already, and even how you've changed.

If your response depends on something--tone of voice, whether you're talking or in a fight, etc.--tell me what it depends on.

If you need to change a detail in the question in order to answer it more accurately or make it fit with your current situation, feel free to do so, but just make sure to warn me of the change... Thanks again for your participation and can't wait to read your responses!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRETEND that you are 18, and have just been offered a scholarship to a great college. This is good news, because your parents have just bought a new house and don't have much extra money right now. The school is two states away, however; is such a big move away from your family problematic?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRETEND you're 24, single, and live at home (with your family). Your current job is a good one, and after saving up for two years you're now ready to trade in your jalopy and buy your first &quot;grown-up&quot; car. How do you decide what to buy, and how/when do you mention it to your family?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretend you have just recently become engaged to someone you met in the last six months. (Congratulations!)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One day, your fiancé is consoling you over the death of a relative. He/she says &quot;Yeah, so sad about your cousin, she was so young! You said it was a car accident, right?&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT does her or his question suggest to you? (And does it depend on anything, like tone of voice, if they're Egyptian, etc.?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Christian Egyptian SURVEY

PRETEND that one of your American professors says “Gosh, you’re just so articulate!” You take her message to mean:


PRETEND that your brother walks in, caroling “Everyone, I’m engaged!” This is the first any of you have heard of this. You would say:


You’re hanging out with friends and family in one of their houses when you have a sudden urge for some tea (or water, Schweppes, etc.).

How would you obtain it?

Would your course of action change depending on whether you were close to the host or had recently met?


One of your parents has been diagnosed with a chronic (but not life-threatening) condition that requires ongoing management and treatment. Your parents, who live about six hours away, have insurance coverage that takes care of most of the medical care...except for an experimental form of therapy that has proven useful in halting the condition’s progress and symptoms.

You get the feeling that your parent has been suffering more than he/she has let on; moreover, you feel that he/she really wants to try the therapy. You know that your parents would be unable to afford the treatment long-term, though they should be able to manage for a year.

After finishing up a phone conversation with your parents one evening, it occurs to you that your house has an entire wing that is never used, that the therapy is available in your town, and that you have stocks and investments worth over $500,000. Your parents would never expect financial assistance or an invitation to move in with you, much less suggest anything like that. What do you do?


Christian Egyptian SURVEY

How do you usually "wrap up" a phone conversation?

(Meaning "if you had to hang up to go to work, how would you get the other person to stop talking?")

Does it change based upon the person you're speaking with?

(Are you one way with family and another way with colleagues, in other words.)

You're at work and an Egyptian friend asks how you're doing. You say "Great, thanks, you?" to which he answers "Ahamdullilah!" (praise be to God).

You take that to mean:

Now, please indicate IF you're available for the online interview, and WHEN (evenings, mornings, specific days, etc.)

OR

Indicate whether you prefer the same interview questions "at your own pace" in an identical questionnaire.

Finally, please type your USERNAME from before in a separate line.
## APPENDIX F

### LIST OF REVIEWED BLOGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogger/Blog Name</th>
<th>Blog Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4am</td>
<td><a href="http://4amterror.s.blogspot.com">http://4amterror.s.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asrar el Banat</td>
<td><a href="http://asrarelbanat.blogspot.com/">http://asrarelbanat.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen/Diasporic Discontent</td>
<td><a href="http://disaporicdiscontents.com">http://disaporicdiscontents.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallen Essence</td>
<td><a href="http://fallenessence.blogspot.com">http://fallenessence.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ftractive</td>
<td><a href="http://ftractive.wordpress.com/">http://ftractive.wordpress.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghawayesh</td>
<td><a href="http://ghawayesh.blogspot.com/">http://ghawayesh.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midiane</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lymone.com/enme/">http://www.lymone.com/enme/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Unnamed”</td>
<td>Confidential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G
DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONNAIRES, REVISITED

In this appendix, the demographic responses of participants are revealed, as are the responses to the “checkbox question” of cultural conflict and the “scales” of high and low context communication.

Figure 9: Demographic information of questionnaire-takers
The figures immediately above and below display the frequencies of responses provided by a total of 36 questionnaire-takers; it should be noted that the figure above displays its frequencies on the vertical axis, while the figure below notes its frequencies above each respective bar, while the vertical axis displays the percentage.

Figure 10: Questionnaire-taking participants' responses on the "cultural conflicts and impact" question

The remaining charts in this appendix are to do with high and low context communication, respectively; the high context one immediately below shows a higher average per item (overall) than does the low context figure below it—as evidenced by the fact that two “low context” items barely (or don’t) clear the half-way mark (2.5 out of 5).
Furthermore, while the “scales” weren’t as accurate and “telling” as I’d hoped they’d be, it was interesting to note that this particular set (communication style) revealed that participants had a higher overall average\(^5\) of the high context items’ scores (3.913) than they did with regard to the low context items’ scores (3.36)—which corresponds to the whole notion of “Egyptians = high context communication.” On the other hand, the two

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\(^5\) Where “overall average” refers to the arithmetic mean of the average scores given for all six or seven items. Averages were calculated by adding the arithmetic mean of each item, i.e. \(3.24 + 3.65\), et cetera, and then dividing by the number of items.
averages are neither disparate enough\(^6\) from one another, nor extreme enough (as averages of 1.2 or 4.7 might be) to suggest an across-the-board “all or none” mentality, with regards to either style; this, as mentioned in the manuscript, suggests to me that at least some of the participants are selecting (or “tailoring”) their communication styles on a case-by-case basis (whether consciously or unconsciously).

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Figure 12: Averaged scores of the low context communication responses of the questionnaire-takers

\(^6\) It should be noted that I am not making any claims of statistical significance, but am simply reporting a difference, and not that the difference has one particular meaning or another.
APPENDIX H
CASE STUDIES IN CULTURAL WOES

This appendix offers two case studies, each reflecting, analyzing, and expounding upon the intersection of those three communication dimensions examined in this study; blogger Midiane’s case study is based upon a posting that sums up four years of his blog, while El Massry’s case study is rooted in a single, powerful interview.

These participants didn’t write one line or two about the cultural elements that they liked and disliked; rather, they presented lengthy responses which revealed how intertwined and complex their feelings towards their cultures and cultural identities really are (or were at the time).

I should mention that I’d originally hoped to provide an in-depth, line-by-line analysis of every blog posting with relevance to this dissertation, but as the reader will soon learn, my analysis of a 922-word posting that originally filled a page and a half (in block format) has yielded 1,086 words (including less than two-fifths of Midiane’s original post) and occupies over four pages—as does the case study covering El Massry’s entire interview. In other words, while a complete analysis would have convinced me that the misery in these and other cases did actually and accurately come across, this “convincing” was certain to have filled over three hundred pages (and the dissertation was already over four hundred).

Thus, I had to be content with the inclusion of this relatively scant selection of case studies; then again, these cases speak loudly enough that the point will be heard “loud(ly) and clear(ly)” by the audience (and don’t “they” always say that “less is more,” anyway?).

Without further ado, then, I present the stories of Midiane and El Massry.

Too Much on His Plate(s), Yet Still He Hungers:
MIDIANE and the Quest for Affirmation

Midiane is a multi-talented individual, a renaissance man. Many parents would be proud to claim such a bundle of creativity as their own, but Midiane is an Egyptian; this is not to say that Egyptians are against creativity, for ingenuity, or “thinking outside of the box,” is practically a cultural trait. It is to say, however, that Egyptian parents are (often) less-than-enthusiastic if they suspect their offspring of plotting to pursue “the Arts” on a full-time basis.

This is important to note prior to becoming immersed in the excerpt analyzed below (as the back-story does not explicitly appear within the case study), since it was the aforementioned anti-“Art” sentiment which triggered many of the skirmishes
occurring between Midiane and his parents in the days and weeks and months leading up to the situation at hand.

The blogger’s mother was particularly upset after one battle that erupted shortly before the post below was written; her distress over the situation was somehow deduced by a relative, who then took it upon herself to berate Midiane for 1) upsetting his mother, and 2) being rude to her (the relative) during the online conversation which precipitated this blog posting.

The relative then apparently dropped some emotional bombshells on him and absconded soon after, leaving Midiane to deal with the havoc she’d wreaked with her vitriolic words: “Why is this necessary? To just say them and then move on as if words have no power to hurt or ruin,” he pondered, referring to the famous Egyptian communication tactic of ”dibb-ing kalam,” which refers to dumping heavy words onto someone.

Midiane’s first reaction to the unsuccessful online conversation with his mother’s relative is more than unpleasant; since the quarrel’s conclusion, he begins, "my mind has been weak and fraile, unable to focus. I’m shaking from the anger and the tears are really close." Together with the tears came some vitriolic words of his own:

I HATE EGYPT! I HATE EGYPTIANS AND THIS COMPLETELY RUDE, ALIEN, UNLOVING, INTOLERANT CULTURE THAT IS BENT ON BLAMING ME FOR EVERYTHING! I HATE THIS CULTURE THAT DEIFIES PARENTS AND MINIMISES FEELINGS OF OTHERS DOWN TO THE MOST UNIMPORTANT THING IMAGINABLE!

After identifying the issues specific to his culture, he then expresses his negative feelings about his membership in a larger, more general group—that of the global nomads, otherwise known as "third-culture kids."

I hate being a third culture kid. I hate being raised without a culture or home. I hate being raised as a nothing, a wanderer, a cultural and social mutt. I hate this accent, I hate this life.

Shifting then to the way his "rejected membership" made him feel, he continued that:

I hate how I’ve tried for years to be part of this culture which now rejects me, which doesn’t recognise any of my attempts to belong. I hate belonging and wanting to belong and the deep-set feeling of desiring belonging.

In other blog postings, Midiane has written about his parents’ role in his cultural trials, and here reiterates their involvement again, proclaiming that "I
hate my parents." He provides more detail about why he feels this way, writing that they are:

constantly telling me that I am not acting in an Egyptian way, that I'm a bad son, that I'm just this mess who can't do anything right. That I must be advised and reminded of everything because I'm two shakes from being an invalid. Speaking to them about where I am is useless. Speaking to them about my mental and emotional state is futile. Speaking to them about their effect on me...ABSOLUTELY FUCKING USELESS AND FUTILE AND OMG HOW CAN YOU BE SO FUCKING STUPID. HOW CAN YOU EXPECT YOUR PARENTS TO HAVE ANY EMPATHY OR ANY DESIRE TO REACH YOU IN YOUR OWN WAY! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE GARBAGE AND THUS YOU WILL BE FOREVER! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT YOU WILL FOREVER BE IGNORED, DESPISED...!

Such treatment has multiple effects on him, and he continues that:

I hate myself for feeling so shit and weak, the least conversation or word able to ruin me. I hate feeling so vulnerable and weak, so ungrounded and sickly. I hate having to work so hard just to keep myself sane. I hate having to walk around every day of my life with old and new anger.

Then, in this next portion of the posting, he focuses on the tug-of-war with a segment of his soul, writing that:

I hate my birthcountry and I hate the language that I sometimes can't stop speaking simply because it's become such a part of me...I hate the inadvertent lunges into Arabic and slang and humour. I hate it because I can't stop it and stopping it means regutting my identity and left with nothing.

Therein lies the issue: that the "Egyptian" is so great a part of who he is, and yet Egyptians with less travel experience (who have always lived there, in other words) set themselves as grand arbiters of Egyptianness.

At the same time, when the Egyptians with less travel experience not only hold "Egyptianness" over his head, but also hit him over the head with patently-Egyptian forms of communication that he may have been fortunate enough to avoid (or clever enough to ignore), it strengthens the blow against him.

He then asks a question that every Egyptian in the world would wince at: "What do you have when you have neither family nor heritage?" For Egyptians, the family is the biggest, best, and only true support system, while the heritage—
"asl we fasl" [origin and class], as we say—is not only our calling card, but our one and only chance for true greatness among Egyptians.

Saying that someone is "aleel el adab" [lacking in upbringing] or "mesh metrabi" [not raised] or "min 3eyla keda..." [from a family that...] is, therefore, one of the worst sorts of insults you can fling upon an Egyptian. Returning to Midiane, he seems to have found a solution:

I'm going to somehow go on a complete Arabic ban. Because for me, speaking Arabic and being the person that I am is not acceptable to people. If I speak Arabic, it seems to automatically imply that I am Egyptian in every way and I can therefore take your shit.

Or, as I've opined above, it implies that it is acceptable to hit him over the head with the aforementioned patently Egyptian communications. "There is no place for me in this world as a third culture kid," he concludes, labeling himself "a mentality and cultural crossbreed," deciding that there is no place for me in Egypt, Sweden, England, or South Africa. I will always be this freak of nature, the type you piss or spit on when you walk by BECAUSE YOU'RE JUST SO FUCKING WEIRD. How can you sound American yet be born in Egypt? How can you be a Swedish citizen yet have gone to the UK for university? Why aren't you just simple to parse, process, and accept? Why aren't you like this? Why are you so fucking fucked up, you fucking fuck?

Midiane's above reference to technological workings may be a nod to the disapproval his parents have towards his artistic endeavors who, in other postings, are always after him to make greater use of his degree in information technology.

Either way, he reports that "So many conflicting desires and thoughts are in my head, wrestling for dominance and governance," which makes him "angry at myself all the time for not being assertive. Please," he whispers to the Almighty. "Please. I'm tired...and so angry. And so ruined."

EL MASSRY'S Struggles to Feel “Massry”7

El Massry, a twenty-something "global nomad" tells me that he is "originally from Maadi in Cairo," though he decries the posh neighborhood as mere "stuffy pseudo bourgeois."

He continues with the biography, writing that he was born in Egypt, though, as his "father and mother worked in geology for a long time...we spent a long time in the

7 “Massry” is the Arabic masculine form of “Egyptian.”
far east and some of the pacific," among others. "So," he summarizes, "I was born in Egypt, but spent a lot of time between Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, and Australia," until his family returned to Egypt for a "very short time" and settled in France, where he now lives with his family, though he "ended up going to Germany for university."

The first word out of his mouth (or keyboard) when asked to share his feelings about Egyptian culture is "sigh," alerting me to the possibility of mixed emotions, but I do not, as of yet, realize how strongly I will be affected by the sentiments he later expresses. He begins by telling me that he likes "the culture, the food the music..." but struggles with

the people. I always feel left out.... my parents dont think its worth explaining to me things.. so when things happen.. I dont understand n I dont get support..... cuz "ana khawaga" [I am a foreigner] and it doesnt matter and I end up frustrated..... so my take or acceptance on Egyptian culture is a bit isolated... I find it hard to deal with the mentality ... they send mixed signals... they dont want to make an effort... but they get angry when I dont act Egyptian...

His family, he explains, "seem confused about" Egyptian culture, and "say to people theyre liberal," whilst passing judgment on those who aren't, even though "privately theyre very conservative.. maybe even ultra conservative ha ha ha." He then clarifies that "theyve been away from Egypt for a long time, living in far removed cultures," mentioning his

strained relationship with my parents... ive moved back in with them.... a lot of fighting. almost every day.... it gets worse. never a calm day.... so I rebel against them in extreme ways.. to blow steam..... and to feel some independence.... I know it sounds strange.. but.. what can you do?

Despite all that, however, he also reports liking the "depth and breadth of Egyptian culture," as "Egyptians also can be incredibly hospitable and warm.. when theyre not being judgmental.....but that aside," he concludes, "Egypt really is amazing that way...it has magic that is not found anywhere else in the world."

Shifting to the conflicts faced by his Egyptian friends, he writes that they

struggle constantly with being themselves. like me. ... we can never be ourselves.. truly..... thass what I envy about white people... is that they have that freedom..... we dont. we're constantly being told to change or not be this... eventhough society in Egypt is becoming more open... it seems like things r becoming more closed in the diaspora... as a reaction to the west... n its stupid....

Sharing an example from his own life, he writes that he's
been painting for years and have a private collector funding a upcoming show... when it slipped out in church... it was as if I was a leper... n my parents got so angry n almost ripped up my work...

He is quick to point out that there are "others like me..... those whom want to be dancers sculpters... go into public service," recounting that

one guy became a guitarist for a big local jazz band here... n his parents disowned him ... he was engaged to a girl.. girl's family shat on him..... poor guy was devastated... ... now married to an algerian girl.... we dont see him much.... but I keep in contact.. cuz he nows im not like them... but you know in france its all about freedom..... liberte egalite et fraternite :)

So what, specifically, were these freedoms longed for by his friends, and by him?

we just want to do the work that makes us happy... ok some of us dont really care about the faith n church... but those who do.. want it all.... the happy life where we're doing our passion..... n the faith life..... it doesnt have to be a choice of either or like with our parents...

He expounds upon this point, recounting that "our parents say... ur either a Christian... or a musician/painter/singer ... u have to choose..." The problem with this is that, again, "we want to be both at the same time without it being mutually exclusive..." The young artist doesn't feel that mutual exclusivity is the case, however, providing the analysis that "its pure culture but our parents mix culture n religion... n use religious language to effectively issue emotional and cultural fatwas... c'est horrible," he continues, specifying that " mothers do that....anyway."

Speaking of mothers, his seems to object when he makes decisions without consulting with her and his father, resulting in "arguments" with his parents, who "make me doubt myself," noting that "I have to go thru long process to get my confidence back." He reports that his communication with them is above-boards, as "I have nothing to hide, I just try to pick the best moment n say it directly without beating around the bush," adding that he then must "deal with the shit storm afterwards." When I asked what form the storm generally took, El Massry informed me that his parents "shout n screean n swear... n then do silent treatment" which lasts "sometimes for weeks ... so I know they dont approve." He also reports that "theyve sabotaged a few times too... its a lose-lose situation with them."

Shifting to faith, he writes that living the Christian life is "hard in the Orthodox church... ... cuz of the people" as they "judge mostly," crowing that: u dont sound Christian, u dont act Christian, u watch the wrong movies, listen to the wrong music... u should be in sunday school, u should be this, u should be that...
Such expectations only served to distance him, even though "all I wanted to do was to clean the church and be a deacon," telling me that "they basically pushed me to do other stuff." He says that he's over that particular situation, but is quick to note that "im a bit of a dick now with people if they say stuff to me... to keep them away ..." He reports having "tried [white] protestant churches... but a lot of them resemble the world... n im not a big fan of white people," adding that "white french people here can be very racist" and are "not separated from the world." Examples he provides include that "they still get drunk n fornicate" despite membership in and/or regularly attending church, "at least the ones ive been to..."

Shifting to relationships, El Massry, who is engaged to another French Egyptian, provides a balanced critique of the "Egyptian take" on marriage—including "salon marriage" (which he addresses at the end of the passage) writing that

some cultural stuff is useful... and facilitates good living... like how the culture is with marriage... it promotes traditional values that r lost nowadays... adds value to our existence n accentuates our identity... but it has junk about dating... forcing people to engage just to talk to eachothr ..... I dont think its very effective.... its nervewracking for the guy... and its artificial ... I dont mind that when the families r friends or close or acquaintances... its natural.. ... n the dynamic can allow for the guy n girl to talk..... but to go over like a blind date is stupid..

Finally, the artist reveals that his "guidelines for life" are drawn "mostly from the faith," with "some things...tempered by living in the west," resulting in a "more open view on work, career, relationships etc.," though he is quick to add that he does not mean the sort of openness that "betrays my faith... I think about everything I believe," he offers, explicating that "its a constant process" carried out "as I readn learn," surmising that "perhaps the term is enlightenment, non?"
APPENDIX I
STUDY-WIDE PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

While the previous several appendices have examined each “group” of participants—interviewees, questionnaire-takers, and/or bloggers—on its own, this appendix provides a few “big-picture” snapshots of all participants appearing in the study; it must be noted, however, that these snapshots only represent the study’s “official” participants, that is, those with at least one Egyptian parent (in other words, the Florida and Georgia students are not represented below).

It should also be noted that the figures below do not reflect the random would-be participants who marked “male” and “female” (or other contradictory responses), or those who did not complete enough of an instrument to actually “count” as having “completed” one (i.e. “just” the demographic section, and no qualitative responses).

The reason for this is that I do not want to give an inaccurate picture of the participants in this study, neither do I wish to suggest any artificially-inflated findings or themes or trends; however, as noted in the manuscript, some of the responses provided by these not-quite-participants were too significant to abandon.

In sum, while I may report 32 questionnaire-takers in one place and 35 or 37 in another, the discrepancies in numbers aren’t as significant to my findings as are the actual number of instances in which “things” did present themselves; therefore, these figures appear here in the appendix—as a matter of curiosity or record or further illustration, perhaps—and not in the manuscript itself.
Figure 13: Biological sex of "all" participants

Figure 14: Age of "all" participants
Figure 15: Participation type of all participants (total, even those uncounted)
Figure 16: Marital status of "all" participants
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sally Bishai

Sally Bishai is Egyptian American, and greatly enjoys her self-appointed task of enlightening people about what that means.

Her medium of choice is the pen (or keyboard), which she has used to write numerous articles about culture and communication, not to mention politics, the trouble with society, and many other things that will probably get her in trouble; she has also written several books, including the non-fiction titles Mid-East Meets West: On Being and Becoming a Modern Arab American and Date like An Egyptian: The Egyptian’s Guide to Finding a Mate...Or Date, three novels, a philosophical manifesto (!), and two books of poetry.

Sally has also used the microphone, the camera, and the internet quite extensively; in her college days, she spun a scintillating mix of Trance and World Music on her own radio show (which featured her original remixes). More recently, she’s been the producer and host of Sally Bishai’s 30 Minutes With, a web-show that largely focuses on Coptic concerns, civil/human rights issues, and various aspects of culture (particularly that of the “Middle East”); other film projects she’s written, produced, and directed have included Back To Square One? Fifty Years After Emmett Till; Strange Behaviour: How Westerners Feel About Gender Roles in the Middle East; and Children of Kemet: The Copts, Culture, and Democracy of Egypt. And, feeling stifled by the censorship of several mainstream publications who’d previously printed her “less-controversial” work, she founded the online and print X Culture Magazine in January, 2004, and print-only Photo X Quarterly in January 2005.

Finally, Sally earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology (Jacksonville University, 2001), a Master of Arts in Communication Arts (the University of West Florida, 2003), a graduate certificate in Digital Film-Making (Florida State University, 2008), and a Doctor of Philosophy in Speech Communication (Florida State University, 2010); having completed her formal education (or has she?) Sally plans to finish a novel she’s been pretending to work on since 2005, and hopes to return to writing and recording music.

And it will happen—inshallah, and if she doesn't get swept back into “the field” tomorrow!

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8 Arabic for “If God wills it.”