

# CHILDREN OF THE ANCIENT REGIME IN A CHANGING SOCIETY: STUDY OF THE EGYPTIAN STUDENTS AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO\*

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## Preface

This paper represents a portion of a more extensive study of Egyptian secondary and college students in Cairo at both private and governmental educational institutions. The beginnings of a cross-sectional TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) file on Egyptian youth have been implemented. The present paper represents a summary of a detailed survey of student values at American University in Cairo which was administered to a sample of one hundred Egyptian undergraduates. Comparisons are made with earlier American and Lebanese studies.<sup>1</sup>

The study focuses on the somewhat atypical Egyptian students at A.U.C. who tend to represent in origin and orientation the old upper and middle classes of the former society. Values, personality characteristics, occupational preferences, and migration expectations are discussed and related to the problems of adjustment for the children of the old order in a new societal context. We conclude with observations on the future role and functions of an American institution in the United Arab Republic.

*The Setting.* The American University in Cairo is a small, private non-sectarian university chartered in New York fifty years ago. Although it maintains cordial relations with the American University in Beirut, it is affiliated with it or any of the other American colleges in the Near East. It has grown very rapidly in the last six years, but in the fall semester, 1968-69 it still enrolled only 3,964 students in all of its programs:

	(Fall)	(Spring)
Undergraduate	656	616
Graduate	255	226
Special Status	203	160
English Language Institute	193	126
Center of Arabic Studies	74	
Division of Public Service	2583	

\* From a paper originally read at the Middle East Studies Association, Toronto, Canada, Nov. 1969.

<sup>1</sup> See Morris Rosenberg, *Occupations and Values*, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1957, and George Weightman and Siham F. Adham, "Occupational Choices and Mobility Orientation Among Lebanese College Students," *Asian Studies*, Vol. V., No. 2, August 1967, pp. 358-368.

While males (2288) outnumbered females (1676) in total registration, there were more females (394) than males (262) in the undergraduate program. And as we shall see later, this predominance of girls over boys in the undergraduate program is even more pronounced among the Egyptian student group.

In the undergraduate faculty, 419 students were citizens of the United Arab Republic, 95 were from Jordan, and 21 students were Greek nationals. In the graduate faculty the three major nationalities were the United Kingdom (4).

Until the very recent past A.U.C. was often pictured as a "Christian" school catering to the local Greek and Armenian communities. By the fall of 1968, Muslims far outnumbered all others.

	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Others</i>
Undergraduate	394	253	0	12
Graduate	121	122	2	7
Special Status	132	70	1	—
English Language Institute	128	62	1	2
Center of Arabic Studies	6	54	1	13
Division of Public Service	1883	693	—	7
Total	2664	1254	5	41

This was, of course, most marked in the non-credit adult education program of the Division of Public Service, but in all sectors of the University the pattern of Muslim dominance is becoming more pronounced. We call attention to the English Language Institute composition. This branch largely prepares students to qualify to admission in the various A.U.C. faculties.

The changing composition of the student body, especially among the Egyptian nationals, is a reflection of both the rapid decline of the local Armenian and Greek communities and the growing acceptance of Western type education among the more traditional Muslim elements of the society. Thus, the "new campus" wing of the University was formerly the boys technical school and girls academic secondary school for the now retrenching Greek Community. Similarly undergraduate Egyptian students are far more likely to be girls than boys. The first girl ever admitted to A.U.C. was provided with a special educational program to minimize traditional objections. Now A.U.C. is rapidly acquiring a reputation as a "girls' school."

Technically, the American University in Cairo has been under sequestration since the renewal of armed conflict in June 1967 and the breaking of diplomatic relations between the United Arab Republic and United States of America. Actually, the University with only minor interruptions has functioned effectively throughout this period of tension. Relations between the sequestrators and the University administrators and faculty have been most cordial and harmonious. Indeed, with the

continued absence of an embassy staff, some have described one of the major tasks of the A.U.C. as that of "maintaining an American presence."<sup>2</sup> Throughout this period the University has continued to receive necessary financial support from private American foundations and governmental counter-part funds.

The United Arab Republic still does not recognize the degrees granted by the University although exceptional cases have been and are now being accepted.<sup>3</sup> Such an existing policy is naturally crucial in the Afro-Asian context where college training is often seen as a preparation for government service. In addition, academically qualified Egyptian students can attend national universities free. While the tuition costs at American University in Cairo may seem modest by American standards, they are rather high by Egyptian standards. Although scholarship programs are being developed, it still remains true that many of the students at A.U.C. are academically and/or linguistically barred from attending national universities but financially able to meet the costs of private schooling. As we shall see, the socio-economic background and cultural orientation of a student body preparing for a degree not recognized by their own government supplies interesting insights into values, personality characteristics, occupation preferences, and migration expectations. The Egyptian student at the American University is *not* the typical Egyptian college student, but his (or more properly her) influence, at least in the past, is not to be minimized. The administrators of the university are naturally sensitive to such a situation.

### *The Sample Selection*

The entire undergraduate faculty for the second semester of the academic year 1968-69 numbered 616 (of which 243 were males and 373 were females). The religious distribution was: 394 Muslims, 253 Christians, 2 Jews and 7 others. The Egyptian nationals numbered 409 — about two-thirds of the undergraduate group. After eliminating 26 Egyptian part-time students and 58 students of foreign origin (e.g. Greek, Armenian, Lebanese, and Syrian) the total number from which we drew our sample was 325. (See Table 1 for breakdown of "universe" and sample by class and sex).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from a presidential orientation lecture to new faculty in October 1968.

<sup>3</sup> By 1970 degrees were being recognized more easily.

TABLE I  
Distribution of Egyptian Students and Sample by Class and Sex

	Sex					
	Males		Females		Totals	
	Students	Sample	Students	Sample	Students	Sample
Freshman	32	17	111	18	143	35
Sophomore	19	11	59	12	78	23
Junior	13	10	27	9	40	19
Senior	18	12	46	11	64	23
Total	82	50	243	50	325	100

Since our greater study is interested in sex differences in values and aspirations, it was necessary to use a stratified random sample rather than a mere random sample. The Egyptian girls at AUC outnumber the boys by nearly three to one. Our sample was randomly selected by sex, but the proportion of males in the sample is one-half while in the total university it is one-third. Thus, our sample is not truly representative of our universe but it does supply us with a male sample large enough for more detailed analysis. (An earlier random sample yielded, not unsurprisingly, 25 males and 75 females).

The technique used to collect the data was direct questioning from a structured interview schedule administered by an interviewer (an Egyptian Armenian)<sup>4</sup> privately to the interviewers. The main questions dealt with the respondent's socio-economic background, value orientation, personality characteristics, occupational preferences, and migration expectations. With the exception of the migration category, it largely represented a replication of studies done earlier in America and Lebanon. The interview period covered six weeks. Each interview averaged from thirty to forty minutes.

#### *Background Characteristics*

As indicated by Table II, the parents of our sample group are far better educated than the national average. It is estimated that in the last generation only ten per cent of the population were literate. Yet, nearly ninety per cent of the parents have a high school education or better, indeed, nearly 80% of the fathers and 14% of the mothers have had a college education or more. Comparison of the present AUC sample with an earlier sample (1961) from American University of Beirut shows striking differences (Table II). The educational attainment of both the fathers and mothers is much higher than those of the Lebanese parents. Indeed, in most American universities such

<sup>4</sup> Miss Sima S. Kirikian was responsible for all of the interviewing and initial analyses.

a similar parental educational attainment would not be found. Clearly such an educational attainment in a country like Egypt reflects a very high socio-economic status—higher than even that of what might have been regarded as a similar group in Lebanon.

TABLE II  
Parental Educational Background of Egyptian  
and Lebanese Sample Groups

Level of Education	AUC (1969)		AUB (1961)	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Elementary or Less	3	14	30	46
High School or Less	18	72	34	42
College or more	79	14	36	12
Total	100	100	100	100

The greatest number (36) of the fathers of the study group were engaged in government service. Businessmen ranked second highest (26). Land owners and engineers tied for third (12 each). Eight of the fathers were doctors. Again, such an occupational distribution reflects the traditional upper class background of the student body.

Similarly, forty-three per cent of the fathers were said to earn a yearly income of 2,500 Egyptian pounds or more. However, almost one-fifth (19) of the fathers were reported to earn less than 1,200 Egyptian pounds. Significantly, the Egyptian students at A.U.C. report that they come from more wealthy families than did the Lebanese students at A.U.B. Although education of father was related to income, there was a wealthy less educated subgroup which represented nearly twenty per cent of those who receive more than 2,500 pounds per year. This small group of "self-made men" and their families tended to depart from many of the more general patterns of the group.

Muslims represented more than two-thirds of the sample group (70%). Such a representation may have been exaggerated by the exclusion from the sample of Egyptians of foreign origins who tend to be overwhelmingly Christian (Gregorian, Orthodox, Melkite, and Maronite). However, as noted earlier the student body is increasingly becoming Muslim and departing from the old image of A.U.C. as a Christian enclave. Analysis revealed no significant educational and economic differences among the two religious groups (Muslims and Copts) in our sample. Nevertheless, the reported economic status of the Muslims is a little bit higher than that of the Copts. While the males are slightly more likely to be Muslim (76%), there is no marked sex-religious link to complicate the data.

*Values and Work Orientation*

Nearly one-third (32%) said that they expected their major life satisfaction (Table III) to come from a career or occupation. Male students (44%) were more career oriented than females (20%) but even they were less than the earlier male Lebanese sample in which 53% indicated a career orientation. In contrast the Rosenberg study of American males found only 25% ranking career or occupation as their expected major life satisfaction. For American females, only 8% so indicated. Although rated as second highest in the American study, it trailed far behind expectation from family relations.

TABLE III  
Sex and Expected Major Life Satisfaction

	Frequency				Total
	Males		Females		
	No.	%	No.	%	
Major Life Satisfaction					
Career or Occupation	22	44	10	20	32
Family Relations	6	12	21	42	27
Political Activities	12	24	9	18	21
Leisure-Recreation	6	12	6	12	12
Religious Beliefs or Activities	4	8	4	8	8
Total	50	100%	50	100%	100

When confronted with a decision for an occupational choice, some students tend to seek "Extrinsic rewards" (security, status, wealth), others seek "self expression" (use of abilities, creativity, and freedom from supervision), and still others stress "Interpersonal relations" (helpfulness and relating to others). Our sample group stressed those "requirements" for an ideal job which stressed "use of abilities: and creativity. As with similar studies, those who are financially secure tend to de-emphasize the importance of extrinsic rewards — perhaps because wealth and status are just assumed.

Almost half (44%) of the sample indicated a desire to migrate after their graduation. Thirty of the fifty males expressed a desire to migrate. There was almost no difference from one class to another. This would seem to indicate a selective factor in attendance at the American University in Cairo. Many attend A.U.C. because they (or their families) have decided to migrate. When asked why they enrolled at A.U.C. only four said that it was because they wanted to migrate. However, twenty-five said that it was because they wanted to study in English and thirty-five per cent indicated an interest in the opportunities and academic facilities. English training and/or academic opportunities may be a factor in migration expectations. Certain-

ly there is much concern and joking about the prospects for migration. Some students cynically express a greater interest in a visa than in a degree. (Interestingly enough, twenty-three students specifically stated that they had come to A.U.C. precisely because they were ineligible, barred, or failed from a national university).

### *General Analysis*

Our study related many variables such as sex, religion, father's occupation, father's annual income, and educational background of parents to such dependent variables as occupational choice and migration expectation. Here we shall summarize only some of the major findings.

As has been observed in studies in many societies, there is a marked tendency for sons to follow their father's occupation. In our sample, this was particularly true for sons whose fathers are owner of private businesses. Students of high family economic background (39%) are more likely to choose business, while those from lower income families are more likely to choose careers in social or physical sciences (40%).

Not surprising, there is a striking difference in the pattern of occupational choice of sex. In business and the physical science males greatly outnumber females, while the latter chose social work and (perhaps unexpectedly) government work. (Of course females may have a different image of government work (e.g., a secretarial position). In general, an A.U.C. graduate whose degree may not be recognized by the local authorities might experience difficulties in obtaining a government job. Yet, nearly one-fourth of the males and one-third of the females expressed a preference for government employment.

There was a relationship between religious background and occupational choice although possessing a low level of significance. Muslims give greatest preference to government service (34%) and business (30%) while the smaller Christian group wound up in the residuals (housewife, arts, sports, tourism, secretary, journalism) 27% and social work, 23%. There is an even more striking relationship between religion and migration preference when linked to sex. Muslim males are more likely to express a preference for migration than Coptic males, but Coptic females are more likely to express a preference for migration than Muslim females.

The socio-cultural value orientation of the students is determined by such independent variables as sex, religion, and socio-economic status of family. There will be a marked difference in the value orientation patterns by sex group. A significantly greater proportion of male students, as compared to females, place high value on self-expression. A greater proportion of females place higher value on interpersonal relations.

Nearly half of the Muslims express an orientation toward self-expression. Two-fifths of the Christians express an orientation to interpersonal relations. Students from lower socio-economic status (as measured by father's income or education) tend to express a marked orientation toward self-expression. But students from the higher status group show no such discernible pattern of emphasizing.

The relationship between value orientation and occupational choice is usually clear cut. Those who choose the field of business tend to stress the value of extrinsic rewards, while those who choose social work stress the value of interpersonal relationships. However, a sharp contrast is remarkable between the Egyptian, Lebanese, and American sample groups of those desiring to enter into government service and their value orientation. In the present study, only 24% of those choosing government service expressed an interest in extrinsic reward values in contrast to 73% of the Lebanese sample group. In the Egyptian sample, students in government service were oriented toward self-expression (45%). A still different pattern was expressed by the American sample group, where interpersonal relations was ranked relatively high by those who desire to engage in government service. Clearly the nature of government service is perceived very differently in the three societies.

Males were more likely to display detached personality characteristics than females. Half of the small Christian sample could be classified as detached while only one-third of the Muslim sample. For both religious groups and for both sex groups (see Tables IV and V), the "aggressive" personality always represented the smallest proportion of the three personality categories ("Detached," "compliant," and "aggressive"). Such a finding is clearly in line with the socio-anthropological literature on Egyptian personality. Interestingly enough this was the most common type (37%) in the Lebanese sample.

TABLE IV  
Sex and Personality Characteristics

		Personality Characteristics							
		"Detached"		"Compliant"		"Aggressive"		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Males		22	44	15	30	13	26	50	100
Females		16	32	20	40	14	28	50	100

TABLE V  
Religion and Personality Characteristics

	"Detached"		"Compliant"		"Aggressive"		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Muslims	23	34	27	38	20	28	70	100
Christians	15	50	8	27	7	23	30	100



Paradoxically, Copts (Egyptian Christians) possess more detached personality types but express values stressing interpersonal relations. This may reflect their real or fancied minority status. In general, the present study did not find the marked relationship between personality characteristics and selection of occupational values that were demonstrated in the earlier studies. To the extent that their personality configuration does not fit them for their future careers, we may expect considerable frustration and ineffectiveness. Many in our sample appear to be choosing occupations (especially social work and teaching) and affirming values inconsistent with their personality configuration. We hope to explore this whole issue of personality by more projective and non-structural means. As noted earlier, Muslims, especially males, express a greater desire to migrate (see Table VI). Only among the females, are Christians more likely to indicate a greater desire to migrate (see Table VII).

TABLE VI  
Religious Background and Migration Preference of Males

	Want to Migrate		Not Want to Migrate		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Muslims	25	65	13	35	38	100
Christians	5	42	7	58	12	100
	<hr/> 30	<hr/> 60%	<hr/> 20	<hr/> 40%	<hr/> 50	<hr/> 100%

TABLE VII  
Religious Background and Migration Preference of Females

	Want to Migrate		Not Want to Migrate		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Muslims	7	22	25	78	32	100
Christians	7	39	11	61	18	100
	<hr/> 14	<hr/> 28%	<hr/> 36	<hr/> 72%	<hr/> 50	<hr/> 100%

There is a marked relationship between the economic status of the students and a desire to migrate. Sixty percent of the students who come from the higher income families express such a desire in contrast to one-third of the students from more modest income families. Similarly those who choose business as a future career are more likely to welcome the prospects of migration. Nearly two-thirds who value extrinsic rewards hope to migrate while only twenty-eight percent of those who stress interpersonal values indicate such a migration desire. Slightly less than half (47%) of those who are oriented toward self-expression hope to migrate. Financial hopes and expectations appear crucial in motivating migration desires. Nearly half of those who would like to migrate would

prefer some European country (England, France, West Germany, or Switzerland). The United States was ranked second, followed by Canada, Australia, or some other Arab country (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco).

*Implication: Function and Objectives of A.U.C.*

Rather than merely summarize our general findings, we prefer to discuss the implications of our findings for the nature and purposes of the American University in Cairo. In the past, the smaller university drew its student body from the alien marginal trading peoples in Cairo (chiefly Greeks and Armenians). Today, the larger school enrolls far more students of Egyptian origin, but the student body is still not representative of Egyptian student population. The student body is largely composed of the elements of the traditional elite and the old middle class (in contrast to what has been referred to as the "new middle class"). In addition, the student body is becoming more and more female. If anything, the tendency is becoming more and more pronounced. (An Anthropology professor there, has described it as a "finishing school for wealthy girls.")

In large part, the socio-economic background and sexual composition of the student body are both products of the existence of a relatively expensive private school in a society which does not recognize fully the college degree and in addition provides a massive system of free university training. A scholarship program and final recognition might provide for a more balanced and diversified student body.

However, an even greater problem is the fact that nearly half of the students (44%) hope to migrate after finishing their college education. Amongst males the rate is much higher (60%). Incidentally, among the Egyptian student groups which we excluded (Greek, Armenian, or Syrian in origin) the rate approaches nearly one hundred per cent. A.U.C. has been likened to almost "an underground railroad" to the United States and/or Canada.<sup>5</sup> Apparently a large number of students enter the University in the expectation that attendance and graduation will facilitate their migration prospects. The question naturally arises if this is the envisioned purpose of the American University in Cairo. One customarily has tended to think the purpose or idealized goal of such an institution to be the training of future leaders and technicians in a developing nation who will be favorably disposed and oriented to America and her institutional structures. It now appears that the school is increasingly being oriented to some sort of visa or travel office for the recruitment of trained white collar workers. One may wonder if any alien educational institutional agency can ever be functionally and effectively integrated.

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<sup>5</sup> From a conversation with the Chairman of the Department of Anthropology.

Crucially this emerging problem is not merely a problem concerning American University in Cairo. The so-called "liberal" reforms in the American immigration laws are beginning to create a marked "brain-drain" in all the emerging nations. Canada, Australia, and other nations also actively compete for the limited pools of trained professionals in many of the Afro-Asian nations. Many students from these countries who train in the West never return permanently to their homeland. (For some national groups, the proportion has been placed as high as ninety-five percent.) In addition, many who were trained in their own national universities are being recruited. Actually the problem is still quite recent and relatively minor. It is becoming of more immediate concern in several South and Southeast Asian countries. Nevertheless, the problem is clearly pressing in the small, heavily subsidized American University in Cairo. What are to be the long range commitments and goals of a small American university in a foreign nation if the majority of its student body expect to migrate in the near future? Many of the faculty and administrators at A.U.C. have tended to dismiss the question as a short range problem peculiarly related to the past 1967 tensions. There is nothing about the "brain drain" crisis, however, which is peculiarly Egyptian or even Middle Eastern. The issues involved are economic, political, and social on a massive and world wide scale. Increasingly, "mission schools" are viewed with disfavor. The cultural marginality of their finished products made them ineffective agencies for the transition to modernization as distinct from the narrower conceptualization of westernization.