

This study looks at the troubled relationship of the Arab "East" with the "West" and examines possible avenues for improvement. One of the proposed solutions is to foster sustained and intensive contact that favours deep and meaningful connection. In order to test the validity of this idea, this study focuses on the daily interactions between a specific group of young Cairenes who were seeking meaningful connection with the local community of Western expatriates.

Due to the nature of the problematic, an interdisciplinary approach was chosen that is grounded in anthropology yet borrows significantly from the fields of cognitive science, developmental psychology and intercultural studies.

The research set out to investigate the following two hypotheses as regards to the target group: 1, Entering into a meaningful relationship with the Other will alter common stereotypes, and 2, The Other has an influence on the construction of personal identity (given this meaningful relationship).

This study is based on five years of participatory research that was conducted predominantly in Cairo's downtown area between January 2005 and December 2009. It is thus based on an in-depth examination of a particular moment in Cairo's and Egypt's social history, interconnecting domains of identity construction and stereotypes within a narrowly defined community and its urban space. The primary target group consisted of nine young middle class Cairenes who have been in daily contact with the local Western expatriate community.

The study's main findings are as follows: 1, The sustained and intense interaction of the young Cairenes with the local expatriate community resulted in them creating a specific subgroup at the margin of mainstream Egyptian society and minority expatriate culture. 2, The resulting state of in-betweenness has had a profound effect on their construction of their personal selves - that is how they view themselves and relate to others.