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CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTION
OF MARRIAGE IN EGYPT FROM 1998 TO 2012

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Abstract

Fear over the perceived breakdown of the institution of marriage plagues many Egyptian policy-makers and members of the public. This study examines the trajectory of marriage behaviors in three nationally-representative surveys spanning the period 1998 to 2012 to determine whether this fear is justified. It also investigates socio-demographic variations in marriage practices at each time point. Overall, this study finds that marriage is nearly universal in Egyptian society, and both never-marriage and divorce are extremely rare over time and across all socio-demographic groups. Between 1998 and 2006, marriage was increasingly postponed to older ages, but starting in 2006, marriage began occurring earlier in the life-cycle for some groups. At the same time, in the period 2006 to 2012, engagement durations have risen slightly, unions between first cousins have declined slightly, and nuclear families are established by a considerably higher percentage of newlyweds upon marriage. Finally, there is some empirical support for the claim that marriage expenditures have risen over time.

JEL Classification: J11, J12

Keywords: Egypt, marriage, nuptiality, age at marriage, divorce, engagement, consanguinity, cousin marriage, nuclear families, marriage costs.

ملخص

الخوف من انهيار مؤسسة الزواج يصيب العديد من صانعي السياسة المصرية وأفراد الجمهور. تهدف هذه الورقة لدراسة مسار سلوكيات الزواج في ثلاثة مسوح وطنية تغطي الفترة 1998-2012 لتحديد ما إذا كان هذا الخوف له ما يبرره. انها تحقق أيضا في الاختلافات الاجتماعية والديموغرافية في ممارسات الزواج في كل نقطة زمنية. وعموما، وجدت هذه الدراسة أن الزواج هو عالمي تقريبا في المجتمع المصري، وحالات كلا من الذين لم يتزوجوا أبدا والمطلقين نادرة للغاية على مر الزمن وعبر جميع الفئات الاجتماعية والديموغرافية. وبين عامي 1998 و 2006، تأخر الزواج على نحو متزايد لأعمار أكبر، ولكن ابتداء من عام 2006، بدأ الزواج في أعمار أقل لبعض الفئات. في نفس الوقت، في الفترة من 2006 إلى 2012، ارتفعت فترات الخطوبة قليلا، وانخفضت نسبة الارتباط بين الأقارب من الدرجة الأولى قليلا، ويتم بناء وحدة اجتماعية من الأسر بنسبة مئوية أعلى بكثير من المتزوجين حديثا. وأخيرا، هناك بعض الدعم التجريبي للدعاء بأن نفقات الزواج قد ارتفعت مع مرور الوقت.

1. Background and Introduction

In recent years, Egyptian policy-makers and the public have expressed considerable alarm over perceived transformations in the institution of the family. Almost all of these concerns revolve around the belief that the fundamental process through which new sexual unions are formed and children are reproduced - marriage - is breaking down. For instance, the last several years have seen the emergence of a public discourse around the perceived postponement of marriage to successively older ages and the perceived increase in never-marriage (Sholkamy 2008a; Salem forthcoming). In addition to this preoccupation with young people's retreat from marriage, there is also widespread concern that those who have entered into marital unions are dissolving them at unprecedented rates (Cuno 2008). The idea that new types of sexual unions are proliferating among young Egyptians has further fueled the moral alarm felt by those who fear for the future of the family (Abaza 2001).

Breakdown in the institution of marriage provokes concern in the Arab region's most populous country for a number of reasons. Marriage constitutes the only legitimate mechanism through which individuals can access certain privileges in Egyptian society. *First*, parental co-residence is expected of most young Egyptians, and residential independence is usually established first upon marriage. *Second*, sexual relations outside of marriage are widely frowned upon (Singerman 1995; Hoodfar 1997). *Third*, marriage is the sole social institution providing certain protections, as is the case in many patriarchal societies with weak welfare states (Kandiyoti 1988). For women, social respectability and economic support flow through family relations. The financial security of adult women in particular is contingent on the ability and willingness of their male kin to provide support. Women who are unmarried (either because of never-marriage, divorce, or widowhood) are a particularly vulnerable population group that Egyptian society regards with apprehension (Sholkamy 2008a). In the absence of social institutions that may replace marriage as a pathway to the privileges of adulthood and as a supplier of economic protection, a breakdown in marriage would have wide-reaching consequences for Egyptian society.

However, just what evidence exists for the shifts widely thought to be affecting marriage in Egypt today? To date, the literature has lacked a comprehensive descriptive examination of the institution of marriage in Egypt. This paper employs the 1998, 2006, and 2012 Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS) to fill this gap, analyzing patterns in marriage behavior over time and across socio-demographic groups. Using retrospective reports from ever-married respondents obtained in the three cross-sections, this paper describes the duration of engagement by socio-demographic characteristic and across time. It also investigates the prevalence of various marital statuses, including divorce and widowhood, from 1998 to 2012. It next examines the timing of first marriage for men and women, and uncovers differences in marriage timing across various socio-demographic groups. It also investigates the incidence of never-marriage in contemporary Egypt and identifies the groups among which it is most common and how this has changed over successive birth cohorts. The ELMPS data also make possible the investigation of the decline in consanguinity and the rise in nuclear family living arrangements in Egypt over time. Finally, this paper analyzes patterns and trends in matrimonial expenditures in Egypt using a special module in the ELMPS designed for this purpose.

2. Duration of Engagement

In Egypt, the marriage process unfolds over several stages. For Muslim Egyptians, the first stage is an informal engagement called the *qirayet fatiha*. This is followed by a more formal engagement (*khutouba* or *shabka*) in which engagement rings are exchanged and a celebration is hosted by the bride's family. Among Coptic Christians, the *khutouba* is further formalized in a Church ceremony called the *nuss ekleel*. Among Muslims, the next stage in the marriage process is the *katb kitab*, in which the bride and groom sign a marriage contract.

However, consummation and cohabitation for Muslims and Christians do not occur until the wedding (*farah* or *dukhla*). Although on occasion, two of these events are combined and held on the same day, they may also be separated by several months or years.

Some have argued that social changes witnessed in Egypt (particularly inflation in the costs of marriage) have resulted in prolonged engagements in which young people find themselves neither single nor married (Singerman and Ibrahim 2001; Singerman 2007). The ELMPS data make possible the estimation of the time that elapses from individuals' informal engagements to their weddings, both among different socio-demographic groups, and across time. The engagement duration variable was not fielded in 1998. In the 2006 cross-section, questions on the duration of engagement were posed to ever-married women aged 16-49. In the 2012 cross-section, questions on the duration of engagement were posed to ever-married women and men aged 18-39. For the minority of those who were married more than once, the specific marriage to which these questions pertained was the current (for those presently married) or most recent (for those widowed or divorced) marriage.

Differentials in the length of engagements across socio-demographic groups are displayed in Table 1 for ever-married women aged 18-39, comparing the 2006 and 2012 data. It is important to note that the socio-demographic characteristics displayed here are current characteristics. That is, they do not reflect the characteristics of the respondent at the time of engagement, but rather at the time of the survey. In other words, a woman may have been a rural resident at the time of her engagement, but has since moved to a city, where she lived at the time of her participation in the ELMPS. Table 1's disaggregation by socio-demographic characteristic must be interpreted with caution to the extent that such individual characteristics shift over time.

Among ever-married women who wed within the five years preceding the survey the mean length of engagement was approximately 15 months in 2006 and 14 months in 2012 (Table 1). At both time points there is evidence that engagements are longer in urban areas compared to rural areas. In both 2006 and 2012, the region recording the longest engagement durations was the Suez Canal and Alexandria and the regions recording the shortest engagement durations were urban and rural Upper Egypt. Generally, engagement duration increases with increasing educational attainment of the bride.

Table 1 also provides an indication of how the duration of engagement has evolved over time in Egypt. As noted above, recently-married female respondents reported shorter engagements in 2012 compared to 2006. When this general trend is disaggregated by socio-demographic characteristics, we find a reduction in the length of the engagement for all groups with the exception of rural residents (whose engagement duration remained the same) and rural Lower Egyptians (whose engagement durations increased slightly).

3. Current Marital Status

Marriage as a life-course event is one that is experienced by virtually all Egyptians, male and female. This finding echoes the results of other researchers, who have noted that in Egypt at least, marriage is practically universal (Rashad 2000; Rashad et al 2005; El-Zanaty and Way 2009). The universality of marriage does not shift considerably in the 14-year period between 1998 and 2012, as shown by Figure 1. By age 50, the percentage of women and men who have never married ranges from nearly 0% to approximately 3% in the samples surveyed in 1998, 2006, and 2012. Figure 1 also shows that Egyptian women enter into marital unions earlier than do men, a pattern that holds across the three time points. However, an examination of the youngest women for whom we have data (those aged 15-19 and 20-24) does not reveal a visible postponement of marriage between 1998 and 2012, as we might expect. Instead, fewer women in these age groups are never married across time, indicating slightly earlier ages at first marriage from 1998 to 2012 (Figure 1, Panel A). The same

pattern holds for never marriage among men aged 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34, however, among men the trend towards younger entry into marriage occurs mostly between the years 1998 to 2006 (Figure 1, Panel B).

The age pattern of other marital statuses are displayed in Table 2 for the 2012 round of the ELMPS, and I describe how this compares to the same patterns found in 1998 and 2006. The ‘never married’ column in this table includes those who may be in the contractual marriage (or *katb kitab*) stage but have not yet consummated their unions. The ‘never married’ column in Table 2 confirms the impression given by panels A and B of Figure 1, namely that the chances of remaining single diminish as Egyptians age, although this occurs more rapidly for women than it does for men. The risk of marriage, defined here as having entered the consummation and cohabitation stage of a marital union, rises concomitantly with age.

Table 2 provides further insight into marital dissolution in contemporary Egypt. For most Egyptians, the most common route out of marriage is the death of a partner. The risk of becoming a widow or widower increases steadily over the life course, as we might expect. This status is also much more prevalent among older women than it is among older men due to gender norms regarding spousal age differences in Egyptian society, combined with women’s higher life expectancy (Yount and Sibai 2009). Between 1998 and 2012, the percentage of women aged 60-64 who are widowed declined slightly from 47-49% in 1998 and 2006 (figures not displayed), to 44% in 2012. This may reflect a slight narrowing of the spousal age gap over time.

Divorce is the second route out of marriage, but it is relatively rare in Egypt. The percentage of divorcees in the adult population does climb with age, although the risk of divorce does not rise with increasing exposure to the same extent as does widowhood. It is important to note that the ELMPS questionnaires only gathered data about current marital status. So for example, if a woman had married, divorced, and remarried, and was thus in her second marriage at the time of the ELMPS interview, she would be classified as married by the survey. Therefore, the percentage of the population that is divorced in the ELMPS is an underestimate of the total divorce rate in Egypt.

There is limited evidence in the ELMPS data that divorce is becoming more common over time in Egypt. In 1998, the percentage of women in the oldest age groups who were divorced was around 2% (figure not displayed), whereas in 2012, the percentage of women in the oldest age groups who were divorced was around 3% (Table 2). For men in the same age groups, the percentage divorced went from less than 0.5% (figure not displayed) to approximately 2% (Table 2). This negligible increase could well be due to sampling variation, and does not necessarily support the widespread perception that divorce is on the rise. However, vital registration data is needed to definitively confirm this impression of stable divorce rates (see for example Osman and Girgis 2009).

4. Marriage Timing

The timing of entry into marital unions is an important marker of the beginning of full adult status in Egyptian society as well as a key metric of potential completed fertility. It is apparent from Figure 1, as well as Table 2, that men marry considerably later than women do in Egypt. Among all women surveyed in 1998, 31% had married by age 18, 80% had married by age 25, and 92% had married by age 30 (Table 3). In 2006, the percentage of women marrying at the youngest ages had declined relative to 1998. Only 24% reported having married by 18, 76% reported having married by 25, and 91% reported having married by 30. In 2012, 21% of the sample of women had married by 18, 78% had married by 25, and 93% had married by age 30. These last findings reflect further abandonment of the practice of adolescent marriage in particular, and stand in contrast to the earlier ages at marriage for

women over time indicated by Figure 1. At the same time, from 2006 to 2012, Table 3 suggests very slight increases in the percentage of women married by the oldest ages.

For all three points in time, rural women married earlier than urban women, as evidenced by higher percentages marrying at every age among rural residents (Table 3 shows marriage by socio-demographic characteristics in 2012; figures for other years not displayed). Rural Upper Egyptian women reported marrying the earliest among all regions. There is also a clear socio-economic gradient in marriage timing such that the more educated women are, the more likely they are to have postponed marriage to older ages. In spite of this, women in 1998, 2006, and 2012 were undifferentiated by socio-demographic characteristic in terms of likelihood of having married by age 50. Across all three time points, nearly all women were ever-married by this age, suggesting that reports of a growing trend of 'spinsterhood' are without empirical foundation (Table 3).

As for men interviewed in 1998, only 1% had married by age 18, 31% had married by age 25, and 68% had married by age 30 (Table 3). Among men interviewed 8 years later in 2006, 1% reported marrying by 18, 28% reported marrying by 25, and 66% reported marrying by 30. In 2012, 2% had married by 18, 31% had married by 25, and 71% had married by 30. This suggests a very slight shift to earlier entry in marital unions for both men and women between 2006 and 2012, a trend which has been detected in other studies as well (Assaad, Binzel and Gadallah 2010; Assaad and Krafft 2014).

In terms of socio-demographic differentials in marriage timing among men, rural residents, those from rural Upper Egypt, and those who had not completed elementary schooling married at the youngest ages overall in 1998, 2006, and 2012. As is the case for women, by age 50 nearly all men had been married across all three rounds of the survey.

The trend of changing ages at first marriage across time for women noted above can be examined more directly by breaking the percentage of women married by every age down according to their birth cohort. The same exercise is carried out for men to assess whether there is evidence of dropping male ages at first marriage in Egypt.

The percentages of women married by various ages among all women interviewed in 1998 are shown in Figure 2, Panel A. From the birth cohorts of the late 1940s to the birth cohorts of the late 1970s, we see that the percentage of women married by age 30 has remained steady, the percentage of women married by age 25 has declined slightly, and the percentage of women married by age 18 had dropped considerably (Figure 2, Panel A). This suggests a compression in the age at first marriage over time during this period, so that first unions among women became concentrated in the years between 20 and 30 years of age. Breaking this down by rural/urban residence shows that the steepest decline in adolescent marriage occurred among rural women, the group with the highest prevalence of adolescent marriage to begin with. Among women interviewed in 2006, similar patterns obtain (Figure 2, panel B). Again, the percentage of those married by age 18 declines most sharply over successive birth cohorts, and this is driven primarily by postponement in rural women's unions in the 2006 data.

Unexpectedly, Figure 2, Panel C, shows that among the most recent birth cohorts of women interviewed in 2012, a different pattern holds. Among all women, there is evidence of a return to earlier ages at first marriage, as suggested by the uptick in percentages marrying by age 18 and 25 in particular (this holds for urban women). It seems that among rural women, the trend of dropping ages at first marriage has stalled, as indicated by the stagnated rates for marriage by ages 18 and 30. Compared to earlier birth cohorts, a slightly higher percentage of the most recent birth cohorts of rural women wed by age 25. The reduction in female ages

at first marriage is a curious development that warrants monitoring to determine whether this trend will continue beyond 2012.

Next I examine marriage timing among men using the same metric of percentages marrying by ages 18, 25, and 30. Trends in the percentage of men marrying by each age indicate that Egyptian men's marriage has been and remains fairly uncommon before age 18. For all men interviewed in 1998, it appears that there was little change over successive birth cohorts in the percentage of men entering into wedlock by age 18. Among the cohorts of men born from the late 1940s to the mid 1960s, declining shares of men married by age 25 and 30 suggest that age at marriage was being postponed to older and older ages (Figure 3, Panel A). The latter was largely driven by declines in the percentage of rural men entering into wedlock by the third decade of life; still, the overall percentage of rural men marrying by 30 is greater than the percentage of urban men marrying by 30. Therefore, according to the 1998 data, recent cohorts of urban Egyptian men are at especially high 'risk' of marrying late.

Among those men who constitute the 2006 sample, percentages marrying by every age exhibited a general downward trend between the birth cohorts of the late 1940s to the birth cohorts of the mid-1960s. However, for the most recent birth cohorts of all men (Figure 3, Panel B), and for both rural and urban men, there is evidence of growth in the proportion marrying by ages 25 and 30. This means that for those men who reached marriageable ages in 2000-2004, marriage has been occurring at younger ages. For those who view Egyptian men's delayed marriage as a social problem, this may be a welcome development.

My final consideration of marriage timing has to do with the proportions of men marrying by every age in the 2012 data. Figure 2, Panel C confirms that the trend of increasing postponement of marriage among Egyptian men has in fact been reversed. The pattern of earlier marriages among men is evident starting first in urban areas among the birth cohorts of the early and late 1970s, a greater percentage of whom marry by ages 25 and 30 compared to earlier cohorts. This pattern of earlier marriage then followed among men in rural areas. This lends further support to Assaad, Binzel and Gadallah's (2010) and others' (Assaad and Ramadan 2008) observations that the marriage 'crisis' for Egyptian men may be easing.

5. First Cousin Marriage

Across the Arab region, the ideal marriage partner for young brides and grooms is often considered to be the paternal first cousin. Egyptians in particular articulate several rationales for kin endogamy, with avoiding the fragmentation of the patrilineage's property and protecting the bride's interests being chief among those rationales (Tabutin et al 2005; Sholkamy 2008b). The ELMPS 2006 and 2012 questionnaires contain questions about kin relations between husbands and wives before marriage, permitting an investigation into differentials in cousin marriage across socio-demographic groups and across time. In 2006, these questions were posed to ever-married women aged 16-49, whereas in 2012 they were posed to ever-married respondents of both genders aged 18-39. In both questionnaires, these questions refer to the current or last marriage of those married more than once.

Restricting the sample to women 18-39 years old who wed within the last five years reveals that 17% married a first cousin in 2006, compared to 15% in 2012. Across both time points, first cousin unions were most common among socially disadvantaged groups: rural women, Upper Egyptian women, and those with modest educational attainment (Table 4).

An examination of the time trend in cousin marriage indicates that this type of union has been declining in prevalence slightly among the most recently married women. This is the case for all socio-demographic groups considered with the exception of urban Upper Egyptians and women with an elementary school education only, among whom cousin marriage has increased over time.

6. Nuclear Family Living Arrangements

In the past, Egyptian families were customarily patrilocal, meaning that newlywed couples would co-reside with the parents of the groom as an extended family. However, there is evidence that multigenerational extended family households have become less common in recent years. The 2006 ELMPS questionnaire contains an item asking ever-married women aged 16-49 who they lived with at the start of their first marriage. The 2012 questionnaire contains a similar question for ever-married men and women aged 18-39 regarding their current (or for those who are divorced or widowed, their most recent) marriage.

Examining women who married within the five years preceding the survey interview reveals that 63% and 77% formed nuclear families when they first wed in 2006 and 2012, respectively (Table 5). In other words, between the 2006 and 2012 surveys, fewer married individuals reported extended family living arrangements at the beginning of their marriages. Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of urban newlyweds lived as nuclear families when they first married compared to rural newlyweds. In 2006 and 2012, nuclear families were most common among those currently residing in Alexandria and the Suez Canal region and least common in rural Upper Egypt. There is a clear pattern of increasing frequency of nuclear family arrangements with higher educational attainment.

7. Marriage Expenditures

In Egypt, the excessive marriage-related financial outlays young people and their families are expected to make are often credited with causing various social problems, such as delayed marriage and secret unions (Singerman and Ibrahim 2001; Singerman 2007). Here I assess the magnitude of marriage expenditures and evaluate whether there is empirical evidence of rising marriage costs across time. The ELMPS 2006 and 2012 collected information about the expenditures that accompany marriage, namely: the prompt dowry (or *mahr*) given by the groom to the bride, jewelry received by the bride, furniture and appliances purchased for the conjugal home, costs related to housing, the bride's trousseau (or *gihaz*), and celebrations related to engagement and marriage. Since the dowry is typically used by the (Muslim) bride to purchase items for the newlyweds' home, this component cost is excluded from my calculations to avoid double-counting. All reports of marriage costs were in Egyptian pounds, and are corrected for inflation using historical Consumer Price Indexes to standardize them to 2012 Egyptian pound values. Although in 2006 only ever-married women were asked about marriage costs, in 2012 this information was gathered from both ever-married men and women. Here I include only women's reports for consistency, and focus on those married in the five years preceding the interview. Outliers in the costs of marriage data were eliminated by using the Cook's D statistic, which ensures that the means reported below are not unduly influenced by exceptionally large values.

Overall, Table 6 shows that in 2006 marriage expenditures averaged approximately 50,600 Egyptian pounds. In 2012 marriage expenditures averaged approximately 61,200 Egyptian pounds. At both time points, urban marriage costs are considerably higher than rural marriage costs. In 2006, financial outlays on marriage were greatest among Cairo residents, whereas in 2012, they were greatest among those living in rural Lower Egypt. Rural Upper Egypt recorded the lowest mean marriage expenditures at both time points. Not surprisingly, those with modest education spend far less on marriage than do well-educated Egyptians in 2006 and in 2012 (Table 6).

In addition, Table 6 indicates that overall marriage expenditures increased by approximately 10,600 Egyptian pounds for those who married in the period 2007-2012 relative to those who married in the period 2001-2006. Climbing marriage costs among those who wed in the last five years were much more pronounced among rural residents compared to urban residents. Among all regions of Egypt, Greater Cairo was alone in recording an overall reduction in

marriage expenditures between 2006 and 2012. Rural Lower Egyptians reported the greatest increase in marriage expenditures between the two surveys. Rising marriage costs were apparent among all groups when broken down by educational attainment (Table 6).

Figure 4 disaggregates total marriage costs for each of the two marriage cohorts of interest by their component expenditures. It allows us to evaluate whether spending on any particular item has fluctuated in absolute terms. Of particular interest is outlays on housing, which may have been affected by the 1996 ‘new rental’ law whose objective was to expand the supply of housing by creating a category of housing units with definite duration leases whose rents could be adjusted at the end of each term (Assaad and Ramadan 2008). We see that in spite of Egypt’s housing reforms, expenditures on housing increased by 6,600 Egyptian pounds between those who wed in the five years prior to 2006 compared to those who wed in the five years prior to 2012. In part, this is likely due to the fact that a greater proportion of those in the later marriage cohort established nuclear families with residences of their own upon marriage, rather than living with relatives (Table 6). But it also suggests that the housing reforms may have been ineffective in reducing newlyweds’ housing expenditures. If component costs (jewelry, furniture and appliances, housing, bride’s trousseau, and celebrations) are represented as a proportion of total marriage expenditures, it appears that the highest proportional expenditures in both marriage cohorts are devoted to housing on the one hand, and furniture and appliances on the other. Between 2006 and 2012, the proportion of total marriage expenditures spent on housing increases (from 32% to 38%), and the proportion spent on furniture and appliances dropped (from 37% to 30%).

8. Conclusions

This study utilized a unique set of data sources, the nationally-representative 1998, 2006, and 2012 Egypt Labor Market Panel Surveys, to provide descriptions of various aspects of marriage behavior in contemporary Egypt that, to date, have not received sufficiently detailed scrutiny. In particular, there is a need to assess whether the widespread alarm regarding perceived breakdown in the institution of marriage in Egypt is empirically justified.

Contrary to popular reports, never-marriage is not widespread in Egyptian society, nor has it ever been. Virtually all Egyptians marry at some point in the life-cycle. Across all three surveys, approximately 80% of 30-34 year-old men have ever married, and approximately 90% of 30-34 year-old women have ever married. By age 50, more than 96% of all respondents had ever married, and this pattern of universal marriage does not vary considerably over time or across socio-demographic group. The majority of those who are unmarried in Egypt are not comprised of those who have been single all their lives, nor is this group comprised of the divorced. Rather, this group is composed predominantly of older widowed women who have outlived their husbands because of the spousal age gap and their longer lifespan.

Some have raised concern that delayed marriage is expressed in part through prolonged engagements among young people. A comparison of the responses of those who married in the five years prior to the 2006 survey to those who married in the five years prior to the 2012 survey shows that, in fact, those entering marital unions in the later marriage cohort spend slightly less time in the engagement period. On average, respondents spend just over one year engaged to be married.

This paper also directly examined delayed marriage by observing the proportion of men and women married by ages 18, 25, and 30 across the surveys fielded in 1998, 2006, and 2012. Findings from these analyses show that, like other developing countries, marriage timing in Egypt initially followed an overall trend of later and later marriages for men and women. There remains cause for concern regarding the continued practice of adolescent marriage among the most disadvantaged women. Although marriage by age 18 has declined

precipitously over successive birth cohorts of women, there is evidence of an uptick in adolescent marriages in the most recent birth cohorts. For men and women, the trend of marriage postponement over time seems to have reversed for the most recent birth cohorts, more of whom are marrying by the ages of 25 and 30 in the 2006 and 2012 surveys. These findings will be welcomed by those who regard delayed marriage among men as a potential source of political radicalism and social disruption. Together the results on the incidence of never-marriage and delayed marriage do not indicate that there has been a retreat from marriage in Egypt.

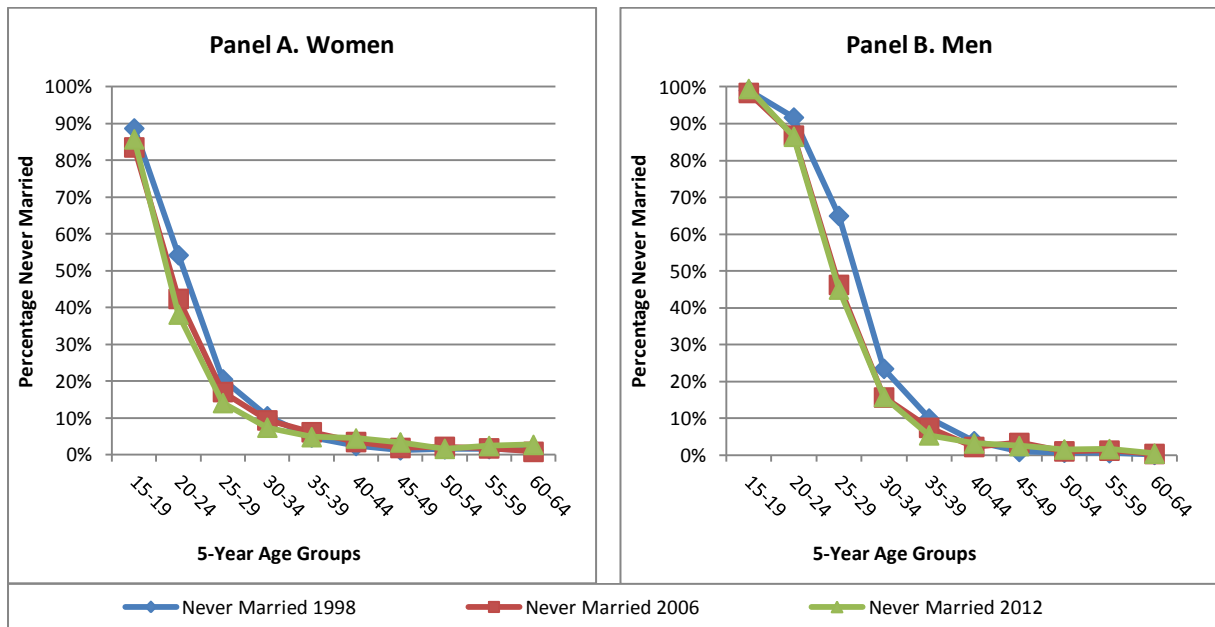
Other aspects of nuptiality investigated in this paper included cousin marriage, nuclear family living arrangements, and marriage expenditures. Overall, first cousin marriage remains common in Egypt although it has declined slightly over time between 2006 and 2012. With regards to nuclear family living arrangements, the data from 2006 and 2012 show that a considerably higher proportion of newlyweds in the latest marriage cohorts lived in an independent residence of their own when they first wed. Finally, there is some empirical support for the claim that marriage costs have experienced inflation over time. Between 2006 and 2012, overall expenditures on marriage costs increased among those who married in the previous five years. However, an examination of the component costs of marriage indicate that spending on housing has increased rather than decreased, as many hoped it would with the implementation of a new housing law.

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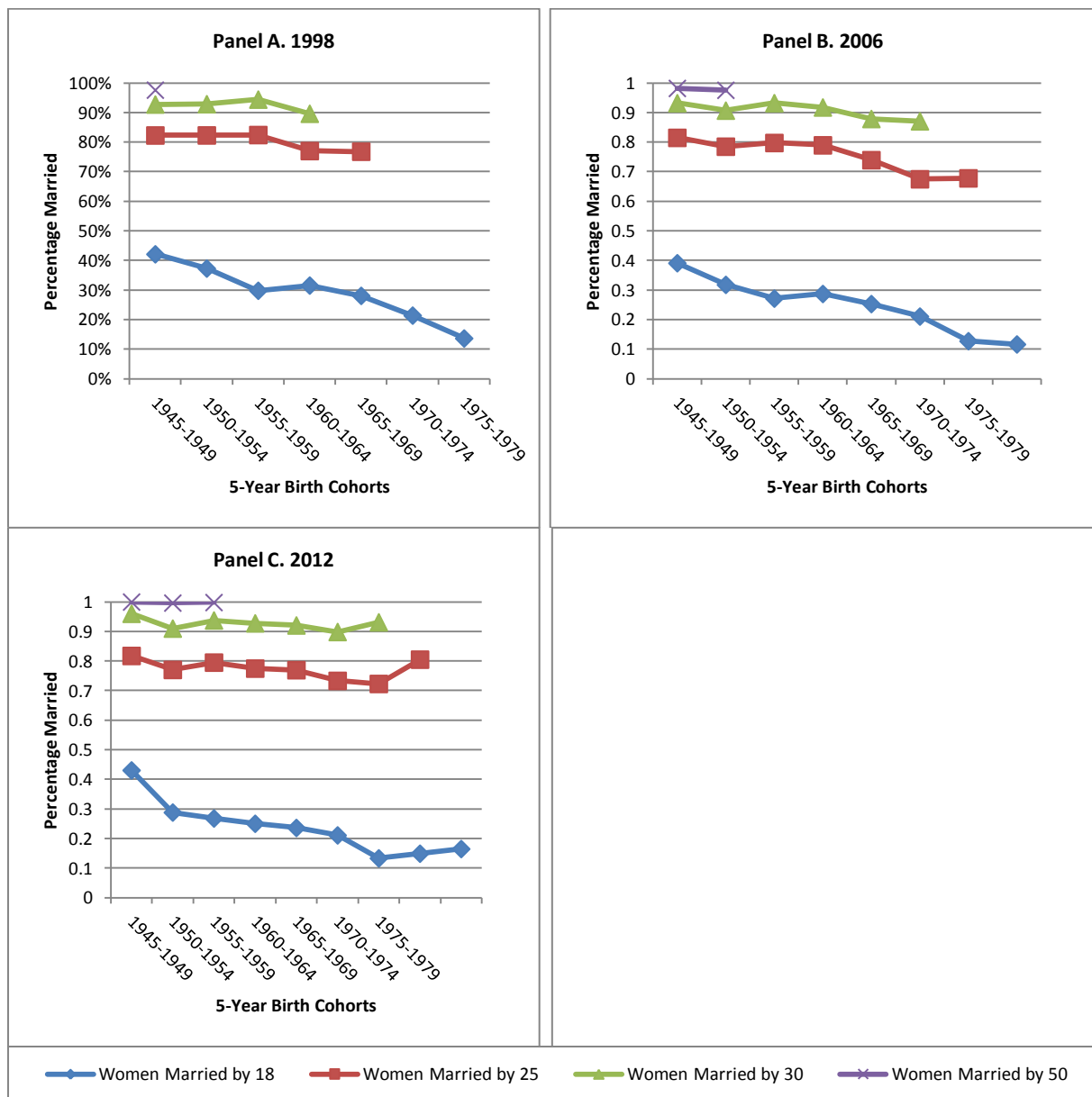
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Figure 1: Percentage of Women and Men Never Married by Age Group, Ages 15-64, 1998, 2006, and 2012



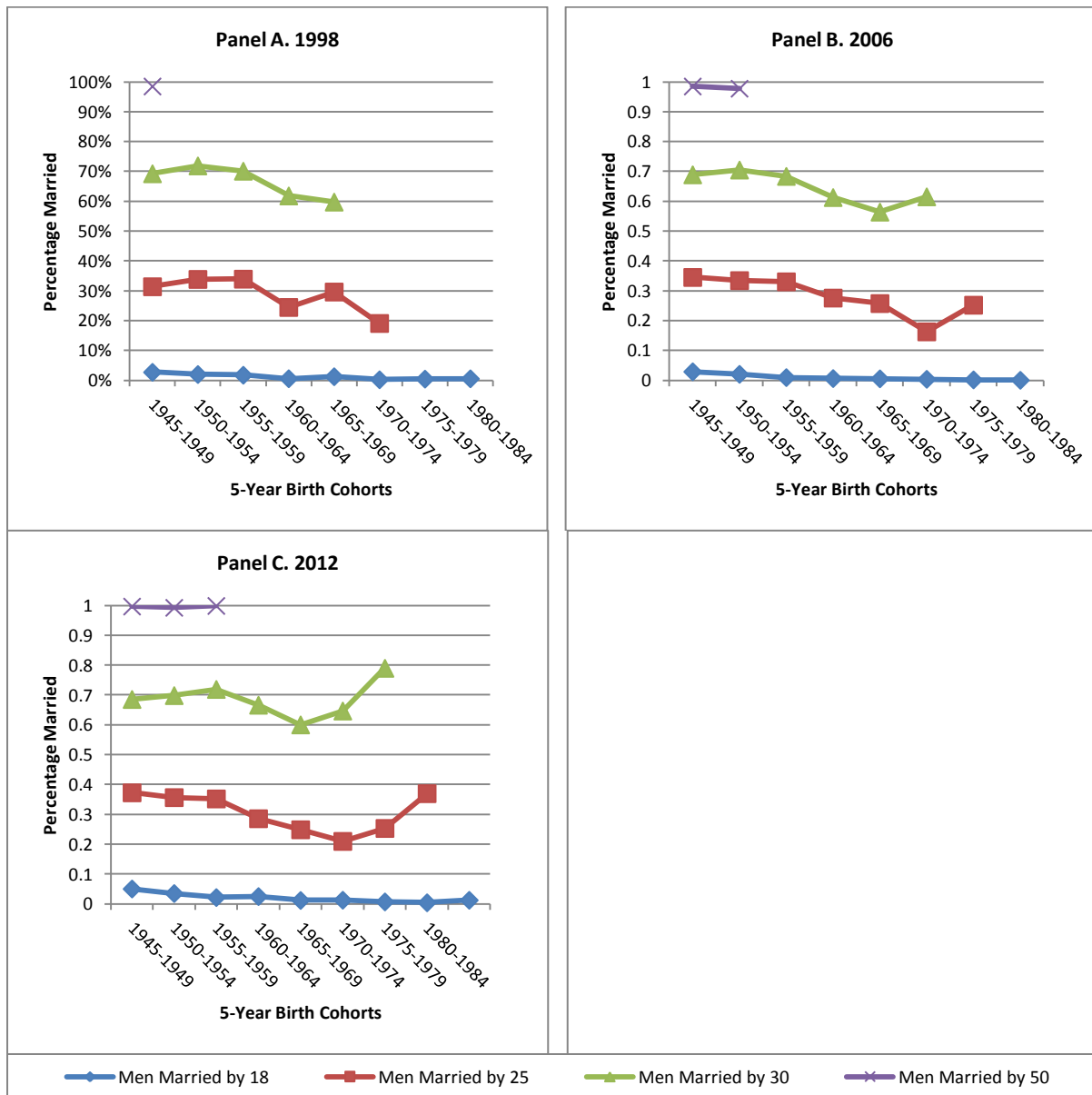
Source: Author's calculations based on ELMS 1998, ELMPS 2006, ELMPS 2012.

Figure 2: Percentage of Women Married by Age 18, 25, and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, 1998, 2006, and 2012



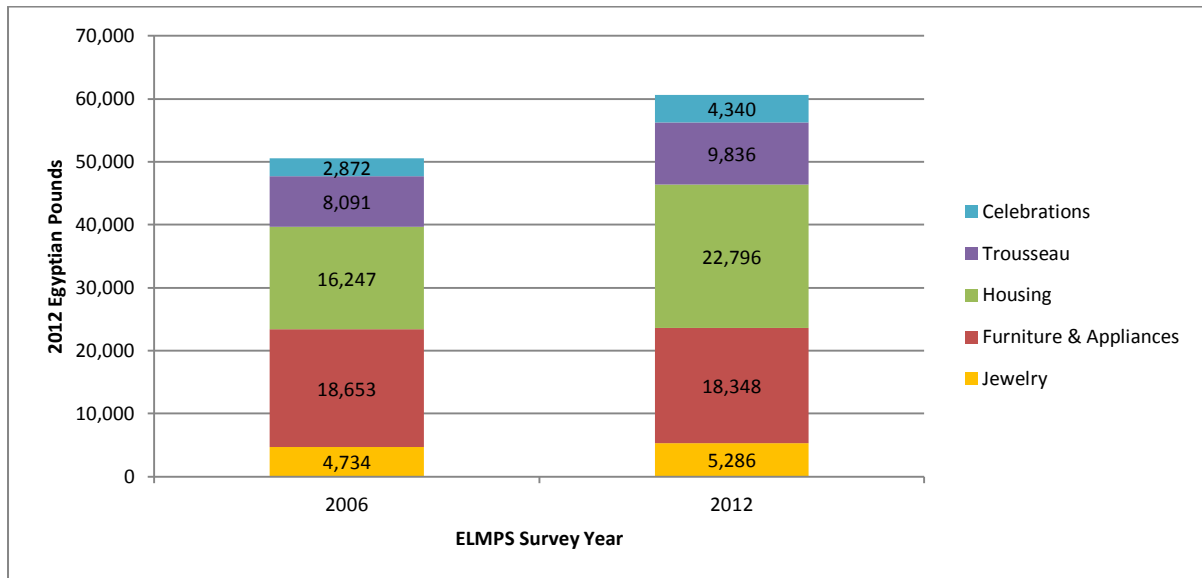
Source: Author's calculations based on ELMS 1998, ELMPS 2006, ELMPS 2012.

Figure 3: Percentage of Men Married by Age 18, 25, 30, and 50 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, 1998, 2006, and 2012



Source: Author's calculations based on ELMS 1998, ELMPS 2006, ELMPS 2012.

Figure 4: Mean Expenditures on Marriage Components (Excluding Prompt Dower), As Reported by the Wife in 2012 Egyptian Pounds, among Ever-Married Women Aged 18–39 and Married within the Previous 5 Years, 2006 and 2012



Source: Author's calculations based on ELMPS 2006, ELMPS 2012.

Table 1: Mean Months from Engagement to Marriage by Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Ever-Married Women Aged 18–39 and Married Within The Previous 5 years, 2006 and 2012

	Engagement Duration in Months 2006	Engagement Duration in Months 2012
All	14.9	14.0
Residence		
Rural	13.6	13.6
Urban	16.7	14.4
Region		
Greater Cairo	16.4	14.8
Alexandria & Suez Canal	21.2	17.5
Urban Lower Egypt	16.0	13.9
Urban Upper Egypt	13.2	11.4
Rural Lower Egypt	14.9	15.3
Rural Upper Egypt	11.9	11.4
Education		
Less than Elementary	12.1	11.4
Elementary	15.7	12.4
Preparatory	16.0	13.9
Secondary	16.1	15.1
Post-Secondary	15.0	14.1
n (Observations)	1,916	3,075

Source: Author's calculations based on ELMPS 2006 and ELMPS 2012.

Table 2: Percentage of Women and Men in Each Current Marital Status by Five-Year Age Group, 2012

5-Year Age Group	Women				Men			
	Never Married	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Never Married	Married	Divorced	Widowed
15-19	85.8	14.2	0.0	0.0	99.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
20-24	38.2	60.4	1.2	0.2	86.5	13.2	0.3	0.1
25-29	14.1	84.1	1.2	0.6	45.0	54.2	0.8	0.0
30-34	7.4	88.1	3.6	1.0	15.8	83.1	1.0	0.0
35-39	4.8	90.2	2.2	2.7	5.4	93.1	1.3	0.2
40-44	4.5	86.8	2.9	5.9	3.2	96.2	0.5	0.1
45-49	3.4	80.6	3.4	12.6	2.5	96.1	1.1	0.3
50-54	1.7	73.8	2.7	21.8	1.6	96.2	1.5	0.8
55-59	2.4	63.7	3.0	30.9	1.7	94.0	1.5	2.8
60-64	2.7	50.5	2.6	44.2	0.5	93.2	1.7	4.6
Total	21.8	68.7	2.0	7.5	36.7	62.0	0.8	0.5
n (Observations)	3,329	10,955	308	2,034	5,404	10,254	97	246

Source: Author's calculations based on ELMPS 2012

Table 3: Percentage Married by Ages 18, 25, 30, and 50, by Survey Year and by Gender and Socio-Demographic Characteristics in 2012

	Percentage Married by 18	Percentage Married by 25	Percentage Married by 30	Percentage Married by 50
Panel A. Women				
All Women 1998	30.9	80.3	91.5	95.5
All Women 2006	23.8	76.0	90.9	97.8
All Women 2012	21.1	78.3	92.9	99.8
Residence 2012				
Rural Women	26.9	85.4	95.8	99.8
Urban Women	13.4	69.7	89.6	99.9
Region 2012				
Greater Cairo Women	13.1	66.5	87.7	99.8
Alexandria & Suez Canal Women	9.3	65.2	88.9	100.0
Urban Lower Egypt Women	13.0	74.5	92.7	100.0
Urban Upper Egypt Women	18.8	76.7	92.0	100.0
Rural Lower Egypt Women	19.8	83.9	95.8	99.6
Rural Upper Egypt Women	36.4	87.6	95.8	100.0
Education 2012				
Less than Elementary Women	37.2	86.2	94.9	99.9
Elementary Women	28.1	85.4	93.5	99.3
Preparatory Women	31.8	85.2	93.2	98.5
Secondary Women	7.1	78.3	93.2	100.0
Post-Secondary Women	0.7	52.9	86.1	100.0
Panel B. Men				
All Men 1998	1.4	30.8	68.0	98.2
All Men 2006	0.8	28.2	65.5	98.5
All Men 2012	1.6	31.1	71.2	99.6
Residence 2012				
Rural Men	2.0	37.3	78.1	99.9
Urban Men	1.1	23.0	62.9	99.4
Region 2012				
Greater Cairo Men	1.3	22.5	62.6	99.6
Alexandria & Suez Canal Men	0.3	19.4	58.8	99.6
Urban Lower Egypt Men	1.2	24.7	65.7	100.0
Urban Upper Egypt Men	1.4	25.4	64.1	97.8
Rural Lower Egypt Men	1.5	33.9	76.7	100.0
Rural Upper Egypt Men	2.7	42.6	80.4	99.7
Education 2012				
Less than Elementary Men	3.9	48.9	83.0	99.5
Elementary Men	2.2	38.3	77.8	99.8
Preparatory Men	1.3	31.5	72.7	98.8
Secondary Men	0.5	26.8	71.2	100.0
Post-Secondary Men	0.0	10.9	52.0	99.8

Source: Author's calculations based on ELMPS 2012.

Table 4: Percentage Married to A First Cousin, by Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Ever-Married Women Aged 18–39 and Married Within the Previous 5 Years, 2006 and 2012

	Percentage Whose Marriage was to a First Cousin 2006	Percentage Whose Marriage was to a First Cousin 2012
All	16.9	14.6
Residence		
Rural	20.6	17.9
Urban	11.7	9.6
Region		
Greater Cairo	11.5	9.3
Alexandria & Suez Canal	10.1	7.1
Urban Lower Egypt	10.1	7.1
Urban Upper Egypt	16.1	16.5
Rural Lower Egypt	17.5	14.6
Rural Upper Egypt	24.7	22.4
Education		
Less than Elementary	19.2	18.1
Elementary	17.4	22.9
Preparatory	22.7	20.7
Secondary	18.7	15.1
Post-Secondary	10.1	7.7
n (Observations)	1,916	3,076

Source: Author's calculations based on ELMPS 2006, ELMPS 2012

Table 5: Percentage Who Formed Nuclear Family at Start of Marriage, by Socio-Demographic Characteristic among Ever-Married Women Aged 18–39 and Married Within the Previous 5 Years, 2006 and 2012

	Percentage Who Formed Nuclear Family at Start of Marriage 2006	Percentage Who Formed Nuclear Family at Start of Marriage 2012
All	62.9	77.0
Residence		
Rural	47.9	70.3
Urban	83.5	87.0
Region		
Greater Cairo	83.6	87.5
Alexandria & Suez Canal	89.0	90.1
Urban Lower Egypt	86.1	85.9
Urban Upper Egypt	73.4	85.4
Rural Lower Egypt	58.7	76.2
Rural Upper Egypt	34.1	62.0
Education		
Less than Elementary	41.5	62.9
Elementary	56.9	68.5
Preparatory	56.0	72.6
Secondary	65.4	76.8
Post-Secondary	82.2	88.7
n (Observations)	1,916	3,076

Source: Author's calculations based on ELMPS 2006, ELMPS 2012

Table 6: Mean Total Marriage Expenditures (Excluding Prompt Dower) As Reported by the Wife, in Thousands of 2012 Egyptian Pounds, by Socio-Demographic Characteristic, Among Ever-Married Women Aged 18–39 and Married Within the Previous 5 Years, 2006 and 2012

	Total Marriage Costs without Dower In Thousands 2006	Total Marriage Costs without Dower In Thousands 2012
All	50.6	61.2
Residence		
Rural	43.2	57.9
Urban	60.7	65.8
Region		
Greater Cairo	70.4	66.9
Alexandria & Suez Canal	55.3	64.2
Urban Lower Egypt	59.6	70.4
Urban Upper Egypt	46.0	54.9
Rural Lower Egypt	53.1	72.7
Rural Upper Egypt	30.6	38.2
Education		
Less than Elementary	29.1	33.2
Elementary	39.6	51.1
Preparatory	36.3	55.4
Secondary	50.0	61.5
Post-Secondary	78.0	79.9
n (Observations)	1,914	2,261

Source: Author's calculations based on ELMPS 2006, ELMPS 2012.