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The American University in Cairo

Humanities and Social Sciences

Pluralities

A Thesis Submitted to

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology and Egyptology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts/Science

by

Sandra Fernandez

under the supervision of

Dr Hanan Sabea

January/2011

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to answer the question “What does it mean to be half/plural Egyptian in Egypt?”. It focuses on the experiences of individuals with one Egyptian parent and one foreign parent living in Egypt. A secondary goal was to examine how individuals created niches and familiarity for themselves within a socio-cultural context marked by the upholding of rigid social boundaries. Contacts were made through existing social ties and referrals by friends and colleagues. Methodologically I conducted interviews with my interlocutors, after introductory e-mails explaining the project and requesting background information in order to ascertain participants' suitability for the project. I also conducted research on the internet via keyword searches and gained access to Facebook groups which were created exclusively for 'Half Egyptians' by 'half Egyptians'. Participant observation took the form of social gatherings. The majority of individuals I engaged with in this research communicated that Egyptians either categorized them as 'Egyptian' or 'foreign' making it clear that there was no category in between. A major deciding factor in this categorization was the gender of the Egyptian parent. This indicates that even though the nationality law changed in 2004 allowing women to confer citizenship, it has little effect on the production of ideas about and the social perceptions of Egyptianness. In my thesis I also examined the meanings of foreignness and Egyptianness. Based on my research it is evident that Egyptianness, though shrouded in ambiguity as to what it really means, remains a "fixed category" in people's discourses and actions, lacking flexibility and possibilities of inclusion for those labeled as plurals or half Egyptians. The existence of such pluralities, as demonstrated in the lived experiences of participants in my study who have one foreign parent, are rejected in daily social encounters as falling under the rubric of 'foreign'. This process of social marginalization does not enable a blending of social and cultural barriers.

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Introduction: Pluralities

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the question “What does it mean to be half/plural Egyptian in Egypt?”. When I started my research I used the term 'half' not as an indication of not being whole or having something lacking, but rather as a direct reference to a specific parental situation. I was interested in how individuals who have one Egyptian parent, one non-Egyptian parent and have been raised mainly outside of Egypt find their own niche in relation to how they are expected to behave in terms of what is constituted as "Egyptian" social standards. While conducting preliminary research people with whom I interacted (Egyptians, half Egyptians and foreigners) confirmed what I had anticipated based on my own social interactions and those of my friends: Egyptian society has rigid ideas regarding concepts such as gender, class, race and mannerisms which run along the lines of being either Egyptian or foreign. The lines that are drawn appear to be clearly defined as many individuals perform these understandings almost without exception in their daily interactions with others. What was also made clear was the lack hybrid space which half/plural Egyptians would occupy. Individuals are constantly addressed on the basis of being a member or not being a member of a particular group and what I was hoping to show was how these categories complicate interactions in Egypt for half/plural Egyptians more so than Egyptians or foreigners. Regarding integration into Egyptian society, half/plural Egyptians find themselves occupying the fringes of the boundaries designated 'Egyptian' and 'foreign' and which many Egyptians presume as clear-cut and fixed. Egyptians and foreigners thus have specific social niches carved out for themselves within Egyptian society, which leaves little space for plural or half Egyptians in the dominant social imagery.

The themes that run through my research take the individual as the focal point of analysis. I examine how individuals who are labeled half Egyptians interact with each other and with the larger social context in Egypt through networks of family, friends, and acquaintances. I explore their reactions to encounters within spaces of work and sociality, and as they carry on with their routine daily lives in the city of Cairo. How they rework ideas about themselves, their social networks and the larger Egyptian context based on their daily interactions and relationships comprises another angle of my research.

Specifically I ask:

- ❖ How do half Egyptians identify themselves socially, nationally and internationally?
- ❖ How do these individuals and others around them define being “Egyptian” or being “half Egyptian” ?
- ❖ How are the boundaries between Egyptianness and non-Egyptianness defined with regard to practices, norms and values?
- ❖ To what extent does nationality and varying cultural experiences acquired while being raised abroad play a role in how those labeled half Egyptians approach being in Egypt, the nature of their interactions in Egypt and ideas about their subjectivities?
- ❖ Do they ultimately feel able to negotiate the multiple backgrounds of cultural knowledge that constitute them as persons?

Although the individual as unit of analysis is central to my research, I emphasize three domains that I argue shape an individual's experiences and ideas about being half Egyptians. These are parentage, residence and nationality. Legally, parentage most often determines the nationality of an individual and contributes to how individuals develop cultural understandings and meanings about nation gender, religion, race and citizenship. Nationality and parentage may influence where an individual lives or his/her legal residence. Residence is a factor that can determine eligibility for nationality. All of these factors play a major role in how a person develops their own understanding of the

production of cultural meanings which they use to formulate their own ideas of self and other. In short people come to understand who they are, why they behave the way they do towards others and why they receive the reactions they do, all in relation to others. The nexus of parentage, nationality and gender is particularly pertinent to recent legal changes in nationality laws in Egypt. The 2004 change to Egyptian Nationality law permitted Egyptian women to confer their nationality to their children of foreign fathers. It thus becomes important to examine the effect of the change in nationality law. In this thesis I use the aforementioned themes to tell the stories of the individuals I met and communicate their specific experiences of being plural in a space which neither allows for nor acknowledges the existence of liminal or hybrid space. The stories, however stand on their own, elaborating on ideas and concepts in such a way as to make the themes secondary.

The Question of Plurality

A major issue in pursuing this research and writing the thesis has been terminology and the concepts they embody; how do individuals refer to themselves and how are they referred to? What are the implications of the various terms used? While conducting research people referred to as Egyptians, foreigners and half Egyptians were lumped as Bicultural or being 'halfies' while the majority of individuals so identified referred to themselves by their particular combination of points of origin (e.g. Egyptian/Irish) or nationalities. In Egypt in particular, 'halfie' was a term that had become very popular because of its use in newspapers and magazines. While the term hybrid could certainly have been an appropriate term, as Kraidy (2003) states, it has become

part of the "trend to blend", a tendency in popular Western culture towards naming people, technology, foods, animals and so on as hybrid, and as such can be too broad. Biculturalism denotes the existence of rigid boundaries within the individual separating the various elements of their background. My research however confirmed my impression that the individual constitutes a blend in which clear cut boundaries do not exist.

My argument thus is for moving towards a term that can be used academically and socially but claimed specifically for individuals 'mixed' backgrounds. In writing this piece I wanted to avoid terms used in popular culture and those that were problematic in academia. In popular culture there can be a tendency to attach labels without fully understanding what they mean and what the terms may mean for the individual being labeled. In academia many of the terms used are already loaded with complexities. The way they are debated and problematized means that their definitions may not fully fit with how the experience of having multiple backgrounds is described and understood. The term plural carries with it enough broadness to encompass various kinds of blends in background but at the same time a kind of specificity which both people in question and researchers may appreciate.

The Legalities of Nationality and the Image of Egypt

Being Egyptian is not only a social and cultural definition, but also one based upon nationality as defined by the law. A social person carries a social self and a national self among many other selves that overlap and meld. The importance of patriarchy was until recently reflected in the nationality laws; Egyptian Nationality was only passed on

paternally. In 2004 the Nationality law was amended to allow women to confer nationality to their children in cases of being married to non-Egyptian men (Leila 2004). It then becomes important to look into how the legal understanding of being Egyptian guides and shapes the social understanding of Egyptianness and how the legal codification of what it is to be Egyptian is a reflection of the social understanding of being Egyptian for example with regard to the patriarchal effect.

The state is supposed to be responsible for administering those elements which foster the development of model citizens, defining who are eligible social members of the state and nation. Education in this regard serves as an important tool in the shaping ideas and the making of citizens. Anderson (1983) argues that the development of the national concept is rooted in literacy and the ability to imagine a community consisting of hundreds of thousands (and eventually millions) of individuals. The quality and agenda of the educational system however, lends itself to the maintenance of elite control (Amin 2000). Religion is an element which according to the Egyptian Constitution is safeguarded as part of education¹, and has been more socially influential since the 1980's, because of the widespread belief that the incorporation of Islamic understandings into all areas of the state would eliminate many of the problems felt by the population (Eickelman 2002). As such it plays a role in defining who is and is not Egyptian.

Various media forms are also important tools in shaping ideas about ideal citizens. Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) clearly states in her work on Egyptian melodrama that popular media forms shape society and in the case of Egypt, how the nation is imagined. Specifically the producers of Egyptian melodramas seek to produce modern Egyptian

¹ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_one/part_one.asp

citizens through setting the parameters by which people engage in actions that sustain the Egyptian state and nation. Media forms constitute one of the many tools by which national culture is produced. Shafik (2006) writes that the absolute stereotypes the characters in Egyptian films symbolize are also representative of not only how wider society views people in their midst but also how producers and the state would like these 'types' to be viewed. Coptic, foreign and female stereotypes are produced through film in order to guide social development (Shafik 2006). Shafik (2006) also draws from the work of Stuart Hall who writes that difference is necessary to generate meaning and othering is a part of that process. Othering is involved in the process of inclusion and exclusion and for Shafik (2006) it is about representing absolute 'types' on film which individuals either relate to or antagonize. Film as one media form thus becomes important as a guide for understanding the Egyptian concept of "us and "them" which also informs the view of individuals with a plural existence and how they are perceived by others.

Part of the constitution of the Egyptian nation is homogeneity; Egyptianness as a product of systems of education, media productions and dissemination, and state discourses is formed based on the notion of a singular ethnicity. During the time of the Egyptian Nationalist movement (early to middle 20th century) it was feared that any fragmentation in the national image (which implied the Egyptian had a single ethnicity) would lead to division within the emerging nation thus making it impossible for the Egyptian nation to exist (Baron 2005). The Egyptian citizen imagined as a homogenous entity is a result of the state guiding social development to ends which benefit the system. The idea of the Egyptian woman as the symbol of the nation developed in tandem with initial attempts to consolidate hybridity within Egypt so that the Egyptian citizen was

imagined as having one religion, one ethnicity, and one language (Baron 2005). The figure of the Egyptian woman carries the key to the dissemination and perpetuation of the Egyptian nation through giving birth to and raising Egyptian children. Suad Joseph (1996) writes that women are still considered second class citizens in many Middle Eastern countries. While officially they may be incorporated into the state system as equals, legal issues such as inheritance and custody of children challenge legal assumptions and provisions about gender equality (Egyptian State Information & Joseph 1996). Categories used by scholars and the state system to identify citizens for example gender, ethnicity, class, religion feed into the specific definition of Egyptianness perpetuated by society and I will use them to examine the boundaries between being and not being Egyptian as defined by half/plural Egyptians and other Egyptians.

Theoretical Framework

In my thesis the concepts of self and subject are pertinent because they help explain state motivations, social motivations and how the individual understands themselves and others. For this I turn to Michel Foucault. In a book based upon his final lectures, he historicizes the idea of the self by tracing its existence from the development of the Western concept by Greek philosophers culminating with the evolution of the self into the object of political manipulation (Gutman et al.1988). The self is the focal point from which the subject is developed as that which is manipulated and molded by larger structures such as the state and society. It is also the dividing point in that an individual self is not someone else. It is the boundary between what one is and what one is not.

The self as addressed by Hermans (2001) also becomes a point from which one

extends into the world. The self can also encompass that which relates to the self and helps make the self what it is. From this perspective the self is divided into the “I” and the “Me”. The “self as knower” falls in line with Foucault’s self (Gutman et al. 1988) as it is the awareness of being different from others that is critical and relates to personal identity. The “Me” is defined as the “self as known” (Hermans 2001) and is empirical in that it is that with which others engage, understand and if one incorporates Foucault, study and manage. This self differs in that it can also include extensions into the outside world, namely ‘all that the person can call his or her own’ (Hermans 2001: 244). This includes people and material objects. Foucault also sees the self as an outward expression of an individual definition (Gutman et al. 1988). His focus was the self and subject understood by wider society, the state and the government. This concept extends towards how the state manages the self and how the self is trained to regulate others in a cycle which perpetuates the state and state order (Burchill et al. 1991).

Identity is a major issue with regards to self and how an individual determines who they are and how they identify themselves to others. For Stuart Hall (Du Gay & Hall 1996) identity is part of a power negotiation in which exclusion and inclusion are involved as part of continuously shifting emotional and practical attachments. Having an identity and identifying others is a continuously changing process which also involves the recognition of differences between one’s self and others. One is engaged in what Hall (Du Gay & Hall 1996) calls a ‘process of becoming’ rather than simply being. It suggests the past present and future of an individual as existing simultaneously which is why identity is such a complicated process of continuous shift. There is no unchanging oneness with regard to identity, no singular point but an ‘intersection of an enduring

process' (Du Gay & Hall 1996). This becomes central when my research turns to addressing Egyptianness as lacking a specific definition or having a nondescript definition which shifts according to who one talks to. It is also relevant in how plural Egyptians categorize themselves and those around them. The term 'halfie' and being plural lends itself to ideas of 'rupture' within Hall's work, but that would also imply the prevalence of more specific definitions of Egyptianness.

Hall also makes reference to ideas that are similar to Homi Bhabha (Meredith 1998). The concept of Third Space refers to spaces of negotiation where ideas are reworked to form something that is a result of but different from the combining elements (Meredith 1998). Hall also discusses areas of 'suture', which constitute a cross section of separate elements in a continuous process of reorganization. The individual subject is fixed to a specific position from which they are able to fashion, stylize, produce, perform and change their position. A plural individual becomes a physical representation and result of these re-workings. These processes are also embodied and reproduced in one's daily habits.

The daily habits of the individual are learned through the repeated motions of family, friends and wider society. These sets of pre-coded meanings guide social interaction, how people interpret those actions and formulate relevant social responses. This is Bourdieu's interpretation of social action or habitus (1980) which comprises locus of the process of becoming, and poses the individual as the sum of both past and future potential. This is reflected in the reproduction of daily actions which encompass social meanings that are passed on through social interaction. What becomes both fascinating and relevant is the idea of collective memory with regard to the experiences of plural

Egyptians. Experiences of marginalization or cohesion are then articulated as similar and are described using similar phraseology. This related directly to parallels and synergies in the experiences of half Egyptians.

The idea of the individual as an ever - changing continual process is complementary to individuals with one Egyptian parent expressing pluralities in the constitution of themselves as social individuals. Individuals with one Egyptian parent may experience the process of identification through exclusion on a more conscious level because of the homogenizing force of the Egyptian nation-state and prevailing social norms that may tend to emphasize homogeneity in the face of diversity. At the same time individuals with one Egyptian parent may embody the places of 'suture' which Hall (1996) discusses. This embodiment leads to the performance of various cultural understandings in one's daily routine. These performances have lead to particular responses. For example in an article written by Ahraf Omar (2001) an Egyptian woman who was raised overseas describes her family being horrified when she suggested sending flowers to the family of a recently deceased friend rather than the customary visit and sharing of tea.

Theories of Biculturalism and Personality

The idea of Biculturalism was brought to my attention by the only piece of academic writing I was able to find specifically addressing the experiences of plural Egyptians. Underlying the concept of Biculturalism as applied to plural Egyptians (Bicultural Egyptians defined as individuals who are either half Egyptian or were raised primarily in a non-Egyptian culture) is the assumption that culture equals nation. This is

countered by the work of Gupta and Ferguson (1992). To be bicultural indicates two cultural influences as a result of two national or ethnic influences as provided by countries of birth, residence, or nationality. This also becomes a link to how various definitions of being and not being Egyptian are formed. Mary Ayad (2007), the author of the sole piece of research concerning what I refer to as plural Egyptians draws from La Fromboise (1993) as the expert in bicultural theory who explores various studies and details the results. While the work of Mary Ayad (2007) is crucial in that it highlights the existence of a dilemma for plural Egyptians who try to find their niche in Egypt her work almost stops short there. For example she does not clearly define biculturalism which is described in La Fromboise's work as living 'at the juncture between two cultures' (La Fromboise et al.1993) either because they are mixed racially or because they were born in to one culture and have had considerable exposure to another. Individuals are claimed to have a double consciousness which means they are aware of being either part of or marginalized by one culture, the other or both. It is then suggested that biculturals suffer from divided loyalties which can cause ambivalence. My research has shown that ambivalence, while possible is not a universal and cannot be assumed to be a problem that every plural individual experiences.

Theories of biculturalism are useful in that they challenge the idea of plurality as being socially and psychologically undesirable and making it almost impossible for individuals to interact on a level which is socially deemed 'normal' (La Fromboise et al. 1993). According to La Fromboise (Coleman, H. L. K., Gerton, J, La Fromboise; 1993), a bicultural individual can do one of four things: share his/her condition with others, align him/herself with marginal individuals, align him/herself with a particular culture or

experience a feeling of being barred or restricted because of his/her situation. Other studies of biculturalism include that of Hisham Motkal Abu-Rayya (2006) and Thierry Devos (2006). Devos (2006) specifically looks at individuals of Asian American and Mexican American backgrounds while Abu-Rayya (2006) focuses on the experiences of European Arabs in Israel. The ultimate conclusion as corroborated by the work of Benet-Martinez (2005) and Abu-Rayya (2006) is that plural or bicultural individuals are endowed with the materials that make them better equipped to function socially in multiple cultural milieus and move from one context to another on a regular basis. For many plural Egyptians this is a lived reality.

Imagining a Nation

Imagining the existence of the nation begins according to Anderson with the emergence of print capitalism (Anderson 1983). Anderson explains that the development of print capitalism allowed for more rapid and widespread dissemination of information, which in turn allowed for the development of collective imagination and memory. The fixing of ideas and concepts to paper (and subsequently reality) through printing facilitates the education and unification of groups of people under larger headings such as the nation through an understanding of the differences between the group/groups one identifies with and any other group (one that the individuals does not identify with). Education in many instances was affected by class; the class you belonged to influenced the quality of education you received. Anderson (1983) also touches upon language as a method of reinforcing class hierarchy. This is later demonstrated in Egyptian society through the discussion of *baladiness* (see Chapter 3). Ernest Gellner (1983) lays out

definitions of the state, nation and nationalism and given the complexity of my research a definition is necessary. Gellner defines nationalism as a political principle and a theory of political legitimacy. There can be a multiplicity of states within national boundaries without there being one nation. The state is defined as an agency within society which has monopoly over the use of legitimate violence to maintain order within society.

The work of Suad Joseph (1996) was useful in how the various elements of state and national construction are imagined with reference to the Middle East. She makes it clear that citizenship in the Middle East addresses gender in a different way to Western countries and that reflects upon nationality and how it is conferred. This is supported by the work of Beth Baron (2005) who details the Egyptian nationalist movement in her book and shows how national imagery and metaphor became predominantly feminine. In the eyes of the state a citizen is male and the female is positioned as a subordinate (Joseph 1996). In the scheme of national imagery and family metaphor the woman is the carrier of national culture which is to be passed on to the children of Egyptian men (Baron 2005). Women as symbols of the nation find their ties to the patriarchal system reinforced in another way; it is man's responsibility as a national to protect their culture and the physical embodiment of culture. The legal rights of women are tied to their rights as citizens of the state and as members of kin groups and families. Because of the patriarchal nature of state system and the role they play in it, women find themselves treated as sub-citizens (Joseph 1996). They are denied power by the nation-state but cannot evoke change as they rely on the system instilled by the government and by kinship for protection and for them to exist as citizens. Gender is not a factor of citizenship in its own right; it is linked to race, class, religion, kinship and other

identifying categories used by the state. The role of women in society and the state and how individuals are engaged through gender in Egyptian society is very important, because the experiences of half Egyptians may be colored completely by the fact that they are a certain gender. This is especially true for women. It is no secret that women are treated differently in Egypt but the extent to which people are able to adjust or how their Egyptianness comes into question will depend on their gender as well as that of their Egyptian parent.

Transnationalism

A major part of this study is the effect being raised or having lived abroad has on how individuals interact with others when in Egypt. International influences (foreign media, non-Egyptian family members, friends from living/growing up overseas) play a strong if not equal role in identity construction. Studies of transnationalism serve to complement the literature on nationalism and identity formation in that they offer an understanding of the channels in which individuals with one Egyptian parent may travel being raised outside of Egypt and possibly coming back many times. Ghorashi (2004) writes about the Iranian community in Los Angeles as a way of dispelling the myth that immigrants and diasporic peoples contain a duality within themselves. Ghorashi (2004) using Hall's claim that 'the modern nation is a cultural hybrid', argues that ideas associated with home and nation have been detached from geographical location. Identity is therefore given the flexibility it needs to incorporate the full spectrum of heterogeneous elements that are involved in composing an individual. The idea is to create a space of belonging which is not limited to the nation state. Ghorashi invokes the notion of

hybridity as ‘the celebration of multiple positioning by making choices about living in and within cultural difference’ (Ghorashi 2004). Conradson and McKay (2007) claim that selfhood in itself is a ‘hybrid achievement’ because it absorbs a collection of experiences, movements, people, preferences and places in order to constitute itself. What is ultimately suggested (Ghorashi 2004) is that individuals with a plural background create spaces of hybridity using their daily habits and the reproduction of acts that are meaningful to both cultures they embody. Duality is thus eliminated because it is possible to be both which is an example of the flexibility required in having and defining an identity as argued by Hall (1996). It is this idea which comes under fire in Egyptian society but is countered through the formation of groups where individuals with one Egyptian parent or individuals who were raised abroad can meet and share their experiences. An example of such networks is a group called Roots which I will present in Chapter 4. Bechhofer and McCrone (2008) highlight the importance of identity markers and how it is decided that one belongs or does not belong. Their research among Scots revealed that there were no specific criteria which designated one Scottish. Having certain identity markers (e.g. being born in Scotland or having a specific accent) however, held more sway than others in whether or not an individual’s claim towards national identity was accepted by others. Similar examples can be found in Egypt; if one does not look Egyptian it is extremely hard for Egyptians to accept that they are.

The Image of Egypt

The majority of people I interviewed have stressed that Egyptian society is extremely difficult to become a part of. It has been described to me many times as rigid

and closed. There is a specific understanding of Egyptianness as well, one which is reproduced in actions and language use but has yet to be verbalized at least to myself and my contacts. One fact is repeatedly made clear: one is either Egyptian or they are not; occupying the spaces in between is not an option which makes the position of plural Egyptians very difficult. The idea of Egyptian being a single ethnicity, culture and religion (as well as many other elements) stems from the need to unite Egypt during the nationalist movement (Baron 2005). It is an idea that is still in circulation thanks to the current state structure. There is a lot of emphasis placed on appearance; if an individual looks foreign, that will permanently color their experience in Egypt. Language, also serves as a gateway; the better and more dynamic one's ability to communicate in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic the more likely they are to be accepted. These elements work in tandem. Individuals still find the expectations they face to vary from being allowed freedom of movement (because of being thought of as foreign) to being expected to perform Egyptianness perfectly (because of being considered Egyptian). Women may automatically find themselves in situations of higher restriction especially if they are living with or near family members. Being Egyptian without nationality and being expected to 'behave' Egyptian can be somewhat disorienting and may give rise to feelings of lacking and alienation. This begs the question of criteria; the definition of what it is to be Egyptian is never stable nor clearly articulated. In an article written for Al-Ahram Weekly in 2001, Ashraf Omar explains that plural Egyptians feel that they have to work twice as hard to be accepted socially by Egyptians. They complain that foreigners are allowed even expected to be completely ignorant of Egyptian cultural nuances. Plural Egyptians on the other hand are expected to be perfect representations of

Egyptianness.

Methodology

The original goal of this research was an extensive look at the various meanings and codes which play a role in how plural Egyptians experience being in Egypt. Being an Egyptian citizen and social being alone contains many complexities (issues of religion, gender, race, socio-economic standing, and class); being a plural Egyptian thus adds many more complex elements to the equation. In order to address the questions of my research I had to deploy various methods of exploration. As a result I sought to engage in an analysis of internet sites, Egyptian media forms, and Parliamentary debates as well as conducting interviews, engaging in participant observation and the collection of life histories.

Participant Criteria

The criterion when I began my research for selecting my informants was that individuals must have one parent who is Egyptian and one parent who is non-Egyptian. The individual must have spent a period of at least 6 consecutive months in Egypt before participating in this study to ensure the individual has at least begun the process of adjusting to being in Egypt. They must be between the ages of 18 and 30 and have at least a basic knowledge of Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. Socioeconomic background was also important, since it will directly affect the circumstances surrounding how and where the individual grew up and why they may have decided to come back to Egypt. There is also a tendency to view working and poorer classes of societies as ‘authentic’ representations of a particular culture. An example of this is the use of the *‘Ibn el Balad’*

during the establishment of the Egyptian nation (Baron 2005). Egyptian upper classes (and to some extent middle classes) consider themselves more western and possibly may be construed (also by themselves) as less "authentic" Egyptian. What was also important is the gender of which parent is Egyptian. I had hoped to interview an even number of individuals with an Egyptian father and Egyptian mother because the experience with reference to cultural exposure, and the enforcement of certain rules and rights in relation to acquisition and regulation of citizenship. What was also important was the religion of the individuals, which can be linked to parentage.

In total I was able to make direct contact with 25 individuals in Cairo who wanted to participate in my research. When I officially began my research I had already been asking around my social circle if anyone knew individuals who were half Egyptian. While I specifically used the term half so that it was clear that I was looking for individuals with one Egyptian parent and one foreign parent, I was directed to many individuals who had two Egyptian parents but had been raised overseas. It seemed that for many individuals, being half Egyptian and being Egyptian were the same so long as the person was raised abroad. In a few instances this was not made clear until I received their response to the introductory paragraph. At this point I had to explain that they did not qualify. Two major sources of contacts were friends at AUC and individuals with whom I was already friends. At one point I had asked a friend if she knew any individuals who were half Egyptian and she pulled me to the center of AUC's HUSS courtyard and began pulling aside passers-by that she knew. That day I made four contacts.

Another problem I experienced was that of getting individuals to maintain contact. The main methods of communication were e-mail and phone and while texting

and calling allowed for exchange at more regular intervals, when I sent material via e-mail (e.g. introductory paragraph questions, follow-up questions) the responses were much slower and in many cases non-existent. Having said that, there were many individuals that I had managed to keep in contact with up until a certain stage of research (post receipt of responses to introductory paragraphs or post follow up interviews for example) but then would become extremely difficult to contact or would merely cease to respond to text messages, phone calls or e-mails. A major issue I had to deal with was trying to decide when it was time to stop pursuing individuals.

Methods

Self Expression

When I began my research this phrase in describing introductory paragraphs was useful but what it really involved was the gathering of basic information about various individuals. This was part of the process of ascertaining viability for research and determining what was meaningful to each individual so as to generate follow up questions. The paragraph which I sent asked for background information, if there were indeed feelings of marginalization and what cultural influences they found meaningful. Along with the introductory questions was a paragraph explaining who I was and what my research goals were so that people were clear as to the nature of the research project and their involvement therein. This stage proved to be tricky in getting people to a) respond to e-mails, and b) managing the timeframe in which they responded. Generally, I gave individuals at most 2 weeks to respond and in doing so was able to get an idea of people's communication habits and adjust myself accordingly. What I also found was that

a few people felt unable to express themselves via e-mail and preferred to meet in person. For others, meeting in person was better for their schedules. This quickly became an option that I offered to all individuals.

Interviews

Once I had collected introductory paragraphs the next step was to organize follow up interviews. I experienced delays as a result of the aforementioned communication issues, but once I had received individual responses meetings were set up rather quickly. What was sometimes difficult was being able to generate questions because some individual's responses were succinct and did not yield a great deal of detail. In those instances I would ask questions which would require them to elaborate on statements they had made. The other end of the spectrum was those individuals who gave great amounts of detail. All of these individuals have been included in this thesis. Once again, there were a number of individuals who did not respond to requests for follow up interviews.

Participant Observation

The majority of people I had interviewed were living in Cairo either with friends or on their own. Of the 25 individuals contacted, 10 of them were employed. The rest were mainly students. Of the 10 employed, I was able to maintain contact with 5 but either a language barrier or their employers' regulations prevented me from observing them at work. Thus participant observation was reduced to social events. Kevin was the

individual with whom I socialized most and I was able to witness on multiple occasions his interactions with friends and on one occasion his extended family.

Internet

I also conducted internet searches for any and all content that concerns plural Egyptians and more specifically half Egyptians. The media I collected was divided in to five categories: Facebook Groups, Websites, Blogs, Newspaper Articles, and sites concerning Nationality Laws. When initially developing the idea for research, friends of mine had told me about the existence of a Facebook Group entitled “Half Egyptian Half Something Else”. The purpose of the group is to allow space for half Egyptians to come together and share experiences and offer each other support while in or outside of Egypt. I had also made contact with the founder of another Facebook group called “Egyptian Half Breeds”. My intention was to pose various questions to the groups based upon my data from previously mentioned methods of data collection (making sure to keep personal information confidential) in order to ascertain a wider reaction to issues raised. The site turned out to be a useful source for contacting potential interviewees and many of my interviewees and friends were already members.

The Reality of Being Plural

Cairo as a city has endless layers. Various versions of the city have been built one on top of the other throughout the centuries , making it seem instinctive that its inhabitants live on top of one another, occupying whatever space possible. Thus when one wanders through downtown Cairo one really wanders sideways, over under and

sincerely through downtown. One also has to duck and weave around cars, people and during the weeks leading up to Eid el Adha, goats. It is only in the morning just before sunrise that the city really becomes quiet and the space that holds the contrast between watching the sun rise and sun set is heavy with the emotion you had no time to feel earlier. Living in Cairo is the equivalent to living with the volume turned up as high as it goes. You are out in the open so to speak, and if your life heretofore had not been lived completely in public (and smiling all the while), it would be in Cairo.

As thoroughly as one can plan to undertake research and cover as many possible outcomes, the experience is never what one expects it to be. Cairo is a very difficult place to do research; plans are always very open-ended and something unexpected always happens. It is known as a place of transience; people are constantly passing through and as a result one is left with a feeling of being caught in a liminal space much like Marc Auge's (1995) spaces of transit. At the same time, it is a place of superactivity as a result of it being a transit hub. One thing I have become increasingly aware of while doing research was my position as a Westerner in the Middle East. Besides the possibility of my own experiences as a plural affecting my research there is also the complications of being a foreigner in Egypt and more importantly being a non-white foreign female in Egypt. As these three elements are connected in that I embody them, there must also be a point of separation. My difficulty was in separating being foreign from being plural but what helped was being able to share experiences with the individuals I interviewed and learn that for some their feelings about living in Cairo were not that different to how I had felt living in Cairo.

Informally I began my research in the fall of 2008. This involved engaging

individuals in conversation and getting an idea from them of what was important and if they may be interested in participating in my research in the future. All of it was very casual and I found that a lot of what people had to say resonated with me as a plural individual myself. When I began my research a little over a year later my focus was almost immediately on the internet and the idea of the virtual/imagined community. I began documenting basic information about Facebook groups concerning half Egyptians as well as cataloguing how many groups were dedicated to being Egyptian. I was given permission to make contact with group member and a few individuals wrote me about participating in my research. At the same time friends were coming forward to participate and in turn introducing me to friends of theirs who were interested in being involved.

Constable (2003) wrote that virtual ethnography lacked a bounded space and an official beginning and end so when doing her research the question was, when to stop. My research was divided into a physical and virtual one in terms of gathering information because if I was not researching online and dealing with people via e-mail and Facebook, I was meeting people in cafe's or going to gatherings at friends houses. In doing online research a major question was that of privacy. While some argue that online publication constitutes a form of consent, I felt that given my relationship with individuals who participated in research (many of whom were members of groups on Facebook) it would be more appropriate to obtain consent before accessing the site for the Facebook group.

The main difficulty I faced was in getting individuals to respond to my introductory question. I admit that the lengthiness of the introductory paragraph and the in depth reflection sometimes required to answer them, lends itself to the e-mail being

forgotten altogether. Many individuals have admitted later that many of the questions asked they had never thought about. Certain people had more time to answer questions in an interview setting or were more able to articulate themselves verbally so I began to offer the alternative of an interview with the same questions. This format actually led to quicker follow up interviews than when relying on introductory questions via e-mail alone. Few interviews maintained a formal setting; once people were more comfortable they were more forthcoming with details elaborating on their general feelings and responses to questions. As a result, interviews eventually became lengthy conversations, which ended in comparisons of various experiences in and around Cairo. A major consideration I had was how to write about interviews during which our experiences as plurals in Egypt melded together. It became difficult to write where my experiences ended and theirs began.

What is Missing?

The most immediate gap in my research is that of parliamentary debate about the newly decreed Nationality Law. The websites I had access to did not yield a great deal (if any) of information and what I was able to find came directly from newspaper articles. What I also found was that a lot of the questions I asked sparked reflection; people did not readily have stories to tell in response to these questions . As a result people were still processing the questions I asked as they were answering them. In some cases people did not have an answer to the questions I posed. Many people have admitted that they have not really thought about their positions as plural individuals in the ways reflected in the questions I had asked. I feel that many individuals needed further time to think and

answer these questions for themselves rather than for the research.

Organization of the Thesis

The first chapter "Who Exactly Are You?" is an introduction to a number of key individuals who provide useful details and accounts relevant to the various arguments of the thesis as a whole. How the question "where are you from?" is perceived and understood by different individuals is used to complicate the idea of identity as embodied and performed differently according to the background of the performer. The backgrounds of various individuals are detailed so that the reader becomes more familiar with the people who help provide an understanding of how identity can be constituted. Their background stories are an amalgamation of details from introductory paragraphs and the interviews that followed. Theories of self and subject combined with ideas of identity, embodiment and habitus provide a tool for analyzing how individual may come to the conclusions they do viz-a-viz how they describe themselves and their background.

Chapter 2 "The Nation and its People" looks at the concept of the ideal citizen through the lens of the various 'tools' (education, media etc) used to constitute it. The ideal citizen is an idea which is generated and reproduced by the state and feeds into national and social ideas of the ideal. This in turn informs the content of what it means to be Egyptian. What one arrives at is an understanding of where a plural individual may find themselves situated as a national and citizen. Religion and gender are addressed as tools for the categorization of those deemed Egyptian, a national or a foreigner and a non-national. The impact of transnationalism is also examined particularly the relationship between plural Egyptians and their nationality/ies. The legal aspect of being Egyptian is

addressed through the examination of the recently changed Nationality Law and its predecessors codifications. I detail both the law of 1975 and the law of 2004 and the effects the change in law have on plural Egyptians through a documentary that was released by the New Woman's Foundation. What comes to the forefront is the fact that the problems experienced by plural Egyptians who have been raised abroad are different from those who have been raised inside Egypt. A description of an interview with an individual who has lived in Egypt for the past 5 years demonstrates how certain experiences of hardship and comradeship are shared as a result of having Egyptian nationality.

Chapter three "Agnabi ow Masri?" addresses various ways in which Egyptianness and its supposed opposite foreignness are understood. It is about how ideas of Egyptianness and foreignness are formed, learned, and changed. I also examine the idea of Egyptianness in relation to memory. This is important because plural Egyptians mainly learn their ideas of Egyptianness from their Egyptian parent who may have been overseas for years even decades, creating a gap between current day Egypt and the Egypt of memory and imagination. Egyptianness and to a certain extent foreignness are also addressed as gendered. I explain the differences in behavior and expectations on the part of Egyptians through descriptions given by individuals who were interviewed. I also explore the role of class as intertwined with ideas of authenticity and how both shape the understanding of the national image.

Chapter Four "On Being a Community" follows notions of the formation of community among plural Egyptians and traces how many of them constitute community. It looks at the relevance and criteria of community and belonging by introducing the idea

of virtual communities as a medium for forging unity between plural Egyptians. How individuals engage with virtual space and create niches of comfort allowing freedom of expression is explored through examining Facebook groups created specifically for individuals with one Egyptian parent. I elaborate on one Facebook group as an example.

In the concluding chapter I reiterate the purpose of my research. I pull together the conclusions drawn, highlighting my contributions to existing literature and proposing areas of future research.

Chapter 1: Who Exactly Are You?

One of the first questions that is asked when people meet each other for the first time is “Where are you from?” Sometimes it is adjusted, for example, “Where are you from in the United States?” The very question itself suggests movement from a starting position to an endpoint, supposedly the location from which one is being asked the question, but how does one define the ‘start’? In various conversations I have noticed that people tend to assume that ‘from’ has a universal definition, a singular meaning that every individual knows and understands but asking more detailed questions does not clarify the meaning. Being ‘from’ some place can mean many things including nationality, birthplace, and current place of residence. Typically when one asks such a question they seek a single answer but for plural individuals that tends to be extremely difficult if not impossible. If a plural individual were asked what their nationality, birthplace and place of residence were separately rather than where they were from, more often than not the answers to the first three would be different. Mai, for example was born in the United States, is half French, half Egyptian, and while she has lived in all three countries she has also lived in Spain and the United Arab Emirates. Many people I have spoken to (Amira and Mai are good examples) complain about people becoming impatient or dismissive when they try to answer the question “where are you from?” because the answer does not come in the form of a single city or country. Amira clarifies saying that she has been accused of being difficult or not wanting to answer the question and giving the response “It’s very complicated” often makes the situation worse. The people they meet tend to lose interest in continuing a conversation soon thereafter.

The purpose of introducing identity in this fashion is to demonstrate how what are thought to be the simplest of concepts in everyday interaction (where are you from) are far more complicated. Such interactions engage with and represent the most basic ways in which meanings are learned, understood and transmitted to others. As this is a key element of how Bourdieu explains his concept of habitus (1980), the meanings that are learned and embodied are shared and mutually understood. The point I was making in the case of the question “where are you from?” is that the meaning while assumed to be mutually understood, might not be. An individual may ask another individual where they are from with a specific idea of what 'from' means, while the person responding may have a completely different definition of the word. This chapter aims to address ideas and understandings of identity through stories and background information about individuals taken from their introductory paragraphs I asked them to write. I begin with a discussion of various theories of identity, self and subject and how being plural is addressed theoretically to lay the conceptual framework that will guide my analysis. I then introduce the main characters who will appear in the thesis and briefly narrate their life stories. My aim is to familiarize the reader with my interlocutors and also introduce the complex backgrounds that constitute who they are and how they situate themselves in the context of Egypt.

Identity, Dialogical Self and the Subject

Stuart Hall (1996) criticizes the idea of a single unifying original identity while acknowledging a lack of substitutes for the concept of identity itself. He draws links to Foucault and his idea of the subject as the point from which exclusion and inclusion of

persons and things occurs. According to Foucault (Gutman et al. 1988) the subject is generated by the self which is a point of separation from the world; it is an attempt at defining the boundaries of an individual in contrast to other individuals that seek to do the same. This proposition is further complimented by Herman's (2008) understanding of the dialogical self. A key point that Hall (1996) makes is that identity is also constituted through difference. The dialogical self however is also a point from which an individual can establish connections, as a person becomes both a separate entity but extends him/herself through the things and people with which they associate. A plural Egyptian, for example is not only a delineated individual but is also constituted by friends, family, where they live and even the things they own. The dialogical self (Hermans 2008) also suggests the existence of the Other within the self as well. An example of how this is consciously rejected by individuals and institutions is the categorization of dual nationals as non-Egyptian through such events as the ruling made by a court judge that dual nationals cannot hold positions in parliament (Howeidy 2001). Their possession of another nationality and thus being part "the other" calls into question one's loyalty to the Egyptian state making them closer to foreigners than nationals. Nationality here acts as the legal representation of that which is linked to geography through place of birth and parentage (the Other in this specific example being non-Egyptian). It represents legally what some would call one's culture or ethnicity which is also derived from a combination of parentage and geography.

Drawing from the concept of governmentality and Technologies of Self (Burchill et al. 1991 & Gutman et al.1988), in order to begin to categorize and shape individuals into ideal citizens it has to be determined who and what they are along the lines of

standardized criteria. How individuals categorize themselves often relies upon varying criteria which can be reorganized for the purposes of the state and nation. For individuals it can be a matter of adopting identification methods they find meaningful; for institutions it is a matter of useful factors and attributes that correspond to set criteria for categorization. In order for the government to instill and maintain the necessary regulatory structures which are reinforced by the state and society and thus become self-perpetuating, the self and subject have to be clearly defined. Foucault (Foucault & Gros 2001) writes:

“The government of men demands not only acts of obedience and submission from those who are led, but also ‘truth activities’, which have the peculiar feature that the subject is not only required to tell the truth but must tell the truth about himself.” (Foucault & Gros 2001, 510)

Foucault wrote this with Christian confession in mind. With modern state power, telling the truth about oneself was a method of controlling the individual. Full disclosure of a person's acts and thoughts comprises part of the methods (technologies of the state in Foucauldian terms) by which individuals are categorized and defined, so as to be controlled by the state and government (Foucault & Gros 2001). According to Foucault (Foucault & Gros 2001), all of this finds its beginnings in the notion of caring for the self (Ibid). This notion which originated in Greek Antiquity allowed Foucault to develop the concept of technologies of the self which he defines as:

“The procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, offered or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self knowledge.”(Foucault & Gros, 2001, 513)

The goal, as argued by Foucault (Foucault & Gros 2001) is to understand the self in order to control it, possibly as an attempt to pin down the constantly shifting idea of what it is to be a specific individual (Hall 1996).

Identity entails shared characteristics and commonality; the fact that it is constantly in flux seems to be ignored or overlooked by governments in the process of dealing with multiples groups of peoples and the varied categories which accompany their various situations. At the same time individuals and groups are being claimed by other institutions and agents. Identity is addressed as a culmination of fixed points such as gender, birthplace, socio-economic status and education, but also involves points which are subject to change yet are assumed to be unchanging, for example residence and nationality (difficult as it may be a person's nationality can change). In short how individuals identify themselves is different from how they are identified administratively for the purposes of bureaucracy. These personal self definitions use terms, meanings and labels that are seldom the same. I return to the example of the article written by Amira Howeidy (2001) for *al Ahram Weekly* detailing the court ruling which barred dual nationals from holding positions in parliament. The Supreme Administrative Court judges who passed the ruling cited the question of dual loyalty as the main reason for their decision. I will show through the testimonies of Mary, Mai and others that these sentiments are reproduced socially among average Egyptians whom plural Egyptians confront daily; one is either familiar and hence considered Egyptian, or unfamiliar and perceived as foreign. Being part foreign in this context is a good enough reason to be considered socially foreign. The acceptance of being plural as part of the processes which construct and maintain a society follows Hall's (1996) claims that identity changes constantly. If the self as a representation of knowing is pitted against being the other and representing the unknown (Hall 1996), being half Egyptian would represent a partial unknown. This partial unknown is comprised of a mix of familiarity and unfamiliarity

which creates zones of discomfort and difficulties for the Egyptian government, state and subsequently society to accept and deal with. In my analysis of the case of plural Egyptians one of the most important aspects of their social being is a notion of identity as constantly shifting and morphing as one grows older and accumulates a wealth of experiences. This however, is what identity is for all individuals regardless of whether or not they realize and/or acknowledge it.

Personal self-definitions seemed to vary across ideas linked to gender, nationality and most importantly the places in which people have lived. Some individuals seem to base their ideas of self on the effect their various ‘homes’ have had on their notions of selves, in addition to their parental origins and nationality. For example, Kevin relates just as strongly to being in the Emirates and the United States as he does to being half Egyptian and half Irish. This in part has to do with positive memories of friends and family as well as of the place itself. While participants feel the effects of being a plural Egyptian in various ways, many would not immediately identify themselves as such. Kevin believes that all aspects of a person's being are relevant to how one identifies one's self. Thus birthplace, place(s) of residence, nationality, and cultural influences all hold a substantial, if not equal, sway. While others may argue that living in the UAE is irrelevant, Kevin would not.

Many individuals I had interviewed were aware of being different, but they never saw their difference as something distinct with which to identify with other individuals like themselves. For example, Fouad clearly stated in his interview that he did not define himself in such a way as to align himself with other individuals who were plural. Being plural seemed a major part of how my interviewees interpreted their experiences.

However, some individuals had not really begun to process their experiences in Egypt and reflect upon their feelings with regard to specifically being plural (rather than being international or merely standing out more so in Egypt than other places where they have lived) until I began to interview them. For some it just did not occur to them to think of themselves in that way. Residence, nationality, birthplace and cultural influences as distinct markers and associated with different geographical locations were a given. Many interviewees did not consider such a mix 'normal' for everyone but that did not necessarily prevent such experiences from being normalized for them. I would argue that such experiences were experienced as embodied for many plural Egyptians, to the extent that they encompassed an inseparable aspect of their daily actions thus making them habitual (Bourdieu 1980 & Ingold 2000). Hybridity, according to Ghorashi (2004) is performed and reproduced in daily actions. An individual's understanding of himself or herself is performed as part of the exchange that is social interaction. This performance is not necessarily a conscious act which may explain how individuals do not reflect on certain elements of how they may or may not define themselves. How each person constitutes their identity is partially fuelled by factors such as nationality and residence but none of these factors hold complete sway over how an individual identifies him/herself.

Bicultural?

In discussing personal self definitions and labels assigned by outside institutions and individuals biculturalism is a concept that must be touched upon. Biculturalism is a term that I only came across once or twice while conducting my research but has led me

to examine it and other similar terms more thoroughly. For example Kevin, Evan and another friend of mine who is half Egyptian half Kuwaiti (not interviewed as she was too busy at the time) have approached me separately recommending an article entitled "Identity Crisis 101." This article uses the term "halfies" to describe not only half Egyptians, but also those who are born to Egyptian parents but have been raised abroad. Ayad uses this definition to describe Bicultural Egyptians. As with the terms 'halfie' and plural Egyptian, the question arises as to whether or not individuals refer to themselves using the term bicultural. The only two individuals I had heard use the term 'bicultural' were Kevin and Mary, but only Kevin used the term in reference to himself. Mary used the term in an attempt to understand a question I had asked her. Kevin has used the word 'halfie' once or twice, but it seemed he used it merely as a substitute for another he could not find. Knowledge gained from the interviews contradicted and challenged ideas of biculturalism those individuals often discuss living in multiple locales and having more than two cultural influences. The term bicultural implies having only two cultural influences; in contrast the majority of participants had between three and five such influences. Equally important to the reductionism entailed in biculturalism as a concept is what is meant by culture? It is easy to assume that one nation has only one culture within its boundaries (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). To use an example if Evan discusses influences from Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and Egypt (as an example), are these 3 separate cultures or more? From one viewpoint it could be said that there are only two cultures at work, Western and Middle Eastern, but that assumes uniformity in all Middle Eastern countries. Biculturalism also indicates a mental divide between cultures rather than a meld (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos 2005 & La Fromboise 1993) which is what

individuals have indicated through their behavior, for example mixing cultural meanings and gestures.

Ayad's (2007) summations based upon the establishment of a West/Middle East dichotomy as part of the definition of bicultural Egyptian is partially relevant in how in many instances Egyptian society is constructed in opposition to Western society. Yet such constructs and dichotomies not only defy lived experiences, but also render it almost impossible for plural individuals to create and make comfortable spaces for themselves. I say almost because individuals do succeed in creating comfortable spaces; these spaces do not always include Egyptians however (as I demonstrate in Chapter 4). If it does for example with Kevin, there tends to be a clear divide between Egyptian friends and non-Egyptian friends for example there would be certain social setting in which Egyptians of foreigners may be uncomfortable. Chapter 4 discusses ideas of community and details how individuals gravitate towards internationals or other Egyptians with some form of travel experience.

What needs to be stressed in this regard is how class plays a major role in these interactions. The majority of individuals included in these circles tend to belong to middle or upper classes. The background of internationals on the other hand can vary class wise. The majority of individuals (I refer specifically to those I interacted with) do not refer to themselves in terms of class but their mobility and educational associations (many participants in my research travel frequently or are associated with AUC in one way or another) indicate a certain class bracket. A question which arises relates to whether or not being of a certain class aids in creating a comfortable niche for individuals. As the majority of individuals interviewed interact with foreign

internationals who occupy a space outside of the Egyptian class system it becomes more likely that the answer is yes. Class, like gender, parentage, place of birth and residence are factors which crosscut how the state and government categorize people and how individuals constitute self identities. But who are the plural Egyptians who come to constitute the main characters of my study? To their life stories and backgrounds I turn next.

Mary

One evening after an interview, Mary, Mahmoud and I went to the Townhouse Gallery to view an exhibition on the Asylums of Egypt which turned out to be a fine example of what Foucault was trying to argue concerning the alienation of undesirables in society. Later on the three of us agree that the marginalization of those deemed deviant is a global universal.

Marginalization was definitely the theme of the evening. Before the visit to Townhouse Gallery, I met Mary after having corresponded via e-mail over the better part of a year to conduct an extended version of the interviews. She had sent me a link to her blog entitled “Inanities.” I had gleaned some answers to my questions from that and an article she had written for *The Daily News Egypt* on ‘halfies’ in Egypt and the difficulties of the non-existence of a middle ground. It was like déjà vu; I walked in through the glass doors, quickly scanned the room and gravitated towards the woman with her back towards me in a red long-sleeved top with a red and white striped sweater draped around her shoulders. Already sipping a beer, she was even sure we had met before, possibly at a party. I was nervous because she had written about halfies before and I saw her as

somewhat of an expert. She invited me to have a beer with her and I explained the main ideas of my research. She then proceeded to ask me about my background and we talked informally for a while before launching into the interview. Mary had never really reconciled or gotten comfortable with her identity as a 'halfie' (to use the words from her article) and she was tired and frustrated with having to prove her Egyptianness on a daily basis through a tirade of questions posed by people in shops or on the street, the answers to which few accepted to be truthful. As much as she loves Egypt and the Egyptian people, she abhors what she feels is their close-mindedness and at times was quite vocal about it. Eventually, what came to light was the fact that constantly being asked who you are and then having to deal with the fact that people decide who you are regardless of the answer you give, exacerbates whatever internal conflict one may already have. Mary eventually just 'gave up', stopped arguing with people over whom she was or was not, and let people think what they wanted. These issues, she felt, came down to one thing: her mother being the Egyptian and not her father.

Mary was born in the UK and had her first visit to Egypt when she was merely months old. She holds both Egyptian and UK nationalities. Her mother was the major influence in her life; according to Mary, she seemed intent upon being the proud Egyptian mother of a 'foreign' child. Mary's mother did not speak to her in Arabic, claiming that bilingualism would confuse her and continuously dyed Mary's hair blond as a child. Mary feels that this among other things aided in barring her access to elements of the Egyptian social network and permanently branded her 'foreign'. Her mother had even told her on many occasions that she was a foreigner and not Egyptian, indicating that this was how she felt. At the same time she remembers her mother not being very comfortable

in Egyptian society. She says it was as if her mother was visiting a country that was unfamiliar to her. She claims her mother only exited the house accompanied by her sisters or other female relatives. If one were to examine the relationship between Mary and her mother using the postcolonial lens, a useful author would be Frantz Fanon (1952). A Chapter in his book, *Black Skin White Masks*, discusses what he calls *lactification*. While this process concerns black women marrying white men in order to produce lighter children, the emphasis is upon the desire to be accepted into the world of the former colonial power. I in no way imply that this was Mary's mother's intention, but the importance she places on having a 'foreign' child suggests a preference for foreignness that may pervade certain parts of Egyptian society. An example may be the use of "*Merci*" rather than "*Shukran*" (both meaning "thank you" but one is French while the other is Arabic) in Egypt. The result is that Mary has not completely felt comfortable being in Egypt and has sought to understand her environment through Egyptian literature, art, and film. She blames her mother for not speaking to her in Arabic as a child and for not teaching her "Egyptianness" or what it means to be and behave Egyptian. She is also angry at social acceptance of the patriarchal system. For her, the change in nationality law means that she is Egyptian on paper (she has even been asked by strangers to produce her identity card to prove her nationality), but she is still told that she does not look Egyptian which, is part of the reason she constantly has to prove her Egyptianness.

What I found striking about Mary's account was the reference to how a child develops awareness towards different languages and the concept of nationality. She recalls as a child not consciously differentiating between speaking Arabic and English and links the lack of awareness to a lack of self-consciousness about who she was and

where she was. As with embodiment (Ingold 2001) and habitus (Bourdieu 1980), codes and meanings that are learned are encased in the actions one performs and one may perform these actions not knowing why but learning the reasons through doing. Mary describes knowing facts as a child that are not linked with the greater concepts one learns when one is older, like when a child is unaware of the links between stereotypes and various cultures. An example of this is where she writes:

“Dad speaks English, we eat mashed potatoes if we’re lucky (and molokheyya if we’re not) at ***** place and when Om Mohamed the cleaner/cook/companion to my grandmother is prostrating on the rug it is called praying, and you can’t talk to her until she stands up. Straight-forward facts undisturbed by the contemplation of my existence in the bigger world².”

These facts she speaks about are described in the language of a child, the point being that children digest facts as they experience them, having not yet learned the meanings that accompany them. This is part of the process of habitus (Bourdieu 1980); repetitive action allows one to understand the meaning of the action. These facts can also be divided along cultural lines; speaking English and eating mashed potatoes is notably western and in this case English, while eating *molokheyya* is Egyptian and Om Mohamed's specific form of prayer is Islamic but also Egyptian. Mary is in effect learning Englishness and Egyptianness but she would not be able to identify herself as doing so until she is much older.

Eventually something in Mary changed and upon later visits to Egypt she became aware of recognizing the various sounds around her, but the Arabic no longer had meaning. Like many children who learn a language at a young age but never practice, she had lost the ability to speak Arabic. By this point her relatives had stopped speaking Arabic to her. While rejecting the idea of Egypt created by her most recent negative

² <http://allthegoodnameshadgone.blogspot.com/2007/08/helwa-ya-balad-meen-part-2-return-to.html>

experiences (mainly having to do with how she was treated on the streets and an incident where she and her family were pelted with rocks at the Pyramids in Giza) she sought to maintain a connection to Egypt by immersing herself in its music, literature and learning Arabic. Here she could have some sort of control over how she engaged with being Egyptian because anything negative she experienced she could put a stop to e.g. close the book. When she eventually returned to Egypt, it was a completely different story. She describes how she learned of the intricacies of the class system and how the non-existence of social mobility sickened her as she saw it as a major source of the country's problems. Because her father is from the United Kingdom she is often treated like a representative for all things British and this is reflected in questions such as "Why don't English people believe in God anymore?" She has given up trying to explain her situation to people. When I ask her about the difference between the Egypt of her childhood and the Egypt she experiences now, she tells me that she has discovered an Egypt that is her own and not her mother's. Unlike her family members, Mary explores the city, uses the metro and attends various protests that take place in Cairo and she loves the life that she lives here. While she herself gets very defensive about Egypt, she dislikes the fact that Egyptians do not allow foreigners to criticize the country. In a specific instance a friend of hers elaborated on how he felt about foreigners criticizing Egypt.

"He compared Egypt to his mother, and said that while he himself could insult her, those not closely related to her did not share this privilege."

Mary's problem with her friend's statement is that it extends to include foreigners who have lived in Egypt for decades. This leads her to ask the question, how long do you have to be in a country to belong? When I ask her about media, Mary has a wealth of information about not only films and books, but film stars as well. An interesting thing

that Mary shows me is her national identity card. She claims it is illegal because of the arrangement of her name. Normally on the Egyptian identity card, your name reads as first name, father's name then grandfather's name or last name. Because her mother is Egyptian, the office put her mother's name in the middle instead of her father's name, which is technically fraud, she explains. It presents an interesting conundrum, as in following Egyptian lineage it makes sense to put her mother's name; however this counters the system of patriarchy, which dictates how family lineage is traced. While she does not have any problems because of the way her card reads, she wonders if Egypt is ever going to adapt to accepting Egyptian mothers as the bearers of citizenship.

Eventually we are joined by Mary's friend Mahmoud who also has a lot to offer in terms of how mixing has been accepted historically in Egypt but now is suddenly a taboo. Mahmoud is Egyptian, works as a psychiatrist aiding Iraqi refugees and so offers his opinion as a 'full Egyptian'. He reaffirms much of what Mary has been saying; if one's father is Egyptian, they tend to be absorbed into the realm of 'Egyptian,' while those with Egyptian mothers are categorized as 'foreign'. Religiously he says there is a concern over the loss of Muslim women through marrying outside of the religion. For many, a Muslim marrying a Christian is the same as an Egyptian marrying a foreigner; they are frowned upon in the same way. He also says it depends on the type of exposure to Egypt one has had. An example he gives is from his childhood. One of the children he went to school with was half American, but none of the children were really aware of this because he had been at school with them since they were very little and in terms of social nuances he was Egyptian. On the other hand, two children who were half French joined their school when they were around 14 years old and were never really accepted because

they had different mannerisms and the way they spoke Arabic was different. Mary and Mahmoud then began discussing famous people who are half Egyptian. They agree that if a person is famous, Egyptians are eager to claim them as their own. Otherwise, they are subject to the 'rules of Egyptianness' i.e. being determined as either Egyptian or foreign and held to the relevant codes of conduct. They mention many Egyptian film stars who are half Egyptian but have 'Egyptianized' themselves so as to be better accepted in the Egyptian film industry.

Between the interview, Mary's article and her blog there is a stark frankness about how she feels and how others with whom she interacts (mainly those interviewed for her article) feel. She brought this frankness to the interview uncensored (in contrast to her article). While others I have interviewed may struggle to find the appropriate wording, Mary was very direct and no nonsense with regards to language use, her interpersonal relationships, and particularly her stance on Egyptian society with regards to acceptable modes of practice. For example, most individuals would not readily admit to negative relationships with their family members. Also, when she describes an experience she had when she and her cousin were applying for Syrian visas she says:

"At the Syrian Embassy in London she casually mentioned that her father is from Alexandria and was immediately relieved of the need to pay for a visa and was welcomed like a lost daughter. All that was missing was for Assad himself to adorn her with a lei. I on the other hand, the daughter of imperialists and pigs, was made to wait in line and pay for a visa with all the other scum."

What I want to draw attention to is the use of such strong language (imperialists, pigs, scum) in expressing an opinion that comes from a historical and political context that ties directly into how she identifies herself and how she is identified by others.

Amira

While Mary is an example that is reminiscent of Hall's (Du Gay & Hall 1996) descriptions of identity in flux, Amira's shifts in spaces of identity are more linear. Amira seems to have come to Egypt with a particular idea of Egyptianness in mind (as a result of how her father raised her), but found the experience of being in Egypt and interacting with Egyptians to be different. Amira was born in Austria to an Egyptian father and an Austrian mother. She has Austrian nationality, but is also contemplating getting her Egyptian identity card. Her father's family is originally Upper Egyptian but currently lives in Alexandria and her mother's family is from Southern Austria. She currently studies Arabic and Baltic languages at a university in Austria, but has taken a year off to study Arabic in Egypt. While she had previously been to Egypt to visit family members, she decided she wanted to really experience Egypt, learn the language better and get in touch with her father's roots. During her time in Egypt, she worked with the Austrian Embassy's cultural center as an intern and lived in an apartment in Garden City.

Amira deliberately chose to live in Cairo versus Alexandria in order to be spared the protection of her family and the sugar-coating of those close to her family. Originally she felt that she was more Egyptian but after having spent almost 7 months in Cairo she has come to the conclusion that she is more Austrian. She feels she cannot relate socially to Egyptians and their standards which includes for example strangers involving themselves in her day to day affairs and not feeling comfortable on the street. When living in Austria Amira felt truly independent; she had freedom of movement, action and speech. In Cairo, however she came to depend on her friends and family to do things and rarely ventured from her apartment alone. What she found so surprising about Egypt is how liberal it could be. From her time spent in Alexandria with family and stories from

her father, she had put together an image of Egypt that was very strict and conservative. Her experience in Cairo has involved double standards leading to the discovery of openness in society, a discovery which has shocked her. She describes extreme scenarios of people having crazy parties, drinking heavily and of the promiscuity of both men and women but asks that I do not reveal details for the sake of maintaining social anonymity. I once sat with her in a coffee shop discussing the much rumored double standard of veiling. We had both heard from various sources of the promiscuity of certain veiled women, but what she found to be most aggravating was the fact that unveiled women are automatically branded and criticized based upon their clothing, while veiled women are often seen wearing tighter and more suggestive clothing than non-veiled women. This is a sentiment shared by Kevin who says that in Egypt besides wearing the *hijab* (veil) there is little a woman can do to not appear 'loose' as he puts it. Amira has always made a serious effort with regards to wearing appropriate clothing (that day she was wearing a pair of jeans and a t-shirt with a long sleeved shirt underneath), but even when she was coming to meet me that day she was harassed many times. She feels Egypt has a strict 'face', yet what goes on underneath is a completely different story.

Amira is another individual whom others perceive as foreign. She complains about trying to speak Arabic and people constantly responding to her in English and not believing that she is half Egyptian. She tries to tackle the question of where she is from by breaking it down; she asks people what exactly they are looking for when they ask, but she is still met with a dismissive reaction. Towards the end of her time in Egypt she missed her friends and family in Austria. She had originally imagined living in Cairo long-term believing that if her family were not near she would be able to have her own

life and live it with a degree of privacy. Now she feels it is not possible. She now looks forward to returning to her life in Austria now sure that it is where she belongs.

Kevin

Kevin endeavors to represent equally all elements of his identity and I feel he also serves as an excellent example of how multifaceted and ever-changing identity is. His mother is Irish, his father Egyptian and he spent the majority of his years between the US and the UAE with a brief stint in Saudi Arabia. The youngest of three, he was not spared the naming ritual which had developed as each parent attempted to exert their influence. The result was an Egyptian name for the time spent in the Middle East and an Irish name when in the West (although as a child he refused to respond to his Arab name). What follows are the things that I have gleaned from his accounts that he feels are crucial to his idea of self identity. Partially due to his parents influence, he relates strongly to American culture (he has American nationality and his parents have incorporated American cultural influence into how they raised him). In his early years he did not feel connected to his Arab roots (despite yearly visits to Egypt and Ireland) but that soon changed after moving to Egypt as an adult.

Kevin has been claimed by both Americans and Egyptians, in that his accent is American and his father is Egyptian which in the eyes of Egyptians qualifies him as a member. Americans automatically latch on to his accent, he says, and seem to forget about the rest of his background, while Egyptians will always ask if it is his father that is

Egyptian. While describing a recent visit to Ireland for a TEFL course, he admits adopting an Irish accent to be more accepted as partially Irish and not dismissed as another American trying to claim Irish heritage. I have often seen him consciously and vocally switch from being a representative of the Irish to Egyptian and then align himself with Americans through very specific details of having lived in New York, and then return to making a joke about Egyptian families that can only be understood from the perspective of having Egyptian family members. Sometimes Kevin will begin a sentence by clarifying his position as Egyptian or Irish or having lived the majority of his life in the State of New York before lending his opinion to the conversation. For example he may begin with "As a New Yorker..." or "Being Irish...". He takes great offence to any jokes made about the Irish potato famine as he views it as Ireland's great tragedy and unifying force.

Originally Kevin had a strong reaction against being called Egyptian (at school in the UAE he would deny he was Egyptian) mainly because of his lack of knowledge culturally which also caused him to feel disconnected from Egypt. Since coming to Egypt recently he has learned a great deal and now feels more of a connection to that part of his being. A major turning point, he recalls, was his first Ramadan spent in Cairo. It gave him a greater sense of the unity with others that comes from sharing religious beliefs and helped break down barriers that had existed with family members who saw him as the 'foreign relative'. He still cites language and his accent in Arabic as a significant barrier; speaking Arabic with a foreign accent can be an isolating factor. His sense of closeness to Irish culture stems from his closeness to his mother (his mother read to him nightly and helped him with his homework until he was in high school) and time spent in Ireland. He

even says he went through a period of time during which he unconsciously referred to Ireland as home. Despite Kevin's various attachments to different sites of cultural origin he says:

“In the ‘who am I’ question, I like sometimes to say ‘I am a foreigner’. I am one everywhere I guess, but not usually one without any claim to an international ally, at least a claimed home that defended me. This would be a first.”

Kevin's self-description rings of a disconnection from national and geographical ties as defining qualities. Culturally he embraces all that he is composed of but much like transnationals and diasporic communities ideas of nation and a geographical homeland are ties to imagined and distant communities and groups of people. What is also present in his description is the sense that while he does not necessarily wave his various national flags, he believes in having the support of the nation which for example takes the form of having a passport that allows him to travel or the protection of his rights as a citizen. This is his sentiment towards nationality (as I develop in chapter 3); it is a passport.

Kevin is very aware of the effect of race on the different registers of his national membership, especially as he is often in situations where he is the only Arab and has become sensitive to the differences in the way people react to him and treat him. He feels he had first become aware of the difference between being Caucasian in America and being Arab post the bombings of September 11, 2001. Suddenly he found himself defined more by what people assumed to be his racial background. Like many individuals in the United States, Kevin became subject to the stereotype of the Arab as a fundamental Islamic terrorist bent upon destroying 'the American way of life'. In Cairo, he often ponders the differences in details that people do or do not notice concerning Egyptian culture. One example of this is the first time he met a mutual friend of ours who is an American convert to Islam. When she arrived at his apartment it was clear to him that she

was *muhagaba* or veiled, yet because of the way she was veiled it was not apparent to his two American flat mates. On another occasion his friends had asked if a mutual friend of theirs was Egyptian when for him it was clear from his accent that he was. Kevin considers these small details to be obvious, but I speculate that they are only obvious because of his experiences and possibly his background. Kevin takes pride in being a 'doorway to Islam', happily taking the time to explain nuances to the uninformed and giving advice to those who seek it.

Mai

Mai has one of the more turbulent stories of the people I have interviewed. Her mother is French, born in Betton and her father is Egyptian, born in Sohag but his family now lives outside of Alexandria. She has French, Egyptian and American nationalities. She has lived in the United State for 4 years, spent 6 years in France, 5 years in Egypt, 4 years in the UAE, and a year in Spain. She has a sister who lives in New York and another who lives in Alexandria. She has very strong, happy memories of her childhood in Egypt, but has hardly any fondness for her time in Dubai. She cannot explain why but she says that in terms of her memories it is as if she had never lived there. Her recollections of Egypt are filled with memories of her aunt's flat and spending a lot of time with her cousins playing chess or listening to music. She says that in her aunt's neighborhood they were known as 'the foreigner kids'. Things however, changed when she and her cousins grew older. With the exception of an uncle, aunt and a few cousins, relations between Mai, her sister and the rest of her family have soured. It is those family members that are the source of malicious rumors concerning what Mai and her sisters do

and have decided that whatever it was it must be something socially unacceptable. Mai has never clarified what such rumors were because of how sensitive she is to the behavior of her family members. The general attitude of her aunts and cousins is that because she has spent most of her life outside of Egypt she is essentially foreign and as a result, they expect she does the things foreigners do and which Egyptian society frowns upon, for example being sexually promiscuous. More specifically she had come to Alexandria to visit her family and her male cousin's parents went away for a week leaving her and her cousin in their apartment alone for a week. Upon the return of her uncle and aunt there was a flurry of rumors surrounding what could have happened between a young male and female were left alone in a flat. This occurrence fueled rumors that there was something romantic happening between Mai and her cousin. While her cousin understands that friendship between males and females is possible, the rest of her family is skeptical to say the least. She purposefully chose to live in Cairo to escape her family's judgments.

In her own account, Mai describes herself as having "*un demi sentiment d'appartenance, qui finalement n'en est pas un, car l'appartenance est ou n'est pas*" roughly translated to mean "... a half feeling of belonging, which in the end is not because membership either is or is not." Mai feels that she is partially French, partially Egyptian but at the same time not because, as the quote indicates, she is aware of the idea that one is either one or the other but not both. This is an indication of a sense of occupying liminal space, but at the same time being aware of social forces not allowing liminal spaces to exist. To create her own space, she says she has a sense of a partial membership, of being in and being out at the same time.

Mai also seems to be very aware of her Egyptian family's class background. Her family comes from a poor area of Alexandria and it seems to play a role in how she interacts with Egyptians in Cairo and more specifically AUC Egyptians. She originally wanted to avoid living with high class Egyptians because the situation made her feel really uncomfortable. In an e-mail to a friend she says:

Toutefois l'ecart considerable entre la "haute" cairote et mes racines egyptiennes est flagrant, et j'ai du mal a me faire a ce monde a part ou toute le monde se connait, parle de l'egypte, de son developpement, avec detachment, sourires et billets en poche (cedej, cabinet d'avocats, ONGs, AUC, etrangers...)

The rough translation is that she feels there is a great gap between her Egyptian roots and upper class Cairenes and she has had a hard time becoming part of a world where everyone knows each other and are able to discuss Egypt and its development with detachment, smiles and money in their pockets. She goes on to say *"pas tres surprenant, mais fondamentalement derangeant. Quelle est ma place? Qu'est ce que je veux faire?"* - [not very surprising but fundamentally disturbing. What is my place? What do I want to do?]. There is an overwhelming sense of displacement; Mai gives the impression of feeling completely out of place both with her family and within the space she tried to create in Cairo. The tools at play in her self-definition viz-a-viz Egyptian standards are her gender and class background. She also draws attention to the gap felt by the majority of Egyptians as a result of class and socio-economic setting.

When Mai first moved to France it was a matter of adjusting, i.e. learning colloquialisms, fashion trends and pop music, but being in Egypt is significantly harder for her. While her language ability is fairly advanced and she attempts to dress in a fairly modest manner (shirts with sleeves, scarves, all clothing that is loose fitting) she still meets criticism, for example from her coworkers who claim her Arabic is not good

enough for an Egyptian. One of Mai's goals during her time in Cairo is to attempt to change people's minds about foreigners, plural Egyptians, overseas and living abroad. She believes Egyptian society demands uniformity from its members and she wants to fight it. She wants people to learn to judge each other based upon character rather than nationality. Mai often feels discouraged; she wonders if she should bother to put in the effort required to open doors, which she says are automatically shut if a certain level of Egyptianness is not performed. She continues to do so however, because she believes ultimately it will be worth it and she cannot be anyone other than who she is. She admits visiting Cairo causes her to reflect upon what she calls her predominately "Western" lifestyle. She finds sometimes when she returns to France that her behavior changes; for example she is less willing to let people touch her, but she would argue the same happens when she comes back.

Riad

Riad holds a particular kind of weight on his shoulders. Both of his parents being deaf meant that they relied on him heavily for a long time. His father is Egyptian and his mother is Libyan, and he has lived in Egypt since 2005. He only has Egyptian nationality. While growing up in Libya, his friends always referred to him using his mother's maiden name; his friends did not want to be associated with an Egyptian. Riad explains that there is a lot of racism in Libya which runs along the lines of both skin color and nationality; Libyans do not look very highly upon Egyptians. He says his family has always been more liberal than the average Libyans and Egyptians. That is not to say that things are not light hearted; his Egyptian family members will joke that he is Libyan and his Libyan

family members will joke that he is Egyptian. In Egypt, he initially did not feel he belonged and he could not understand things such as jokes and specific criticisms of others for example by Muslims about Christians and vice versa. He says he has been called a foreigner in both countries and as a result has taken it as a refuge. Riad feels that accepting the role of the foreigner puts him in a space where he is no longer subject to certain social expectations for example that of maintaining behaviour that is categorized as Egyptian. He feels less scrutinized in this role and can therefore live his life as he pleases. He has found it easier to socialize with Egyptians with overseas exposure and internationals in Cairo. He feels more connected to people when he takes the route people call 'foreign'. Riad feels that this is because people are more open about what they talk about and there are fewer taboos, for example discussing romance and religion. He avoids discussing religion with Egyptians because when he speaks with Muslims he often finds they tend to make anti-Christian comments (e.g. "Christians look greasy" and "they insult Muslims in church"). Riad himself is religiously liberal, adhering to no major religion.

When Riad first arrived in Cairo, he did not feel he belonged and constantly told people he was Libyan. He took a job at the Japanese Embassy to avoid the potential difficulties with Egyptians that he later experienced. He found that former AUC students working with him were more open and understanding of his background. He is still friends with these people. He indicated that Egyptians without exposure to other cultures and countries find it difficult to interact with him because to them he is "not very Egyptian". Riad has often thought about being half but when he discussed it with me, it was mainly surrounding romantic relationships. In the past his girlfriends have always

been half Libyan and more recently his girlfriends have been European. He knows in Libya he would have faced problems because it is difficult for Libyan women to marry non-Libyans and not having Libyan nationality would carry weight in that matter. His family has always felt that he would never be happy with a typical Egyptian or Libyan girl and this is part of the inexplicable something that makes him different. It is something that even he cannot put in words.

Conclusions

Individuals introduced in this chapter have demonstrated who they feel they are and how they have constituted their identities using meaningful labels. The points at which they either agree or disagree with what goes on around them and the ways in which they engage with individuals and how people react to them exemplify how the self and subject are dealt with (to a certain extent and relative to context) by members of Egyptian society. Identity as an understanding of who one is and who one is not embodied, in the sense that people act out who they are which evokes a reaction by others. I show that the term bicultural is useful in establishing boundaries and highlighting the role of the East/West dichotomy in how Egyptians interact with plural Egyptians. It also reveals how plurals do or do not talk about themselves. Each individual introduced in this chapter has used nationality, birthplace and residence as tools to establish their identity. In some cases the elements which cause feelings of alienation are clearly defined, while in others they are indefinable. Identity is a meld and within that meld factors (such as place and space like birthplace and residence, parentage,

personal characteristics) inform how individuals form ideas about themselves with which they engage other individuals and society as a whole.

Mary's story highlights an issue, which I address in Chapter 2. She is the only individual with an Egyptian mother who I was able to interview in depth and her story indicates that regardless of the change in nationality law, having an Egyptian mother designates one as foreign in Egyptian society. She along with Kevin, Riad and Mai demonstrate in clearer ways how identity is something that is in constant flux. Amira's case exemplifies how clear cut lines had been drawn. She entered Egypt feeling more Egyptian and left feeling more Austrian. Her story also has examples of how memory (addressed in Chapter 4) of a country can become increasingly different to the contemporary experience of a place. Kevin's story is one of self discovery, coming to terms with who he felt he was and then using these understandings to guide others. He has endeavored to establish and maintain ties to all cultures and countries shaping his background but at the same time, he remains disconnected from ties that fix him geographically and nationally. He considers himself as simultaneously belonging to everywhere and nowhere. Mai's story describes both gender and class as the main elements she struggled with while in Egypt. Like Kevin, she has a sense of both belonging and not belonging, but she is also aware of the fact that her experience in Egypt has indicated to her that one cannot be both. Gender manifests itself in part through her relationship with her family and with her ex-coworkers. Class issues manifest themselves through her relations with friends and individuals she met in Cairo. Riad 's story was useful in demonstrating similarities between Libya and Egypt. He serves as an example of how sometimes the only option one is left with is being 'marginalized', but

also how this option for some can be liberating rather than constricting. His marginalization, like Mary's, is social however, one that many feel should have been rectified for all Egyptians by the change in Nationality Law which is what I examine in the following chapter.

Chapter 2: The Nation and its People

This chapter examines the relationship between the formation of what is imagined as the "ideal Egyptian" by the nation, state and society and the effect it has on individuals who have only one Egyptian parent. What I seek to show is how ideas of singularity (having a single ethnicity, culture, parental roots and thus a single citizenship and nationality) inform the legal premise of nationality, state's understanding of citizenship, and society's idea of its individual members. These ideas, however, are neither singular nor uniform. The "ideal Egyptian" takes many forms hence the difficulty in giving an exact definition to "Egyptianness". These various understandings inform each other, reinforce each other and thus overlap. The traditional understanding of the difference between citizenship and nationality is that the state has citizens and the nation has nationals (Joseph 1996 & Fitzgerald 2006), but the problem I have found in my research has been a tendency towards interchanging the terms. Citizenship also carries many other definitions for example being a 'juridical status that confers political rights' (Turner 2008). The Egyptian Constitution also refers to Egypt as a state but then discusses nationality as defined by the law³. I have for the sake of clarity tried to refer to citizens when discussing the state and nationals when discussing the nation. The government, state and society appear to be striving for a specific image which does not seem to be clearly defined. This image does however, need to be strictly adhered to in order to maintain Egyptianness as embodied by the statements of Articles 9 and 12 of the constitution. These statements are in themselves vague and I speculate that the vagueness allows space for the development of Egyptianness in its current form and as a category in

³ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_one/part_one.aspx

practice which allows those performing Egyptianness to react negatively to that which is perceived as non-Egyptian, most crystallized in how individuals react to 'half Egyptians'. Although similar arguments can be made for non-Egyptians, specific social categories exist for them which involve mostly mutual acceptance of existing on the fringes of society⁴ (Ayad 2007). The paragraphs to follow give the reader an insight to the kinds of links that seem to be drawn by individuals in Cairo when engaging in pleasantries and serves as an introduction to how an individual's origins are understood, processed and acted upon. Then I discuss existing literature on the nation, state, religion, women, transnationalism and how they inform firstly ideas of Egyptianness. I use transnationalism as a paradigm to explain the various differences represented by plural Egyptians. I thereafter move to the Egyptian nationality law of 1975 explaining who was considered Egyptian according to the law, and detail the new Nationality law which came into effect in 2004. Afterwards this chapter describes the role played by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in helping compose the new nationality law and the experiences of Egyptians post the implementation of the law as chronicled in a documentary by the New Woman's Foundation. This chapter ends with a description of an interview I conducted with an individual who has been living in Egypt for 5 years and describes some of the difficulties he experiences because of Egyptian nationality. This description reflects sentiments expressed in the segment entitled "The Aftermath of 2004".

Upon Arrival...

⁴ <http://allthegoodnameshadgone.blogspot.com/2007/08/helwa-ya-balad-meen-part-2-return-to.html>

One's first days in Cairo can be overwhelming as one is immediately bombarded with extreme sights, loud sounds, and intense people. My first days living in Cairo were no different. The first question one is almost always asked where you are from (enta/enti menin?). If you happen to pause the assumption is that you do not understand what is being asked. On almost every occasion that has happened to a friend or to me the next question is almost always "What country?" or "what nationality?". Asking about one's country or nationality is assumed to reveal which culture one comes from and subsequently how one should engage with the "Other". The assumption that the world is naturally divided into different countries each with their own unique and singular societies and cultures is common (Gupta & Ferguson 1992); even the use of the phrase 'Egyptian society' is an oversimplification as it conveys the impression of a singular unit. Each nation contains multiple cultures which in turn contain a multitude of differences. Nations themselves however are not the boundaries of cultures and societies (Gupta & Ferguson 1992).

While in the back of a taxi on my way to Zamalek to meet friends the cab driver began asking me the usual slew of questions which included where I am from. At the time I was still keen to represent myself as accurately as possible and I explained that I was a quarter Cuban, a quarter Nigerian and half American. His response (translated) was simply this: "No, you must be of African origin.". This was typically the response I received when trying to explain myself four years ago. Eventually I changed my answer to simply stating that I was Belgian which the majority of people refused to believe, because "There are no black people in Belgium". This response indicates a specific association of skin color to geographical location and nationality. While engaged in

interviews I would often tell these or similar stories to my participants who would generally chime in saying that they too were given the third degree as to the origins of their father or why their appearance was not a certain way as a result of their supposed origins. For Example Mary, who is half Egyptian half British told me during her interview that when she explains that she is half British half Egyptian to Egyptians, they comment that she does not look Egyptian. Nationality can be misleading; Mary also explained to me that she had a Syrian grandmother and an Ethiopian great great grandmother, while her own mother continues to insist she is English. What is curious is that if one looks into the history of Egypt itself, one finds a similar variety of lineages reset by the establishment of a legal definition of Egyptian nationality.

The State of the Nation

“The Arab Republic of Egypt is a democratic state based on citizenship. The Egyptian people are part of the Arab nation and work for the realization of its comprehensive unity.”

I took this quotation directly from the Egyptian constitution⁵ as it forms a key part of how the relationship between the state, nation, society and the individual are legally delineated. Super-ceding and informing these categories is the production of Egypt, an Arab country and hence there is stress on cultural links to the Arab world. Egyptians as part of the Arab world become responsible for maintaining Arabness as well as Egyptianness and this is reflected in the various responsibilities expressed in the

⁵ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_one/part_one.asp

constitution⁶. An example of this is the maintenance of the family unit and religious values, which I will address later. What I also describe here is the formula for the ideal citizen as engineered by the state, supported by the government and reinforced by society. The relationship between Egyptian society and the state is described as follows in the constitution:

Art.12:

Society shall be committed to safeguarding and protecting morals, promoting the genuine Egyptian traditions and abiding by the high standards of religious education, moral and national values, the historical heritage of the people, scientific facts, socialist conduct and public manners within the limits of the law. The state is committed to abiding by these principles and promoting them.

The Egyptian constitution does not define moral and national values in a more specific manner but they can be inferred from the testimonies of participants in this research and from how Egyptians are represented in the media. The maintenance of unity within Egypt is central and is strived for through different agents such as government institutions, educational institutions, the media as well as an overall understanding of what vaguely are construed as proper social standards. These agents fashion and form the Egyptian subject and regulate his/her conduct and I hope to demonstrate this more clearly later in this chapter and in the chapters that follow. The maintenance of similar morals and values across Egyptian society reinforce social and subsequently national unity (taking into account variations across class, region and religion). Morals and values are thus not the focus of this chapter but one of the tools through which I examine the shaping of the ideal citizen. The Egyptian family emerges as a focal point in molding

⁶ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_one/part_one.asp

citizens and its members become subjects to be acted upon by society, the state and the government as supported by article 9 of the constitution⁷:

Art.9:

The family is the basis of the society founded on religion, morality and patriotism. The State is keen to preserve the genuine character of the Egyptian family with all values and traditions represented by it while affirming and promoting this character in the interplay of relations within the Egyptian society.

Values and morals set against a cultural and national background are key in explaining the rigid uniformity which individuals often faced (as described in Mary Ayad's account of the lives of Bicultural Egyptians, 2007). Individuals living in an environment where they are continuously surrounded by individuals who share similar values and morals (or at least values that they are accustomed to or can relate to) are likely to have a strong reaction to individuals displaying a different set of values. This is not to say that values and morals themselves are rigid and unchanging, just that they factor into the constitution and presentation of the self as perceived in contrast with the other. In addition to isolating the family as the base unit for management and creation of "ideal Egyptian", Article 9 indicates the criteria by which the family is shaped. Article 12 serves as an extension of Article 9, which mimics how the individual extends into society via family and friends, much in the same way friends, family, acquaintances and things act as extensions of individuals (Hermans 2008). Values and morals serve as tools by which individuals learn to function socially and as members (citizens) of the state. Interviewees have claimed that they have certain values and morals, which align with those of Egyptians in Egypt and others that do not. The overlap in morals/values which

⁷ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_two/part_one.asp

are compatible between plural Egyptians and Egyptians may be linked to the successful interaction and formation of relationships between the two.

While nationality law does not mention religion as part of the criteria for securing Egyptian nationality, the constitution states that Shar'ia law is the principle source of legislation in Egypt⁸. Shar'ia law is stated to determine the limits of the equality of women to men and religious education is a 'principle subject' of public education in Egypt⁹. Religion is linked to the law and thus has an influence in the production of meaning about the ideal Egyptian. According to Ismail (1998), there is also a discourse in practice vilifying the West and anything representative of the West. The two forms this takes are the confrontation of the West as the Other and the reaffirmation of the superiority of Islam (Ismail 1998). The confrontation with the Other concerns threats to the cohesion of the Islamic worldview and one of these representations is the interaction of the Other as a method of corruption. Another is the infiltration of Western ideas and schools of thought into Egyptian society through such things as teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution in schools (Ismail 1998). A product of interaction with the West includes the children of unions between Egyptians and Westerners or children raised in the West who return to Egypt: plural Egyptians. If religion serves as a key element in the composition of the ideal citizen, ideas of conservative Islam, which Ismail has argued are more prevalent in society at present, do serve as tools (to use Foucault's term in *Technologies of Self*) which define social members and exclude non-members, thus creating difficulties in the integration of plural Egyptians as members of the state and

⁸ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_one/part_one.aspx

⁹ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_two/part_one.aspx

society. Conservative ideals informed by particular interpretations of ways of life deemed Islamic are used actively as justification for exclusion. An integration of plural Egyptians into the state and society could justify the reorganization of the relationship between state, family and citizenship for instance by acknowledging international marriages (Turner 2007). The offspring of so-called international marriages are not the only reason for this needed change in outlook and involvement on the part of the state; economic globalization, increase in labor migration, low fertility and aging populations, dispersed families and changing definitions of citizenship and legal entitlement are also cited as reasons (Turner 2007).

Religion, the State and Women

This section addresses the role of religion and gender in contributing to the idea of the ideal Egyptian. It further highlights the connection between the social, legal, national and state understandings of who is and is not a national as well as how it is reinforced. I also provide an explanation for the experiences that plural Egyptian women have had while in Egypt. This provides a context for understanding how gender and religion are used to create barriers for inclusion, which lead to misunderstandings, incorrect classifications and ultimately rejection, as Mary indicates. Though Mary is an Egyptian national, she is socially rejected as foreign.

“The state shall guarantee harmonization between the duties of the woman towards the family and her work in the society, ensuring her equality status with man in fields of political, social, cultural and economic life without violation of the rules of Islamic jurisprudence.”

Effectively what can be gleaned from the above excerpt, which is from the Egyptian Constitution¹⁰, is that so long as the rights of women do not contradict the role of women in Islam, they are permitted to define women's positioning in society. This means that the role of women remains subject to social standards governed norms and regulations interpreted as premised in religion, culture and tradition, and socially (as well as sometimes legally) enforced by state and society. Such prescribed roles, while dictated and outlines by state decrees, are also taught by parents and thus reinforced and passed on from generation to generation. As I mention later in this chapter, women (see section entitled "Aftermath of 2004") have found that while the Egyptian government has passed laws towards the equality of women (for instance Egyptian Nationality Law of 2004) and signed international human rights treaties¹¹, there are still plenty of people who do not consider these laws binding or meaningful, nor do they share the desire for equality which is presumed to undergird the passing of these laws. (New Woman's Foundation, 2010).

Joseph argues that women in the Middle East are positioned as second -class citizens who depend on their kinsmen for access and mediation with the state; men by contrast to women are granted full citizenship (Joseph 1996). Abu Lughod (2005) focuses on how women are socialized through television programs and specific melodramas to “have faith in authority”. When the state is unable to deliver in terms of social welfare and when there are failures in government policies, women turn to alternatives to have their needs met. Abu Lughod (2005) states that religious discourses are the most powerful

¹⁰ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_two/part_one.aspx

¹¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>

alternatives in Egypt. How women are blocked from institutions deemed necessary for national development is exemplified in a television series adapted from a short story written by Salwa Bakr. In it a young girl named Nuna is sent by her family from Upper Egypt to Cairo to work as a house keeper. The television series focuses on two things: Nuna's aspirations to gain an education and the fact that her employers reduce her value to that of the work she can do. Eventually, her father goes to Cairo to take her home for an arranged marriage and Nuna decides to run away. Bakr (Abu Lughod 2005) was seeking to depict a fact of everyday life in Cairo and used it to highlight what was once considered the solution to "backwardness": universal education of both men and women.

El-Safty (2004) claims that the woman's social situation in Egypt is inextricably tied to Egypt's history of constantly being colonized and its position as an Arab and predominately Muslim nation. The level of equality between men and women has changed on multiple occasions; however the gap has widened in more recent decades (El-Safty 2004). She argues that the reversal in terms of a woman's status appears to be religious (e.g. veiling) but the gender gap is manifested socially, politically and economically. El-Safty (2004) also makes it clear that both within and outside of the Middle East it is a common assumption that religion is responsible for men's subjugation of women. This is also supported by the work of Margot Badran (2009) on Islamic and secular feminism. Given the phrasing in the Constitution and contemporary events, it is easy to imagine how it has become so facile to assume that Islam is responsible for the restriction of women's rights. It is also possible to understand how Egyptianness is now equated with Islamic piety. This however is not necessarily the case. El-Safty (2004) admits that there is a gap between the rights granted to women through Islam and the

rights they experience in everyday life. She attributes this to cultural factors specific to Egypt. For example, in Islam a marriage is only valid if both parties involved enter into the union willingly; forced marriages are meant to be invalid. This is further compounded by religious groups who misinterpret Islamic teachings (El-Safty 2004).

I have looked at the nexus between gender and religion in shaping Egyptian citizenship because of how they are often perceived to be linked. What this section has shown is how they are in fact linked socially and manipulated to juxtapose a reified Egyptian (also Islamic/Arab/traditional) reality to an equally reified construct of "Western" values and norms. Specific ideas of gender roles feed into the image of the "ideal Egyptian" and while such norms are influenced by religion, they have not done so in the ways that are traditionally assumed (Armbrust 2000). Gender and religion are lenses through which individuals are viewed and plural Egyptians more so, because of being perceived as either foreign or Egyptian.

Transnationalism

In discussing ideas of nationalism and examining the layers involved in understanding Egyptianness, it becomes important to address transnationalism as an explanation of the complexities of plural life as a whole. Transnationalism offers analytical perspectives on how plural Egyptians may have grown up and how they may experience being in Egypt. What is also important is the experience of being transnational, which allows us to analyze how individuals combine multiple cultural experiences within themselves possibly forming a new or hybrid space containing many cultures.

According to Vertovec (2003) transnationalism is a broad term which covers multiple forms of migrations and global activities. Generally there is a heavy emphasis on immigration and diaspora when dealing with transnationalism. Vertovec (2003) focuses on various forms of transnational social migration for example transnational social movements and transnational business networks. These kinds of networks help to explain the channels in which plural Egyptians may travel. In contrast Patterson (2006) takes the stance that people from poor countries migrate to rich countries and not the other way around, asking why there is a lack of brain circulation in sub Saharan Africa. This argument reveals a large gap in transnational studies which Patterson does not compensate for. Vertovec (2003), however is able to explain various forms of movement which fall under the category of transnationalism thus explaining how other individuals move back and forth between various countries. Patterson (2006) goes on to argue that the success of these migrations is based upon the relationship between the diasporic community in the US and that community of the homeland. While this is a one-sided view of transnationalism the author makes a good point when he states that migration outward from Africa is a constant (Patterson 2006). It is in part through such migration that an Egyptian may meet a non-Egyptian and marry.

Ghosrashi (2004) pushes the discussion of the dialogue between diasporic community and homeland further. He shows how Iranian communities in the Western United States blend ideas of homeland and settled land to create a separate culture which is a blend of both. In doing so they create a space for themselves, which is not necessarily attached to the nation or state. Embodiment of hybrid culture means that an individual can carry multiple cultures with them. A transnational is often a portable 'melting pot' (to

borrow an Americanism). Biai (1999) supports Ghorashi's ideas in her work about Peruvian Catholic communities in New Jersey. Biai (1999) argues that originally a push-pull theory dominated with a focus on the economic factors behind migration. According to Biai (1999) there is a need to acknowledge the fluidity of transnational movements. This has partially to do with governments and how they view their nationals. To explore this point in the case of Egypt, I return to the idea of nationality and examine the 1975 Nationality Law.

The Egyptian Nationality Law of 1975

An Egyptian as a national is defined clearly in the Egyptian constitution¹². Law Number 26 of 1975 (an amendment to the Egyptian nationality law) was instituted under the presidency of Anwar Sadat who ushered an economic 'open door' policy with Western countries. At the time Egypt was also dealing with the aftermath of Gamal Abdel Nasser's presidency (deceased 1970), and entered into a war with Israel the result of which was the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty which was signed in 1979¹³. The Nationality Law of 1975 begins as follows: “Article 1: Are considered Egyptians: Those who have settled in Egypt since before November 5, 1914 and are not nationals of foreign countries, and have maintained their residence in Egypt until the present law comes into force. The ascendants’ residence shall be considered as completing that of the descendants, and the residence of the husband as completing that of his wife.” It continues to define an Egyptian national through the lineage of one’s father. What is also important to note here

¹² <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=3ae6b4e218>

¹³ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm>

is the use of residency; having lived a certain number of years in Egypt prior to November 5th, 1914, guarantees one citizenship which indicates that at one point, birthplace, nationality and other forms of lineage were irrelevant. The mother's lineage only comes into play when the identity of the father cannot be ascertained. For example, if a child is born in Egypt but his/her parents are unknown or if a child is born to an Egyptian woman and a relationship to the father cannot be proven, the child is considered Egyptian¹⁴. What is useful to keep in mind is the fact that this does not change the social opinion that children of Egyptian mothers and foreign fathers are not Egyptian.

This directly supports the work of Suad Joseph (1996) concerning citizenship in the Middle East. Citizenship is gendered, and in this case the gender is male with females construed as dependants. What hinges upon this definition is the role women then play as citizens and how this is manipulated socially. For example in the Egyptian Constitution¹⁵ women are equal to men insofar as this equality does not interfere with their duties to their family and Shari'a law. This is why one's fathers nationality is still used to determine children's nationality and why marrying a non Egyptian is still frowned upon in many families, more so for daughters than sons. (see section entitled 'Mary', Chapter One) Children of such unions are sometimes looked upon as foreigners or "odd cousins" and it is much worse in the cases of children who were raised abroad. Mai is an excellent example. She is 24, half Egyptian half French and raised in various parts of Europe, the US and the Middle East. Her extended family cited her absence from Egypt as part of the reason why they consider her an outsider. Residency is also tied to gender and citizenship

¹⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=3ae6b4e218>

¹⁵ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_two/part_one.aspx

as the woman is also the symbol of the Egyptian nation; women as the bearers of Egyptian culture must also be protected and it is men's responsibility to do so. Such ideas are further reinforced through religious idioms: Muslim women cannot marry Christian men because the children will then be Christian and Christian women cannot marry Muslim men for the same reason as well as the fear of the Coptic population of Egypt shrinking even further (Shafik 2006). Marriage in Egypt, like many other parts of the world is a matter that concerns both the state (in the form of maintenance of legal obligations) and religion. Egyptian family law is regulated by Islamic courts according to Shari'a law. Legally a man and woman enter into a contract in which a man becomes responsible for the well being of his wife and the woman agrees to obey her husband as a result (Bardsley-Sirois & Fluehr-Lobban 1990). This makes the woman subject to the whims of her husband thus reinforcing Joseph's (1996) assertions concerning gendered citizenship. Marrying an Egyptian does not guarantee citizenship or nationality; according to Egyptian Nationality law¹⁶ (1975) one must go through the Ministry of the Interior and remain married for at least two years.

The Ministry of the Interior serves as the final word on who is legally Egyptian with the exception of the President. The legal definition used in the previous paragraph relies on parentage and residency as part of the criteria for Egyptian nationality. One has to either have an Egyptian father, have lived in Egypt since the early 20th century or be living in Egypt when the law came into effect. This however is limited by the circumstances under which one obtains nationality. For example foreigners who obtain Egyptian nationality cannot transmit it to their wives. According to Bryan S. Turner

¹⁶ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=3ae6b4e218>

(2007) because the majority of individuals are born into citizenship, family affairs, while part of the private sphere, become part of the public sphere and that explains the regulation of citizenship and nationality granted to foreign spouses. Since nationality and citizenship can be passed on (inherited) from parent to child, citizenship and nationality are tied to ideas about race and ethnicity (Turner 2007). It follows that Egyptians need permission from the Ministry of the Interior to acquire another nationality and they require additional permission to retain their Egyptian nationality. New nationals have to wait five years before being able to exercise their rights. In all cases wives need to either make a separate application or make their wish to be part of their husbands application known at the time of the said application. The majority of decisions regarding applications however can be overturned by either the Ministry of the Interior or the President. While the decision to marry and reproduce can be a private thing (Turner 2007), marriage and reproduction affect the future population of a country and thus comes under the jurisdiction of the state. In cases where the religion and ethnicity of the parents are different, conflict can arise in the categorization of the child (Turner 2007).

The Egyptian Nationality Law of 2004

In the summer of 2004 the Egyptian Nationality Law was amended (Law number 26 of 1975 was amended by Law number 154 of 2004¹⁷) to allow women to confer citizenship to their children. According to an article written by Reem Leila (2004) the process to change the Nationality law of 1975 began with an announcement by President Hosni Mubarak. The amendment was drafted with the help of the Konrad Adenauer

¹⁷ <http://www.lexadin.nl/wlg/legis/nofr/oeur/lxweegy.htm>

Foundation under advisement of members of the Shura Council, People's Assembly and the National Council for Women (Konrad Adenauer Foundation 2004). A major reason for its revision was the discrimination against women in conferring citizenship¹⁸. For example, the National Women's Council¹⁹ has recorded many complaints made by women regarding the payment of alimony. Another argument was that the Egyptian nation must utilize all of its resources to their fullest potential (Konrad Adenauer Foundation 2004). As a resource of Egypt, women were not fully engaged in its continuing development being barred from passing on their nationality to their children (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004). At the time of passage there were a million individuals in Egypt with Egyptian mothers barred from gaining Egyptian nationality (Leila 2004). Initially those born after the passing of the law were excluded, but that has now changed. While news articles (Leila 2004 & Leila 2003) have stated that individuals were given a year grace period to apply for nationality after the passage of the law, I have since met many individuals who have acquired Egyptian nationality years after the passage of the law and a few who are currently going through the application process. One of those supporting this claim was Mary. Another individual, Evan (18 and a student at AUC), has yet to apply for Egyptian nationality even though he knows he is entitled to it. Half British half Egyptian, he feels that his life may be easier if he had only a UK passport. Initially there were also a great deal of restrictions (for example having to reside within Egypt for at least a decade and which have since given way to the labyrinth that is the Egyptian bureaucratic system. According to *Al Ahram Weekly* (Leila 2004 &

¹⁸ http://www.ncwegypt.com/english/prog_newlaw.jsp

¹⁹ http://www.ncwegypt.com/english/prog_newlaw.jsp

Leila 2003) the law also gives children of Palestinian fathers the right to nationality. The process requires a tremendous amount of paperwork authenticating the origins of the mother. These children of foreign fathers will not be allowed to serve in the military, the police and are barred from certain parliamentary positions.

Many men are grateful for being dual nationals as they have no desire to serve in the military, explains an Egyptian friend of mine who was raised in the US. It is not for a lack of patriotism; he says the low salary (about LE 50 a month) and the conditions under which one has to live while in the army are hardly attractive and certainly not enough to inspire one to serve their country. Others simply feel that it is a loss of three, five or even more years of their life. Egyptians live below bare minimum in the army and are recruited based upon their training at university. Another Egyptian friend who was raised in Dubai explained to me that one's undergraduate degree determines the number of years one has to serve. As difficult as the military process is, gaining exempt status is even harder once you have been "called". This same friend was barred from leaving the country three years ago because he had not fulfilled his military service and it took him a year and a half for his paperwork to be processed by the relevant offices. What one notices here is a need by the Egyptian government to claim some of its citizens/nationals while other are excluded on the basis of assumed dual loyalties. It seems that the minute one is determined to be Egyptian by certain factors of inclusion they come under intense and sometimes extreme scrutiny; they are required to perform "Egyptianness" to the letter. Even from the outset one can see the remnants of suspicion of foreigners; half Egyptians are still to a certain extent viewed as threats to national security. The idea of being foreign is often associated with the other and the unknown and as a result becomes a source of fear (Shafik 2006).

The easier it is to associate a plural Egyptian with being foreign, the easier it is for them to be excluded. This is supported by an article published by *Al Ahram Weekly* (Howeidy 2001) in which a judge bases his ruling to deny dual citizens the right to hold positions in parliament under Article 90 of the Constitution which requires a member of the People's Assembly to recite an oath before the Assembly to safeguard the nation, the republican regime, the interest of the people and to abide by the Constitution²⁰. Would not the interests of dual nationals or plural Egyptians fall under the parameters of this oath? A major and more complicated example of how half Egyptians are viewed as traitors and potential spies is the Egyptian governments decision to revoke the nationality of any Egyptian who is married to an Israeli²¹. Here the fear is that children of such unions would be drafted by the Israeli Defense Force and may find themselves fighting against Egypt. One article claims (though does not elaborate) that being an Egyptian married to an Israeli is a threat to Egyptian human rights²². The fear of Egyptian-Israel children stems from previous conflicts that have occurred between Egypt and Israel²³.

The Aftermath of 2004

In 2004 the Konrad Adenauer Foundation working with the Development Program for Women and Children, the National Council of Women and other agencies of

²⁰ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_five/part_two.aspx

²¹ http://www.governmentalityblog.com/my_weblog/2009/05/egypt-revoking-citizenship-on-those-wed-to-israelis, <http://www.sandmonkey.org/2007/11/29/marry-an-israeli-man-lose-your-egyptian-nationality>, <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/Ext/App/TalkBack/CdaViewOpenTalkBack/1,11382,L-3719...>, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1098645.html>

²² <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1098645.html>

²³ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm>

the Egyptian government published the results of a conference held in order to collaborate on the redrafting of the Egyptian Nationality Law. The conference's executive director was Khaled Sadek, the conference coordinator was Shimma Elmasry and key speakers included Professor Rouad Riyad, a member of the Committee promulgating the Nationality Law of 1975 and judge at the International Court for the Prosecution of War Criminals (Konrad Adenauer Foundation; 2004). The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is a political foundation of German origins. Eventually named for the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and founded in 1955 (under the name "Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education"), it is also a think tank and consulting agency with offices located all over the world. Their goal is to generate thought which leads to political action in the countries in which they work²⁴. This was a conference that they played a major role in organizing, and which aimed at the drafting of a new law that did not discriminate against women and the children of foreign fathers. The main goals of the conference were to create a dialogue between the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and local institutions, improve the development experience for local women as a key part of the development of Egypt as a whole, and the drafting of a nationality law which assures the equality of women to men. During the conference it was made clear that besides being unconstitutional (citing Articles 40 and 11 of the Egyptian Constitution) the existing nationality law violated basic human rights and as one of the basic laws of the state it needed to equally represent and support its people (Konrad Adenauer Foundation 2004).

²⁴ <http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.3628/>

Egypt like the majority of other countries in the world is in a position where internal politics depend to a certain extent upon global politics. The country receives aid from various organizations but the dispensation of this aid is often contingent upon the development and redrafting of certain policies within the government. The National Human Rights Council was created in 2003 under Egyptian law number 94 of 2003²⁵. In August of 2010 USAID produced a report concerning gender based constraints preventing access to and participation in health programs run in Egypt and supported by USAID. Their summary stated that differences in gender roles, 'normative behaviour' and 'identities' as a result of 'unequal control over resources and power' lead to unhealthy practices in relation to family planning, sexual health and domestic violence²⁶. In essence the lower social status of women prevents access and use of health services. The report also stated that countries with a higher level of gender equality had on average a lower poverty rate. While the main concern of the report was augmenting the implementation of their programs it also shows the link between the dispensation of foreign aid and the maintenance of certain social, economic and political requirements.

What is also brought to light is the negative view that many still hold concerning dual nationality. The question of dual allegiance is a serious one and that is reflected in the tendency of many nations to exclude dual nationals from political office or the military. In 2001 the Administrative Court and the Supreme Administrative Court prohibited three Egyptians from keeping their positions in Parliament on the grounds that

²⁵ http://www.achpr.org/english/Archives/State%20reports/eng/Egypt/Egypt%20Report_3_eng.pdf

²⁶ http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1410_1_Egypt_Gender_Assessment_Final_FINAL_acc.pdf

they were dual nationals. Al Ahram Weekly reported that these restrictions opened the doors for other individuals holding office to be prohibited from holding office (Howeidy 2001). The courts argument is that “it cannot be imagined that the person who is required to look after the country’s interest may share his loyalty to Egypt with another country”. The courts defined citizenship as a bond between an individual and the state and claimed that one cannot have a bond with two states (Howeidy 2001). Can the same be said of nationality?

According to the Konrad Adenaur Foundation, a major concern about the incorporation of children of Egyptian mothers into the system via granting them nationality is that it would result in a sudden increase in population²⁷. Government representatives translate this into an increase in the number of people to be looked after by the state. This is an argument supported by a documentary that was produced by the New Woman's Foundation and posted on Youtube.com in December of 2009²⁸ to detail the experiences of women who attempted to acquire nationality on behalf of their children or individuals applying for nationality. Entitled *My Nationality is My and My Family's Right*, their goal was to shed light on the problems experienced. Returning to the argument of population increase for example, it is assumed that the children of Egyptian mothers would become a 'burden' (as expressed in the accounts from the documentary²⁹) to the country of Egypt. The New Woman Foundation documentary clearly shows that these people are more of a so called burden in their current state

²⁷ http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/18/2/year-2004/dokument_id-5375/index.html

²⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHgoL08tBRA> (part one)

²⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHgoL08tBRA> (part one)

(classified as foreigners) than if they were able to obtain Egyptian nationality and through this gain access to state education and jobs³⁰. Besides having to deal with educational fees, mothers of half Egyptian children have to deal with complicated registration procedures and if their children are overseas they have to check in with Egyptian authorities on a regular basis in order to keep their residency. One woman who was interviewed in the documentary by New Woman's Foundation applied for her two children to become Egyptian nationals and only one child was approved. After having paid all the necessary fees and had her paperwork processed, when she went to pick up her child's certificate she was told she would have to pay an extra LE1,200 which she could not afford. Such arbitrary changes, additions and denials are apparently common when children of Egyptian mothers apply for nationality, which makes the process especially hard for lower class Egyptians who often cannot afford the extra fees. Their children thus become foreigners in their own country, having to register with a foreign Embassy, pay foreign fees and have to obtain permits to work in Egypt. The various views represented here feed into how images about those who are affected by the new law are created and how individuals react and interact with these images.

Another argument according to documentary participants³¹ is that allowing Egyptian women to confer nationality to their children would promote the acceptance of and increase in the number of illegitimate children. The counter argument made by individuals in the documentary is that preventing children of Egyptian mothers from acquiring Egyptian nationality threatened the Egyptian family which is safeguarded under

³⁰ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/>

³¹ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/>

Article 9 of the Egyptian Constitution³². Women interviewed in the documentary claimed that the problems they experience in acquiring nationality divides their families in that children who in many cases have only known Egypt as a home are made to feel unwelcome and through being denied the basic rights of Egyptians are categorized as foreign irrespective of their place of birth and permanent residence. This in turn contributes to a feeling of alienation (as expressed by individuals in the documentary) that is felt by the majority of Egyptians as a result of the socio-economic situation in Egypt being barred from various opportunities within the country because of nationality (or in this case, lack thereof). This alienation on a national level translates into social alienation. Advocates (New Woman's Foundation)³³ for the amendment of the law state there are already enough alienated people in Egypt without adding the scores of half Egyptians who live in Egypt to the record. Egypt cannot afford to add to the already huge anti-government sentiment created by other problems within the Egyptian economy and society. The country as represented by the state and government does not recognize its own citizens and in turn society does not recognize its own people.

Both key speakers in the Conference and interviewees in the documentary claim that the aforementioned issues combined with the inequality experienced in acquiring nationality through marriage to an Egyptian and the passing on of nationality to children contributes to the disruption of the family unit through the perpetuation of gender inequality³⁴. They claimed that it "causes the family to lose its natural social status and

³² http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_two/part_one.asp

³³ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/>

³⁴ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/>

bring up an unstable, insecure generation with a feeling of not belonging” (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2004). A key point made here is that national unity is equally important within the family unit as the family is construed as a microcosm of the nation; key speakers in the conference felt that all family members should have the same nationality³⁵. What can also be argued here is that in an attempt to maintain the cohesion of the nation antagonism becomes part of the Egyptian identity . Not only does being Egyptian entail a strong identification with Egyptian cultures, it can become the identification of other cultures as standing against Egyptian culture, much like certain branches of Islam structure the West as a threatening force in Ismail's work (1998). Karmen Erjavek (2003) explains in her work concerning the construction of identity through moral panic in the former Yugoslavia that part of the process of solidifying the Slovakian identity once Yugoslavia disbanded involved creating antagonism between various ethnic groups in order to reinforce their identities. This is complementary to Hall's (1996) theories of identity as forged through relationships of inclusion and exclusion. Antagonisms such as those displayed against perceived foreigners (for example Walid's teachers' comment "they steal the best from our country", Chapter 3) can be used to strengthen ties among Egyptians. If an antagonistic (and in some cases threatening) image of 'them' can be developed, it makes the unity between 'us' stronger. A problem with plural Egyptians however, is that while some are defined as 'us' through nationality, they may not be defined as such socially which complicates what it means to be Egyptian even further. Ties to the first nationality law are reflected socially hence the majority of problems being experienced by children of Egyptian mothers. At the end of

³⁵ http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/18/2/year-2004/dokument_id-5375/index.html

the Conference it was recommended that the sections of the Nationality law which pose potential problems in terms of Human Rights be dealt with by:

- Allowing individuals who are handicapped to obtain Egyptian Nationality
- Reversing Egypt's legal acceptance of discrimination against women
- Instigating studies to determine families who cannot afford to pay the LE 1,500 nationality fee and offering such families exemption from fees
- Ensuring all relevant civil society organizations participate in the drafting of the new law
- The inclusion of an article which gives the law a retroactive effect in order to prevent new cases of inequality not just towards women but between women
- Addressing the situation of women married to Palestinians separately and so long as it does not broach the security issue
- Ensuring the law does not contain any exceptions in allowing women to confer nationality to their children

In the documentary produced by the New Woman's Foundation women argue that the current nationality law is unconstitutional (as does Konrad Adenauer Foundation) because it contradicts multiple sections of the constitution which claim that all citizens are equal under the law and no discrimination can be made based upon gender, race, religion, economic or social status or any other factor³⁶. Perpetuating the practice of unjustified rejection of nationality applications (among other claims of discrimination) puts Egypt in a position of violating the various international treaties concerning human rights and making its continuing reservation to Article 9 of Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women³⁷ which is posted on their website as follows:

³⁶ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/> & Article 40 http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_three/part_one.aspx

³⁷ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>

“Reservation to the text of article 9, paragraph 2, concerning the granting to women of equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children, without prejudice to the acquisition by a child born of a marriage of the nationality of his father. This is in order to prevent a child's acquisition of two nationalities where his parents are of different nationalities, since this may be prejudicial to his future. It is clear that the child's acquisition of his father's nationality is the procedure most suitable for the child and that this does not infringe upon the principle of equality between men and women, since it is customary for a woman to agree, upon marrying an alien, that her children shall be of the father's nationality.”

This statement assumes that there is no need for women to confer citizenship as all women will defer to their husbands when it comes to the question of their children's nationality. It also indicates that children holding dual nationality is a negative situation. While the constitution states the rights of women should be protected, it also declares it should be so insofar as it does not interfere with the traditional social structure. It ensures that while women may be equal on paper, they may never be so in practice. This falls in line with what Suad Joseph (1996) writes about the gendered nature of citizenship in the Middle East and the complaints being made by the New Womens Foundation.

The legal understanding of the Egyptian nation, state and society along with the accounts of the women in *My Nationality is My and My Family's Right*³⁸ creates the impression of a state and social system which rely on (social and cultural) boundaries and borders that are maintained by Egyptian citizens rather than allowing for the crossing of borders by Egyptian citizens and others. Infiltration by an outside, unfamiliar, and different force seems to be considered a possible precursor and cause of state and national dissolution. In short, allowing for the existence of porous boundaries regarding people and how they identify themselves is considered a threat. Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul (2008) argue that citizenship needs to be addressed along the lines of four

³⁸ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/>

elements: belonging, status, rights and participation. This is used as a launching point from which to address the debate over the position of transnationals (Bloemraad et al. 2008). The first is liberal nationalism, which supports the idea that in order to best preserve individual rights they must be maintained within national borders. The second is cosmopolitanism, which advocates the transcendence of national borders by citizenship law (Bloemraad et al. 2008). While cosmopolitanism promotes the transcendence of borders it still relies on laws which have not yet been modified to do so. It is also suggested that in order to guarantee the rights of individuals existing within the state the rights of transnationals must be restricted. The authors however, argue that if goods, capital and ideas can cross borders, individuals and rights should be able to as well (Bloemraad et al. 2008). It has also been suggested that by ceasing to address dual nationality on terms set for uni-nationals many of the perceived issues can be rectified (Ross & Stasiulis 2006). As a potential new normalized state of existence dual citizenship represents a change occurring in how people are governed, monitored and regulated. Egyptian dual nationals are subject only to Egyptian laws when in Egypt; they cannot seek refuge in their other nationality.

To reconcile the argument between liberal nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the authors call on the work of Habermas (Bloemraad et al. 2008) in which it is suggested that political institutions be developed which recognize cultural differences and uphold shared universal values in order to allow individuals to act on a global level. A major issue with international institutions such as the European Union and United Nations is that it is claimed that they undermine national sovereignty. The authors present an example of postnational citizenship; they claim that regardless of the location of Turkish

nationals, they are able to enjoy full civil rights and most of their social and political rights (when the authors touch upon dual citizenship they treat it as if it is a choice made by individuals rather than something an individual can be born into). From this position the reader is reminded that dual citizenship, while accepted by many countries all over the world is still addressed differently by each country with some still raising the question of loyalty (Bloemraad et al. 2008). All of this is relevant in informing how preconceptions are developed and translate into the Egyptian society. It explains the experiences of the women in the documentary *My Nationality is My and My Family's Right*³⁹ and supports the arguments made by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (2004) but does not explain the experiences of participants in this piece of research.

Individuals that I have interviewed seem to face more social rather than nationality based ramifications of being plural. Many of them already have Egyptian nationality, feel that the law is a positive thing and as a result do not have direct experiences of the problems faced by the women in the documentary. Riad (who already has Egyptian nationality) feels that is fair especially for those who are born and raised in Egypt as they may be regarded as second class citizens and hopes that a similar law may take effect in Libya. Amira (whose father is also Egyptian) is very proud and glad that the law has changed. Kevin has a story which links him to the situation. His sister married an Iraqi and while her son has no problem acquiring Egyptian nationality he speculates that had it not happened his nephew would be part of his Egyptian family but not part of the country. He goes on to say:

³⁹ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/>

" The old law was neither fair nor realistic in the modern world also for social reasons... By denying him citizenship Egypt is saying they would never claim him or stand up for him in a time of need. He cannot rely on his country or serve his country. That in my mind would be a bit of an insult and a violation of Egyptian culture as it stands today."

For these individuals dual citizenship and nationality are linked to cultural ties other than immigration habits (supported by Dahlin & Hironaka; 2008) that often go unrecognized resulting in the mono-ethnic model of citizenship and nationality. This is relevant to ideas of Egyptian parentage, for example many Egyptians claim Turkish and Lebanese roots. A more specific example is that of Walid in the section to follow. Being in Egypt for him is the legal aspect of his nationality intersecting with what he is perceived to be visually (when not dressed in clothing determined by others to be foreign, he is often mistaken for being completely Sudanese). Legally he experiences what it is to be Egyptian (for example his experiences searching for employment which while mostly attributable to social perception hinges upon his having Egyptian nationality) but socially he is sometimes told to return to his home country. What is necessary according to Dahlin and Hironika (2008) is a recognition of the full function of dual citizenship and nationality which involves membership in an international community and the legitimization of cultural identity through the use of an almost universal set of individual rights. The state needs to acquire a more internationally oriented identity in order to fully comprehend the position of dual nationals. Individuals as dual nationals and what that means for their lives as international beings needs to be understood by the governments they are related to and accepted.

So how do half Egyptians imagine themselves as part of a nation (be it Egypt or another)? Sometimes they do not. Sometimes the nation is nothing more than the governing body that issues their passports. Kevin discusses experiencing a “disconnect”

from the Egypt his family members talked about and experienced. He explained that during his adolescence in the Gulf he felt no linguistic or personal connection to Egypt and when people argued that the fact that his father is Egyptian made him Egyptian he would argue to the contrary. For him the linguistic and personal connection is far more important than the dictates of belonging to a nation because it is one's father's nation. He also believed very strongly that it is wrong to discount the origins of one's mother. In school he was accused of being ashamed and even racist against Egypt for merely identifying with another country. The claim that having an Egyptian father is what makes one Egyptian is widely made by Egyptians. Mary cites it as the reason why her Egyptian friends tell her she will never be Egyptian regardless of citizenship, knowledge of social nuances, and exceptional language ability. Nationality for her was meant to end all the questions; she had Egyptian nationality and that made her Egyptian. Every day for her is yet another obstacle course in which she needs to prove to Egyptians that she is not foreign. While Amira (½ Egyptian ½ Austrian) has similar experiences on a daily basis to those of Mary, her take on nationality is different. For her nationality is not just a passport; it is a sense of belonging, of feeling at home, and feeling comfortable. Unfortunately this is not how she feels in Egypt. While she is glad she came back to Egypt for a prolonged stay, she was shocked by the Egypt she found. The contrast she found between being conservative and liberal on the part of Egyptians specifically was something that made her uncomfortable and led her to the conclusion that a strong double standard exists within Egyptian society. According to Mary the newspaper Al Ahram publishes the names of children of Egyptian mothers who acquire citizenship on a weekly basis, almost as if it is a point of curiosity; a strange phenomenon.

A national within the nation

I am sitting across from Walid who is complaining about not being able to get a job that pays well. He speaks rapidly and in a fashion which denotes having multiple ideas in his head but not enough time to express them all. At 20 years of age, Walid has been in Egypt for 5 years and is currently employed by a mobile call center. He also attends secondary school in Kattameya. His background is exceptionally complicated; his mother is half Egyptian half Sudanese while his father is half Egyptian, a quarter Turkish and a quarter Sudanese with familial ties to Morocco. In terms of nationality Walid automatically received his Egyptian nationality but had to apply for Sudanese nationality and was given a lot of hassle by the Sudanese Embassy for being Egyptian. He is also in the process of obtaining his Moroccan nationality. The following account is about the role Egyptian nationality plays in his life and humanizes the legalities I have tried to exemplify in this chapter.

Walid says in order to make progress economically you need one or more of three things: money, wusta (connections) and/or the right nationality (otherwise known as not Egyptian). He explains that having Egyptian nationality in Egypt works against you because you are automatically paid less and because having one of the 'big three' (money, connections and the 'right' nationality that is) applies. He elaborates by telling me the story of a Polish friend of his who had suddenly decided to move to Egypt and was able to obtain a job at a prestigious hotel with all expenses paid (a round trip ticket, a month paid vacation) and a salary of \$1,100 a month. Another friend of his on the other hand, works at a five star hotel and makes LE 2,000 a month. He goes on to give many

examples of either himself or friends applying for jobs and being told that because they were not referred by someone who actually worked there they would not be getting the job. The major point Walid is stressing is that he and his friends feel Egyptian nationality is a restrictive rather than productive element in their lives in Egypt. It is a national complaint: Egyptians are second class citizens in their own country. Complaining, as explained by Asef Bayat (2009), becomes impossible in the political setting of Egypt as even the smallest of demonstrations are shut down with unnecessary force. It is even worse when one tries to leave the country. Walid and his friend hatched a plan to emigrate: they made a list of countries which had high quality of living and salary, did online research about each and made plans to begin visiting embassies to determine what was required to obtain a work or student visa. His friend came away from the Italian Embassy thoroughly demoralized however, and suggested putting their plans on hold. Besides needing proof of pre-acceptance by an employer, school or university in Italy, one requires enough money to be able to support oneself throughout their stay (and a bank statement proving that one has at minimum \$10,000), a round trip ticket and many other things most Egyptians (who come from a lower class background) just cannot afford. As a result Walid feels stuck in Egypt, a country he has grown to dislike. He thinks about the love he felt for Egypt when he was away and how he missed his home country and laments his decision to come here. On one occasion he sought advice from a neighbor who told him that Egypt is like one's mother in that she is meant to provide for her children (citizens). Not everyone loves their mother and sometimes their mothers are not good. If one has a bad mother, he says, you do not have to love them.

“You loved your country before you knew of its problems” he says. “Now that you are facing reality it is different.”

Walid considers himself a fighter; he has no intention of letting these hardships get the better of him. I met him at CityStars mall a few months later just after he was hired as a telemarketer for an online advertiser. Automatically he seemed happier; being in Cairo was not as problematic as before now that he had one of the 'big three'. While life seems to have settled somewhat he still holds on to his feelings of being alienated from Egypt.

What Walid describes is a discontent which is felt by large numbers of Egyptians and is not necessarily related to being plural but is highlighted by a specific situation in which plural individuals are made to feel as if they do not belong but lack the proper platform to express it. This feeling of discontent is linked to feeling of alienation felt by individuals stuck in economic situations they cannot change for example being unable to find employment⁴⁰. Normally in times of unrest due to a need for social and political reform; individuals are able to voice their concerns in public spaces and if necessary go as far as staging revolutions (Bayat 2009). For individuals in an urban setting who are unable to demonstrate because of restrictions enforced by secret and regular police, the streets and public spaces become the only places left to express discontent (Bayat 2009). Bayat (2009) clarifies that public spaces in a state such as Egypt are meant to be used passively for example for activities such as walking watching and driving. Examples of active use of public space include street vending, the establishment of street communities, and protests. The argument is that these activities threaten those given authority by the state and as a result are put down as part of regulation by the state. Because of the high rate of poverty in cities like Cairo (Bayat 2009), people are left with little choice but to

⁴⁰ <http://www.learningpartnership.org/citizenship/2010/01/egypt-nationality-law-2/>

live their lives in public spaces, depending upon them for survival. What this does however is allow dialogues of discontent to move beyond familiar social spheres and gives individuals the opportunity to discover commonalities be that in lifestyles, ideas or basic discontent. The state, however, finds a stronger need to monitor behaviour on the streets because of the viral nature of communication therein (Bayat 2009). What develops from the occupation of the streets in this particular fashion is what Bayat (2009) calls 'social non-movements'; the 'collective actions of non-collective actors' causes social change. Walid currently considers Egypt home and as a result is caught in a situation common to the majority of Egyptian population. He is categorized by Egyptian standards and has to go through those channels in order to find a job, channels that discriminate against the very people it should be supporting.

Conclusion

The Egyptian state is concerned with unity as are members who belong to the abstract entity we call Egyptian society. This is reflected in how ideas of 'us' and 'them' are engaged through conversation. Nationality, besides being determined by one's birthplace, residence and parentage also comes under the influence of the state through the regulation and categorization of people by such factors as gender, education, and religious affiliation. A focal unit in the process of state regulation of the population is the family unit as the site of population production. The state is responsible for the creation and maintenance of an Egyptian ideal citizen and this is reflected in parts of the Egyptian Constitution. What is also reflected is the flexibility of criteria which seem to be left to society to narrow down in defining who is Egyptian and how one performs Egyptianness.

Religion plays a role in shaping and reinforcing categories of 'them' and 'us' through the dichotomy of 'West' and 'East'. What is also demonstrated is how religious belief is used as justification of gender inequality when in fact the sources for gender discrimination are far more embedded in Egyptian society. These ideas do not however represent something that is universal in Egyptian society.

The earliest nationality laws based their criteria on residence and patriarchal lineage indicating an attempt to unify individuals as Egyptians but also singular entities. The Nationality Law of 2004 enabled transfer of nationality to children by their mothers. Egyptian mothers however experiences many problems in obtaining nationality for their children. The documentary made by the New Woman's Foundation detailed hardships which alienated individuals with Egyptian mothers in a way which is similar to the sense of alienation felt by Egyptians facing economic hardships. For plural Egyptians, nationality remains an idea that one carries with them rather than being completely embodied by passports and identity cards. Being a plural Egyptian poses a problem in that the institutions of the state and government have dictated citizenship and nationality in such a way as to exclude even partial foreignness/otherness.

Chapter 3: Masri ow Agnabi?

Continuing the line of enquiry which began with the idea of the ideal Egyptian as imagined through the lens of the state and nation, this chapter addresses the various nuances to being included and excluded from Egyptian socio-cultural circles. In Egypt looking foreign and looking Egyptian are at once simple and complicated matters. While an individual can look at another individual and make an assumption of how their appearance defines them, articulating these meanings and definitions verbally may be exceedingly difficult. In some cases it may be as simple as assuming an individual has complete knowledge or ignorance of a social situation. A major problem addressed in this chapter is the limitations of verbal articulation of how one does or does not look Egyptian. Participants were not able to give specific details of what a typical Egyptian or foreigner did or did not look like. Minute details contained within various stories of social interaction involving criticism of one or the other reveals a clearer picture of the meanings involved, how they are enacted and possibly why they are not always vocalized.

During an interview, Walid tells me that when he first arrived in Cairo he had long wavy hair and wore ripped jeans which made him a target for harassment both on the street and at school. People would continuously ask him if he was gay or tell him that he looked so. He eventually cut his hair and spiked it, causing him to be told by his teacher that he was trying to emulate foreigners which were bad role models. Overall, his school entertained anti-foreign sentiments and the teachers capitalized upon any opportunity to put down the people who “steal the best of our country”. Walid also says that many foreigners are accused of stealing Egyptian jobs. For example there was a

woman from the UK working at the call center with Walid and his colleagues assumed that she was being paid a higher salary because she was foreign. These same teachers would, according to Walid, assume that he could not be Egyptian because of his dark skin and would continuously tell him to return to his home country. Walid explained that for men certain markers of appearance such as the wearing of jewelry and having long hair were considered feminine and indicative of being homosexual in Egyptian popular thought. Gelled hair, on the other hand is common among Egyptian men. Other dress related markers such as the wearing of ripped jeans were considered 'too weird' and led people to dismiss him as a foreigner, to them most likely Sudanese because of his skin color.

While what it takes to be foreign is clear-cut, the definition of Egyptian is more or less shrouded in ambiguity. I have been told many times that people are quite happy to tell you the ways in which you are not Egyptian but according to most plural Egyptians they are incapable of telling you what being Egyptian is. Most plural Egyptians understand Egyptianness through what they see when they visit extended family or how they are sometimes corrected in their Arabic. Some indicate that it is a nondescript perfection; they are not sure what exactly it is but it is something at which they cannot falter. In some cases it can be as simple as geography. Mai, who is half French half Egyptian has lived the majority of her life outside of Egypt and when she returns to visit her Egyptian side of the family the excuse they use for their negative behavior towards her is that she is foreign and therefore it is acceptable. The negative behavior takes the form of family members being rude to her, excluding her from activities and spreading malicious rumors about her. There is also family resentment because her parents were

able to pay for her education and she did not need to work while at school (Mai explains her father's side of the family are working class). As previously explained, Mai has always felt that she shares a connection with both Egyptians and French people, but at the same time she does not. She describes it as “un demi sentiment d'appartenance, qui finalement n'en est pas un, car l'appartenance est ou n'est pas” (a half feeling of belonging, which in the end is not because membership either is or is not). This is a perfect description of what other plurals have claimed to experience; one either is or is not Egyptian, but at the same time one can feel as if they belong at least partially regardless of their personal situation.

The first section of this chapter launches us directly into the ideas of Egyptianness/foreignness through the experiences and reflections of interviewees. In the following I section describe how Egyptianness/foreignness is learned as part of how the self is constituted in Egypt. There I also touch upon the idea of memory with regards to the evolution of Egyptian culture and try to highlight the importance of the gap which develops between memory and the present as time passes. Then I deal with the concept of *baladyness* as it relates to differentiations in the Egyptian class hierarchies and the notion of Egyptianness to demonstrate how intersections of class, religion, and gender shape how plural Egyptians are addressed. This chapter closes with a section describing physical appearance as a defining factor of how individuals are determined to be Egyptian or foreign.

Egyptian, Plural, Foreign = ?

In understanding what it means to be a half Egyptian in Egypt, I felt it necessary to ask the question directly and in so doing ask what the perceptions of being foreign and Egyptian were. For plural Egyptians, there is no middle ground in terms of how one behaves; if you have any claim what-so-ever to Egypt, you are required to behave in a manner that is considered ‘Egyptian’. Often, individuals gravitate towards the “wealthy and cosmopolitan Egyptian crowd” or to “one of the myriad foreigner subcultures”⁴¹ (Omar 2001) because it is easier to meet people who are able to understand where they are coming from in terms of worldview. Many individuals I have spoken to have made similar claims. Fara is 18 and a student at AUC. She was born in the United States to an Egyptian father and a Uruguayan mother. Now in Cairo for almost a decade, she complains that many Egyptians find her mannerisms ‘weird’. For example, she still does not understand certain Egyptian jokes and her Egyptian friends claim she is too ‘outspoken’ for a woman. Fara enjoys engaging in debates with friends and family and haggling when in the market, but she says these are situations when women are meant to be quiet. She compares the position of women in Egypt to that of women in the West in the 17th century and it is from this position that she considers herself more liberal. For example in dealing with romance, she does not want to date, but at the same time feels that marrying someone you do not know makes no sense. She also stands as an example of being an individual for whom religion is very important. In contrast to the Western (see Armbrust, 2000) stereotype of Middle Eastern women in *abayas* and *hijabs*, Fara was veiled when she was younger but eventually changed her mind.

⁴¹ <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/552/li1.htm>

Another important element is how individuals engage the people they interact with. Fouad was born in the UK and holds UK and Egyptian nationality. His mother is Syrian and his father Egyptian and he grew up in an American compound in Saudi Arabia. He had lived in the UK for 6 years and has been living in 6th of October City for almost 11 months. He feels he differs from Egyptians on points such as timeliness, gossip, sugarcoating and basic lifestyle. Unlike most Egyptians, he does not live with his parents and is currently focusing on his career and other goals which do not include marriage. He feels because of the time spent in the United Kingdom he is more open-minded and has lost certain biases he gained while living in Saudi Arabia. He almost embraces being perceived as foreign in Egypt, finding it more advantageous and in some cases amusing. Fouad likes to take advantage of the fact that he looks foreign and if given the opportunity will claim to be foreign when dealing with Egyptians. Mai, tired of being treated as if she is inferior by her Egyptian coworkers, seeks refuge in her mostly European circle of friends. She cites language as the major barrier at work along with her coworkers constantly reminding her that she was a foreigner. Mai feels her experience with Egyptians would definitely have been different had she been male. There is also a question of class, as traveling to other countries becomes less of an event as one moves up in social hierarchy. Mai admits her family comes from a working class background making it more poignant that her return is not celebrated.

Mai feels that if she were a male her return to Egypt would have been viewed by family members and wider Egyptian society as something triumphant and as a result she would be treated better. Generally when male Egyptians leave Egypt for prolonged periods of time their return is celebrated as a successful endeavor. In an article Ashraf

Omar had written for *Al Ahrām Weekly* (2001), individuals claimed that it is almost impossible to maintain what they call meaningful and comfortable relationships with “real Egyptians” (defined in the article as Egyptians who have not spent prolonged periods of time overseas). It returns to the issues surrounding Egyptianness; plural Egyptians are marginalized by Egyptians because they are “expected to know everything”⁴² (*Al-Ahrām Weekly* 2001). The claim is that Egyptians view them as “exotic pets” or simply accuse them of denying their origins. This accusation stems from an idea of Egyptianness that may clash with plural ideas of Egyptianness or not blend well with the particular cultural combinations being performed.

Teaching and Learning Egyptianness

The rights of the individual to manage the social conduct of others are clearly detailed in the Egyptian constitution⁴³. An example of this is article 9 that states that the “genuine character of the Egyptian family”⁴⁴ is not defined, leaving it to be decided socially and collectively. The state and society determine what the model Egyptian and Egyptian family are. These determinations are coded and disseminated in ways which seem to resemble negative reinforcement (see B. F. Skinner). Negative conditions are stopped when certain types of behaviour conducive to the ideal Egyptian image are performed. People are criticized and ridiculed in passing and by their families for saying something, behaving and even dressing in a manner that is ‘not Egyptian’. Here we see

⁴² <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/552/li1.htm>

⁴³ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_two/part_one.aspx

⁴⁴ http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_two/part_one.aspx

individual selves who are socialized to regulate their own behavior and that of others in order to ensure the perpetuation of social order in what is constituted as a specific Egyptian form. Corrigan and Sayer (1985) in addressing the development of the English state argue that the state and culture work in tandem; the state is a cultural production and culture in turn is state regulated. The state is also responsible for dictating what the acceptable forms of social image and activity are, as well as dictating individual and collective identity (Corrigan & Sayer 1985). Herein lies the 'blueprints' for how the individual self becomes the social subject. Social ideas of Egyptianness inform both legal and social aspects of being. Csordas (1994) addresses the transformation of the body from something fixed into something with a history, thus enabling it to be separated from its pure physicality. He draws upon the work of Mauss (Csordas 1994) describing the body as a tool, thus making it an agent rather than an object being acted upon. According to Foucault the body and self are worked on and managed both internally and externally to form the subject (Gutman et al. 1988). Ingold (2001) wrote that 'in perception the world is constructed to a certain order'.

That idea of order is not only acted and performed; it is also embodied. This is where the Egyptian/foreign dichotomy comes into play; being Egyptian is not only visible but is also embodied. Thinking and feeling become external, housed in the actions which express their meaning (Ingold 2000). The body is trained through repeating tasks, postures and gestures to project specific codes and concepts (which it is hoped are mutually understood). One performs Egyptianness and the same can also be said for any other culture, society or state associated with a nation. There exists equally ideal French, Irish and Americans so a plural individual would have multiple ideals working on them.

An individual for example not only ‘looks’ foreign but also ‘acts’ foreign. Ingold (2001) explains using Bourdieu's habitus that because individuals from different backgrounds have become familiarized with their environment differently they will approach the same sensory experiences (or in the case of this research interactions) with practices that reflect such experiences. Not only would this apply to an encounter between Egyptians from different backgrounds (e.g. different ideas of Egyptianness), but also interactions between an Egyptian and a foreigner. The boundaries of Egyptianness are constructed by contrast and with such boundaries in place it becomes easy to identify people as Egyptian and thus discipline them to particular standards.

The Egyptian constitution⁴⁵ as a technology in the making of states and the legal production of its order, is set up among other technologies of governance to maintain the unity of the Egyptian nation in a very specific manner (see Chapter 1). The latter part of Article 9 of the Egyptian Constitution states:

“Society shall be committed to safeguarding and protecting morals, promoting genuine Egyptian traditions. It shall give due consideration, within the limits of the law, to high standards of religious education, moral and national values, historical heritage of the people, scientific facts and public morality.”

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the constitution lacks the specific description needed to understand Egyptianness, but it should not be necessary as Egyptianness is learned through family and friends. Embodied learning becomes the method by which people understand and internalize norms within Egyptian society regardless of their origins. Egyptians and half Egyptians internalize cues and meanings from their relatives. As Berger (1967) describes it:

“Common sense contains innumerable pre and quasi – scientific interpretations about everyday reality, which it takes for granted.(Berger & Luckmann 1967: 39”

⁴⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=3ae6b4e218>

The world is not only real; it is the seat of thought and actions which in turn sustain reality as existing (Berger & Luckmann 1967). Consciousness is described as intentional and allows individuals to understand their environment through experience. This is embodiment, the location of the body combined with the experience of the present. If something does not fit into the model based upon the set of meanings one has attached to the various points in their environment individuals will attempt to make it fit into the model (Berger & Luckman 1967). Berger and Luckman (1967) make the suggestion of broadening the model as a method of resolving the misalignment between the individual's system of meaning and that which does not fit into a system. Foucault on the other hand, emphasizes how the body is trained to conform with the wider social system (Gutman et al.1988). Here I return to an earlier example: individuals within Egyptian society being criticized (i.e. disciplined) for behaving in a manner deemed 'non-Egyptian'. The criticism endured by individuals can be said to be a method by which to coerce them into conforming with the set model, in this case pressuring individuals to conform to Egyptian social norms. For example, Evan, like Walid, has been called gay on the street by Egyptian men for having long hair.

At this point another element comes into play: residence. Egyptians learning Egyptianness overseas rather than in Egypt are believed to be disconnected from the "source". The geographical distance may also allow for the development of a romanticized idyllic Egypt complemented by social change over the passage of years and decades. Egyptianness which is both taught and learned overseas is often different and removed from Egyptianness as experienced in Egypt. When individuals leave a country for another they carry with them an almost frozen (possibly idealized) image and idea of

that country and how it is embodied culturally. With the support of others who may share this idea of Egyptianness, this idea is taught and passed on. This form of Egyptianness is acted out in the same fashion as Egyptianness in Egypt. Ideas of Egyptianness in Egypt may change, while ideas of Egyptianness carried by individuals may not or may change in different ways. An example of this is how Iranians have learned to maintain ideas of the homeland while incorporating ideas from their place of residence, in this case the United States (Ghorashi 2004). Ghorashi (2004) states that memories of the point of origin are combined with the experience of the place of residence to form a meld of the two by which individuals learn to maintain a balance between the two. Egyptians abroad may not realize this but they may be subject to a similar process of melding and fusion.

Many individuals with whom I spoke claimed that their parents experienced certain levels of shock upon returning to Egypt after being away for many years, even decades in some cases. They did not recognize the country they had come back to. Amira's father for example was very strict with her when she was growing up in Austria. He placed limitations on her interactions with men on a romantic level and kept a very watchful eye on her activities outside of the house. Through this Amira developed an understanding that Egyptian society was a very strict in terms of behaviour. Amira's father, however, lived in Egypt 30 years ago. In contrast Amira's experience of Cairo has been far more liberal. She discovered that parties and drinking among Egyptians she encountered is a regular occurrence. In her opinion, depending upon where you are men and women can engage in friendships without a romantic subtext and women can exit their homes at night without social repercussions. Kevin explains that when his father left Cairo in the 1970's there were wide empty streets almost devoid of garbage and filled

with fresh air (In 2004 Cairo was declared the world 's most polluted city⁴⁶). He also mentioned that women tended not to wear *hijabs* and were not harassed by men.

The following story serves as an example. In the summer of 2007 I enrolled in a course at the University of California Berkeley. I had purchased a laptop not even a year ago and had since experienced problem after problem and took the opportunity of being in the US to see if I could have it fixed. I wandered into an electronics store off Telegraph Street and met a man who became extremely excited when I told him I was a Masters student in Cairo. He explained that he was originally from Mohandiseen and had left in the late 1960's, never to return. He asked me to describe the current state of the city and how I felt about the people I had encountered. He then described a Cairo I had until then never heard of, a city of cleaner streets and fewer cars, of women in miniskirts and men who did not stare, let alone harass. He felt that the sweep of fundamentalism as he saw it had changed the country for the worse and that the socialization of the population to view liberalism as evil was stunting the country's development. The descriptions he had heard from relatives and friends of present-day Egypt had killed his desire to return. This raises the question of the size of the gap between the Egypt he remembered and current day Egypt that other transnational Egyptians experience. How does this memory in turn affect the children of Egyptians who have been raised abroad?

Learning Egyptianness Abroad - Memory and Learning as Gendered Experiences

I asked individuals about the cultural influence of their Egyptian parent and the answers I received were varied. Plural Egyptian men did not feel like they had a

⁴⁶ http://www.allcountries.org/air_pollution.html

particularly strong cultural influence outside of visits to Egypt and with extended family members. Kevin's interactions with family members formed part of his first experience of being in Egypt on his own. He decided to enroll in AUC's Arabic Language Institute (ALI) program in order to learn Arabic (as a child he had not learned a great deal of Arabic and he cites growing up in mostly English speaking environments as the reason for this). As the youngest son of the eldest son of five, it was a big event when he came to Cairo and his family was eager to shower him with hospitality (unlike Mai and her family in an earlier example). He described being bombarded with phone calls and requests for visits at all hours which cut into his academic time. He eventually had to cut his family off in order to focus on his studies. Currently Kevin lives in an apartment his immediate family owns and sees his family on holidays. His parents still live in the US. Evan, like a few others (Fara for example), did not have a strong Egyptian influence at home because his father worked overseas. His father did attempt to exert a cultural influence on him through sending him to an Arabic language teacher but Evan claims he found his own ways to 'rebel'. Being moved between Saudi Arabia and London until moving to Cairo three years ago has meant that Evan does not feel strong connections to any of the locations he has lived in, nor does he feel strong connections to the people he has met. He thinks he has grown up to be very British because of living in London and he definitely feels that both of his parents tried to raise him with their own sets of cultural values, but British culture ultimately dominated over Egyptian cultural influences.

Plural Egyptian women whose parents were based at home (rather than having to travel for work) found that in most cases if their parents did not immediately set restrictions based upon gender, they tried to as they entered puberty. Living in either in

the United States or Europe resulted in parents becoming concerned about a lack of Egyptian influence. Parents attempted to set curfews, ban the consumption of alcohol, control what their daughters wore and prevent them from spending time with men, though not always successfully. One woman described the actions of her father as “attempting to make up for lost time” as she felt he had not made an effort to raise her with Egyptian values. In a few cases the respective parent eventually realized that having raised their child outside of Egypt, it would not be feasible to persist with such restrictions⁴⁷. Fara, however, felt these restrictions were unnecessary. As a practicing Muslim (and not just because she is Muslim) she did not feel the need to drink and socialize in the same fashion as her friends in the United States. Fara’s father is Egyptian, and her mother is Uruguayan and even though she only lived in the US in her early childhood she still makes regular visits, for example during the summer holidays. Her mother was a major influence in her life as her father worked overseas. A convert from a Catholic background, her mother struggled with learning Egyptianness even after having moved to Cairo when Fara was eight years old. Fara admits that in part, because of her father’s absence, her mother has raised her with American cultural values (as she has phrased it) , but for her that means a non patriarchal upbringing, getting a job at the age of 12 and generally having more freedom. She sees being raised Egyptian as being raised in a very religious fashion and she thinks there are marked differences in the way women are raised versus the way men are raised. Men for example do not cry and are expected to become engineers and doctors, while women are given significantly less freedom.

⁴⁷ This example comes from an individual I was able to obtain responses to the introductory paragraph from but I was not able to contact for a follow-up interview. As a result she has not been introduced in this study.

Comparing the situation of women in Cairo to that of women globally in the 1800's, she goes on to explain that women are not expected to work and are often told to cover their hair. Fara feels she has learned to cultivate her own understanding of Islam and what it means to be Egyptian. Further, according to herself and her friends she has an American tinge to it. She disagrees with the patriarchal system and her friends and family feel that she is too outspoken and headstrong for an Egyptian female.

Amira attributes the majority of her experiences to her gender. Her father continues to monitor and control her actions despite being in a different country. Amira's parents separated when she was young and for a short time she lived with her father who still lives in Austria. However, she found the restrictions too difficult (for example having to deal with male-female relationships, the details of which Amira asked me not to include) so she moved in with her mother who lived in another part of town. Even while in Egypt her father attempted to exert his influence by trying to tell her what she can and cannot do because of her gender. When comparing life in Austria to life in Egypt, Amira feels the most marked difference is in the lack of personal space and privacy one experiences in Egypt. She finds it aggravating that, for example, her *bowab* (similar to a superintendant) knows when she exits and returns to her apartment, who her visitors are and when they leave, who her extended visitors are and even something as minor as when and where she orders food from. She initially felt that if she lived in Cairo (her family being in Alexandria) it could be possible to have her own life and be comfortable despite the intrusiveness of Egyptian society. She found this to be near impossible.

Amira found that constantly having to check the appropriateness of her clothing or not being able to smile and make eye contact with people on the street made her feel

uncomfortable and weak. In Egypt she relies heavily on others which is something she dislikes greatly, whereas in Austria she says she is completely independent. She feels she is treated like a baby. Simple things such as, hailing a taxi, running errands or paying her internet bills are things she is not able to do on her own because her male friends say that if she did she would be taken advantage of because she is a woman. Based on various accounts, learning Egyptianness seems to be heavily influenced by the gender of the plural Egyptian, but it is also affected by life circumstances such as the absence of one parent and how strongly the need is felt to impart cultural knowledge and adhere to their practice in daily life. The trend seems to be that the fathers are the ones setting restrictions and culturally disciplining their children. Yet this does not mean mothers are not involved in raising their children. In the majority of cases the individual's fathers who are Egyptians living abroad may cause them to feel the need to add a counterweight to the pull of "other" cultural influences on their children. This is also gender based in that there may be more restrictions for daughters than sons.

For Kevin, gender roles have a minimal effect. Unlike many of the plural males I have interviewed, it is his Irish mother who could be said to have exerted more of an influence as he spent a great deal of time with her up until attending university. She would spend time singing to him, reading him various Irish stories and helping him with his homework. This is not to say that his father had not left any cultural impression; rather it is merely the case that the scales were tipped in his mother's favor. Kevin very clearly states in his account that his parents "had always raised us to think of ourselves as Americans". This in part seems to be what allows Kevin to don the "American hat" as well as his Irish and Egyptian ones. In terms of past influences, a concern (among many

apprehensions concerning coming to Egypt) was people's reactions to an Arab man capable of cooking and cleaning for himself and eventually coming to live with female foreigners. So far it has not been a major issue, neither with his family nor with people he encounters on a regular basis, for example his *bowab*.

Egyptianness as a process of being socialized is gendered. As previously mentioned (see Chapter 2) women were instrumental in the emancipation of Egypt as a nation in its own right but in the process were denied their own emancipation (Baron 2005). Baron (2005) also comments on the role of men as a result of the imagery associated with women. As the protectors of the nation it becomes the man's responsibility to protect the cultural carriers of the nation from any infiltrating and negative forces. This, in part, is where the idea of Egyptian women marrying foreigners being likened to a betrayal of the nation comes from. For example, one of Mary's Egyptian friends told her that people tend to look upon women who marry foreigners as "sluts or having low standards". Also, according to Mary and her friend Mahmoud, the lengthy name which comes from patrilineal tracing (e.g. a person has a first name followed by their father's name followed by their grandfather's name and so on) has become a source of pride and for Egyptian women marrying non-Egyptians is seen as breaking the lineage. The concept of honor is also tied to this imagery making protection of the nation and the nation's women a matter of preserving honor.

Shafik (2006) describes the use of Islamic teaching concerning equality between male and female sexuality as a basis for setting restrictions on the liberties of women. Their mere presence is argued to be a form of seduction (Shafik 2006). These restrictions as El Safty (2004) has shown are rooted in social, political and economic shifts. If placing

restrictions on women is a social rather than a religious phenomenon, it would explain why Amira and Fara's fathers, being raised in Egypt, would still feel the need to place restrictions upon their daughters in order to 'protect' them.

Mary says her mother could not get out of Egypt fast enough. She had been plotting her escape for years before it actually happened. She even faked her CV in order to get out of the country. The picture Mary paints of her relationship with her mother is endlessly fascinating. Her mother seemed to be intent upon raising a European child and went to great lengths to bar key elements of Egyptian culture from her. For example, despite pleas from Mary's father, her mother refused to speak Arabic to her as a child, claiming it would confuse her. For that Mary is eternally angry. This among other things is part of the reason people dismiss her as foreign. Mary describes being regularly subjected to sessions under a large hair dryer with 'sun -in' in her hair so that her mother could boast of having a blond child. The other way in which Mary's mother has had a lasting effect on her has to do with how patriarchy is embedded in the Egyptian social system. Mary's mother is Egyptian and for the majority of people she deals with on a regular basis that is the deciding factor; Mary is judged to be foreign. She says her feelings about being plural change daily; she has never really reconciled herself with her identity, especially as she is constantly faced with being told she is something different to what she feels she is. People decide what she is (I repeatedly asked her to elaborate and this is as much detail as she was able to give me) and she lets them because she finds it almost impossible to argue with such subjective ideas of Egyptianness. She feels that Egypt has become more closed and that Egyptianness is often defined by one's appearance and what one says. She often wonders what differences there would have

been to her experience in Egypt had she been male and/or not half but fully Egyptian. She often sees it as being the source of her insecurities and unhappiness. Her sense of self and feelings regarding being in Egypt continue to be a work in progress that sustains an inner conflict. This is in contrast to Mai who is settled in being 'both' and 'neither'.

For others, gender brings with it a scrutiny that cripples the experience of being in Egypt. Mai and Amira's families live in Alexandria, yet they deliberately chose to live in Cairo to be allowed the independence adults are given in the West. While Amira has no negative feelings towards her family, in Mai's case it is automatically assumed by her family in Alexandria that as a foreigner, she will be up to no good. The amount of kindness she is shown varies among her family members, but even her closest relatives have indicated that the difference in the way she is treated is somewhat justifiable. There is an aunt and niece in Mai's family who are known for gossiping about various family members, not always in a positive light. There was a particular instance when Mai was visiting that her aunt and cousin had been spreading ill-spirited rumors about Mai and another one of her female cousins. She was visiting another aunt who had told her what had happened and her aunt effectively condoned the spreading of rumors about Mai while claiming that her own daughter did not deserve such bad treatment. She had said that it was one thing to say nasty things about Mai because Mai was practically foreign and foreigners do such negative things, but her daughter was a good person who would never do anything wrong.

Another situation involved a male cousin of Mai's with whom she was very close emotionally. Because of their closeness rumors began to fly among family members who felt that for their closeness there must be some romantic involvement. As far as they were

concerned, as a foreigner the lengths to which Mai may go was unknown. Her cousin was romantically involved with a woman who made her jealousy at their closeness known. On Mai's last day before returning to France, her cousin decided to take her, his 'girlfriend' and a few of her friends to Khan el-Khalili. Despite her attempts to be nice to her cousin's 'girlfriend' and friends, they were openly and blatantly rude to her throughout the trip. Towards the end Mai's cousin's 'girlfriend' friend took her aside and gave her a lecture on the 'needs' of Mai's cousin. She told her that Mai's cousin needed a real Egyptian woman and even if Mai were to have him he could never really be happy with a '*khawaga*' (foreigner but with a negative connotation, confirmed by Mai) who does not know anything about Egyptian customs and does "other things" (this was Mai's way of indicating that her family and their friends thought that because she was foreign she was promiscuous). Mai left Egypt devastated at the fact that although she had done nothing to indicate anything of the sort, she would always be thought of badly, not only by Egyptians, but also by her own family and there was nothing she could do about it. Ironically, Mai later heard that her cousin's 'girlfriend' had been unfaithful and mistreated him in other ways. Like Mary, being in Egypt has also been a constant reminder of the ways in which Mai will not be considered Egyptian and she seeks solace in her group of international friends in Cairo. She had worked in a law firm for a few months but eventually quit because she wanted to focus on her language skills. At the law firm her colleagues made it clear that she did not belong; she says they were not in the least bit interested in trying to see the ways in which she was Egyptian. Mai feels very strongly that if she had spoken better Arabic things would have been different. These differences in experience may also find their roots in Egyptian class hierarchies.

***Balady* or *Balady*? The relationship between class and cultural immersion**

A useful insight into the idea of Egyptianness is that of being '*balady*' which Mary discusses at great length in one of her blogs⁴⁸.

When I came to Egypt I of course knew of the existence of the class system and about some people and things being 'balady' - mostly because of certain family members who, if wishing to secretly comment on someone or something's balady status would whisper 'c'est tres mon pays', a direct French translation of balady, or 'my country.' The word can serve both as a neutral adjective ('mooz balady,' locally produced bananas), and as a term to deem something or someone as lower class and without the 'benefit' of exposure to the outside world. The term is approximately equivalent to 'common' in the British context, but its usage [is] fraught with the mysterious subtleties of Egyptian society.

*I gradually learnt that the factors determining balady status include language, wealth, education and appearance. Thus someone who only speaks Arabic may be balady, but not if this person is my grandmother, because we are an excellent family, *****. If however he only speaks Arabic and he is a plumber, he is almost certainly balady. If the same plumber happens to have got lucky and accumulated wealth he is probably still balady and worse still 'nouveau riche,' and one determines this by looking at his shoes and his wife. In contrast if the son of a very rich man does nothing but go to the club everyday and knows mostly nada about nada he is still not balady because he speaks English and comes from good-breeding. Wealth is not a conclusive determinant of balady-free status because the family might be intellectuals... members of these families will almost certainly never be balady. Education is important too: State universities are generally frowned upon... having attended AUC at some point virtually guarantees that the individual in question is not balady. A university education abroad (in Western Europe or the US) means that the individual in question both has money and speaks another language and is decidedly not balady ... Observance of one's religious obligations is necessary and good, but excessive piety/religious conservatism is not, because it may indicate an uncultivated mind.*

Mary goes on to explain how being *balady* is not necessarily in what you do but how you do it⁴⁹. For example, she says that two individuals may enjoy watching American films, but the *balady* individual is the one reading the Arabic subtitles. Both

⁴⁸ <http://allthegoodnameshadgone.blogspot.com/2007/08/helwa-ya-balad-meen-part-2-return-to.html>

⁴⁹ <http://allthegoodnameshadgone.blogspot.com/2007/08/helwa-ya-balad-meen-part-2-return-to.html>

individuals may enjoy watching football matches, but one will go to a cafe with an LE 30 minimum while the other will go to an *ahwa* and enjoy tea and sheesha for at most LE 6. Both women may enjoy shopping, but one shops at the City Stars mall while the other does not. Finally, two families enjoy Arab pop music and *sha3by* music, but the *balady* family would have this music played at a relative's wedding while the well-to-do family would not allow it.

Embedded in Mary's explanation of the complexities of *balady* status is an explanation of Egyptianness as understood through class hierarchies. There is emphasis on gender as Mary indicates the appearance of a man's wife is one indicator of their class and social status. I am not arguing that being *balady* is being a 'real' Egyptian, but certain elements of *baladiness* have constructed part of the Egyptian national image. In describing the development of the nationalist movement and how the nation was represented in the late 19th century, Baron (2005) contends that at times the Egyptian nation was depicted as the *ibn al-balad* (in this explanation the translation is 'son of the village') and when this was the case the representation was always male. At the same time it is class bound because upper class Egyptians are often accused of having abandoned their roots in an attempt to be more Western (Ashraf 2001 & Carr 2004). The use of an individual's wife as a determinant for being *balady* (as taken from Mary's account) is rooted in the national imagery of 'ibn el balad' as the symbol of Egyptian authenticity. As part of various countries' attempts to show a shift from 'traditional' to modern, men have adapted their style of dress to appear more Western, but women as the bearers of culture are often made to/are pressured to maintain a style of dress which is in keeping with the country's cultural heritage. Action is argued to be the seat of meaning

(Ingold 2001), thus the act of wearing certain clothing contains within it specific meanings.

As well as the *ibn al-balad* image, Baron (2005) also demonstrates the use of many images of Egypt as a fully clothed and sometimes fully veiled woman. It is because the image of Egypt as a woman is tied up in the issue of both the country and the woman's honor. The nation has also been represented as a *fallaha* or peasant woman, which is in line with both of the previous imagery examples (Baron 2005). In Egyptian cinema (Shafik 2006), the representation of Egypt as feminine often goes with representing the nation as being taken advantage of or raped by an invading force (often the West as part of anti-colonial sentiment). Women are continuously represented as submissive and passive and in instances when women are given more commanding roles they are made to seem more masculine and less 'attractive' (Shafik 2006). Thus being passive, submissive and dressed modestly falls in line with the role of women as the guardians of culture which poses a problem for women who do not conform to this ideal. This may in part explain why Amira and Mai are harassed despite wearing long sleeved shirts in the streets of Cairo. Amira feels that social status determines what is acceptable for one to wear. To her, tighter, more revealing clothing with designer labels is associated with the upper classes.

Kevin provides specific examples which demonstrate how Egyptianness and foreignness are perceived through clothing. He claims that baseball caps worn backwards, messenger bags, backpacks on adults and well made bicycles constituted signs of foreignness and more specifically Westernization. Kevin claims that Egyptians love novelty t-shirts, (but, according to Kevin, do not realize that foreigners generally do

not wear them) and tight shirts to show how strong they are. He also claims that shoes are an important status symbol for school children because of the uniforms they wear. With regards to women, Kevin says, there is little one can do not to look 'loose' if you are not *hijabi* because Egyptians have made up their minds about Westerners and Western culture. He speculates that a combination of the infiltration of Western media, what he calls 'note memorization of the educational system', huge economical differences and men being encouraged to be fashion conscious, fuel ideas of what constitutes foreign and Egyptian. If one moves from the accusation that upper class Egyptians are 'less Egyptian' in part because of their dress it falls in line with the traditionally held belief that the working and the poor classes are the traditional holders of Egyptian culture. While this is not the case, it is certainly believed to be "true" and directly influences ideas about how Egyptianness is learned and understood.

The first two paragraphs taken from Mary's account exemplify how education, socioeconomic status, and language are intertwined in a way which affects how one is valued and thus addressed as an Egyptian. Mary's comparison between two modes of living (which I have paraphrased) shows that how one manipulates these elements (if one is indeed in a position to do so) can affect social standing and indeed perceived social standing. It is the differences in the way these are manipulated by the people in question which highlights *baladiness* and in turn the ways in which one class is associated with being Western and the other with being more 'traditional' (I have placed traditional in quotation marks because it is sometimes indicated as a negative quality in terms of social class in Egypt). Traditional however, has also been associated with cultural authenticity. We are returned to the idea that being Egyptian stands in contrast to being Western or

foreign which is surprising given the extent to which Western influence has been soaked up by Egyptian society (Amar & Singerman 2006). Even guidebooks make passing comments concerning men in *galaybeyas* driving donkey carts while talking on mobile phones. The Egyptian individual seems to contain varying degrees of two extremes: those which are more traditional and thus more 'Egyptian' and those which are considered more Western and by default less 'Egyptian'. Due to the fact that plural Egyptians are automatically thrust into the category deemed 'less' or 'un-Egyptian', no middle ground is created to promote an understanding of being plural. It can be argued that as part of the regulating system of the state (Burchill et al. 1991), society as self regulating and reinforcing the state targets possible 'deviants' from the established order and encourages behavior modification so as to fall in line with the accepted norm. The supposed dichotomies of traditional/modern along with ideas of *baladiness* can serve as tools for regulating the self and others (Gutman et al. 1988) within Egyptian society. Class becomes another method by which elements such as religion, education and gender roles (which maintain order between each other) in turn are regulated.

Rainer Hamel (1998) paints a picture of the Egyptian state and society through how these two elements are entwined with language and class. Hamel clarifies the Egyptian linguistic hierarchy; Egyptian colloquial Arabic is spoken by all individuals, but English and Modern Standard Arabic or *Fus'ha* compete as languages of prestige and power. The dividing element is education because English and other foreign languages are taught in private schools attended by wealthier classes and *Fus'ha* is taught in state schools which supply government institutions and the Egyptian labor market (Hamel 1998). Hamel (1998) uses Bourdieu's theories of the linguistic market and symbolic

capital with the understanding that the linguistic market has adapted to compensate for the accessibility of *fus'ha* to the working classes and by readdressing how the upper class invest their linguistic capital. According to Hamel (1998) it is possible for multiple languages to be in competition without compromising the hierarchy which is linked to Bourdieu's theories. This description of language ties back into Mary's description of *baladiness* in that while the knowledge of certain languages denotes class, colloquial Egyptian, as spoken by all is only a differentiating element in *how* it is spoken. For example, AUC students are often made fun of by non-AUCians for their tendency to inject English words into their Arabic dialogues.

Personal Complexities of perceived Egyptianness/foreignness

Being defined as foreign can also be seen as a safe haven. In my interview with Riad he explained that rather than trying to meet standards that are never defined, it can be easier to just accept the label of foreign because it affords him the freedom to live his life as he chooses. He does not have to worry about who he associates with, rumors, the fact that he drinks, and those 'odd' little things about him that cause people to dismiss him as 'different' despite his proficiency in Arabic, both in Libya and Egypt. Once again according to Riad, it is never something specific (he cannot spell it out); there is just something about him that is not quite Libyan, nor quite Egyptian. While his family members on both sides accept him as he is, this indefinable thing is what people turn to when they cite his differences is part of the reason why he is not fully immersed in either Egyptian or Libyan society.

In Ashraf Omar's (2001) article concerning Egyptians with overseas exposure who attempt to adjust to living in Cairo, an individual who was interviewed explained that friendship with Egyptians is almost instantaneous. The individual (Omar 2001) describes it as follows:

"It's like you're dating these five people," ***** said. "You go everywhere together. You talk every day. It's insane."

***** says forming friendships with regular Egyptians "is not impossible, but hard." She described Egyptian female friendship dynamics as a strange combination of extremely tight and extremely unstable. "It's instant friendship, and it's very superficial... It's very easy to meet people in Egypt. You can be here for a month and suddenly you have a circle of friends," she said. "It's perfect if you just want to socialize. But once you hit a snag or disagree on something, it's instant disintegration."

Based upon Fouad's claims it is very similar with male friendships. He finds it more difficult to be open and honest because of the taboos (personal family situations and sexual relationships for example) that exist with regard to what one can discuss with others. One could have been friends with the same group of people for decades and not actually know a great deal about them as individuals. Fouad says if there is ever a disagreement or a difference in opinion, the offending individual is expelled from the group. For Fouad, friendships with Egyptian men follows a pattern: he makes a friend and becomes part of a group as a result, there is a few months of closeness during which his friends become 'possessive' as he describes it (for example he cannot spend time with other friends without inviting them or incurring displeasure at not being invited), there is a fight that is not resolved and Fouad moves on to make other friends. In friendships with non-Egyptians, Fouad finds when there is an argument it is possible to resolve it and go back to being friends. Overall he finds friendships with Egyptians to be fraught with hypersensitivity, nosiness and jealousy. He finds that people in Egypt gossip terribly and have a tendency to exaggerate or 'sugar-coat' what they are saying. Fouad sees himself as

a more direct personality and in many cases just does not have the patience for the dance that is socializing in Egypt. For example, if Fouad makes plans with one friend and does not invite their entire social group, the individuals not included will get offended. The majority of the other individuals I have interviewed tend to gravitate towards a more international group of friends and those who have Egyptian friends have very few and find that the relationships are tense and fairly superficial as they cannot engage with them in the manner they would with their international friends. The experience is similar to Fouad's; there are similar restrictions and expectations although women's friendships are more superficial yet tight-knit.

In terms of being male in Egypt, Fouad knows his position is viewed as being odd. He does not live with his parents and has no current aspirations towards marriage. Further, he does not feel pressured by his immediate family to conform to traditional Egyptian standards. When I asked him about gender-related perceptions of Egyptians, he described Egyptian males as being “hound dogs” who are sexually frustrated, strong, controlling with regard to women, have a need to protect women and create barriers in speech. He claims that Egyptian men can be extremely persistent in terms of romance, but it does not go unprompted. In relationships Fouad says Egyptian women are game-players who need constant proof that the man involved really cares for them. Women are said to allow men to think they are in control. Fouad feels the subsequent tendency to “play hard to get” serves as further motivation for Egyptian men. When describing Egyptian women, he begins by saying they talk a lot and gossip but admits that on the whole Egyptians in general are like that regardless of gender roles. Beyond that he reverts

to restrictions and expectations placed upon Egyptian women by their family members and wider society.

According to Fouad a major element in the foreign stereotype is the belief that all foreigners are completely naïve about Egyptian culture. More importantly, it is the belief that foreigners are incapable of ever understanding Egyptian culture. When people realize that he is half Egyptian, the first thing that changes is the tendency to explain every detail of Egyptian culture. Fouad also said that the realization that he is half Egyptian welcomed him into the 'brotherhood' of Egypt that is the barriers come down; he is instantly Egyptian. He claims that from being mistaken for a foreign person to the realization that he is half Egyptian, the content of conversations change and people become more open while maintaining traditional conversation taboos.

Evan is another individual who is mistaken for a foreigner. Initially it was his mode of dress; he usually has long hair and likes to wear tighter jeans which caused people on the street to call him gay. Upon meeting him when he first started university in Cairo a woman told him she was glad he was half Egyptian as it meant he was more open-minded. For him, being Egyptian is tied to a sense of national pride which he thinks is embodied in an Egyptian's fierce defensiveness of the country; he does not feel national pride towards any country in particular but he does not attribute it to being half Egyptian, half British. Female participants seemed to refer to clothing indirectly or non-specifically. Amira for example complains about not being able to wear what she wants in terms of short-sleeved shirts. She claims that even when wearing long sleeves men harass her. Mai wears both short and long sleeves and almost always carries a scarf with her. In a discussion with a prospective language teacher, it was suggested very strongly to

her that if she wore a veil she would look more Egyptian. This individual was dressed in conservative Muslim dress with the appropriate head cap and beard. He seemed insistent that all Egyptian women should be veiled.

Being married to an Egyptian does not guarantee entry to Egyptian society as an equal. A foreigner married to an Egyptian is still a foreigner and is treated as such. I sat in Stella bar with a group of friends discussing relationships and non-verbal cues when a man at the adjoining table insisted on interrupting with his input. His name was David, he hailed from Australia and had just gotten out of a lengthy marriage to an Egyptian woman. He was relieved; as hard as he had tried, he said, he could not please her. He had converted to Islam before marrying her and had been completely upfront about his life, work and what it would mean if they had gotten married. At the time his then fiancée said she was happy to move from place to place with him (he worked as a diplomat) but it seemed the reality of doing so was something she could not abide by. They had even moved back to Cairo for a few years and even then she was not happy. When my friend asked him about how Egyptian men reacted to him being married to an Egyptian woman he explained that he had always been treated as a *khawaga*. When I asked whether he meant *khawaga* or *agnabi* he reaffirmed that he meant *khawaga* (both words refer to foreigners but many have found that *khawaga* carries a negative connotation). As an example, he told the story of the dowry for his marriage. Normally if a family refuses to hand the dowry over to the new husband, the husband would stand in front of the family's residence screaming to anyone who would listen about the dishonesty of the family. Because he is foreign, he explained, his wife's family were not concerned about giving him the dowry.

Conclusion

While this chapter aimed to shed light on the nuances of Egyptianness it has also shown the ambiguity that exists within its definition and understanding. Individuals are asked what their understanding is of both Egyptianness and foreignness and what is often revealed is their own sense of being in Egyptian society. Issues of gender affect what it means to be Egyptian in that what is perceived to be non-Egyptian is suggested to be more apparent among the upper classes. This can be linked to ideas of authenticity. Learning Egyptianness is gendered and many individuals find that being female entails many restrictions. What is important in understanding this is how Egyptianness and foreignness can be embodied and blended within the individual and performed in ones daily life. This performance would act as a cue from which others form their opinions as to whether an individual 'belongs'. *Baladiness* is used as a method of examining ideas of class and the link to authenticity and national image A distinct line seems to be drawn between Egyptian and foreign, making it impossible for a designated foreigner to be accepted as an Egyptian. As plural Egyptians, individuals are automatically categorized as foreign or Egyptians without the option to exist in between and this is done based upon appearance, gender, class and parentage.

Chapter 4: On Being a Community

This chapter concerns the relationships plural Egyptians may or may not have with groups of individuals they consider to be similar. A question which arises is that of community and the role it may or may not play in the lives of plural Egyptians. Do plural Egyptians feel there is a bounded community of plurals in Egypt? What, if any, are the boundaries of their community? The response is mixed. This is in part because of the idea of community and how people relate to each other. Some individuals do not identify themselves as plural or with other plurals. Others identify with specific groups of plurals and internationals (what some Egyptians have called foreigners). Then there are those who seek out groups of people with similar experiences, others who have grown up overseas and feel they are unable to completely 'fit in' Egyptian society or are rejected as foreign or having abandoned their roots. Kevin and Evan for example seek out internationals or their specific counterparts. Evan gravitates towards people who are half British as well; he has found them to be the easiest group to get along with as well as the most welcoming. Both he and Kevin have had trouble making Egyptian friends partially because of a language barrier. Kevin actively seeks out individuals who are half Egyptian so as to build a community of his own while in Cairo.

A question which arises is the meaning of a possible link between those who do not perceive or have never considered a link between themselves and those that could be like them. Does collective experience create collective memory, even if a people do not identify themselves and with each other as a bounded entity? What are the links that are necessary to create a sense of community and are these links or ideas things that the individuals involved need to be aware of? Theories of transnationalism inform my

analysis in that diasporic communities carry with them what is called the memory of the homeland and they use that when adjusting to where they move to (Biai 1999 & Ghorashi 2004). This returns us to a few issues raised by Mary in Chapter 1; how can this link exist if it is not acknowledged or given meaning by the people themselves? It can be reduced to people deciding who you are and attaching meaning and expectations based upon said judgment. Simply put, other individuals label you and the given label comes with assumptions about what makes up the individual. Individuals can be assigned labels by individuals who consider themselves to be different and through that be associated with groups of people that they themselves may never have considered similar or related to. Because of the complexity of this question, it cannot be addressed without further research. The point remains that not all plural Egyptians identify themselves as plural and/or affiliate with a specific group of people.

To address this question it becomes important to look at various types of communities and more specifically the types of communities that directly relate to how individuals attribute meaning to their environment and the relationships that form as a method of support for their particular worldview. The human individual relies on feedback to survive as a social being (Mann et al. 2008). The general tendency in a social setting is to gravitate towards those that give positive feedback as a basis for forming a social group and community. What I hope to describe in this chapter are two main modes of thought which seem to have emerged from my research: community coming in the form of physically gathering either regularly or semi-regularly and interaction online and the formation of virtual communities. Virtual and physical communities do not necessarily stand in contrast (although I use them to distinguish one

from the other in this chapter); they are the two major methods by which ideas of socializing are understood and seem to have developed. Through these I seek to trace the patterns of interaction between different types of people, the levels of comfort individuals feel and the types of information shared as a result. Ultimately what I hope to show is what the communities in which people participate mean to them.

This chapter begins with background information on virtual communities and the kinds of social ties that are generated through online interaction. The next section gives background information on a social network which dominates the majority of online interaction: Facebook. Through Facebook we look at an example of a social group set up for plural Egyptians and the kinds of interactions therein. From Facebook this chapter moves on to physical community before closing with an example of a meeting which hopefully demonstrates not only how modes of being are performed during interaction, but also a possible understanding of why other individuals may not consider being plural as a factor when becoming part of a community.

Virtual Communities

To begin with I feel it is necessary to include an overview of what virtual communities are and what they represent for contemporary socializing habits. It is important to make the link between virtual communities and transnationals clear, especially as something that allows individuals to transcend geographical ties. Virtual communities are described as being part of the evolution of social groups into something more abstract, distant and impersonal (Memmi 2006). This argument falls in line with Constable's (2003) postulation that Anderson's concept of imagined communities can be

extended to the virtual world. The change in how individuals socialize from traditional, closer knit communities has been facilitated through the rapid development of technological devices which remove the need for individuals to physically occupy spaces in close proximity. These "communities of sentiment" (Constable 2003: 32) remove meaning from national boundaries, but at the same time Constable argues that communities can only be so far removed from the state. Marrying across borders as she (Constable 2003) puts it, can also reinforce them. This could, for example, explain and reinforce the use of group names on Facebook such as Half Egyptian, Half Filipino or Half Egyptian, Half Irish. It can also constitute the formation of a virtual 'third space' as referred to by Bhabha (Meredith 1998).

An interesting point raised by Memmi (2006) is that even within traditional social communities not all members come into contact, making the occupation of space less relevant. He uses this point to attempt to ascertain whether or not virtual communities are indeed a new kind of social group rather than an extension of an already existing model. Memmi (2006) claims that the tendency to look at virtual communities as similar to traditional communities in terms of holding traditional morals and values often obscures the role they play by existing in electronic space (Driskell & Lyon 2002).

In discussing and defining virtual communities Memmi (2006) also challenges the use of the term 'community' as it is meant to denote the existence of close personal bonds. As a result, the group should be small and consist of people that each individual knows personally. This in turn suggests having physically met each member of said community. It is also an image which Memmi (2006) claims lends itself very well to clichés and nostalgic imagery but does not exist in the world we currently inhabit. With

specific regard to social networks such as Facebook and Myspace, Memmi's postulations appear to vary. Interaction on these sites seems to vary according to the closeness of the relationship between individuals in real life. Messages posted on Facebook's newsfeed for example range from information exchange to expressions of personal feeling. A major point though is that newsfeed is based on relationships between individuals who have met personally. Memmi (2006) compares the difference between contemporary social groups and traditional social groups to mechanical and organic solidarity as coined by Durkheim. Organic solidarity is meant to be more loosely defined and abstract, much like the relationships in modern day social groups.

These characteristics fall in line with the emergence of new personality types that are affable, flexible and easy going, but also superficial, self-involved and unemotional, thus making them well suited to today's digital world (Memmi 2006). Such informal settings also allow for easier expression in some cases of more unconventional or controversial viewpoints. An example of this is the ability for members of the Coptic diaspora to participate in political movements related to Egypt (Rowe 2001). Membership to social groups has also become more flexible; along with a sense of impersonality, a sense of temporality has developed towards being part of a social group (Memmi 2006). Ironically enough, many cite the quest for meaningful and in depth relationships as part of the reason for joining Internet communities (Memmi 2006). The author however feels that for close-knit groups to exist online they have to follow the same parameters as close-knit groups in reality and with software systems such as groupware (designed to maximize the amount of personal information shared so as to capitalize on the communalities that cause communities to form). This however is

disputed by Driskell and Lyon (2002) who advocate virtual communities as a new and different method of socializing.

Something that has come to light as a result of my research is the extent to which the Internet plays a role in maintaining contact and the changing forms of group socializing. Likened to the telephone, the Internet becomes a tool by which to establish, develop and strengthen bonds with individuals (Driskell & Lyon 2002). People no longer need to meet in person; they can sign in to a chat room, messenger or even Facebook to communicate directly with each other (Kirpatrick 2010, Memmi 2006). This has a direct affect on the concept of community and how it no longer needs to be grounded in the physical location of its members. Incorporated here are elements of Benedict Andersons 'Imagined Community' (1983) and ideas of the essence of transnationalism. It is also a fine example of Ghorashi's (2004) explanations of communities taking what they learn from the environments they live in and blending it with memories of the so-called homeland to create a hybrid space which characterizes themselves and their lives. There is a tendency to assume that the majority of transnationals are some form of migrant, but in truth migrants tend to become more stationary once they arrive in the receiving country (Bloemraad et al. 2008). A community is no longer connected by a point in geography; there are other elements which serve as a linking force, especially where Internet communities are concerned. In addition, the nature of community changes when groups are not physically meeting in one location. This means the community really is imagined as the idea of simultaneity becomes even more important than before. In the case of plural Egyptians, the linking element is still a geographical location embodied by one of their parents but the connection to Egypt itself takes on multiple forms. Internet mediums

allow plural Egyptians to ‘meet’ and engage with each other regardless of the limitations of physical space.

The Effect of Facebook

Before the advent of Twitter, Facebook was the major social and media obsession, being where the majority of people went to be kept up to date on current events of friends, family and media. Its 'infectiousness' is such that there are few individuals who do not have a Facebook account. As part of its development, Facebook became a plane on which individuals shape and project specific parts of their identity and forge relationships, but because of the way Facebook is designed one cannot stray far from reality. Originally one needed to prove one's identity to be part of Facebook; they needed to prove who they were as individuals through providing facts about their existence. Facebook is grounded in reality and based upon the facts about the individuals who run it and are members putting it on the opposite end of the spectrum to sites such as Second Life. In effect its users maintain a lifeline to the so called real world and as a result groups are not that far removed from the real world. Individuals generally 'friend' people on Facebook after having met them in person but this is not a prerequisite for joining groups on Facebook and interacting with individuals. This could be considered a point of 'disconnection' from the so-called real world. From this point people can then begin to interact with individuals they may never meet in person. It began officially in February of 2004 as a site called ‘the facebook’ eventually dropping ‘the’ (Kirkpatrick 2010). Started by then Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg (Kirkpatrick 2010), when it first went online the home page read as follows:

“The facebook is an online directory that connects people through social networks at colleges. We

have opened up The facebook for popular consumption at Harvard University. You can use The facebook to: Search for people at your school; Find out who are in your classes; Look up your friends' friends; See a visualization of your social network.”

What catches the eye is the last phrase. The implication is that part of the original goal was for individuals to physically see their individual 'society' so to speak, almost as if one is visualizing how they extend themselves into the world which would be supported by how Hermans (2004) describes the dialogical self. Like the individual and their virtual social network, the self consists of the individual as well as things that they own, friends and family. These extensions however include establishing connections based purely on commonalities rather than things like physical place and space restricting interactions to work, school and other social locales. One of its unique features was the fact that regardless of its rate of growth, a facebook user would only come into contact with friends and friends of friends when accessing basic main functions such as newsfeed(Kirkpatrick 2010).

For certain countries in the Middle East, Facebook serves as a form of empowerment (Kirkpatrick 2010). Some users based in the Middle East claim that they are able to express their personalities more fully than they would in real life because of social restrictions. With Facebook being the main contributor to the fact that more time is spent on social networking sites than on e-mail, the question becomes what does the site mean for individuals and groups who are formed within its boundaries?

When Zuckerberg established the privacy boundaries for Facebook, one of the things he emphasized was the existence of one identity per person, in that individuals could not divide facets of their lives (e.g. work, friends, family etc) among different profiles (Kirkpatrick 2010). The end result is the Facebook profile format: one person, one identity, one profile. This becomes relevant when one looks at the types of

information people on Facebook are willing to share in groups, particularly groups such as those for plural Egyptians. It is also relevant with regards to the information I collected and why I came to the conclusions I did. Zuckerberg (Kirkpatrick 2010) argues that having multiple profiles shows a lack of integrity in a person's character and being forced to show all aspects of a personality creates healthier relationships. This argument is extended through software that links information on individual's profiles to other information about them on the Internet or for example web pages related to work or hobbies (Kirkpatrick 2010). The reasoning behind the new changes in privacy settings, for example are linked to a desire for transparency and making people more responsible for their actions. With the outing of information through such applications as the Newsfeed, Kirkpatrick (2010) implies that people in fact are unable to deal with the reconciliation of their various layers of selves in the form of anyone they are friends with on Facebook knowing everything about them that is online.

When I began my research, I started looking at Facebook groups concerned with Egyptians or people who are half Egyptian. My original goal was to use these groups as a gateway to meeting and developing relationships with individuals who may be willing to participate in my research. It became a method by which to gain a better idea of the issues which such individuals faced and the possible concerns they had. Learning about the development of Facebook also held explanations as to why it became so widespread so quickly. It provided both structure and freedom of expression at the same time and in some ways became an extension of the lives people lead in the real world. At the same time it seems as though if an individual reaches out far enough into internet space, they lose contact with real space. Now with the advent of Twitter and smartphones which

come with both Facebook and Twitter applications pre-installed, the majority of life for younger generations is lived online. If one so wishes, connections are no longer based upon something grounded in reality for example meeting in person. The strength in this however, is that if an individual is having problems meeting people with common interests with whom they can get along, social networking groups can be ideal.

When I came to Cairo I befriended a few individuals whom I later learned started one of the major Facebook groups. I was able to gain their permission and that of the administrator of another group to engage with members and to use what I found for my research. Of course a question that was raised was how free the information one puts on networking sites actually is and so I have limited the amount of information found that can be shared and all the names related to the various online groups and will be withheld completely. When people join these groups within the confines of online social networking groups there is still a certain amount of privacy which is sought and my presence may or may not put this in jeopardy. For the sake of this research I will limit the information to generalizations and numbers.

When I began cataloguing Facebook groups in the summer of 2009, there were 14 groups that were either for people who are half Egyptian or for people who were half Egyptian and half another nationality. Currently (June 11, 2010), there are 17 groups on Facebook. The main groups I dealt with were entitled “Half Egyptian Half Something Else” and “Egyptian Half Breeds”. When I began my research “Half Egyptian Half Something Else” had 861 members. Currently it has 1,040 members. “Egyptian Half Breeds” had 230 members when I began my research. It currently has 259. The other groups I have followed on Facebook were geared towards specific halves (Half Egyptian

Half Iranian, Half Egyptian Half British, Half Egyptian Half Guyanese, Half Egyptian Half Filipino etc). These groups have significantly smaller numbers ranging from 118 to 3. Similar to an introduction, these groups tend to begin with a forum discussion on members' parental origins of which the variety is wide. Members appear to have parents from all parts of the globe. Traffic seems to have slowed down since the beginning of 2010 on these sites but the membership continues to increase steadily.

Half Egyptian Half Something Else

To better explain the phenomenon of virtual communities, Facebook and the role they play in the lives of plural Egyptians, I will introduce a Facebook group entitled “Half Egyptian, Half Something Else”. Under the ‘Description’ it reads that the group started at a party in Dokki when the group of individuals on the balcony discovered that they were all half Egyptian. Initially welcoming all in the hope of meeting regularly in person and starting groups in other cities (the group began in Cairo), administrators of the group had to add a request that only individuals who were half Egyptian join. They make it clear that they are not attempting to be discriminatory, but remain in line with their original goal which is providing a forum for half Egyptians to express themselves and share experiences “full Egyptians don’t necessarily have or understand”⁵⁰. The language used is fairly informal; the cofounder who wrote the welcome message (who has since withdrawn as a member of the administrative team of the group) uses terms such as “half breeds” and “mutts” to describe herself and other members. It appears to be part of an attempt to maintain a friendly and lighthearted atmosphere within the group but she could

⁵⁰ <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=19214095840&ref=search>

also be using terms people have used in her presence in order to give potential members a starting point from which to relate to her, thus making it more likely that people would join the group.

At first glance, the topics discussed in the various forums would indicate a sense of being marginalized, but it quickly becomes clear that the majority of individuals are grateful for who they are and consider being plural a gift in its own right. One individual writes:

“In Egypt we’re half something else. Somewhere else, we’re half Egyptian. So wherever we are geographically, we bring that certain edge and flava baby.”

Another individual adds:

“You get to shock the pants off of people talking about you in Arabic.”

Yet another writes:

“I didnt get the perk of paying Egyptian fees as AUC. Since it is my mother who is Egyptian, and the law was sexist until 5 years ago, I only got the right to have an Egyptian nationality after I graduated, despite living in Egypt my whole life.

It's only those with Egyptian fathers who have that advantage!”

The way they express their feelings does however give an impression of a clear divide between ‘them’ - not having any plurality to their background or multi-cultural experience- and ‘us’, namely those with a plural background and immersion in multiple cultures. The boundaries of the group can be said to be a method by which to delineate who belongs to 'us' and 'them'; as the former administrator/founder of the groups posted:

"However, it occurred to me that some people joined who aren't half-egyptians and half-something else. Some are indeed full egyptian or quarters or eighths... and all of that stuff. THAT DOESN'T COUNT!

PLEASE ONLY HALF EGYPTIAN AND HALF SOMETHING ELSE PEOPLE JOIN!"

What is presented is a clear cut definition of who belongs and who does not the emphasis being on the word 'half'. Because it is a social group with a specific purpose, it seems to be easier to draw the lines that people do not seem to draw in reality for example those of inclusion and exclusion. As explained by the former administrator, clear cut boundaries need to be maintained for the sake of group cohesion.

Individuals discuss being endowed with a greater understanding of various cultures and how people function. There is an acknowledgement that they “do not belong to any country”, but it is also suggested that being accepted by one’s family can be enough. Some even claim a ‘freedom’ from the social rules which apparently govern those who are not plural. An example of this is claiming their other point of origin when in Egypt to escape social expectations⁵¹. One individual writes:

“You could always pull out your passport and have a pint of beer during ramadan.”

Members feel they are free to choose who they are so to speak. As I argued based upon Riad’s interview in a previous chapter, being defined as foreign can be a safe haven. Group members attest to being mistaken for many different nationalities but rarely do the people asking guess their correct makeup. Many claim to be mistaken for Latin American or Southern European for example. When people do get part of all of their makeup correct it is usually due to specific features such as eye or nose shape.

When it comes to romance and marriage, the majority of group members agree that they would rather marry an individual with a plural background⁵². A few cite this as being key to a successful relationship, as the individual would have had similar experiences and thus be able to relate to their partner. One individual makes an important point that all of us tend to forget:

“It doesn't matter, there are good and bad people wherever you go whether they are mixed race or from individual race, in fact if you go far enough back in history you will find most people have origins from different racial backgrounds. You marry someone for who they are and not what their racial origins are, surely we are not too shallow to look beyond this....”

⁵¹ <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=19214095840&ref=search>

⁵² <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=19214095840&ref=search>

Virtual communities are founded on the basis of removing geographical ties as a shared commonality, yet this specific case concerns a link that begins with geography. It is not fixed however; these ties are that which can be taken anywhere they go. They become embodied as well as carried around in a laptop or housed in a desktop .

When Omar Ashraf wrote about plural Egyptians learning to adjust to being in Cairo he mentioned a group founded by a woman working for noor.net. This group is called Roots and is open to all individuals who are either half Egyptian or Egyptian but were raised abroad (as Ashraf puts it children of people who had emigrated in the 1950's and 1960's). At the time the group was founded, the founder did not realize that 'cultural struggles' as she put it could involve people who were not plural. This serves as a good example of the ways in which nationality does not equal culture. The group offers a medium by which individuals meet people whom they consider like themselves and forge more lasting bonds. As I had previously mentioned, plural Egyptians have had varying difficulties establishing and maintaining relationships with non-plural Egyptians and the virtual/physical group seems to operate as a safe haven. The group meets on a regular basis at the homes of various members. The difference between the clear cut definition given by the creators of "Half Egyptian, Half Something Else" and Roots is that roots claims to be open to those who would fall under Ayad's (2007) definition of Bicultural in that they were either half Egyptian or have had extensive exposure to a culture other than Egypt. What is also important to note is the fact that the group operates both online and in physical space and, like its members, could be argued to occupy a liminal space between boundaries that are already porous. The group and its members are therefore reproducing a quality of their existence, coming from and existing in 'between' spaces or 'third space'

as put by Bhabha (Meredith 1998). The combination of one space (the physical) and another (virtual space) can create another which is in fact an area of overlap between the two, i.e. a 'hybrid' space.

A Community of Flesh and Blood

The following is a description of experience I had thanks to a participant and friend of mine which I felt was necessary to share regardless of the general consensus of interviewees regarding forming communities. While the majority of individuals interviewed did not feel that being plural played a role in how they sought out and formed relationships which lead to becoming part of communities, Kevin has always been keen on the idea of community and since I began my research he has expressed on multiple occasions the desire to have a gathering for plural Egyptians. He was hoping that I might be able to facilitate the introductions if such a meeting were to happen. My goal with this passage was to set a particular scene and make it possible to imagine the exchange which occurred that night as an example of a kind of meeting that happens regularly between Marwan and Kevin.

Kevin had suggested I go with him to El Espaniol which was located around the block from his apartment so that I may sample the fantastic tapas and hopefully be introduced to members of the Spanish Arab network in Cairo. The restaurant is owned and run by a Spanish woman and her half Spanish half Egyptian son, Marwan, who is a complete and total delight to be around. He oozes pure positivity in this boisterous manner which makes it almost infectious (I later discover that this is somewhat of a

mantra of his). When we arrive he is out on an errand but his mother welcomes us in and proceeds to catch up with Kevin.

When Marwan arrives he greets Kevin like a brother. Marwan laments his developing knee problem and his mother cites his weight as the cause which in turn causes a friendly argument between the two about what can and cannot be said in front of guests. It is clear that Marwan is keen to engage us in further conversation but he and his mother see to the needs of our stomachs first. As he is taking our order Marwan realizes that I am the same individual that wrote to him on Facebook about the potential of his participation in my research. He apologizes for not being in contact; he had been extremely busy at the time and eventually forgot that I had written to him. He says he would have no problem answering any questions I may have if I were to re-send the interview. At this point I mention that I happened to have a few hard copies of the questions I sent to him with me. He takes one copy with him and says that while we are eating he will have a look and try to answer as many questions as possible.

Kevin and I begin our meal by discussing varying job salaries and people who make considerably more than he does but still complain that they are underpaid. Towards the end of dinner Kevin and I move our conversation to a pirate themed party we had planned to throw but until now had not had the time to execute. By this point Marwan's mother had gone home for the evening and Marwan was busy on the computer until he heard us discussing the punishment for those who did not show up to the party in costume. This prompted him to tell me about his collection of swords from various parts of the world and offer them as costume not-so-props.

When he finally sits he is immediately at ease and I notice Kevin has taken both his mediator and frame switching hats off. He is no longer eager to ensure equal representation of all of the places from which he hails. We are three plurals engaged in conversation; there is little to misunderstand. Marwan's outlook is simple: all one needs to do is meet every situation with a positive attitude and it changes everything. A different person becomes a unique person and all the negative stereotypes are replaced by a genuine curiosity for what the person is about. Kevin tells a story about instances in which he feels it is easier to claim he is American so as to bypass the myriad of questions and mockery concerning his lack of Arabic. He is taking a class which is supposed to be taught in English but as with many Arabic teachers it is not the case completely. His tendency in such cases is to insist he speaks no Arabic in order to force the requirements of the class to be fulfilled. When he arrives late because of work his teacher asks him numerous times if he speaks Arabic because he has an Arabic name. To emphasize his point he even asks the definitions of the Arabic words thrown in during the interrogation.

To counter this, Marwan tells a story of being in class in Spain and being asked about his origins because of his name and he enthusiastically gave his classmates a detailed explanation. He says that many just plain do not know about the perceived other and that is what creates fear. If he were to come in to the same situation without taking the time to explain or with a tone that can be perceived as negative, the stereotype of the terrorist (for example) persists. Instead, he continues, you create this desire to know more and understand and instead of being different (used here as a negative term) you become unique and appreciated for being so. He goes on to give an example which applies his idea to the Egyptian social space: an Egyptian man makes a comment to the effect of

“Hey Flamenco!” or something similar. Marwan would take this comment and carry on with the joke, thus turning the attempt at an insult on its head and diffusing the situation (if that were the case) or in the case of genuine friendliness, make a new friend through the resulting banter.

During the pause between dinner and dessert Marwan is busy working on his computer and is able to show us an advertisement that was created for a book and shot in their restaurant. The point of the advertisement was double entendres and linguistic errors in Arabic, as demonstrated by a person on a date who is worried that their Arabic is not good enough to carry the date through to its conclusion. Ultimately, the man discovers his date also speaks English and the advertisement comes to a close.

The conversation between Kevin and myself (Marwan is busy on the computer again) turns to television shows we watched as children and we find ourselves explaining various shows to Kevin who is distracted by key phrases in our conversation. Kevin mentions a mutual friend of ours whom he misses and we begin a trek through memories of the previous year. Marwan eventually re-joins us and he begins to ask me about my background and why I came to Cairo. By this point it is nearing midnight and Marwan puts the big screen television on so as to watch the finale of *Alias*. What can be gathered from this is the ease with which Marwan incorporates new faces into his life.

While both Kevin and Marwan address the issues of difference between themselves and Egyptians with as positive an attitude as possible, they each have different approaches. Marwan supplements his positivity with jokes so as to make the situation more lighthearted and to show individuals whom he meets that difference is just that; it is neither positive nor negative. In Kevin’s story about learning Arabic, on the

other hand, it is as if he is forcing individuals to deal with the other part of his heritage in order to bring about an awareness of difference. What is especially important about this encounter is that it highlights commonalities as the stepping stone to creating a sense of community and that theoretically it can be achieved regardless of differences. Another thing I would like to highlight is the informality of the setting; while Kevin is aware of my research and goals, the situation maintains a feeling of openness and freedom in terms of speech. This denotes a level of comfort which may not be allowed to all individuals with whom they come into contact. Kevin made it clear that a major reason for this besides being one of his friends was my background as a plural individual. Kevin's tendencies towards cultural frame switching mean that he finds ways to relate to most of the people he meets, be it through cultural ties, knowing something about a country they are associated with or being curious to learn about where they come from. Marwan has proven himself to be similar through interactions such as the one above, but his manner is far more outgoing than Kevin's.

While it becomes clear that Kevin and Marwan consider themselves part of a community of plurals and actively seek other individuals with similar backgrounds, others I have interviewed do not see themselves as part of a wider community of plurals. Fouad addresses himself based upon the pieces of information he has given me, but does not think that these things link him to a community of halfies. He has no criteria for who he considers to be like him or not like him; he likes to address people based upon the characteristics of an individual's personality which in itself can be said to be a very Western approach. As I stated in Chapter 1, Mary, Riad and Amira have through their experiences with Egyptians felt alienated and they have come to realize they feel more

affiliated with other elements of their background. Mai has expressed feelings of belonging to both and neither at the same time. Such experiences and reflections about the self affect how individuals relate to others and change the criteria for doing so. Like Mai and Fouad imply, it is better to relate to individuals based upon points of character rather than background, social and state reinforced labels.

Conclusion

Virtual communities can act as a support for transnational individuals in that a sense of community is maintained without the attachment to geographical locations. Not all individuals however become part of online communities. Many individuals do not see their positions (however they may define them) as criteria for connecting with others or simply do not consider themselves part of a community. Furthermore, individuals who participate in online communities find commonalities with individuals in such things as personality traits, hobbies, likes and dislikes which can further remove the link to geography. The development of virtual communities is beneficial but cannot completely remove one from their geographical ties. An emphasis is placed on the need for feedback to function as a social human being. At the same time I argued Andersons arguments allowed for communities to be uprooted and become virtual through simultaneity. Hybrid space may also become virtual.

By outlining the background to Facebook I demonstrate how and why it had grown in popularity and show how the structures developed by its creators allow individuals to feel more at ease with sharing information. What I also show is how social individuals who become part of online chat rooms and groups are also more predisposed

to forming bonds which are more flexible and in some cases superficial. Groups such as “Half Egyptian, Half Something Else” however, use geography as a starting point in order to create bonds which move beyond territoriality. They fall short however, because they ground their major definitions in geographical associations. What is also demonstrated is how the virtual space is shaped and used by individuals as one may with 'real' space but with more freedom of expression. Collective experience, in this instance however, does not seem to be linked to collective memory. While many people follow suit in their daily lives, using personal characteristics to relate to people instead of background, there are still those who seek out individuals of a similar background in order to form a community that is tangible. The time I spent with Marwan and Kevin is used to contrast 'real' space and virtual space and demonstrate how Kevin and Marwan engage others in an attempt to dispel myths and bring down stereotypes both abroad and in Egypt.

Conclusions

The goal of this thesis was to address how Plural Egyptians understand the meaning of being plural when living in Egypt. I was also seeking to examine how, if possible, individuals created comfortable spaces for themselves while in Egypt. What has been expressed throughout the stories told by various participants is that parentage, residence and nationality crosscut to affect different aspects of being plural Egyptian. They do so in varying ways relative to the specific situations they find themselves in. The initial research questions are restated as follows:

- ❖ How do half Egyptians identify themselves socially, nationally and internationally?
- ❖ How is being “Egyptian” or being “half Egyptian” defined by these individuals and others around them?
- ❖ How are the boundaries between Egyptianness and non-Egyptianness defined with regard to practices, norms and values?
- ❖ To what extent does nationality and varying cultural experiences acquired (having been raised abroad) play a role in how those labeled half Egyptians approach being in Egypt and the nature of their interactions in Egypt and ideas about their subjectivities?
- ❖ Do they ultimately feel able to negotiate the multiple backgrounds of cultural knowledge that constitute them as persons?

Embodiment and Plurality

One's background is embodied and thus complicated. It becomes more complicated when there are multiple backgrounds and points of origin in play. The embodiment of one's background means that with every action, interaction and habit, one is performing his/her origins, regardless of what they are. The self and subject are how one can address the multiple and blended facets of identity and I tried to use Foucault's (Gutman et al. 1988) theory to show such. Both Hermans (2008) and Hall (1996) address identity and the self from points of division and association. Being plural and

representing a partial 'Other' or unknown may play a role in being accepted or rejected as a part of Egyptian society. The argument is supported by Technologies of self (Gutman et al. 1988) because the self is understood and fashioned as the subject to be regulated and categorized. What is also brought to light are the varying criteria for self definition in that certain elements of one's back ground are more important than others.

Where feelings of marginalization exist they are very strong and run along the lines of gender, class, appearance, and nationality. For Mary, her feelings of marginalization were not only tied to her gender and appearance, but also the fact that her mother is Egyptian which she claims means she is not socially considered Egyptian. These feelings do not, however, prevent her from feeling comfortable in Cairo. They also do not stop her from being an open and frank individual. Her account is also an example of an identity in constant flux which is what Hall (1996) argues to be true of all identity. Amira's account is more an example of how one can be taught Egyptianness from abroad, only to discover it does not fall in line with the changing processes of Egyptianness in Egypt. She came to Egypt and discovered a country far more liberal than the imagery handed down to her by her father. Although she tried to adjust to its differences she ultimately felt that as a person she was more Austrian than Egyptian. Mai's feelings of marginalization are class, gender and family related. Being known as the foreigner in her family, Mai feels that she will never be able to shake off some of the stereotypes associated with such sensibilities. Her family foregrounds her gender, who also assume that because she has lived overseas she must do socially unacceptable things. Mai also talks about feeling as if she belongs, but at the same time not belonging, because according to her, one either belongs or does not. Mai's issues of class seem to be derived

from her experiences in Cairo with people that she meets. Her account leaves the reader with a sense of ambivalence as she asks "What is my place?".

Kevin's account presents itself as more rounded and exemplifies how identity is not only a continuous change but also a continuous search. He moves from feeling no connection to his Arab background to embracing it. He is also someone who seems to truly exist in liminal space being able to move among American, Egyptian and Irish societies and cultures . Rather than displaying extreme nationalism, Kevin takes solace in the possible support that comes from having a nationality. That being said he seems to separate culture from its geographical associations. Riad represents choosing to be marginalized. He has found it easier to exist in the category which is designated for foreigners and feels that even if he lived abroad he would remain in that category.

The Egyptian Constitution details how the relationship between the state, nation, society and the individual unfolds and how they connect to the formation of the ideal citizen. Values and morals are used as part of the social criteria for determining Egyptianness as opposed to foreignness. More specifically, the focus falls upon religion, its relationship to the state and its influence on the role of women (which does not fall in line with traditional stereotypes imagined by the West) as gender is also a category used in determining citizenship. Religion is deployed as an index for producing the dichotomy between the East and West. The West represents the threatening Other and becomes a rallying point for anti-foreignism. Social norm regulating the role of women infiltrate the function of the government through its employees as demonstrated by Bibars and supported by examples from Abu Lughod.

Examination of the Egyptian Nationality Law of 1975 shows that the legal definition of who was Egyptian at one point has been a matter of residence and birthplace. The law however, also traces nationality through the father which reflect what is still a social reality. Marriage and the decision to marry, while being a private matter, are made public because they involve the production of future Egyptians. The Egyptian Nationality Law of 2004 allowed women to confer citizenship to their children adding one million people to the pool of citizens. This law was drafted with the help of a German organization working with the Egyptian government in hopes of ameliorating discrimination against women, which was cited as a major obstruction to the further development of the country. What is also important to note is the relationship between receiving aid and the changes made in law and government policy. The documentary produced by the New Woman's Foundation revealed how many women still face various problems in applying for citizenship for their children. These issues are also class based. One of the problems reported was the addition of fees to the application that families could not afford.

State and society rely on boundaries to maintain cohesion and these boundaries need to be reinforced by Egyptians as social members. Transnationals and plurals find themselves reliant on crossing and existing between boundaries. This is not the case for all plural Egyptians as exemplified by the experiences of Walid who actually has difficulties leaving the country. Walid has experienced difficulties within Egypt because of his nationality. Plural Egyptians who do not have mobility issues do not experience the economical problems of their counterparts born in Egypt; their issues are mostly socially based. Individuals attitudes towards nationality vary according to their experiences both

abroad and in Egypt. They vary from a lack of real attachment to nationality to nationality being removed from geography, and being something that one experiences through people and a sense of home which is similar to the sentiments of diasporic people.

Egyptianness has proven to be both nuanced and vague. The ideas behind it are shaped by various state agents and funneled through society to the individual, yet neither is ever a complete nor an uncontested process. Modes of dress serve as an initial method of determining whether an individual either belongs (is Egyptian) or does not (is foreign). Individuals interviewed indicate that while the definition of being foreign is fairly clear cut, Egyptianness seems to be determined through negative reinforcement of non - Egyptian behaviour. When asked what it means to be Egyptian, it is made clear that there are no middle grounds. Individuals' experiences revert to the major themes of gender and class with appearance and language as supplemental factors. Individuals are socialized to regulate their own behaviour through social feedback. Various state institutions (like education and media) as well as family members, friends, and peers all attempt to produce social images and norms that regulate the performances of Egyptianness. This production happens through embodiment and habitus (Bourdieu 1980) as social and cultural meanings are performed and understood through repeated actions. In this sense the body is also a tool of social production and reinforcement. Egyptianness is learned through family and friends; for plural Egyptians this is complicated by the idea of memory. Egyptian parents who have spent years even decades out of Egypt carry two Egypts, one they remember, the other corresponds to present day Egypt, and both are imparted to their children. Learning and teaching Egyptianness is

also gendered. While men did not feel they experienced being taught Egyptianness, a few women experienced delayed parenting in that their parents would try to set restrictions based on Egyptian social values (e.g. instilling curfews and prohibiting alcohol) during adolescence. These gendered experiences extend to social interactions outside of the family. This experience, however is not a universal as demonstrated by the experiences of Fara.

Ideas of class are examined through the concept of *Baladiness* and its link to ideas of authenticity. *Baladiness* is linked to being working class as is the idea of the authentic Egyptian. This is in turn linked to national imagery which in some cases has depicted the Egyptian nation as a peasant woman. The connection here is to acceptable modes of dress for women, which provides an explanation for some experiences women may have on the streets of Cairo. What is also briefly touched upon is the importance of language in the understanding of class and criteria of being Egyptian. Personal accounts reveal that in some instances regardless of gender, that which designates one a foreigner is still not clearly defined. In other cases individuals are able to determine what Egyptianness is through their interactions with Egyptians and the subsequent understanding of what they are not. These understandings are divided along the lines of gender and are linked to the aforementioned East/West dichotomy. The major focus of accounts are friendships and romance which place greater emphasis on gender.

The role of various types of community is examined as well as the links required to establish community. Virtual communities are introduced as a major way that plural individuals connect across geographical space. They are described as sites of loosely associated social groups which feed into current trends of forming more superficial,

flexible and unemotional relationships. On the other hand these groups are conducive to the lifestyles of transnationals and plural Egyptians. They also demonstrate an extension of the ideas explained in Andersons 'Imagined Community' (1983). Following the development of Facebook shows how easily one can become involved in a virtual world but also demonstrates the various structures in place which make Facebook resemble the 'real world' and allows individuals to feel at ease while disclosing information as members of online groups. What is important to note about Facebook is the fact that individuals are not allowed to fabricate other 'identities' which in essence forces individuals to be honest online. Many Facebook groups have been started specifically geared towards individuals who are half Egyptian (I use the term half because it is the term used in the titles of these various groups). I examine in detail the Facebook group "Half Egyptian, Half Something else" because it is one of the most popular facebook groups geared towards half Egyptians. Analysis of online fora discussions showed that individuals are very vocal about celebrating their plurality as well as quick to name the disadvantages. The boundaries that are drawn regarding who is allowed membership run along the lines of parentage and geography. A co-founder of the group specifically states that only half Egyptians are allowed to join the group. Individuals admit to not experiencing a connection to a specific country. This combined with a feeling that social rules do not necessarily apply to them leads to a sense of accepting the position of marginality as a space of liberation.

I used theories of identity, biculturalism and dialogical self to construct a more rounded image of how identity needs to be addressed in order to understand and

incorporate plural individuals into the social system. Individuals demonstrated through their unique modes of embodying identity that they are a meld of their various backgrounds. These melds however are not measured evenly, with some cultural influences being stronger than others. During social interactions embodiments are performed (as explained by Csordas 1994 and Ingold 2000) and the result is often a reaction that indicates these performances are divided by gender, religion and class along with appearance. There do seem to be contradictions between behaviour and self identification but this can be explained in part through how biculturalism frames the mind of an individual and how multifaceted Identity is. This is only an explanation for plural behaviour and does not completely address non-plural behaviour. These contradictions placed in the context of society lead one to the conclusion that individuals may hold themselves to a specific standard and other plurals to another. This is demonstrated through expressing one opinion or belief in regards to the self and another speculating the effects of the same idea on another.

Some individuals did have issues relating to their personal self identification but these issues were in many cases exacerbated by their time, experiences and encounters in Egypt. Other individuals did not have issues of identity but rather felt uncomfortable being in Egypt. The majority of individuals were comfortable in their self formed milieus and some even sought to meet others and forge communities. Community itself, be it virtual or physical is not a major force in the lives of individuals who are able to adjust to environments and develop comfortable spaces to their own specifications.

As vague as the space designated Egyptian is, it is clear it has a limit and a boundary marking its presumed beginnings and ends and those who belong and others

who do not. This explains why plural Egyptians are categorized as either members or non-members. The boundaries of Egyptianness and foreignness are rigid, but not because of gender, class, and race distinctions. It is because there are multiple overlaps between cultural ideals both within and outside of Egypt which are forced into a singularity and the production of a unitary and regulated mode of conduct. 'Egyptianness' becomes homogenized as does 'foreignness' which contributes to the perception that a middle ground is not possible. "Where are you from" as I attempted to address in the first chapter is a mode of expressing something subjective and is used by people to fashion their existence. The use of rigid labels has been proven to lead to generalizations. These ideas feed into the legal definition of Egyptianness which is what translates into nationality. Plural Egyptians outside of Egypt have in many cases learned a different 'type' of Egyptianness other than that which Egyptians residing in Egypt may have learned. This contributes to the problem of embodying and performing plurality.

Mai's impressions sum up the predicament of being half Egyptian while in Egypt: one has a sense of belonging but at the same not belonging which cannot be. One either is or is not. This emphasis on singularity that is reflected in the rigidity of social boundaries is something which has arisen naturally during the course of research but has not been explored beyond being engrained in Egyptian socio-cultural history. Conclusions can also be drawn from other things she had said during her interview: socially people should be judged or assessed based upon character and merit rather than nationality or perceived nationality. While this study concerns experiences in Egypt specifically it does not mean that these experiences are limited to Egypt. Interviewees agree that the social structure will change slowly. The change in nationality law could be

seen as the beginning of such a change. There is a need to move away from being the 'trend to blend' (to use Kraidy's words) manner in which plurality is perceived (e.g. in Egyptian magazines). Individuals with plural backgrounds need the uniqueness of their situation recognized as part of the process of acknowledging the complexities of identity. Ultimately what is learned from the research is that addressing and dealing with individuals from a position which assumes solid borders causes more misalignment and miscategorization based on misunderstanding.

This thesis is about individual, group, social, national, and world boundaries and demonstrating that while these boundaries are perceived as segmented and rigid they should be negotiated by larger social and state structures as connections that identify a continuous stream which includes the areas where these boundaries overlap. Individuals negotiate these boundaries on a daily basis, but they may not be aware of doing so.

Contributions made by the Thesis

One of the purposes of this research was to build upon previous research and attempt to amalgamate how the experiences of plural Egyptians are interpreted. It offers a different perspective with regards to plural Egyptians interacting with individuals in Egypt and draws upon how these experiences are informed by being raised abroad. This piece of research is more focused on individual stories as an avenue for greater understanding of the half Egyptian experience in Egypt. What could be useful for future research would be exploring the experiences of half Egyptians in Egypt and Egyptians outside of Egypt for the purposes of comparison. An in depth study from the perspective of Egyptians regarding their understandings and ideas of what it means to be half

Egyptian along with perceptions of foreignness would complement my research as well as further research into the social and political boundaries of Egyptianness, why and how spaces of liminality have been eliminated or designated 'undesirable'. In particular the specific role the state plays managing the populace to create and maintain these rigid boundaries and the specific methods of coercion used would be beneficial to future studies.

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