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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**Trickle Down This Effect: Negotiations of
Culture, Care, and Freedom in Contemporary
Cairo International Schools**

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Egyptology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

In Sociology - Anthropology

By **Anne Elizabeth Caldwell**

Under the supervision of **Dr. Sylvain Perdigon**

May/2012

DEDICATION

For Nathan Wadsworth True and the return which he made possible

Also, for the courageous spirits I am privileged to call friends and who left what was familiar in pursuit of life: Mohamed Abou el Soud, Sydney Winston Barnes, Cheyenne Denison, Anuja Ghimire, Shelly Gomez, Shafika Khayatt, Emily Layton, Matthew Powell Lester, Ran Lu, Maya Madkour, Nathanael Mannone, Dave Mignona, Ehsan Nourbakhsh, Abraham Olguin, Idua Olunwa, Kajal Parek, Julia Ribeiro, Kathleen Riffe, Hillery Roach, Jovita Rosemarie, Samantha Sallee, Ramy Medhat Tannious, and Josiah Edward Williams

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I could not have embarked on such a journey without the unconditional love and support of my family: Maj. Gerald Wayne Caldwell, Rebecca Lynn Caldwell, Matthew David Caldwell, and Mark Robert Caldwell.

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to analyze the contradictions and practices of a neoliberal ethical project among a privileged class in contemporary Cairo. The growing presence and availability of international schools in Cairo has reconfigured particular aspects of culture, care, and freedom for elite subjects over the past forty years. The main research question is: how are globalized notions of well being, self-realization, and personal fulfillment transmitted through the work of neoliberal discourse and staff at international schools in Cairo. It has been identified in this thesis that certain forms of care and responsibility are tightly bound and shaped by a neoliberal project that emphasizes freedom and entrepreneurship. As these forms of self-fashioning and self-making are globally circulated through the work of international schools in Cairo, they further convolute meanings of “the good life” and striving toward its end which can often result in particular forms of suffering and shifting imaginations of relating to one’s self. This paper has reviewed literature on the subject and accumulated a more thorough understanding from several interviews with teachers and counselors at international schools in Cairo as well as from surveying students at an international university in Cairo to show the ways in which privilege can too disenfranchise much like failed neoliberal policies in contemporary society.

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I. Introduction

Introduction and Background

What I have observed and learned, as ways of surviving and thriving in Cairo, has directly impacted my research interests. In the twenty two months I have lived in Cairo, I have had the privilege to live in several neighborhoods including Weset Balad (downtown), Garden City, Dokki, Zamalek, Maadi Degla, and Tagamo el Khames (The Fifth Settlement; also known as New Cairo). It is usually in transit, when I am leaving, entering, or in between these spaces that a particular project of “development,” its failures and its so called progressions, becomes most conspicuous. These spaces represent inventions, constructions, and demolitions of an important social problem facing our world today: defining and living “the good life.”

Colorful foliage and extravagant villas line the Ring Road with billboards marketing a new way to live in New Cairo, miles away from the city center. A billboard off the Ring Road advertising for a residential community named La Réve reads: “Where reality is a dream.” A Katamaya residential community advertisement reads: “Real life, real values, real estate.” Another one says: “Where life is more complete.” These sentiments express a certain kind of longing toward human fulfillment that a particular form of privilege satisfies. The lavish homes, modern shopping malls, and foreign private schools in New Cairo indicate an elite lifestyle that challenges other ways of living in the urban metropolis of Cairo today. As my research demonstrates, international schools in Cairo provide an interesting site of analysis to study this material idea of

fulfillment afforded to a particular class of Egyptians, and how it seeks to reorganize aspirations and relations of care grounded in a late liberal governance of freedom.

Over the past thirty years, a globalized shift has remarkably occurred in conjunction with certain neoliberal economic reforms: the value of freedom has been rearranged to emphasize choices of self-realization and self-responsibility in terms of caring for oneself and achieving a desired state of well being. One example of the visibility of this process is seen in Egyptian bookstores that have “self help” sections. Another example of this process of self-transformation can be seen in the rise of counseling in Egypt. Particular elite subjects in Cairo have resources available to cope with life’s struggles while improving themselves in a self-responsible way. In what follows, I aim to highlight how the reconfiguration of freedom within a capitalist trajectory in Cairo creates subjects who find themselves caught between competing ethical projects of self-improvement and “the good life.” Furthermore, by examining and analyzing privileged individuals and their discourse, I argue that privilege itself, the undeniable economic advantage of certain individuals and places, is an important research site in order to better understand how experiments of relating to the self and social suffering are enacted by an ethical project of neoliberalism. The neoliberal project has been well studied when it comes to disenfranchised and marginalized classes. Privileged classes and the way they are affected by neoliberalism is almost always overlooked and taken for granted.

This project is an institutional ethnographic study of services and discourses of international institutions of education in contemporary Cairo. Using ethnographic fieldwork, discursive analysis, and survey research techniques, I investigate whether the

transmission of globalized notions of well being, life fulfillment, and self responsibility has affected a regime of privilege in Cairo. Through examination of the discourse of private international schools in Cairo, interviews with teachers and counselors working at international schools, and surveying students attending an international university in Cairo, I highlight how privilege uniquely produces contested cultural ideas, values, and practices in Cairo. The privileged social classes in Cairo that my research considers, both Egyptian nationals and foreign expatriates working in Cairo, are usually viewed as having access to advantages materially and ethically. At the same time, I demonstrate how privileged individuals living in Cairo are disadvantaged to a certain extent as they orient their life around an unfixed globalized idea of “the good life.”

My methodological approach formally reflects three interconnected levels. I gathered evidence pertaining to (1.) globalized notions of well being, life fulfillment, and self responsibility as transmitted through the institutional discourse of international schools, (2.) the discourse that animates teachers and counselors in their work of providing care in contemporary Cairo, and (3.) perceptions and attitudes of upper class Egyptian university students about these globalized notions and how they impact the ways in which they relate to and care for themselves. A large majority of the students surveyed attended international schools in Cairo which is why they interest me.

During the months of December 2011 through March 2012, I collected and analyzed public archival material generated by international schools in Cairo including their mission statements, marketing of counseling services, and public information distributed to parents and/or students. I formally interviewed six teachers and counselors who currently work at international schools in Cairo in order to explore how their

practices of care for students, as well as their perceptions of Egyptian culture, are impacted by neoliberal discourse and the project of “becoming one’s self.” Finally, I designed and distributed an English survey to 115 university students at The American University in Cairo inquiring about students’ attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge toward indicators of well being, life fulfillment, and caring for and relating to one’s own distress.

Egypt’s Neoliberal Historical and Social Narrative

Egypt’s unique geographical location and historical context has contributed to the country’s intercultural exchanges of knowledge for over four thousand years. Though statistics reveal that most of the country’s population is comprised of native Egyptians, tourists and foreign residents add significantly to Egypt’s diversity (Amer 2011). Egypt is ranked as the 15th most populous country in the world, with a total population of roughly 82 million (CIA, 2011).

International actors and local allies have worked to ensure that Egypt remain deeply embedded in the global capitalist system through a variety of mechanisms that have significantly reshaped Egyptian society, particularly over the last four decades. The commencement of neoliberalism in Egypt is associated with a series of policy measures known as *infatih* (opening) that were launched in the 1970s under President Anwar Sadat and accelerated under Mubarak after Sadat’s assassination (Hanieh 2011, Maher 2011, Singerman 2009). When neoliberal practices made their way to Egypt, global economic authorities considered the decade of the 1990s to be a remarkably successful time period

that evinced the soundness of neoliberal principles in Egypt¹. One of the most visible examples of this “free market” economic growth was the country’s rapidly expanding capital city of Cairo. The land area of Cairo seemed to double, and the development around Greater Cairo represented one of the largest real estate explosions Egypt had ever seen (Mitchell 2002). What slipped into the shadows of this “official” discourse was the internal social crisis this economic project brought about in Egypt including increasing rates of poverty, the growth of urban slums, and the disenfranchisement of the majority, all of which is still vastly prevalent today² and has served as a background for Egypt’s contemporary revolutionary context. Even still, economic practices and spaces of neoliberalism continue to manifest and develop in Cairo despite visible socioeconomic disparities of the project.

In Egypt like elsewhere, this economic project brought about a new way of imagining life for the upper class. Developers of New Cairo marketed exorbitant villas to Egyptian expatriate workers saving for their futures and sending home their earnings from the Gulf region (Mitchell 2002),³ while the wealth of the country remained in the concentrated hands of a few in the private sector. For the upper class, the messages of unfettered capital and neoliberalism in Egypt allowed for a subtle break from inherited ways of life by promoting the fantasy of an individually created life, outside of the

¹ It is reported by the IMF and World Bank that during this time Egypt’s inflation rate dropped below five percent, the budget deficit was reduced to less than three percent, the economy grew at more than five percent a year, revitalized private capitalism accounted for two-thirds of domestic investment, and the Egyptian pound was pegged to the U.S dollar “supported by hard currency reserves of more than \$18 billion” (Mitchell 2002:272).

² Current statistics show an increase in poverty with 40% of Egyptians living on less than two dollars per day, 90% youth are unemployed, and 1/3 of the Egyptian population is illiterate (see Hanieh 2011).

³ The enthusiasm and dream of private home ownership was matched by the state when, for example, The Ministry of Defense Military contractors also began building apartments for the officer class in order to create a new suburbia around New Cairo (Mitchell 2002). “The ‘free market’ program in Egypt was better seen as a multilayered political readjustment of rents, subsidies, and the control of resources” (Mitchell 2002:277).

crowded urban center of Cairo. Part of what I am interested in exploring with my research is to what extent the reconfiguration of subjects as entrepreneurs, economically and ethically, who are responsible for shaping their own lives, has been passed down to Egyptian elite youth.

Tensions in the Available Narratives of Neoliberalism

In this respect, Egypt illustrates the duality of neoliberalism as entailing both free market fiscal policies and a new social imagination. The historical narrative of what is referred to as neoliberalism, late liberalism, or advanced liberalism is entangled with tensions of geopolitical power and modes of thinking about the human beings who are subject to this power. There is little disagreement, however, about the origins of neoliberalism as an economic project in the wake of WWII, and its gradual expansion from the 1970s onward, in particular through economic reforms and structural adjustment programs advocated and employed by global actors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the United States government as conditions through which a nation and its' collective well being could be measured through monetary and fiscal balances (see Mitchell 2002, Harvey 2007)⁴. As early as the 1960s and 1970s, economic theorists began to emphasize the growth of economics in relation to information, communications, and the transfer of knowledge and how this could impact every aspect of economic life (see Bowman in Cosin 1972). Investment in humans

⁴ However, it has failed as a global economic project, evidenced by the increasing disparity between the wealthy and the poor, the proliferation of social inequality and worsening living conditions, and the exploitation of many. Against the global economic crisis of today, even the IMF, World Bank, and Western geopolitical powers do not dismiss these facts.

(human capital) was a revolutionary thought for economic theory and the context of education as a relevant site for the structuring of human capital to take place became a popular subject among economic theorists during this time (ibid). In theory, late liberal thought proposes that human well being can best be advanced by “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2007:2). What surfaces between the phrasings of such articulated values, is that neoliberalism is also a full-fledged moral project of human flourishing, personal fulfillment, and educating individuals to take individual responsibility for all dimensions of their life.

Neoliberalism as a moral project appears to promote desirable ethical goods such as individual freedom, personal fulfillment, and a right to “become yourself.” Recently, however, scholars have begun to critically engage these seemingly self-evident values which ever so casually appear in the social worlds we inhabit today. The tensions that arise from a moral project of neoliberalism and a reconfiguration of freedom pose new alternatives to a traditional, collective way of life and emphasize individual self-creation. As I have experienced in Egypt, the ethical project of late liberalism that emphasizes autonomy and self-creation also challenges and competes with other ethical projects that emphasize the importance of religion, family, and a commitment to the greatness of the nation in guiding daily life.

“Becoming oneself” is a difficult endeavor, located at the intersection of dimensions that can possibly end in “failure”: failure to please God, failure of disappointing one’s family, and failure to “create one’s self.” This type of suffering is best exemplified in the solutions offered by popular psychology: overcoming your

anxiety, stress, depression, and so on. Under the ethical project of late liberalism, whatever one's personal struggle may be, it can and should be remedied so as not to get in the way of achieving "the good life." "Self help" books in modern Egyptian bookstores are themselves symptomatic of this way of responsibly helping one's self. Autonomy is shaped and reinforced in these examples. One dilemma facing the project of neoliberalism is how "the trickle down" effect has failed to equally distribute wealth. However, how do values and practices of autonomously caring for one's suffering trickle down from the most advantaged classes to the most marginalized? It is outside the scope of my current research project to study this question in more depth, but the attendant problematic is significant: if privileged classes serve as sites of experimentation in circulating how we come to relate to ourselves and our suffering, how does this new sense of responsibility (shifted away from the state and onto the individual) possibly trickle down to the point where the most disenfranchised individuals and communities must help themselves while the privileged do the same? Questions about the sphere of neoliberalism's ethical influence should be of social concern, and all the more so for how it shrewdly alters the way we relate to and care for ourselves.

As liberal subjects fashion themselves to become themselves, so they also fashion the social worlds they populate. In my comparative ethnographic study of the negotiations of culture, care, and freedom in contemporary Cairo international schools, I offer new and original anthropological and social research about the ethical project of neoliberalism which continues to radically, even if subtly, shape the fabric of social life. As such, I address larger questions surrounding the governmentality of freedom in current late liberal ideology and its privileged representations in Cairo.

Literature Review

My project is situated at the intersection of bodies of literature that discuss approaches to neoliberalism, social suffering, and global mental health. In this brief review, I attempt to highlight areas of the literature that pertain to my project, acknowledge scholarly gaps, and locate my research questions within the Egyptian context.

Approaches to Neoliberalism and the Contested Space of Cairo

Anthropology has engaged with the study of neoliberalism and its consequential effects over the past fifteen years.⁵ A recent review by Mathieu Hilgers argues that anthropological approaches to neoliberalism presuppose three things. First, the term “neoliberalism” has no single agreed upon definition, but most anthropologists agree the project has an extreme emphasis on individual responsibility and includes “a promotion of freedom as a means to self-realization that disregards any questioning of the economic and social conditions that make such freedom possible” (Hilgers 2011:352). Second, anthropologists distinguish theoretical neoliberalism from practical neoliberalism, which is “embedded in the categories of perception and practices of social agents and institutions,” and they recognize the many differences in implementation of neoliberal

⁵ From this point forward in the proposal, “neoliberalism” refers to an economic project of fiscal policies and structures while “late liberalism” denotes the moral and ethical project that accompanies neoliberal ideology.

policies (ibid). Third, the anthropologists reviewed by Hilgers seek to explain the production and global spread of what is now called and agreed upon as neoliberal practices and representations (ibid). Taking these shared presuppositions, three forms of anthropological knowledge emerge in which anthropologists have considered neoliberal expansion: neoliberalism as culture, as system, and as governmentality (Hilgers 2011, Ong 2006). These academic claims about how neoliberalism has expanded support the notion of neoliberalism as an economic project and an inseparable moral project of late liberalism. Dimensions of the moral project ensues in various and interesting ways in the internationalized capital of Cairo.

While there is a large amount of literature about defining globalization and its effects, I am only interested in it as a vehicle for transmitting neoliberal discourses and practices. It is difficult to untangle the tenets of neoliberalism with globalization, and nearly impossible to do so in the case of Egypt. The editor and contributing authors of *Cairo Contested* assert:

“In Egypt, processes of globalization are deeply entwined with a neoliberal agenda that has dismantled, diminished, and privatized (in part) the formerly large public sector. While Egypt’s integration into the world economy has not been as extensive as some post-colonial nations [...] the impact of this even limited integration has been profound” (Singerman 2009:4).

“The Egyptian state seeks to remake itself as the ‘Tiger on the Nile,’ a growth engine that will not only sustain Egypt’s regional dominance but also propel it to become a truly global capital, drawing investment for its industry, franchises, services, and new ‘planned’ cities in the desert” (Singerman 2009:3).

Globalization in Cairo “writes itself onto the lives of ordinary people, inflecting them with norms, styles, and discourses that, although generated from afar, soon become almost second nature” (Singerman 2009:4). Singerman goes on to say, however, that neoliberal globalization has not gone unchallenged. “In Cairo as elsewhere in the world,

the city's citizens have not simply aligned themselves with the forces of globalization despite the government's best efforts" (Singerman 2009:4). Opposing reactions to the globalized neoliberal agenda of the Egyptian state, which are viewed as moral and political critiques, can be seen in Egypt's contemporary uprisings and revolutionary landscape. In the chapter by Deboulet in *Cairo Contested*, a spatial approach is used to convey some of the geographically rooted struggles of Cairenes in a "neoliberal generation" and offers a "concrete perspective of the physicality of neoliberal space—tied to specific neighborhoods, state institutions, and 'master' plans" (Deboulet 2009:5). Cairenes are supposed to "produce, consume, and service this new economy but their lives are being reshaped spatially by globalization and neoliberalism in very concrete and often negative ways" (Singerman 2009:12). My project seeks to better understand tensions of this neoliberal project in Cairo at the site of elite educational institutions where global economic dimensions intersect with both late liberal ethical applications, and the beliefs and practices of Cairo's changing, local culture.

Egypt is often described as a developing country with a flawed educational system; however, in recent decades, the growth of private schools and universities are considered signs of stability and progress (Amer 2011). Many authors emphasize the importance of education in the diffusion of neoliberalism, and the discourses and practices of neoliberalism have been at work in schools in capitalist societies since arguably the 1980s (Davies & Bansel 2007; Shore 2008, 2009; Shore & Wright 1999). Like Cairo's Ring Road and Americanized shopping malls, the numerous "private educational institutions that claim Western standards and may even award Western degrees are important signposts of Egypt's new liberal age" (de Koning 2009:45).

The Western knowledge and degrees offered by these new schools make for sought after cultural capital and present crucial assets in the urban labor market [...] the policies and narratives of Egypt's new liberal era emphasize global standards and excellence, to which only a minority of the large urban middle class can aspire. Cosmopolitan capital has become a highly significant marker of social distinction and of the kind of social mobility one can expect. The increasingly dual nature (public and private schools) of the educational system articulates, consolidates, and strengthens processes of segregation in Cairo's professional middle class (ibid).

According to de Koning in her book *Global Dreams*, private schools in Cairo are “a central repository for emotional and financial investments,” and “holds the promise of social mobility, not only in terms of careers and living standard, but also social status” (de Koning 2009:49). In other words, private schools are assumed to produce a certain type of person with knowledge of Western/global culture, the English language, and “should reflect the emphasis on certain values within the family” (de Koning 2009:54). Private schools are key sites in the accruelement of this type of “cosmopolitan capital” and instrumental in demarcating one as part of Cairo's elite or upper-middle class (de Koning 2009). Lacking from the literature on private schools in Cairo is research about the employees of these schools and how this type of cosmopolitan capital is shaped by their work of care. How do they propagate ways of being a liberal, privileged subject, working on him/herself, while at the same time, working to create particular students?

Social Suffering

Literature about social suffering emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century with the purpose of investigating and collapsing conditional factors that are usually divided among separate fields in order to bring into a single space a collection of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the harm that social force can inflict

on human experience (Kleinman 1997). “Social suffering results from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems” (Kleinman 1997:ix). Theories of social suffering remove barriers to better understand how “the forms of human suffering can be at the same time collective and individual [...] local and global” as an experience relevant to both high-income and low-income societies (Kleinman 1997:x). One prominent scholar in this area of research, Veena Das, argues that suffering has a dual character with a capacity to mold human beings into moral members of a society while revealing an ill will inflicted upon individuals in the name of the grand projects of society (Das 1995). This dual character of social suffering supports the claim that suffering is socially produced, takes cultural form, and “suffering of all varieties calls for explanations” (Herzfeld 2001:231). I am interested in investigating how private international schools in Cairo circulate systems of knowledge about suffering and well being and in doing so, produce an elite class of Cairenes who relate differently to themselves and the world around them.

International schools have begun to have such a prominent presence in countries all around the world, championing ideals of education and opportunity, it is nearly impossible to ignore their now prevailing global presence within the project of neoliberalism. In the last forty years, schools have been reconfigured to produce highly individualized, responsabilized subjects who have become “entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives” (Brown 2003:38). At the same time, while individuals may have been seduced by their own perceived freedom as Davies and Bansel argue, institutions have transferred risk from the state to the individual (Davies & Bansel 2007).

This increased responsabilization and transfer of risk from the state to the individual has come with heavy costs for many individuals and nations (Saul 2005). Becoming a “proper” neoliberal subject who takes responsibility for her own survival where only the fittest survive, Davies and Basel posit, is no easy task. (Davies & Basel 2007). In Egypt, “[d]enying the social embeddedness of Cairenes also leads to distorted policies and failed ‘solutions’ to their problems” (Singerman 2009:5).

In my research, I explore how privileged individuals who work at and attend international schools in Cairo perceive and relate to suffering as an autonomous concern, where competing moral projects and cultural forms are repurposed under late liberal ideology. It is true that social suffering by definition is unequally distributed, and those disenfranchised classes are more likely to be the victims of social suffering. At the same time, however, my hypothesis upholds that elite classes are a key site for the study of social suffering, not only because it has been neglected in the literature, but also because it is a site of elaboration of idioms of suffering and a site of educating responses to suffering. Meaning, it is a location where experiments are made regarding teaching new ways of suffering and relating to one’s own pain and that of others in connection to hegemonic projects of society.

Global Mental Health

My research, on some levels, deals with issues of global mental health insofar as self-realization entails idioms of depression, anxiety, stress and ways to relate to one’s self and others under such labels as “depressed,” “anxious,” or “distressed” which have

now taken on a global circulation. Social science methods of studying the globalization of health analyze it from the perspective of local and social contexts. Generally, scholars argue for a model that positions health as an outcome of social, economic, and political processes that has redefined and eroded boundaries separating people, resulting in new forms of social organization and human interactions (Lee 2003). These boundaries of globalization include the spatial, the temporal, and the cognitive. Therefore, many social scientists agree that global health occupies a new kind of political space where world system power relations should provide the context for the study of global health (Janes 2009).

Burawoy and his graduate students developed three axes to help ground the complexities of globalization: global economic and political forces, global connections, and the global imagination (Burawoy 2000). How these axes interact with each other is complex and nonlinear which makes studying local contexts of globalization crucial and also contested (Janes 2009). As Singerman notes in *Cairo Contested*, “While scholars generally agree that globalization diminishes national sovereignty and third world nations have little recourse to set the terms of globalization, people living in neoliberal spaces are doubly disenfranchised, since their national leadership has not only become more externally dependent and externally oriented but they have such weak political representation in that government to begin with” (Singerman 2009:12). What interests me about the neoliberal spaces of Cairo, specifically private schools, is precisely how freedom is reconfigured in ways that shift responsibility onto the liberal subject in a society where responsibility is often a shared, collective value. “Experts” who are often

unfamiliar with Egyptian culture, moreover, paradoxically impose a language of responsibility for one's mental health.

The presence and influence of foreign entities in Egypt's history have greatly shaped local theories of mental illness, psychotherapy, and healing. These concepts have expanded and been transmitted through educational institutions since the French occupation (Amer 2011). For example, education policies influenced by foreign practices of mental health became a central priority during the Ottoman rule under Mohammed Ali from 1805 to 1848. During this time and in the period that followed, several colleges were created including a college of medicine in 1827 offering psychiatric teachings, as well as the earliest notable psychiatric textbook written by an Egyptian in the late 1880's (Abou-Hatab 2004). Other Egyptian mental health trends directly impacted and transmitted through institutions of education since the nineteenth century have included state-sponsored postgraduate studies in Europe, translations of foreign scholastic textbooks into Arabic, and various levels of diplomas offered in neuropsychiatry (Abou-Hatab 2004, Okasha 2004).

Foreign influences paralleled with expanding education initiatives in Egypt brought about significant mental health developments in the twentieth century. There are a number of contentions surrounding psychology and psychiatry in Egypt—one dissension in particular is the identity and role of school versus clinical psychologists (Soueif & Ahmed 2001) and how psychological practice is often conflated with social work or psychiatry (Abou-Hatab 2004). Another contention deeply rooted in Egyptian psychological and psychiatric practices is a “conflict between an allegiance to Western models versus an appreciation of the Egyptian socio-cultural context” (Amer 2011).

Western theories and models for diagnosing and treating mental health concerns have too often been circulated without critical examination of cultural applications (Abou-Hatab 2004, Ahmed 2004), and it is argued that this transmission and dependence on Western epistemology has stifled the emergence of Egyptian-generated culturally relevant psychology (Ahmed 2004, Abou-Hatab 2004). Amer suggests that one “effective catalyst for improving counseling and psychotherapy training in Egypt would be the institution of more rigorous regulations and laws to oversee these professions” (Amer 2011). She is not alone in this notion, as many Arab scholars writing about this discipline and its’ practices in Egypt argue for more regulations and bureaucratic institutions to oversee the discipline’s development in Egypt, more specialization within the discipline, and more strategies targeted toward the public in order to remove stigma and increase understanding of mental health services.

These practices and perceptions of mental health in Egypt are grounded in broader theories of global mental health. Global mental health is considered by medical anthropologists to be first and foremost a question of economic and political welfare (Desjarlais, et. al. 1996). Under the larger anthropological definition of global health as “an area of research and practice that endeavours to link health, broadly conceived as a dynamic state that is an essential resource for life and well being” (Janes 2009), global mental health relates to concerns of the family, community, environmental, and available resources. Current research shows that these factors largely impact poorer nations and communities worldwide. Much like the theoretical backbone of social suffering, my research seeks to bring into one space, new considerations of the treatment and transmission of global mental health categories of well being, suffering, and care in

Cairo. For my project, I inquire as to how the local realities of elite Egyptian students confront methods of globalized notions of mental health as transmitted through teachers and counselors working at international institutions of education. How do they confront other ideas and practices of mental health care in their culture such as those found in relations of kinship and competing versions of the Islamic way of life? How does privilege, a site of elite elaborations, affect relations of care in Cairo?

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework is a reflection of the two disciplines my graduate work embodies—anthropology and sociology. In this section, I engage with the efforts of sociologist Nikolas Rose and anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli to focus on the relatively recent and exciting new field of theoretical inquiry: the critical theory of late liberalism. Though Marx and Foucault are not cited directly, Rose and Povinelli draw upon both of these theorists. My goal is to outline their set of inquiries emphasizing the challenges that suffering and care present to late liberalism and the subject of freedom.

Rose is interested in understanding the political and ethical dilemmas that arise as modern slogans of freedom and individual autonomy spread across regions of the world that are being opened up to “the penetration of free-market economics, anticollectivist cultural politics, and the technologies of consumption” (1996:16). One aspect of the governmentality of freedom which Rose is interested in is how freedom “is to be gained through self-improvement obtained through individual entrepreneurial activity” (Davies & Bansel 2007:252). It is articulated into norms and principles for arranging our

experience of the world and expressed into rationales for practicing relations to ourselves (2004). To govern, one must act upon these forces and employ them in order to shape actions, processes, and outcomes in desired directions. Governing presupposes the freedom of the governed. “To govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and to utilize it” for specific objectives (1999:4).

Rose argues the abstraction of freedom as discipline has created spaces of well-regulated liberty. The public rationale of government is linked to the private question of behaving and conducting ourselves, and he explores how this has been made possible through the trajectory of late liberalism (1996, 2004). Public space is a key value to liberal thought (2004) and in the public domain, the possibility of new inventions of disciplining and manipulating “free individuals” whose transgressions are “now seen as an upset to the order of proper comportment, has been wielded through” late liberal thought (1997:77, 1999). As a “science of the individual,” psychology found a place “within the techniques of rule” as a way to help free individuals cope with their lives (1996:117). However, its position and authority within public and private spheres of contemporary Egyptian culture is most often disputed. It is outside of the scope of my research to heavily focus on psychology. I am only interested in it as a practice and repertoire of notions for the “conduct of conduct,” which is used by teachers and counselors alike to imagine and transmit notions of well being, self-actualization, and care.

Povinelli refers to liberalism as having a “phantom-like nature” (2006:13). As a moving target developed and used to secure power in the contemporary world, liberalism “is located nowhere but in its continual citation as the motivating logic and aspiration of

dispersed and competing social and cultural experiments” (2006:13). This empire of liberalism, according to Povinelli, created global suffering while claiming “to create and foster wealth, happiness, and life, and it claimed a universal origin and end even as it was partial about its values and goals” (2006:18). When colonial regimes absorbed local languages and “life-worlds” in order to secure their universal claims, “the more the tensions and contradictions between its ideal image and its actual practice increased, while suspicion grew that liberalism was an incoherent, ideology-driven system of exploitation” (2006:18). One of these contradictions that Povinelli discusses in *The Empire of Love*, is the moment a liberal subject is said to become sovereign and autonomous:

The liberal subject is said to become sovereign at the moment she projects herself as her own authentic ground. The foundational self is necessarily phantasmagorical for the simple reason that no one can pick herself up by her own bootstraps. The felicity of this foundational event depends on an entire host of conditioning social institutions and relations (Povinelli 2006:194, see also Donzelot 1997).

The fantasy of autonomy and becoming a free, self-governing subject manifests a contradiction at the heart of liberalism. Critical theories of late liberalism such as Rose’s and Povinelli’s, critically engage liberal values of autonomy and individuality which are imposed, almost without question, as desirable means to personal fulfillment and self-realization. How do professional counselors, teachers, and international institutions of education further this contradiction by transmitting notions of well being and self-responsibility through their discourse and labor? I suggest that they constitute a unique site to investigate how these globalized notions manifest locally and ameliorate governmentalities of freedom in contemporary Cairo.

Not only is the elite class an important location to research circulations of a late

liberal project because they are positioned close to these forms of power, but their understanding of suffering is informed by this location within a capitalist system. By deflecting responsibility for well being and suffering onto the elite individual and away from institutional or ideological discursive promises, teachers and counselors in Cairo are ever more bound up in late liberal modes of governance and arguably capitalist production. One simple example of this is the service of psychological counseling—it is not free, by any means, and in fact can be quite costly. Even in the case of international private schools, these costs are bundled into tuition and fees and therefore even if the student or their family never pay directly for the service, they have already paid for its availability through enrollment at a private school. As my research shows and I argue, these services are not limited to psychological services but are rather wrapped up in all facets of making a late liberal subject including achieving one’s potential, notions of well being, and educating a responsible, autonomous self. Further, as I have referred to in my literature review, I assert that this particular site of education utilizes presumed values of freedom to govern Cairo’s upper-middle class in ways that influence their responses to other visible forms of social suffering in their nation and perhaps beyond those borders.

Research Design and Methodology

Methodologically, this research is grounded in standard techniques of data collection for anthropological and sociological research (Babbie 2008, Yon 2003) and involves tracing in a local setting the global circulation of expert knowledge that

produces particular relations (Janes 2009). The following field procedures and activities were used over a period of three months and are reflected in the subsequent chapters:

1. **Chapter Two (Discursive Content Analysis):** I collected and analyzed publically available archival material generated by international schools and universities including their mission statements, materials that outline counseling services and programs, and information packages distributed to parents and/or students. Specifically, I reviewed and analyzed the language published in public brochures in the counseling and administrative offices on campus, on websites, and other marketing materials. I used this language to write my survey as well as to analyze how the forms and definitions of well being, personal fulfillment and achievement, and self-responsibility are reflected and circulated by these institutions of international education.
2. **Chapter Three (Ethnographic Interviews):** International schools at the high school and collegiate level were contacted on the basis of introducing them to my project. I interviewed counselors, teachers, and principals with oversight of these student services from four secondary international schools and one international university. In depth, open-ended interviews focused on various aspects of the counseling services provided, students' well being challenges, language attached to transmitted globalized notions of well being and personal fulfillment at the intersection of the cultural, religious, and familial context in Cairo. Specifically, I (a.) inquired into the counselors' vocational training including his/her counseling philosophy or standard counseling model adhered to as well as their experiences

being a counselor in Cairo, (b.) inquired about the common reasons and methods students are referred to or choose to participate in individual counseling (stress, anxiety, depression, academic struggles, familial conflict, identity struggles, relationship conflict), (c.) assessed common indicators of when concern arises for the counselor or teacher on behalf of the student and when that student is deemed “at risk,” and (d.) evaluated how care is transmitted and how the language of care is deployed by the counselor or teacher. Participants for the ethnographic interviews included: (1.) counselors at secondary international schools and two psychologists employed at international universities who conduct individual counseling sessions with students, (2.) teachers who refer students to counseling services and support at the secondary schools

3. **Chapter Four (Survey Questionnaire)** See Appendix A: The survey instrument was designed to identify university Egyptian students’ perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge toward globalized categories of well being, “self-help,” and individual self-care. I administered the survey to 115 Egyptian university students attempting to obtain a cross-section of students. The survey: (a.) recorded their gender, (b.) religious orientation and personal religiosity, (c.) if they have ever used the counseling services on campus or read a “self-help” book, (d.) inquired about their belief toward categories of well being defined in counseling marketing materials, (e.) inquired about their concern with their stress (f.) inquired about how they alleviate stress, (g.) how they relate to themselves, and (h.) if they would attend particular wellness seminars if offered on campus. Survey participants were over the age of 18.

Contribution to the Academic Disciplines

I believe my project will significantly contribute to ethnographic research in the Middle East for several reasons. First, my master's research will contribute to a better understanding of how globalized transmissions of suffering and care bear upon a lived, cultural reality of elite Egyptian youth in contemporary Cairo. Second, my research will be relevant to future academic debates about the "trickle down effect" of suffering and self-care within a late liberal moral project infused with governmentalities of freedom as transmitted through institutions of international education. Third, my research will more broadly offer insights into global relations that contribute to the current tensions occurring at intersections of knowledge, power, and human fulfillment in revolutionary Egypt.

II. Ethical Exchanges on the Private Education Market

Introduction and Background

Imagine a family of four in France or America has just received a job transfer to Cairo, or Egyptian parents living in New Cairo need to decide which private school to enroll their now school-aged son or daughter. Most likely they would hear some names of schools and turn to the Internet to gather more knowledge. The ability and in fact obligation of the institution to introduce itself to the public in this way, allows for an exchange of knowledge that was unavailable thirty years ago.

This chapter analyzes discourses of international schools in Cairo, as presented on their public websites, where discernments and claims about the situation of contemporary life emerge in tenuous ways. The particular feature of contemporary life I am concerned with here is a display of optimism through discursive promises made by the schools. By examining the discourse through this lense, I show how notions of fulfillment and care are connected to and emerge from the globalized economic policies of free and open markets. In this chapter I draw upon the current critical theorist Lauren Berlant, including the idea that what it means to exist in this form of contemporary life involves attachments that are often cruel. “Optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving” (Berlant 2011:2). How does this ideological space of power motivate behaviors and generate a sense of, “you may never quite get there, but you should try”? The attachment to “the good life” in contemporary

Cairo involves interesting negotiations of culture, care, and freedom through the discursive self-presentation and public information provided by international schools.

It should be noted that it is difficult to write about these texts; they appear self-evident, agreeable, and desirable. Who does not want possibilities and the opportunity to live a fulfilling life? And further, is it not a role of educational institutions to infuse this type of progressive attitude and demonstrate how education can help one actualize their own well being? As a liberal subject, those questions have obvious answers to me that make writing about this language in a way that seeks to highlight the less obvious answers, all the more challenging.

I have selected four schools' websites: Cairo American College, Modern Language Schools of Egypt, the International School of Choueifat in Egypt, and Smart International School of Egypt to analyze in this chapter. In handling these texts concretely, I aim to highlight particular tensions that arise in the language, knots that cannot be untied easily. I examine and demonstrate (1.) how institutional identities are constituted through particular self-presentations of "who they are" and how they fit into a parallel economic discourse, (2.) how this discourse addresses and dialogues with a particular audience of privileged parents and families, (3.) the extent to which a discursive atmosphere of "care" inculcates particular values into the project of "becoming oneself," and (4.) how discourses of the global in this context illicit responsibilized participation and action toward helping places in crisis. In doing so, I aim to show how the market site of the international school is an influential location for these discourses to shape those who work in them and those who are receiving their goods.

Institutional Identities

The ability for institutions, organizations, corporations, and individuals to offer a self-presentation through technological instruments like the Internet is a relatively recent phenomenon. Fifteen years ago it was unconceivable to emit this type of self-presentation through the technological vehicle we now know as the Internet. Since the inception of the Internet, new modes of presenting oneself as an individual and marketing one's product⁶ have evolved. The readily attainable information of the Internet has altered ways in which private international schools in Cairo have to present and promote their institutions to the public. It also means that the schools have to abide by a certain format, or implicit rules, of the genre of web-mediated institutional self-presentation. The result, as we shall see, is that these texts aimed at presenting the unique institutional identity end up sounding all the same.

In Cairo, it is likely that before the induction of mass communication through the Internet, the community garnered knowledge about international schools through face to face contact with friends, family, or in-person visits to the school. The ability of institutions to engender a written discourse easily available to a public of strangers suggests a different kind of institutional portrayal, perhaps most notably in (1.) the school's ability to more thoroughly describe its educational mission, beliefs, and services and (2.) its removed representation of itself, that is, the words "speak for themselves" and eliminate the dialogical nature of a face-to-face encounter. It is difficult to speculate about the individual or group of individuals who took part in writing the content found on

⁶ See Mark Alle Peterson, *Anthropology & Mass Communication: Media and Myth in the New Millennium*, Berghahn Books: 2008.

their websites—perhaps a principal, administrator, or committee of professionals developed these texts for the school. Though some of the web sites do include personal, signed notes from principals, in this section, I am focused on the texts which do not claim authorship and therefore, I am more interested in how discursive self-presentation is used to constitute an institutional identity. Particularly, I am interested in how these distinct identities become nondescript and similar in discourse.

Because international schools in contemporary Cairo are privately managed,⁷ they function like free-market businesses in the sense that families pay to receive a certain kind of product and should dissatisfaction arise, the family can enroll their child in another school. In order to stay in business, these schools are obligated to vie with one another and thus must market themselves in a way that creates a distinct identity for their institution. A concrete example of how the discursive identity of international schools as privatized institutions compete in a particular market of education is exemplified through the International School of Choueifat in Egypt (ISCE), which is owned by SABIS, a global education management organization:

SABIS® is a global education management organization with a 125+ year track record in the operation of Pre-K and K-12 schools. The distinguishing mark of these schools is their implementation of the **SABIS®** Educational System. The first school in what has grown to be the **SABIS®** School Network was the International School of Choueifat, which was founded in 1886 in the village of Choueifat, a suburb of Beirut, Lebanon. Currently, the **SABIS®** School Network consists of schools that operate in the private and public sectors worldwide. These schools educate thousands of students and all implement the **SABIS®** Educational System, although each one of them remains financially independent. With a legacy from the 19th century and a vision for the 21st century, the **SABIS®** Organization will continue to provide top-quality education for a changing world (www.iscegypt-sabis.net).

⁷ The only possible exceptions that I have found in my research so far are the Misr Language Schools. They may receive some funding from the Egyptian government as my interlocutors have mentioned, however this information is unverifiable by academic sources and publicly unavailable to date.

SABIS seeks to distinguish their business of education (a franchise) by drawing upon a particular history, the founding of the school in Beirut in 1886 (but by whom, is left undisclosed) and situating this historical statement next to language such as the “private and public sectors” and “financially independent.” In doing so, SABIS and ISCE present themselves as part of a natural continuum of expanding markets and educational excellence. Smart International School of Egypt (SIS) advertises this point as well, albeit in more billboard-like terms:

Giza, once the burial place for Pharaohs of the past is now a bustling, lively area, home to new residential complexes, resorts, Smart Village, Pyramids heights, multinational companies. To add to this new area, Smart International School is well placed in the Governate of Giza, to offer a clean and healthy setting for a school for the future (www.sis-egypt.com).

Both schools depict their respective institutions spatially and temporally. The economic and geographical relations conditioning their institutional pasts have now rendered a particular present and future possible. Each school frames their appeals with notions of financial independence and comfortable possibilities. As a competitive business within an economic market and a producer of education for an elite class living in Cairo, these schools seek to create consonance between two different but congruous discourses: the economic and the ethical.

Competition in the economic sense propels these schools to present their identities in a way that necessitates and validates their function as an educational institution, masking the competitive economic dimension that in part sustains them. For an international school to self-reveal candidly their market position in hopes of bolstering enrollment or garnering reputational merit would not be nearly as compelling as these statements of mission which attempt to persuade the reader toward certain attachments:

Cairo American College is an international, independent day school dedicated to preparing pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students to succeed in schools and universities of their choice. Our mission is to ensure that each student achieves his or her educational and personal potential in a safe environment. We challenge all students to envision new possibilities, empower them to achieve their aspirations, and inspire them to serve a global community and contribute to a sustainable future (www.cacegypt.org).

ISC - Egypt will be recognized as providers of top quality education to a highly diverse student body. ISC - Egypt will strive to help all students achieve their full potential, prepare them for success in college, equip them with the ability and desire for lifelong learning, and strengthen their civic, ethical, and moral values. ISC - Egypt will maintain high standards of efficiency and accountability throughout their operation (www.iscegypt-sabis.net).

Misr Language School is dedicated to providing all students with an equal opportunity to pursue their education while nurturing all aspects of academic integrity, civility, self-respect, and self-realization (<http://mls-egypt.org>).

At *Smart International School* we aim to develop pupils through the delivery of a relevant balanced international curriculum that allows pupils to develop through an integrated approach, the skills and knowledge required to become independent lifelong learners with an understanding of cultural diversity and positive attitudes to self evaluation becoming responsible citizens with international awareness, compassion, integrity and moral certainty (www.sis-egypt.com).

As demonstrated in these mission statements, institutional identities written with efforts of distinction, in hopes of persuading a potential buyer to select their product, often reflect resemblances and end up sounding the same. Their self-presentations as institutions also promote attachments to potential, opportunities, and the gift of care. The educational institution, seeks to maintain high levels of “accountability” and “efficiency.” Furthermore, they illustrate the force of an encompassing discourse from which it is risky to deviate.

Concretely, the use of the words “possibilities” and “self-realization” in these present tense mission statements denotes how the students’ endeavor of self-fashioning becomes part of the institutions’ identities as particular vehicles of education. In the mission statements of CAC, ISC Egypt, and MLS, dedication is given to all who pass

through the schools' doors. The dedication that each student achieves his or her educational *and* personal potential orients the institution's identity toward mobilizing values of self-responsibility and autonomy. For CAC, students are challenged to envision new possibilities and are empowered to achieve their aspirations. In the MLS mission statement, students have an "equal opportunity to pursue their education" that nurtures autonomous values of the self.

MLS is dedicated to "nurturing all aspects of academic integrity, civility, self-respect, and self-realization." In both cases, the identity of the school, their presentation as a generous institution to be accepted like a recipient of care subtly shifts responsibility to the student. That is, their identity centers on constructing, in an equal and impartial way, a particular type of subject who exists in the world as an accountable, aspiring individual. These specific words offer more approachable means to understanding an entrepreneurial spirit imparted to students. If possibilities abound and the ability to actualize these possibilities for oneself is "nurtured" through the school, the institutions become a network of choices. Further, these ideological identities are transmitted through an optimistic attachment that "becoming oneself" and "reaching one's potential" will result in a life of prosperity and fulfillment.⁸ What makes this facet of the identities of international schools most interesting to my project is precisely the spatial and temporal context in which they are situated: contemporary Cairo. These international schools do not self-present their identities in the same fashion as, for example, an individual on a social media website. They are presenting their identity to a targeted audience, a desired consumer.

⁸ See the concluding section of this chapter for a more thorough discussion of this topic.

Audience and Consumers

Cairo is crowded with international schools. These international schools occupy a particular place on the education market in Egypt's current fragile economy. The intent of this section is to discuss who might be reading the publicly available materials and who might be a consumer of their marketing ends. For the purposes of my project, I am primarily interested in the Egyptian elite class, however, expatriates from all over the world reside in Cairo and more often than not, they send their children to international schools of their choosing. Though the specific demographics of each school vary, international schools are comprised of students from various parts of the world with each school enrolling a number of Egyptians. The audiences reading these websites consist of a specific elite class with the monetary means to pay for this type of education. Their privilege allows them the ability to be selective when choosing where to enroll their child, and an international school must not only represent an identity, but must also actively market their identity to families of the upper and middle class who can afford its costs⁹.

In doing so, many international schools have "philosophy statements" on their websites, adding texture to their "mission." In the case of MLS, their philosophy statement reads:

Education is a growth process that includes the mental, moral, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of the individual. At Misr Language Schools (MLS) each student is seen as a unique individual who possesses certain potential, needs, aspirations and interests. Our purpose is to provide them with opportunities for personal discovery and growth as well as varied experiences

⁹ Of the four schools mentioned in this chapter, only Cairo American College and Smart International School of Egypt have their tuition and fees posted publicly on their websites.

that will enable them to achieve their utmost potential in order to become successful and productive members of society (<http://mls-egypt.org>).

While a certain thread of values is woven into the language of the MLS philosophy, an interesting shift from saying “the student” to “the individual” and “them” occurs. In this discursive shift one can infer that the targeted audience is some type of parental or guardian figure. Both MLS and CAC more directly address their audiences:

In addition, we firmly believe the parents, teachers, students and administrators constitute a partnership that works together towards the empowerment of students in achieving the school’s objectives (<http://mls-egypt.org>).

We collaborate through a partnership of motivated students, exemplary and caring staff, and involved families within a dynamic American educational model, enriched by our multicultural and diverse student body and the school’s unique location in Egypt (www.cacegypt.org).

Both schools use the word “partnership,” mentioning families and parents, the school staff, and students working together toward a desired end. What is distinctive in CAC’s statement is the reference to “a dynamic American educational model” followed by how this Western model is “enriched by” the “multicultural and diverse student body,” as well as the school’s “unique location in Egypt.” This text aims to appeal to expatriate parents as well as Egyptian parents who may value an American educational model and view it as a desired “best product” for their children. Furthermore, this phrasing suggests that CAC embraces matters of diversity, multiculturalism, and the location of the school in Egypt; its phrasing forms another layer of desirability to their offer in hopes that it will appeal to a certain type of parent who may or may not be Egyptian.

By navigating a marketing line of appealing to Egyptian and expatriate parents in this public venue, certain tensions arise in relation to destabilizing values of culture including notions of the family and individuality. Referring back to the mission statements of these schools, they each speak of college or further education as a goal or

end to which they are committed to helping students succeed. Cairo American College is dedicated to preparing students “to succeed in schools and universities of their choice.” ISC Egypt claims to strive to help all students prepare “for success in college.” MLS is “dedicated to providing all students with an equal opportunity to pursue their education.” SIS seeks to develop “the skills and knowledge required to become independent lifelong learners.” The importance of pursuing a formal education or being accepted into a prestigious university bears upon family expectations for elite youth in Cairo. As several of my interlocutors shared, the Egyptian students who attend these international schools are being groomed to be the future leaders of Egypt.

Last updated in August 2008, the Cairo American College (CAC) website states an institutional vision that claims itself as “a world class learning environment that affirms the voice, passions and talents of students.” To “affirm the voice, passions and talents of students” is to assume that these already exist within the student and that the student will flourish. More interestingly, this phrase assumes that a student’s voice, passions, and talents derive from the student rather than being instilled or passed down by familial values and relationships. CAC’s stated “beliefs”, listed under their mission statement, do not hesitate to bring opaque notions of the self and community into one articulated, positivistic space.

We believe that:
Each person has intrinsic worth.
Our community models and promotes respect, responsibility, and integrity.
Student learning is the focus of all school activity.
Honest and compassionate communication is essential.
The pursuit of knowledge, understanding, and truth is a life-long process.
Embracing diversity strengthens community and enriches life.
The well being of the community depends upon the peaceful actions and contributions of every member.
No institution has a more profound effect on the individual than family
(www.cacegypt.org).

The discursive interplay between the individual, the community, and the family works to further make ambiguous notions of well being and culture, while reinforcing specific “beliefs” of the institution and reproducing its ideology. Notably, the last belief stated removes the responsibility away from the institution and shifts it onto the family, as though implying that the school cannot fail at its own goals. “Our contemporary regime of the self is not ‘antisocial.’ It construes the ‘relationships’ of the self with lovers, family, children, friends, and colleagues as central both to personal happiness and social efficacy” (Rose 1996:159). The family in Egypt is a vital capillary for social life, but as discussed in the next chapter through the voices of my interlocutors, it is also viewed as a limitation to students’ well being and self-actualization.

Discourses of Care

I am interested in how international schools frame their goals of education by employing particular values. The language of care, in the discursive performance by international schools, transmits an ideology that offers care from the institution to the student while also imparting care as a practice of self-discipline for the school. Therapeutic care services do not appear on the websites of the schools analyzed here. However, an atmosphere of “care” is created in other, more diffuse ways.

CAC’s “beliefs” (listed in the previous section) demonstrate the way care is used as a discursive tool, which interestingly, presents notions of care in relation to the value of responsibility. CAC identifies itself as an institution that collaborates through a partnership involving “exemplary and caring staff [...] in a safe environment”

(www.cacegypt.org). While there is a shared sense of responsibility in a “partnership” and collaboration, the CAC staff also bears a certain kind of responsibility to be “exemplary and caring.”

The objectives of MLS, “to educate and develop students who will meet society’s future needs,” are listed on their website as:

Developing strong interpersonal and communication skills.
Providing academic support in all areas including time-management.
Instilling the concept that education is a life-long process and that the skills of creative and crucial thinking and problem solving are crucial to success.
Instilling a sense of integrity, responsibility, self-respect and respect for others, thus empowering the students to achieve their goals.
Providing ongoing training for all staff members to ensure teaching quality and administrative efficiency (<http://mls-egypt.org>).

Care is not framed as an issue of mental wellness in this case. It is addressed as a discursive mechanism that is provided, instilled, developed, and supported in order to help students reach their full potential. MLS notes that it takes care of its employees and students, and while this is a particularly difficult text to disagree with, the way the school shifts responsibility away from itself to the individualized endeavor of developing oneself is worth noting. By “providing” and “instilling,” MLS seeds a concept whose collaborated outcome is in the hands of the responsabilized, liberal subjects of staff and students. To “provide,” “instill,” or “empower” is an action of impartment but does not infer responsibility for a result. The notion of care being responsabilized and self-disciplined extends beyond the example of how this is transmitted to students and staff.

In the case of ISC Egypt, their objectives infuse care into various functions and aspects of their school:

- 1. School Environment:** To provide a safe, secure, positive and enjoyable environment for the young people entrusted to us.
- 2. Academic Achievement:** To help and encourage our students to achieve the highest levels of academic success, optimizing the best features of the British Educational System together with Egyptian Ministry of Education set in an

international environment. Teaching them how to seek knowledge, cope with the fast changes, and the latest technological developments in order to compete in a global economy.

3. Personal Development: To assist our young people in preparing for adult life by encouraging traditional values and fostering self-assurance, mutual respect and a sense of duty.

4. Recognized Leader: To ensure that SIS retains its place as a recognized leader in education within the national and international communities.

5. Financial Strength: To maintain financial security in to sustain the on going development of the school and its facilities.

6. Good Employer: To provide an environment that attracts and retains the highest caliber of staff and which encourages the continuing professional and personal development of the individual.

7. Social Commitment: To ensure that SIS maintains and expands its respected position in the local community.

8. Cultural Enrichment: To ensure that pupils benefit from Egypt's language, history and culture through Arabic studies (www.iscegypt-sabis.net).

Care looms large in all eight objectives with the use of words like “help,” “benefit,” “assist,” and “provide.” MLS also reveals a sense of self-care as listed in objectives four, five, six, and seven: caring for their recognition and respectability, financial strength, and working environment.

The value of responsibility through a discursive lens of care is often framed with values of independence and individuality. The Smart International School (SIS) of Egypt has a particularly interesting quote on their website that reads:

Smart Students leave the school as fully-rounded individuals with decisive career choices, lifelong friendships and above all, comfortable with themselves; being able to be an effective team member in the modern world, taking measures of responsibility and prepared for personal independence (www.sis-egypt.com)

These statements are intended to be encouraging and informative. The notion of students being “comfortable with themselves” as the most important aspect of being a student who attended SIS is striking in the sense that the language that follows describes a particular kind of self: “an effective team member in the modern world, taking measures of responsibility and prepared for personal independence.” What does it mean to be an

effective team member in the modern world and why is this seemingly clarified by responsibility and personal independence? This paradox, denoting a way to be comfortable with oneself and a way of participating in “the modern world” reflects instead an uncomfortable tension that exists in a contemporary ethical project grounded in a very material existence: to be a part of the modern world, one must find themselves independent of that world and responsible for their participation in it.

Discourses of the ‘Global’

The school websites analyzed here all have something to say about “the global.” Students will become “global citizens,” prepared to work for the “global economy” and care for “the global community.” As self-evident as these concepts seem, they are not circulated equally around the world like some discourses of globalization would have one believe. Defining what it means to be a global citizen and care for the world is in part attached to notions of “the good life.” In this instance, international schools in Cairo have created student service trips to reinforce how care of the global is combined with experiences of a self-discoverable journey. The syndication and implementation of these two facets of improvement, the world outside of the self and the world inside of the self, underscore neoliberal thought.

CAC states on their website that their institution inspires students “to use their hearts and minds as global citizens,” and to “serve a global community and contribute to a sustainable future” (www.cacegypt.org). Two of my interlocutors informed me of school’s student service trips that occur during the year. Students participate in activities

aimed to help foreign and local communities in some capacity. Similarly, the SABIS “Educational System” webpage of ISC Egypt’s website contains a scrolling list of student service projects such as “visits to orphanage, “visits to nursing home,” “Students for Somalia,” and “homeless children summer camp” (www.iscegypt-sabis.net). The language found on the SIS website also states that they strive to develop “positive attitudes to self evaluation” so that students become “responsible citizens with international awareness, compassion, integrity and moral certainty” (www.sis-egypt.com). Combining a sense of care and responsibility with “international awareness,” these schools positively frame global knowledge as beneficial and distinguished.

MLS, in a similar vein, states that one of their institutional objectives is “encouraging community service to instill a better understanding of the responsibility associated with privilege, and a stronger awareness of the issues facing our world today” (<http://mls-egypt.org>). In Cairo, class distinctions associated with privilege have been reformulated through participation in community service projects. As the schools promote this type of participation, they also present culture as caring for “the other.” Caring for others in this way complicates other cultural attachments of care in Cairo like caring for family, friends, politics, or one’s religious life. It also redirects older forms of patronage or long-standing ideas about the philanthropic responsibilities of upper classes.

Discursive Silences

A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something

simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way of being. These kinds of optimistic relations are not inherently cruel. They become cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially (Berlant 2001:1).

My research project furthers Lauren Berlant's discussion of what she calls cruel optimism. I highlight how institutions of international education draw attachments to a certain sense of self-achievement and fulfillment. International schools in Cairo are products of neoliberal discourse and are not expected to deviate from it. As such, they make optimistic promises to students and families about the students they produce—students who will flourish and succeed in all aspects of their lives and who will have the nurturing support of their staff to do so. As my next chapter demonstrates, the publicly available discourse of these neoliberal institutions is somewhat different from the discourse and practices of teachers and counselors working at international schools. What aligns, however, is the practice of working on one's self and developing affective rhythms of survival in pursuit of "the good life."

III. Practicing the Labor of Care in International Schools

March 11, 2012. 3:15PM. Secondary teacher meeting at School C in a classroom. Four to five desks are grouped together, forming four squares around the room. The principal is standing at the front of the room. Teachers are sitting at students' desks, talking, laughing, reading the whiteboard which has instructions for a warm up activity which they begin to work on. Three Egyptian teachers sit together in the back of the room speaking Arabic to one another and have not begun the warm up activity. Paper, glue, scissors, and typed words are on the desks. Using the supplies on the desks, the teachers are instructed to come up with a graphic organizer incorporating the words. I am asked to join a group with Wynona, Al, Mark, and Sean.

Mark: *(reads the printed meeting agenda)* What the f?

Sean: Do you want to do a teacher learner Venn diagram?

Mark: Learner gets 'challenged.' The learner 'thinks.' Teachers don't have to think.

Teachers 'coach.' Students have no idea what 'strategy' is.

Al: 'Scaffold' isn't a teacher word. Isn't that where they hang people?

Mark: What's that?

Al: Isn't a scaffold where they hang people?

Mark: That's it.

Sean: So that's a discipline word. We could have a Venn spectrum. We're going to be famous. 'Goals'...student.

Mark: 'Work.'

Sean: Work is with the teacher only right?

Mark: I'm leaving the thinking to you guys. I'll just focus on the artistic beauty. (*cutting the paper the words are printed on, making fringe and unconventional shapes*)

Wynona: 'Discussion'...both. What's 'as'?

Sean: Missing an 's.' (*Mark and Al laugh*)

Wynona: 'Skill'...student. 'Evaluation'... 'Habit'...learner...(*she notices Mark's elaborative cutting*) What's this? Did you add this extra?

Mark: Nope this is just random cutting.

Wynona and Al: Just random cutting?

The principal approaches our table.

Principal: What is your 'organizer'? Nice, a Venn diagram. It's very creative.

Mark: It's a Venn...a Venn spectrum. I'm letting them do the thinking. You guys need to think more.

Principal: And somebody has to come up with a good title.

Wynona: The Venn Spectrum.

Al: Our title is right over there, The Habit of Successful People. Habit of thinking as success. Golden information.

Wynona: What did you say? Habit...success...goal...

Al: No, that's not what I said actually.

Sean: Students have 'portfolios.' Teachers have portfolios. 'Performance.'

Mark: I feel like that's a teacher trait.

Wynona: Venn spectrum habit. Habits of success. We should put 'habits and opportunities of success.'

Sean: We could make some of our own words here on these cards.

Mark: *(looks at me)* Is this an activity you initiated?

Wynona: 'Opportunities and habits of success' because opportunities come first and habits follow.

Sean: Who was Venn anyway? And why did he get to patent a bunch of circles?

Wynona: We've changed it to spectrum.

Sean: You still put Venn in though.

Wynona: Yeah because we're going to have a circle that overlaps another circle.

Mark: Venn must have been some guy.

Al: Venn?

Sean: He just did what teachers always did and then said that it was his.

A female teacher comes up to Mark and shows him a book titled 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.' Mark looks at me again.

Mark: That's what academics do. They complicate the simple.

Principal: *(addresses the room)* You have about four and half more minutes to get your stuff stuck down.

Mark: Guys, I'm doing a great job, and I feel like you are not pulling your weight.

Wynona: It wont fit.

Al: I don't have scissors

Mark: You're supposed to be using your *brain*, Al.

Sean: Maybe we can use the yellow paper there and stick the words on that because it's big.

Mark: (*looks at his cutting*) Look at the beauty. I mean it doesn't get better than this.
'Information.'

(*Another team shouts they too have a Venn diagram.*)

Al: (*points his finger*) Cheaters, cheaters.

Mark: What? You heard our idea... (*the principal approaches our table again*) We
have a member, I don't know where she came from, and she is not contributing.

Principal: (*laughs*) But you're strong and can handle this.

Al: She doesn't have scissors either

Mark: I should be a hairdresser. Look at this.

Wynona: The circles won't fit. I think the options said t-chart or Venn diagram.

Al: Or other.

Wynona: Or other.

Mark: No, Venn diagram *is* other. There is no Venn diagram up there.

Wynona: Let's do the Venn angular Venn.

Al: It doesn't have to be round.

Wynona: Yeah, it doesn't have to be round. Did I do this right?

Mark: I'm doing a great job, I don't know about you guys. I'm going to get an A. You
guys are going to be left in the dust.

Wynona: That's not big enough for the Venn.

Sean: We could just cut these smaller.

Wynona: Let's just write the words. Shouldn't 'learning' be both?

Sean: Yeah, lifelong learners.

Mark: We only need sixteen words. I learn way more than my students do.

Principal: Two more minutes, and you'll have to let someone else finish sticking the stuff down.

(Teachers shout they are finished with their organizers.)

Sean: *(picks up one of the pieces of paper Mark has been cutting)* Oh, I like this one, man.

Al: Me too.

Wynona: 'Feedback' ... 'work' ... 'discussion' ... 'motivation' ...

Principal: Someone carry on with the glueage and everyone else get focused so we can begin.

Wynona: *(looks at the finished organizer)* Rough work and raw discussion.

Sean: Sweet.

Mark: Really good.

(Sean picks up the scraps of paper leftover from Mark's cutting and makes a pile in the center of the desk.)

Principal: The activity we did as the warm up activity is meant for looking at assessment in a new way. This type of activity engages students; it has that tactile aspect. It's differently shaded in that you were given a choice of your graphic organizer and you got to choose the words, there was a lot of choice there, but you were able to choose and figure out which words you wanted to do, which ones you wanted to use, which ones fit with your graphic organizer best for your group. It also got people talking about the topic in a higher order thinking kind of way. So this kind of activity is a good activity to address those different types of learning styles and learning needs. You could get them to extend their graphic organizer. You can refer to their organizers as you get through your

unit or your topic. This is just a different engaging activity so that students are participating in their own learning. Moving on to the agenda item: end of the day supervision. Those people who are monitoring end of the day activities, moving people about to the buses or to the gates, secondary students should only be exiting through either the buses or this gate here. There is no reason they need to be picked up anywhere else. Please remind students of this. We've got kids who hang out in the cafeteria, in the elementary area, being silly and messing about all afternoon...they're going up to the front door and pushing the little kids over so they can get to their driver. And secondary students aren't supposed to be in the elementary area. Most of the time they aren't doing anything wrong, but it's not their area, they need to be on this side of the school, not that side of the school.

Mark: There were a couple of kids today, right at the end of the day, buying something from the cafeteria. Is that ok?

Principal: No. The cafeteria is closed. They should not be anywhere near the cafeteria except for 11:15 and 11:45. Please don't dismiss them from class to get something from the cafeteria, or leave class to go to a kiosk that may or may not be open at some point during the day or not during the day, just depending on when the day ends and why. I don't know the rhyme or reason of that kiosk there...but they shouldn't be going there during class time. Let's move on to student success.

(Donna, a "Student Success Specialist," moves to the front of the room.)

Donna: So what I'll do is email a list of people currently on behavior and academic contracts. It is the students' responsibility to have those tracking sheets but when you have the list, if you could push them along or say, 'I know you're supposed to be giving

me something, where is it?' that would really help. I was delivering detention slips and appointment slips to rooms. It's difficult because I'm knocking on doors, and I know sometimes you finally have your class settled down and then 'bang, bang, bang.'

(Mark takes out a piece of paper and begins to write things down. Sean is making origami-like figures with the scraps of paper. Wynona joins Donna at the front of the room.)

Wynona: And it's not just a detention for no reason. They're on this because they're on the path to not succeeding so we put them, not as punishment, but as part of the requirement to be in school at this time, to accept this help. It's their responsibility to do it, but we can encourage them along by giving them that nudge like Donna said. They're on this program because they lack that responsibility to begin with, with their regular work.

Donna: So the next step would be for those students who haven't been submitting or doing their part, is detention. It's one of the things we're doing for them, but there is also the 'how is this student doing' checklist that has been put in some of the mailboxes. I got one from Barbara and one of the things I noticed about it was this: The student had a whole bunch of 5's there, it's a ranking from 1 to 5, and this kid had a lot of 5's and a lot of 4's and it looked like it was pretty good. But the problem is those questions don't really give us the big picture so please write on the bottom, because what Barbara wrote on there is a better picture of what our problem is, which despite the high and pretty good marks, this person continually is defiant, continually questions the teacher's instructions, continually fights against the current to get things done and so those kind of anecdotal things I need to know because those are the kinds of reasons those kids are on there.

Wynona: And feel free to fill in one of these questionnaires on your own. If you think you want to refer a student to us, and just say, 'here's a little glimpse of how this student is doing in our class' feel free to drop us a note, send us an email, or fill in one of these questionnaires if you see poor habits, etc. Also put down on the sheet how many times a day do you have to speak to this student for whatever reason, academic, social, behavioral, etc. And if you've been keeping a tally of how many times you tried to help them by suggesting something, put that down and let us know.

(Mark passes a note to Al, a question about how to solve and teach Method of Finite Difference. Al immediately picks a pen out of his pocket and begins writing numbers and equations in response.)

Teacher: Can I ask something about the contract? We only have five options and I end up having arguments with students who want a 5 but the 5 says 'outstanding.' And they don't seem to understand the meaning of 'outstanding' so quite often you have to explain to them, it's not 'outstanding,' but they don't seem to comprehend what is 'outstanding' and what's not. Can we have more detailed information of how we can justify our marks?

Mark: Actually I like it. There are those ten things it gives you at the top....

Donna: I know how these kids are, and they're very argumentative and they want to get into a debate about it. And it's just not debatable.

Wynona: Sometimes they try to convince you as much as they try to convince themselves that they're doing really well in your class. But our professional job is to say, 'no, not really.'

Principal: Getting off the contract is a good example to those people who are still on the contract to say, "I can get off the contract."

Teacher: Can you let us know if it's an academic or behavior contract too? That would be good to know.

Wynona: Most of them are behavior or both. We were chatting earlier about another method that might be more effective. Maybe we'll give a booklet.

Teacher: I've seen them done on card stock before. These kids aren't that organized anyway so it usually just gets stuck in their bag. It seems like a waste.

Donna: Crumbled up and handed in is not a waste.

Wynona: Perhaps a booklet may help...

Teacher: I've seen them folded like this, on card stock, and then on each day their goals are listed.

Donna: They're going to lose that thing. If you have ideas, let us know.

Wynona: Are there suggestions you guys have for this program?

Mark: *(looks up from reading the note he passed to Al)* Shock therapy.

(laughter ensues, someone makes a buzzing sound)

Introduction

The town, the family, and the school were perhaps the most important sites in which the issue of liberty was problematized and technologized. Each can be seen as a kind of 'machine' for assembling civilization (Rose 2004:72).

Upon completion of my fieldwork, I realized quickly that it was situated quite differently than those of my colleagues who were living in refugee camps, working with indigenous musicians, or researching the Egyptian revolution downtown. I was situated throughout my research in a realm of privilege that has and continues to have great influence and ambitious aims. The voices of my expatriate interlocutors in this chapter represent fragments of how privileged individuals working in education speak about Egyptian culture and the students with whom they work and moreover, how they relate to Egyptian culture and citizens while presenting themselves as experts. The fragmented evidence here is intended to outline and give some concrete shape to an ethical project of late liberalism as it is transmitted through the staff of international schools.

The staff meeting scene exemplifies several things about how educators in Cairo treat their jobs, the students they work with, and the environment where they work. The secondary teachers at School C provide a picture of what it means to be an educational expert in Cairo as seamless, self-evident, and self-authorizing. Yet they also are students, working on themselves in a monotonous kind of way. As I observed and documented, their participation in the group activity was more of a way to socialize with each other and demonstrate that they knew something about education that an outsider would not know. They exchanged words on the table as well as ideas about who a teacher should be, who a student should be, and how the relationships between the two should function

ethically within the bounds of a marketplace. The student as a responsibilized “uncivilized” individual in need of development, “expert” practices of deploying responsibility as care, tensions about discourses of potential and achievement, and its casual nature in the name of doing one’s job as an educator. Their actions, like the way Mark cut the paper, and the humor used to pass the time, while mildly entertaining, also made me wonder if they would find similar actions by the students in their classes as acceptable. They spoke casually and routinely of forms, contracts, and policies which were to be used to govern their duties as teachers and govern their students as pupils on behavior contracts. Wynona remarked, “Sometimes they (the students) try to convince you as much as they try to convince themselves that they’re doing really well in your class. But our professional job is to say, ‘no, not really.’” The paradox between a student striving to excel and the professional responsibility of a high school counselor to put students on behavior contracts in order to continue their “development,” illustrates one relation of cruel optimism in educational institutions. Such a relation of cruel optimism that exists here needs to be analyzed in its cultural forms and implications for the foreign individuals who negotiate them in everyday life.

In what follows, I seek to demonstrate how privilege commands particular liberal strategies of governmentality at work in (1.) the family, (2.) care, responsibility, and civilizing discourse and, (3.) a sentimentality of liberalism. My interlocutors articulate how working with these students and working on themselves within spaces of freedom, influence responses to social problems that are themselves shared social experiences (Kleinman, Das, Lock 1997). The individual fragmented narratives of my interlocutors working in international schools in Cairo with some of Egypt’s most prominent families

of business and politics, further splinter notions of responsibility, and reinforce its effect as “duty” and care in particular liberal, elite subjects who will likely influence responses to national social problems in the years to come.

Many people played an instrumental role in the crafting of the questions presented here, and many questions led me to interview my interlocutors the way that I did. I was told that I would have no success gaining permission to conduct research at public schools, which is one reason why I chose to pursue international schools; however, during my preliminary research, it was difficult to gain permission to conduct research on the school campuses, which was my original goal. A few international school administrators invited me on to their campus but after hearing more about my research interests, they declined to participate in my project. I was frustrated as a researcher and graduate student. Convinced that others supporting education would gladly participate in a research area that is widely neglected, private education in Cairo, I assumed at least one school of the twenty I contacted would help me in my own educational pursuits in the name of research. Beyond my disappointment, it raised a crucial question for my project: Is education suspicious of itself? If research about the people and practices within the walls of schools is impermissible, then can education stand on its own pillar that champions lifelong learning? Did they fear offering disclosure about the people and practices within the walls of international schools, even in an anonymous and confidential manner as I am ethically bound, would expose more harm than good? I was somewhat shocked; after all, these institutions claim to provide nurturing, flourishing environments where happy students learn and grow.

Given this interesting educational suspicion, I was even more determined to persevere. In the end, I was able to attend the one staff meeting at School C where I interviewed Wynona. I also interviewed two teachers and one school counselor who all agreed to meet with me outside of their schools. Through ethnographic interviews with John, Will, Wynona, and Sarah, the liberal value, freedom, is applied as autonomy to examine how educators' labor of care for themselves and their students intersects with a privileged discourse about "the good life."

The Private, Privileged Family

Neoliberal economic policies advocate privatization as a means toward economic growth and in the same vein the family is a key value for liberal thought where it is "celebrated as the essential basis and counterweight to government" (Rose 2004:74). Historically, a range of liberal technologies has been invented that "enable the family to do its public duty without destroying its private authority" (ibid).

These maneuvers were undertaken by doctors and philanthropists, in schemes of model housing, in feminist campaigns to encourage marriage and to enforce fathers to accept their domestic responsibilities and so forth. They sought to enhance everything that would secure the family as a space for the investment of individual passions, yet to ensure that these passions would be satisfied in a way that would produce public benefits (ibid).

As the previous chapter demonstrated, international schools market their institutions as a "good investment" for the family. Furthermore, according to my interlocutors, international schools seem to be the only option for students of this privileged status if

they are to please their family, which means in most cases that they need to be accepted into a prestigious university either in Egypt or outside of Egypt.

Of central importance to my research interests, my interlocutors are privileged as well. Specifically in Cairo as I have learned, positions at international schools are coveted and viewed as more prestigious jobs which differs vastly from how teaching positions are perceived in North America or Europe, the places my interlocutors hold citizenship from. One of my interlocutors, Will, is a secondary school mathematics teacher at School A. I first met Will by chance, and he offered to share his experiences as a teacher at School A working with some of the most privileged citizens of Egypt. He explained that, for most of the students he teaches, their primary concern is being accepted into a prestigious university:

It's all about getting into a good school. It's an external pressure, not to please themselves... their parents do put a lot of pressure on them to get into a good university. You ask the kids what their parents do and they say, 'They're in business.' And then you ask them what they're going to do, and they're going into business. I really don't know what a lot of my parents do, and I really don't want to know. I don't want that to be part of my judgment or enter into my opinions of them.

Though he claimed that he did not want that knowledge to be part of his judgment or enter into his opinions of the students, Will shared with me the specific names of certain prominent Egyptian families who send their children to School A. Realizing for himself who these students were as he mentioned their names, gave him pause: the types of futures they will lead and be responsible for, the positions of power they might occupy someday that he himself will never experience. From where I was sitting, I believe Will's realization to himself shifted the rest of our conversation in two significant ways. First, for a moment, humility was present. He expressed slight disbelief that he was a part of shaping this particular class of students. "Wow, I guess that's pretty cool." His

recognition that his ability to leave a low-paid and unrespectable teaching position in the United States to embark on a higher-paid, more reputable career path working with influential families in Egypt, distinguished his privilege from the particular privilege of his students. Second, and much more striking to me, was how Will's acknowledgement of his students' privilege and social status suddenly directed his speech about the students who "have a lot of adjusting to do" at School A and their families:

We expect you to take care of yourself. We're not going to do it for you. The kindergarten and first grade teachers are having to hand the kids the toilet paper and say, 'go figure it out. I'm not coming in there with you.' Or kids will say that their driver didn't give them their book when they got out of the car. How engaged are the parents with the kids as compared to the nanny or the driver? Who is really raising the kids? There certainly are parents who are very attached but then there is dad who is always out traveling on business...or mom...I had a girl two years ago that would miss three or four days of school every quarter because she was out doing trade shows with her mother. But that was probably an important thing for her to be doing, she was learning on the ground.

During my fieldwork, it became quite apparent that Will did not stand alone in these notions of privilege. He, like all of my interlocutors who work at secondary schools in Cairo, indicated a divide between their own privileged ability to work as an "expert" in a foreign country and the privilege of the Egyptian students and families with whom they encounter on a daily basis.

John, an English teacher at School B who lives in Zamalek where we met earlier this year, provides another example of how his discernments about his students transmit distinctions of privilege:

For those who have enormous privilege, it makes them think that they deserve that privilege. 'There is a reason why my family is incredibly prosperous, and I'm turning eighteen, and I'm being bought this Mercedes and going off to a \$50,000 a year university education in the states. It's because that's what God wants for my family and me. I deserve it. I have had conversations with students to the effect of, 'Well, I'm privileged because I'm meant to be.' And I have, sorry to say, been judgmental and said, 'No you're not. You're extraordinarily lucky

to be like that. It's the result of the connections of your great-grandparents and your parents.' In one case, I openly said to a class, 'You know perfectly well that the reason you're in the position you're in has absolutely nothing to do with God. It has to do with the fact that your grandfather was a close associate of President Sadat during the time of privatization. You know this perfectly well.'

In some ways, I could not have asked for more viable evidence of how knowledge about privilege in Egypt is considered to be a result of Egypt's *infitah*, and furthermore, John's speech demonstrates how his own privilege carries expertise that Egyptians, in his view, do not possess. For example, John told me a story about his son who is enrolled at a sister international school in Cairo. He was trying to explain to me how his son, a Caucasian male, is isolated and teased by Egyptians at his school, resulting in an "incredible iceberg of rumor purely based on the fact that he's a handsome, western boy." This iceberg of rumor as John recounted to me, which in some ways created a new rumor itself, was that two Egyptian male students were chatting on a website where one told the other that John's son had dealt his friend heroin and now his friend was addicted. John was emphatic that his son had never sold anyone heroin. "They're incredibly bored children. Not used to anything different. Now this whole wasp's nest of hearsay has grown up around my son without him ever being fully aware of it." Like many Middle Eastern societies, one of the most important rhythms of Egyptian life is the cultivation of relationships and respect (Elyachar 2005). Is it possible that John may not really know his son like he thinks he does, that his teenage son is too "bored" and in fact involved with drugs, hiding this fact from his father like most teenagers would? Of course it is possible. Is it possible that the two Egyptian young men were in some way not gossiping, but rather, voicing concern for a friend who may come from an influential family in a culture where the repercussions of his actions could bring immense dishonor and shame to his family? Most certainly it is possible. John, in his attempt to distinguish his

privileged son from the privileged Egyptian teenagers, assumes that his self as a privileged parent, who is free to make such protective assumptions on behalf of his son, a liberal subject who lives in a household where choices and freedom are valued, is somehow more free to say what he wants about Egyptian culture than the Egyptian young men who made certain assumptions about his “western” son. John’s perception of the situation, in this example, demonstrates how a discourse of privilege reveals itself on an ethical market: one is free to choose and exert that freedom, but one is also constrained by their self-identification. In John’s words, without us “ever being fully aware of it.”

Two of my other interlocutors, Wynona a counselor at School C and Sarah a counselor at School A, also spoke about the privileged families of their Egyptian students, distinguishing them from students and families in other countries where they have worked. Wynona shared the following:

You hear more of the privilege in their lives. ‘My driver didn’t bring my homework’ or ‘My maid forgot to pack that for me.’ Of course back home, we’re just not used to this. Here, I find more than in other populations I’ve worked with, is a parent or both parents are away...and for long periods of time. Lots of them are business people. Off to Asia or the Middle East, like Dubai, for weeks, months at a time. Sometimes you ask a student, ‘Who is taking care of you?’ ‘I’m taking care of myself. My grandmother is taking care of me.’ But really the grandmother is just the figure, the name behind it, but there’s no one really taking care of them. Then their attendance drops and they’re not making it to school on time ...or not wearing their uniform...or they’re behaving poorly until they know that mom or dad is back in the country. That happens more often here than anywhere else I have taught.

Wynona associates privilege with particular behaviors and makes assumptions about family care and culture in Cairo. She indicates that the grandmother is just an imaginary figure of care and that no one is taking care of the student except himself. A more likely possibility is that the student has a network of care, as is often the case in Egyptian culture. Even still, Wynona does not consider this and in fact does not recognize the

student's dropping attendance or "poor behavior" as indicative of the school's failure to successfully teach students how to care for themselves. Instead she shifts responsibility back onto the privileged family who is not fulfilling their duties of care.

Interestingly, the way Wynona speaks of the privileged family in Egypt is much like how teachers speak of poor families in North America. During my own personal experience working in a lower-class school in Texas and working with children in protective custody, I often heard teachers and caseworkers speak of these families as dysfunctional or abnormal. Parents' drug use, their physical and sexual abuse of their own children, or a thirteen-year-old girl being pregnant was cause for concern and did indicate on some level that the family unit was troubled. To some extent, Wynona transfers this dysfunction onto elite Egyptian families, understanding the parents as "abandoning" their children, who in turn suffer from behavior problems, in order to make a living. The following section explores in more depth how my interlocutors work to civilize students through their care and negotiate Egyptian culture.

Care, Culture, and Freedom: A Responsible Civilizing Discourse

"The school was a very important site for the elaboration of the norms of freedom in liberal strategy" (Rose 2004:76). In order to better understand how globalized neoliberal values of care and responsibility reflect particular aspects of freedom, I find the site of the international school an informative point of analysis. In relationships of teacher and student, my interlocutors reconfigure the ways certain techniques are instilled that encourage autonomy and simultaneously bind these students into a "civilized polity"

(Rose 2004:78). Last year John was putting on a play in one of his classes and he only had one boy in the class. He decided to make the boy play the “anti-hero” in the play. The main character who is a male is “tormented by two kinds of hit men type figures who are also male.” John knew he had to cast girls in the rest of the male parts if the play was to be performed:

One of the hit men was sort of a femme-man-hating nature and so the other one had to be very butch. The girl I picked to do this was like that and during the process of the play, she came to my office one day and asked, ‘It wouldn’t be wrong would it, sir, for a girl to like other girls? Like my character kind of does in the play?’ I said, ‘No, there is really nothing wrong with that. It’s ok.’ And I can remember seeing her physically change. Like completely relaxed. Like someone approved that she was just figuring out for herself that she was a lesbian. Interestingly, not long after that I had to cancel the play because of her mother...and this is a very liberal school for Egypt...her mother asked her about the play and the student spoke openly about it. Her mother pulled her out and called the school to complain about the way the play had been changed to accommodate the girl actors.

John grounds an important cultural distinction in the value of responsibility. Later he said that every teenager struggles with responsibility and occasionally some adults. “But it’s a hard thing for teenagers, especially in this culture.” If this is so, then how could we understand responsibility as a negotiated value in the example with his female student asking questions about sexuality? In John’s rendering of her questioning, the student is at a crossroads between a self that is theoretically free to choose what is acceptable or not for herself, and a societal concern which is not only a constraint in John’s words, but uncivilized to some degree. The same story could happen at a respectable secondary school in the United States, but John isolates this incident as defining Egyptian culture in some way.

John works at a school that subscribes to a form of curriculum of care called pastoral care. Another international school in Cairo, School M, abides by pastoral care and states in their pastoral care policy that the provision of pastoral care in the school aims to ensure that “pupils’ self-esteem is heightened, enabling a fully self-motivated child to fulfill his or her potential.” The linking of care by means of acknowledging and elaborating self-potential can also function in such a way as to produce a divide between what is considered civilized and uncivilized. Potential is used here as showing the ability to become or develop into something in the future. Discursively and concretely, potential has no beginning or end. It is merely a constant striving to become something. For my interlocutors, the students need their “civilized” care to become particular autonomous individuals who are free to make their own choices regardless of “uncivilized” family, cultural, or religious expectations.

The divide that is proposed between what is civilized and uncivilized behaviors or attitudes, illustrates my interlocutors’ preconceptions about Egyptian culture and their students’ potential. Can students ever reach their potential in the voices of my interlocutors liberal subjects themselves? When I arrived to meet Wynona at School C where she works as a guidance counselor and part-time teacher, she was on the phone and a young boy, probably about eight or nine years old, was sitting at her desk. I stood in the hallway and waited. She eventually hung up the phone and said to the student, “We’re going to get you on the right track.” He was short and thin, carrying his backpack loosely on one shoulder with it half-unzipped. It appeared to be relatively empty. He walked past me, looking straight ahead, and did not look to acknowledge that I was standing in front of him in the hallway. The only item in his backpack was a form

given to him by an expert who could help him “get on the right track.” Where was his potential? Was it still becoming, did it ever start, did he care?

I think these kids in particular at our school have a problem with taking the initiative, taking the risk, and putting themselves out there—putting in their effort to do well. A lot of them lack taking responsibility for their own education; they place the responsibility on the teachers for their education instead of themselves. So a lot of times I see they aren't really trying as hard as they should be trying. Compared to a typical student in North America. They lack that self-motivation. Expectations are given in class and the first thing they say is, 'Well, this is too hard. Why are you doing this to us?' Why is the teacher punishing the student rather than the student saying, 'I'm not sure what this is, this is new, I need to study this.' A lot of times it could be cultural. I'm not sure. It's not something we see as much in a North American school as we do here, and in my six years of living here, it really hasn't changed. It's not all the students though. The ones that lack motivation also lack motivation in all areas of their life...perhaps it's upbringing, perhaps it's the fact that they are wealthier, perhaps they have nannies and maids, drivers...but there are other issues other than lack of motivation...there are attendance problems, focus issues...issues with students who most likely have learning disabilities and they're not getting the support at home they need to get it identified...(Wynona)

Although Wynona's opinions above make many assumptions about aspects of Egyptian culture, her words silence and maintain discourses of liberal selves. “All of these silences are part of the delicate apparatus by which the discourses of autology and genealogy are maintained in liberal worlds” (Povinelli 2006:62). By autological subject, Povinelli is referring to “discourses, practices, and fantasies about self-making, self-sovereignty, and the value of individual freedom associated with the Enlightenment project of contractual constitutional democracy and capitalism” (Povinelli 2006:4). By genealogical society, she is referring to “discourses, practices, and fantasies about social constraints placed on the autological subject by various kinds of inheritances” (ibid). In the above example, the autological self is Wynona's inference that Egyptian students lack taking responsibility and do not “put themselves out there.” This unsuccessful exertion of effort could be “culture,” she says, a genealogical constraint preventing the privileged students from actualizing their full potential. In this way, her notions about Egyptian

culture also ossify categories of “normal behavior” as imagined and circulated by counselors working at international schools. I asked Wynona how she came to learn about Egyptian culture since she has lived in Cairo:

There are lots of things that they find normal here that are shocking for us. And we have to be sensitive to that and understand it a bit more. We don't always condone it or accept it, but we do try, within the walls of our school, to...I hate to say impose...but to expect more of their behavior than we would expect in a school outside of Egypt. But then the students leave, and they go to their culture, which is very different. So every day we try to get them to come here, and if I could use that terrible word, conform, a little bit to our expectations and code of behavior and all of that. When really they go back home and into their culture and their world, where anything is happening. It's normal for them.

In this instance, Wynona constructs culture as something “other” and a production that prevents the self-making subject from succeeding. It also highlights one predicament and contradiction of the late liberal, autological subject including her uncomfortable discovery that it takes a great deal of conformity to produce free subjects. Something is subtly normalized then in this interaction between teacher and student: education and culture and privilege and culture, work themselves out in the labor of care at international schools in Cairo as seen in the words of Wynona and John. This material manifestation transforms “the world into an image of its own normative horizons” (Povinelli 2006:15). These normative horizons, moreover, are contained within spaces of freedom that seek to civilize and disperse a project of self-fashioning to Egyptian high school students and their families.

I first had contact with Sarah, a counselor at School A, in October 2011 who was willing to help me with my thesis research outside of her school campus. We met in a small café in the suburb of Maadi. Situated behind high walls and gated communities, the international schools I research here typically have a diverse student population. Sarah shared with me that School A has students with “60 different passports: 40% are

American, 30-35% are Egyptian, 10-15% are Korean, and the rest hold passports from a variety of other countries.” School psychology and counseling is most prominent at School A. Teachers, parents, other students, and self-referrals make their way to Sarah’s office to express concern for a student, friend, son/daughter, or themselves. Among some of the reasons students come to her office include cutting/self-mutilation, eating disorders, and sadness. She added, however, that Egyptian girls see her the most with a wider range of problems. They often are suffering from “issues of sexuality, depression in the home, physical abuse by their fathers, and sometimes forced circumcision. In my counseling with American students, I had never heard these things discussed so candidly.” In her work with students, Sarah tries to develop trust and “a positive relationship with unconditional regard for their culture, helping kids advocate for themselves in different ways.” The few girls who are veiled come to her with “issues of sexuality.” For girls, she tries to show them that “they can make decisions for themselves and still respect their culture.”

They have to answer to their father until they get married and then they have to answer to their husband. I try to instill a sense of self in them. For girls that stay here and don't live abroad or leave Egypt for college, this is much harder. When the girls who have gone overseas come back, they are so empowered. Most of the girls don't consider their mothers very influential in their lives. The most influential person is their father—they struggle with their identity as a woman. In the end, they will always come back to the family, both origin and extended. Families pay \$17,000 to invest in their kids becoming critical thinkers but then they end up not being able to do it.

The student’s self, in Sarah’s phrasing here, is not a neutrally free subject. The self is being fashioned toward a certain type of privileged identity as a woman born into an Egyptian family who can afford to send her abroad for college and who will ultimately be her impetus to embodying this so called empowerment. I asked Sarah how she came to know about Egyptian culture during her eight years in Cairo. She said she learned

about it from the students and families at School A and also from a few Egyptian friends. Additionally, I inquired into whether or not living in Egypt had left a profound impact on her and she remarked that it had not: “My time here has only confirmed what I already believe. People are people wherever you go.” The tension between what Sarah believes and what she ascribes as a cultural matter in the aforementioned example, exemplifies how the invention of certain liberal practices, i.e. professional school counseling, serves to delineate ethical norms about what is civilized and uncivilized. Additionally, the enactment of professionalized forms of care complicates how school counselors and teachers fashion and confront themselves while living in an inherited society which is not their own. As they work to shape students to become autonomous “critical thinkers,” they position themselves against a rather indeterminate object, “Egyptian culture,” which for most of my interlocutors, is spoken of as an obstacle to the fantasy of “the good life.” In the conversations with my interlocutors, I did not sense that their time working in Egypt had caused them to question their own assumptions or practices about privilege, care, or culture.

If the student is a key transfer point of knowledge within liberalism, the student as a self is “already conditioned by liberalism’s emergence and dispersion in empire” (Povinelli 2006:17). In the case of my research, empire in Egypt takes the form of the mass presence of international schools and globalized ideologies of well being and care present in neoliberal discourse. Within the pervasive project of expanding markets and creating entrepreneurs who help themselves by helping the world and vice versa, how does this imported dispersion of empire through international schools, begin to sentimentalize care?

Toward a Sentimentality of Liberalism

Three of my interlocutors mentioned that as part of School A and School C's high school graduation requirements, students are required to go on a community service trip outside of school. The students are responsible for paying for it and ensuring that the requirement is met. Will, the mathematics teacher from School A, said that more of his informal conversations with Egyptian students about personal issues occurred during these service trips where he has served as an adult chaperone. Sarah also mentioned how much she enjoyed taking students on service trips because of the way it altered conversations between students and herself that would otherwise not happen in the school setting.

This aspect of the work of international schools, framed by social responsibilities and the privatization of humanitarian impulses, resonates with a political discourse that emerged in the first half of the century: the "individual was a locus of needs that were to be socially met if malign consequences were to be avoided, but was reciprocally to be a being to whom political, civil, and social obligations and duties were to be attached" (Rose 1996:164). Since the advent of widespread neoliberal policies in the 1970s, critical discourses of this type of humanitarian development have emerged. These critical discourses criticize humanitarianism as "bureaucratic and inefficient, as patronizing and patriarchal, as doing nothing to tackle or redress fundamental inequalities, as a usurper of private choices and freedoms, as a violation of individual rights" (165). Liberal political opinion today upholds the idea that "citizenship is to be active and individualistic rather than passive and dependent" (ibid). Lauren Berlant argues that the promotion of

“individual acts of identification based on collective group memberships” is a particular form of what she calls, liberal sentimentality (Berlant 1998:636):

[Liberal sentimentality] has been conventionally deployed to bind persons to the nation through a universalist rhetoric not of citizenship *per se* but of the capacity for suffering and trauma at the citizen’s core; that this structure has been deployed mainly by the culturally privileged to humanize those very subjects who are also, and at the same time, reduced to cliché with the reigning regimes of entitlement or value [...]

The initiatives and service trips required of students by the international school they attend demonstrate the sentimentality I am using here. Likewise, the initiatives work to sentimentalize the individual who is intended to embark on a journey of self-discovery while developing a capacity to care for others’ suffering and hardships.

Annually at School A and School C, students in grades nine through twelve are accompanied by teachers and staff of international schools and travel to foreign countries, and in some cases places in Egypt, to deliver service to disenfranchised communities. Will told me that one year they painted a school, another year they “hauled bricks and moved big stones to build the foundation of a house,” and they also built stilt houses on a river in Vietnam. Sarah went to Vietnam to build stilt houses with the students as well, and when recounting the trip she said, “Imagine a fourteen year old boy with a machete in his hands chopping down wood in the forest to build the house. The kids worked so hard that week, they were exhausted, but talk about a bonding experience. And they were so proud of what they did.”

Some of the students go to local hotel kitchens instead, a project called “Cooking in Cairo” at School C. As Will and Sarah both shared with me, School A did not take any trips last year because of the sociopolitical situation in Egypt. Sarah expressed there

were concerns about safety and possible disruptions in the country, which made her think about an experience with the first of these trips:

The first year we instituted these trips was a tragic year. Three students and one teacher lost their lives here in Egypt. They were on a scuba-diving trip, and there was a fire on the boat they were staying in. There was the big question of, 'do we continue this program'? We developed risk assessments for all of the programs and at that time we were also talking very seriously about the purpose of the trips and how do they tie to our curriculum. Our kids have a lot of privilege. They don't need a vacation. So it has to be an accredited, graded course with clearly articulated course outcomes.

In years past, some of these accredited, graded courses at School A visit Paris and study art museums, London to study live theatre, China to study the pandas, Malaysia to care for orangutans, Sri Lanka to rescue turtles and study the environment. School C's policy for students preparing for university requires that they complete forty hours of community service volunteering. Wynona helps coordinate these field trips including suggesting possible places in Cairo where "students could take advantage" of this opportunity.

One week in the year all grades will go on a field trip to get field experience. There is a whole list of places, and of course, I can't remember them all. The field trip is educational. Every grade is off to a different destination for a different focus but it's fun and they're learning their soft skills, their cooperative learning skills, et cetera. But there is also a focus. For example, grade elevens are going to Dahab for marine biology and Siwa for fossils, history, and Bedouin culture...

The students have choices as to what trip they attend, but the staff of international schools set those choices and the "learning outcomes." It is not to say that the intent behind these trips can be evaluated ethically as they offer students the ability to learn more about other cultures and garner personal benefits, I am sure. As Will shared with me, he had a very impactful conversation with a student "who could be President of Egypt someday" on one of these trips about Judaism and how language has the possibility to inflict pain,

knowledge, and power. He and the student both perceived the conversation as productive and somehow satisfying.

The sentimentality of liberalism that is embodied in my interlocutors and acted upon is layered. First, they all “chose” to come to a developing country to work and educate youth. Second, they facilitate “socially responsible” service trips for students, but also for themselves, in such a way that what is sentimentalized is the duty and obligation of privilege. This individual obligation, that in turn impacts communities and relations of care, is transmitted to students as another form of dual responsibility: the labor of developing and caring for one’s self is manifested in tandem with the labor of developing and caring for others. In the discourse of my interlocutors, this sentimentality again appears as self-evident for themselves and for the students they are in the business of educating. What is interesting here is whether or not teachers and students have discussions in the classroom about the responsibilities of the state toward the good health of its poor citizens and so on. When responsibility and the ethical impulse towards “bettering the world” are conducted uniquely on these private trips, a certain privatization of responsibility takes place insidiously.

How They Got Here

Expanding practices of self-exploration influenced how and why the teachers and counselors of international schools came to Cairo and landed at the particular schools they did. My interlocutors’ “self-conscious commitment to self-elaboration” (Povinelli 2006:98) is particularly viable in better understanding how a sentimentality of liberalism

appears in their particular privilege, another location of social experiments and elaborations.

Will moved to Cairo and began teaching at School A in 2007. When we met at his apartment in March, he said he was ready for a change: “There are new ways to say ‘thank you,’ new things to eat.” He recently accepted a teaching position in Kenya so this is his last year teaching at School A. He offered me some water when I arrived, curled up in a plush chair, and lit a cigarette. In college and graduate school, Will studied engineering and then joined the Peace Corps in 1989. “I was doing construction work mainly, and I really did not enjoy the engineering side. I did enjoy the relief work and education work. A friend mentioned that they were going to go back to school to become a teacher, and I decided I would do that too.” After a short teaching stint at a middle school in the United States, he was ready to move “overseas” again and ended up teaching in Guam for three years before coming to Cairo. Exposure to the Peace Corps influenced Will’s decision to continue to live away from his home country, and the experience also helped him choose a different path for himself. Furthermore, his advantaged class privilege allowed him the freedom to make such a choice. Not everyone has this kind of privilege—the ability to uproot one’s life for the sake of trying something different and fulfilling a desire.

John was very proud to work at “the freest international school in Cairo.” Previously working in advertising, John found the work “incredibly shallow” and decided to teach instead. He was recruited from an international job fair in 2007 to seed an international school (affiliated with a specific country) in Cairo. When I asked John to share with me how he became a teacher in Cairo and his personal educational

background, he began that story in an interesting place, when he left the school he was hired to manage:

One day I told some kids in a lesson that you didn't have to necessarily have a religion and that many people in their lives didn't even believe that people had souls or that those souls went anywhere after they died. Not so long before this happened I had given an assembly because, as the head of secondary school at the time, there had been some prejudicial treatment toward the Coptic Christian kids. It was around the time of Eid el Adha, leading up to Christmas vacation, and I talked about Eid el Adha which is about Abraham and the founding of monotheism. I stressed the commonalities of all three monotheistic religions, which are important to Islamic tradition. But some parents freaked out when their kids got home and said that Christians and Jews were the same. That incident combined with my telling that I was an atheist, and I certainly was, led some parents to demand my removal. Then I moved to School B where you are freest to teach whatever beliefs you have and discuss things like that openly. I do that a lot. A kid from Zamalek recently came to me and said, 'Well sir, you'll be glad to know your class has worked. I'm atheist now. I've lost my faith.' And I said, 'I'm actually glad. I'm happy for you to have whatever beliefs you want. What's important to me is you think those beliefs through. And you don't just have ideas about life and the universe because that's what you received. I want you to question your received ideas. And when you question your received ideas and whether you keep or lose them, is a matter of indifference to me. What I want you to do is think through why you believe what you believe. Believe it for yourself out of conviction, not just because it's what you inherited.'

John's words and the way he does his job as a teacher calls to mind Povinelli's concept of the autological subject: he seeks to "liberate" students in such a way that they are free from their "inheritance." Furthermore, John's tone of correctness and distinctiveness when answering this question, how and why he came to Cairo, presented him as an encompassing expert, offering knowledge and guidance that is beneficial to students, schools, and Egyptian culture. Likewise, I asked Wynona how she became interested in high school guidance counseling. "All teachers are basically guidance counselors to begin with," she said, "You do a little counseling in your class, but of course your focus is teaching your subject. Nowadays any teacher is partially mother, father, counselor, et cetera. It's a role of everything melded." She also mentioned that at her school, the

guidance counseling staff has initiated a student success program where they ask teachers to refer students to their services.

Originally from Ireland, Sarah's parents decided to bring their six children to America for "more opportunities." In 1974, Sarah enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, and her MOS (United States military occupation code) while stationed in the U.S. was sending commands to troops in Vietnam. "Now that I know what I do with my counseling education about the psychological scars of war veterans, I have a completely different impression of those men and women serving in Vietnam, and I think I would have done my job a little differently."¹⁰ Following her time as a Marine, she continued her education, receiving a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree, and four licensures and certifications. After a difficult end to a twenty year marriage, she decided to move abroad, something she had always wanted to do, and has now been living in Cairo for nine years. "You would think as a counselor I would have seen my divorce coming, but I didn't. I thought I was the best wife and mother. The divorce was completely devastating to me, so I decided to begin a new life." Like Will this is Sarah's last year working at School A, and she is returning to the United States.

The examples here exemplify "the inculcation and shaping of 'private' responsibility" which assigns a key role to experts, in this case, that of teacher, counselor, mother, and father (Rose 2004:75). "For it is experts [...] who can specify ways of conducting one's private affairs that are desirable, not because they are required by a moral code dictated by God or the Prince, but because they are rational and true" (Rose 2004:75). My interlocutors, however, hardly appear to be "experts" about the Middle

¹⁰ See Allan Young's *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* for an interesting discussion on how PTSD has been culturally produced, diagnosed, and treated.

East or Egypt. Their lack of knowledge and experience in the region and apparent absence of a desire on their part to learn more about Egyptian society, affects their views of their privileged pupils and their families, leading them to judge these individuals and masking that judgment under notions of care and responsibility. The discourses of liberalism that produce certain planes of freedom also draw more segmentations between how we relate to ourselves as authorizing our own freedom, how we relate to others, and how we imagine social constraint upon freedom.

Conclusions

To be sure, the ideology and practices of competitive neoliberalism do their quietly effective and insidious work within the major institutions—the media and the universities—that shape the imaginative context in which we live. They do so with hardly anyone noticing (Harvey 2000: 155-156).

Through the experiences of my interlocutors and their fragmented representation here, I demonstrate how particular notions of freedom, culture, and care animate a liberal project at work in contemporary Cairo. The ways in which students become bound into relationships with new authorities like their teachers and counselors, also binds them to new relations and knowledge of caring for themselves and others, a sentimentality of liberalism. An ethnographic detailing of this type of invention, allows for a richer understanding of how subjects of freedom engage with the pursuit of “the good life” and its liberal problematics. I acknowledge, however, the limitations of my ethnographic fieldwork and a certain failure to capture the “everyday” given that I was only able to gather fragments at different points in time.

At times the acquiescence between my interlocutors and I about certain topics that critically “shape the imaginative context in which we live,” was difficult to pinpoint, if noticeable at all, as Harvey has noted is indicative of liberal subjects (Harvey 2000). Whether this was because we held foreign passports or embodied similar socioeconomic backgrounds or were exposed early on to how self-evident and accepted some things about everyday life become, the exchanges presented here more importantly highlight what is at stake about this project: a turn toward “thinking about the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on” (Berlant 2011:8).

The capacity to “become one’s self” under liberal ideology and its pervasive mechanisms of governing has the ability to put everyday life in crisis. For the privileged, it is a crisis of responsibility folding upon itself constantly. One must consistently be working on one’s self to achieve a desired state of autonomy and well being. The practices to actualize this fantasy of liberalism have become as expansive as the neoliberal force that seeks to bring all aspects of life into its domain of capitalist accumulation. In Cairo, where “relationships make possible the negotiation of daily life,” practices and exchanges of knowledge about culture, care, and freedom have new implications for the liberal subjects living here under the tenets of neoliberalism and its accompanying ethical project (Elyachar 2005:143).

IV. The Freedom to Imagine and Conduct a Privileged Self

Introduction

Terms like “stress” and “depression” have become ways to label and measure an individual’s well being. Such concepts also offer ways of relating to one’s self. Counselors, health practitioners, and educators in their work of care deploy these terms, and in doing so, they also extend these concepts to certain individuals as tools to measure, judge, and reflect on their own sense of well being. More importantly to my research goals and as demonstrated in the previous chapters, concepts of well being are able to circulate in everyday talk while a certain indeterminacy remains as to what they refer to.

In this chapter, I use survey results to assess to what extent a particular discourse of the late liberal self as free and self-responsible has taken hold amongst university students enrolled at an international university in Cairo. I was unable to interview students under the age of eighteen, but still I wanted to survey students in an international education context, which is why I chose the site of an international university. The survey I distributed to students was designed to test (1.) the students’ level of agreement with particular discursive promises and beliefs of late liberal ideology which international schools promote and circulate, (2.) the students’ concern for their own stress which my interlocutors did not address, and (3.) how students choose to care for themselves. This chapter is therefore structured into three corresponding sections to examine these questions. Has a discourse of the self, burdened by its self-evident freedom, taken hold

with these students? Does a certain way of relating to one's self become a burden under the imperative to abide by a certain imaginary of the good life (being successful, being one's self, being liberated from tradition)?

I surveyed 115 students attending The American University in Cairo. All respondents were over the age of eighteen. They completed questionnaires on their perceptions of globalized notions of well being and self-actualization as well as their perceptions of particular indicators that cause stress on a daily basis. These results address the attitudes and behaviors of elite university students as they relate to globalized notions of well being and human fulfillment and also their own daily stress and attendant anxieties regarding self-realization. I attempted to obtain a cross-section of students by contacting faculty in various academic departments across campus and requested to administer my survey to their classes. Three sets of variables were explored: social background characteristics, perceptions of globalized notions of well being and self-realization, and perceptions of self and care for one's self.

Of the 115 students who responded to my survey, 53% were female and 47% were male. All of the respondents were undergraduate students, but their academic concentrations: 39% were majoring in Business, 30% were majoring in the Social Sciences or Humanities, 25% were majoring in Math, Science, or Engineering, and 7% were undeclared undergraduate students. Egyptian passport holders comprised 78% of the respondents. Other respondents held dual citizenship between Egypt and another country. Only nine respondents specified they only held passports from countries other than Egypt, which included: America, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, and Yemen. Among the

students who indicated they attended a private school in Egypt, 77% went to an international school.

In the chapter analysis that follows, I chose two primary independent variables to be used: (1.) the type of secondary school respondents attended and (2.) how religious they consider themselves. My selection of these independent variables correlates to my research interests about institutions of education, as well as claims made by my interlocutors about how religion affects students. I am aware that the very concept of religion has been thoroughly problematized in anthropological literature. Suffice it is to say for the sake of my project that it does enjoy widespread currency in ordinary language in Egypt, manifesting a distinct way to relate to one's self in a secular modern context. This is why I chose to ask the respondents how religious they consider themselves.

After listening to my adult interlocutors speak of their students and their families, I began to wonder whether students respected these "authority" figures and viewed them as "experts of care." Would students choose to be self-reflective and read a self-help book to discern how they should care for themselves or accomplish a goal? Would they voluntarily seek out professional counseling to help them cope with life's struggles? I suggest that: (1.) students are more likely to turn to forms of caring for themselves which do not include reading self-help literature or seeking out professional counseling, (2.) there may be a correlation between the self-identification of students as "religious" and the ways they choose to alleviate stress and (3.) the type of high school they attended might affect the way they choose to alleviate stress and their perceptions of globalized notions of well being. The analysis in this chapter will compare the statistically

significant relationships using cross tabulations and Pearson’s Chi-Square between my two independent variables and students’ responses to particular questions. Therefore, the independent variable represented in Table 4.1 is the primary indicator of students’ education background that is used throughout the chapter. The following tables describe the educational and religious backgrounds of my respondents:

Table 4.1: Secondary School Attended

	Frequency	Percentage
Public School in Egypt	8	7
Private School in Egypt	93	81
Public School Outside of Egypt	7	6
Private School Outside of Egypt	7	6
Total	115	100

Table 4.2: Religious Orientation

	Frequency	Percentage
Agnostic/Undecided	2	2
Atheist	1	1
Christian	18	16
Muslim	94	82
Total	115	100

Table 4.3: Religiosity

	Frequency	Percentage
Not Religious	22	19
Somewhat Religious	88	77
Extremely Religious	5	4
Total	115	100

Discourses of Well Being

As previously demonstrated, the discourse published on international schools' websites in Cairo about becoming one's self and reaching one's full potential is difficult to dispute as a personal aspiration. In this section, I investigate how particular discourses and ideological representations of well being in contemporary Egyptian private schools are reflected in the attitudes and perceptions of the elite Egyptian university students I surveyed. In order to measure how Egyptian university students validate globalized discourses of well being, respondents were asked to indicate their subjective level of agreement with specific statements that represent globalized concepts about mental and ethical well being. Responses ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree (1-4). The first cross tabulation that proved to be statistically significant was between the statement, "Individual freedom improves one's individual well being" and what kind of secondary school the respondent attended:

Table 4.4: 'Individual Freedom Improves One's Individual Well Being' and Secondary School Attended

	Public School in Egypt	Private School in Egypt	Public School Outside of Egypt	Private School Outside of Egypt	Total
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	14 %	1 %
Disagree	0	11 %	0	0	9 %
Neutral	25 %	22 %	29 %	43 %	24 %
Agree	38 %	34 %	43 %	0	33 %
Strongly Agree	38 %	33 %	29 %	43 %	34 %
Total Count	8	93	7	7	115
Total Percentage Within High School Attended	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

The Pearson Chi-Square value for Table 4.4 was 22.034 and the p value equaled .037. Only 10% of students disagreed with this statement while 67% agreed to some extent regardless of what kind of secondary school they attended. However, those who went to a private school in Egypt are slightly more likely to disagree with this statement than those who attended a public school in Egypt. This is noteworthy because one would expect that those who went to a private school in Egypt would be more likely to agree that individual freedom improves one's individual well being. As these statistics illustrate, some students have an experience of "the burden of freedom" and it might be on the basis of this experience that some of them are skeptical about the connection between freedom and well being. Another interesting statistic is the percentage of students who strongly disagreed with the statement as they attended private schools outside of Egypt. Still, the majority of respondents seem to buy into the discourse of freedom as a successful venture.

While private schools present certain promises to families and students through their online discourse including promises about producing a certain kind of global citizen who is free to help him/herself toward well being and human flourishing, the results from this analysis indicate that the concept of freedom is "grounded in the emergence of a new way of understanding and acting upon human beings as subjects of freedom" within a larger advanced or neoliberal ideology (Rose 2004:84). Though sites of education are vital for the transmission of ideologies of freedom, it does not seem to matter in this case whether students attended a public or private secondary school and their perception of the relation between individual freedom and individual well being.

I use Nikolas Rose’s concept of freedom as autonomy to better understand these particular results of my survey. “Freedom is seen as autonomy, the capacity to realize one’s desires in one’s secular life, to fulfill one’s potential through one’s own endeavours, to determine the course of one’s own existence through acts of choice” (Rose 2004:84). Freedom as autonomy, in this way, seems to be successfully encouraged by the discourse of international schools in Cairo as argued previously. However, in Egypt, family and religious attachments serve as important social mechanisms in regulating every day life (see Ahmed 1992). In order to measure how neoliberal discourses about attachments toward the family are validated by Egyptian university students, respondents were asked to indicate their subjective level of agreement with a specific statement published in a marketing brochure by The American University in Cairo’s Student Counseling Center. The following table demonstrates a relationship between how religious students consider themselves and their subjective level of agreement with the statement in the brochure, “The demand on one’s ability to please their family has increased.”

Table 4.5: ‘The Demand on One’s Ability to Please Their Family Has Increased’ and Religiosity

	Not Religious At All	Somewhat Religious	Extremely Religious	Total
Strongly Disagree	0	0	20 %	1 %
Disagree	18 %	15 %	40 %	17 %
Neutral	18 %	24 %	0	22 %
Agree	36 %	39 %	20 %	37 %
Strongly Agree	14 %	13 %	0	12 %

Total Count	22	88	5	115
Total Percentage Within High School Attended	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

The Pearson Chi-Square value for Table 2.2 was 26.898 and the p-value equaled .003 so there is a relationship between the two variables. Regardless of the students' perceptions about the extent to which individual freedom improves one's state of well being, the expectation to please one's family remains a prevalent perception among those who consider themselves religious or not religious at all. Specifically though, those who considered themselves more religious were more likely to disagree. Also, the less religious feel more pressure to please their family and pleasing themselves as an individual. In other words, the perception of freedom as autonomy is in tension with collective values that place importance on kinship ties in Egypt, particularly among those who consider themselves less religious.

This result also supports the perceptions of one of my interlocutors, Dr. Hamed, an Egyptian psychologist who works privately part time with clients and teaches at an international university in Cairo. As an Egyptian national educated in the West, Dr. Hamed takes pride in his field of work much like my other interlocutors. His discussion of his own relational Egyptian culture is influenced by his knowledge of certain liberal divides like collectivist and individualistic cultures:

Our (Egyptian) culture is very relational. Which means people's well being depends on the acceptance of the other. The idea early on in life that you need to be unique and find your individuality and find your inner voice doesn't really apply so much to the Egyptian culture. In a collectivist culture, you really have a self that is very porous, the group is more important than the individual (Field notes, March 1, 2012).

Though Dr. Hamed's assertion that the group is more important than the individual in Egyptian society, in the statement "The demand on one's ability to please their family has increased," the word "ability" strikes me as significant in understanding the tension between freedom as autonomy and the particular cultural value of kinship in Egypt. The value or perception of pleasing one's family shifts to a certain kind of behavior and more specifically, an individual striving to please one's family in this phrasing. The ability to please one's family is therefore self-responsibilized in this case, through the individual capacity to please one's family. Interestingly, 60% of respondents who considered themselves to be intensely religious disagreed with this statement. This statistic could be attributed to the way in which patriarchal values about the family remain indoctrinated through religion in Egypt (see Ahmed 1992) and therefore, the perception among more religious students is that the demand to please their family has not increased. A more critical engagement, however, provides evidence that assumed connections between religion, indoctrination, and patriarchy tell us very little about actual "oriental" worlds but speak volumes about the assumptions of secular liberalism. One could also infer that the more self-fashioned religious students disagree with this statement because caring for one's family can also function as a mode of caring for one's self.(?)

Ideologically, late liberal discourse about freedom, well being, and the ability to please one's family proved statistically significant in my survey analysis. Therefore, particular perceptions have taken hold among elite Egyptian university students though it cannot be concretely proven that it is the work of international schools that do so in this instance. In the next section, I use my survey results to test how one's educational background and religiosity influence the care of one's autonomous self.

Self Care

Choices of self care are of particular interest to my research project. In this section, I will highlight how the self who says, “I am stressed” or “I am depressed” may also confront a self that lends itself to action—“I should do something to take care of this.” I specifically chose to inquire about two forms of self-care in my survey because of their economic function within a neoliberal framework and also because of their recent and expanding influence among Egypt’s elite: (1.) individual counseling and (2.) self-help books. For an elite class of Egyptian students, forms of caring for one’s self through psychological counseling and self-help books have become more readily available over the past thirty years. English bookstores in Cairo have designated “self-help” sections and international universities have psychology departments as well as counseling centers on campus. Are Egyptian students likely to choose these specific forms of self-care despite their exposure to them at private schools in Cairo or popular mass media?

Of the students I surveyed, 17% indicated they had been to the counseling center on campus, 64% had not, and 20% did not know what the counseling center was. Concerning students’ use of self-help books to care for themselves, 26% of the survey respondents had read a self-help book. Though 67% indicated they had never read a self-help book, only 7% said they did not know what a “self-help” book was which is a smaller percentage than the 26% who did not know what the counseling center on their campus was. On the questionnaire, I also asked students to mention the title(s) of the

self-help book they read or the general topic the book covered. Included in the topics considered “self-help” to these particular university students are the following:

-
- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| ▪ Body Image | ▪ Philosophy |
| ▪ Business | ▪ Public Speaking |
| ▪ Confidence | ▪ Self-esteem |
| ▪ Efficiency | ▪ Self-development |
| ▪ Leadership Skills Development | ▪ Selling |
| ▪ Online Skills | ▪ Steps to Success |
| ▪ Organization | ▪ Relationships |
| | ▪ Time Management |
-

The specific self-help book titles listed as read by respondents included: *Understanding Body Language*, *Be Yourself*, *Be Happy*, *How to Gain Confidence*, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, *The Alchemist*, and *The Secret*. Several of these books have appeared on bestseller lists and can be found in local bookstores. The areas of life for which students seek help or guidance are represented broadly and diversely here, but they all point to a self-responsibilized way of caring for one’s self or a self-reflective journey of discovery. Even still, the Egyptian university students I surveyed do not predominantly use these forms of self care.

If these forms of self care are unpopular among elite Egyptian students, then which forms are more prevalent? In order to measure students’ behaviors of self care, I also asked respondents to indicate ways in which they alleviate their own stress. Students were given a list of possible ways to alleviate stress and asked to indicate whether they did or did not partake in these activities to alleviate stress. The following frequency distributions describe their behaviors:

Table 4.6: Ways to Alleviate Stress

		Frequency	Percentage
Spend Time Alone	No	33	29
	Yes	82	71
	Total	115	100
Shop	No	90	78
	Yes	25	22
	Total	115	100
Meditate	No	96	83
	Yes	19	17
	Total	115	100
Read a book	No	88	77
	Yes	27	23
	Total	115	100
Journal/blog	No	98	85
	Yes	17	15
	Total	115	100
Pray	No	38	33
	Yes	77	67
	Total	115	100
Exercise	No	45	39
	Yes	70	61
	Total	115	100
Drink	No	88	77
	Yes	27	23
	Total	115	100
Smoke	No	76	66
	Yes	39	34
	Total	115	100
		Frequency	Percentage
Talk to a family member	No	50	44
	Yes	65	56
	Total	115	100
Talk to a friend	No	7	44

	Yes	108	56
	Total	115	100
Seek professional counseling	No	105	91
	Yes	10	9
	Total	115	100

Only 9% of students said they would seek professional counseling to alleviate their personal stress while a majority of students chose other forms of alleviating their own stress: 71% indicated they prefer to spend time alone, 67% indicated they choose to pray, 61% exercise, 56% talk to a family member, and 94% talk to a friend. Additionally, students could select “other” and write open-ended ways of alleviating their own stress that were not included in the original list. The responses included: social networking online, going out with friends, getting a massage, listening to music, singing, dancing, watching movies or television, spending time with a boyfriend or girlfriend, spending time with siblings, traveling, sleeping, driving around at night, listening to the Quran, and daydreaming. Although these activities include more individualized behaviors (i.e. spending time alone, listening to music) and more social behaviors (i.e. talking to a friend, spending time with siblings), there was not a statistically significant relationship between the secondary school attended and chosen methods of caring for one’s stress. There is, on the other hand, a statistically significant relationship between religiosity and two forms of alleviating stress: smoking and praying:

Table 4.7: Religiosity and Alleviating Stress

Smoking to Alleviate Stress	Not Religious at All	Somewhat Religious	Extremely Religious	Total

	No	36 %	74 %	60%	66 %
	Yes	64 %	26 %	40%	34 %
	Total Count	22	88	5	115
	Total Percentage Within Religiosity	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Chi-square value = 11.130 P-value = .004					

Praying to Alleviate Stress	No	72.7%	23.9%	20%	33%
	Yes	27.3%	76.1%	80%	67%
	Total Count	22	88	5	115
	Total Percentage Within Religiosity	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Chi-square value = 19.395 P-value = .000					

Of the 88 respondents who indicated they would consider themselves somewhat religious, 74% do not smoke to alleviate stress. Respondents who consider themselves more religious are not likely to smoke to relieve stress, but those who considered them less religious were more likely to smoke to alleviate stress. Overall, smoking does not appear to be a common form of alleviating stress for this sample of Egyptian students with only 34% choosing to do so regardless of their personal religiosity. A majority of students, 67%, choose to pray to alleviate stress despite how religious they consider

themselves; however, the less religious students are not as likely to pray which is less surprising.

When choosing to care for one's individual stress, the majority of the elite Egyptian students surveyed do not turn to more privileged forms of care such as personal counseling. To a certain extent, this sample of students choose to care for themselves in much more common ways of spending time alone or spending time with others. Therefore, globalized forms of self care like individual counseling or self help books, despite their recent infiltration in Egyptian society and function in international schools in Cairo, are not widely perceived as viable means to alleviate stress among the students surveyed. Yet these results also begin to point to how neoliberalism and religion can work together in an ethical project of caring for one's self.

Senses of Well Being

In this section I make the distinction between caring for one's well being and relating to one's well being. The problem of freedom "now comes to be understood in terms of the capacity of an autonomous individual to establish an identity through shaping a meaningful everyday life" (Rose 2004:84). At any given time for a privileged social class, that which can be understood as living a "meaningful everyday life," can at the same time be a source of stress or cause feelings of depression or anxiety. In this instance of privileged individuals, to assess one's own suffering also produces particular ways of relating to one's self.

In order to capture how students relate to their own well being, I asked respondents to rank their level of concern about their personal stress on a scale of very concerned to not concerned at all (1-4).

Table 4.8: Level of Concern About One's Own Stress

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Concerned	24	21
Moderately Concerned	52	45
Slightly Concerned	24	21
Not Concerned	15	13
Total	115	100

Cumulatively, Table 4.8 signifies that 87% of the respondents were concerned to some extent with their own stress. My interlocutors expressed little acknowledgement or concern regarding how students relate to their individual pain, suffering, or distress. Interestingly, within the group of students who attended a public secondary school in Egypt, 100% were concerned about their own stress, while 86% of students who attended private schools were concerned about their own stress. These results suggest that the vague concept of stress is of concern to elite students regardless of the secondary school they attended. Relating to one's own stress as a matter of individual concern also suggests the changing ways in which "people relate to themselves, the kinds of people we take ourselves to be at particular times [...] and the ways in which varying presuppositions about the nature of human beings are embodied in technologies that will enable people to be governed, and to govern themselves" (Rose 2004:84). For one to utter the popular idiom "I am stressed out" or to acknowledge concern for one's own stress is a mode of governing one's self while simultaneously enabling the need to be governed. As the previous section demonstrated, the desire and ability to alleviate stress

is not just a concern for Egyptian students, but a mode of behaving and governing one's self.

Moreover, I was interested in knowing more from students themselves about what particular things cause them stress in their every day lives. Respondents were asked to measure seven sources of stress on a five-item scale. Only one cross tabulation analysis proved to be statistically significant:

Table 4.9: Family Expectations Affecting Daily Stress Level and High School Attended

	Public School In Egypt	Private School In Egypt	Public School Outside of Egypt	Private School Outside of Egypt	Total
Causes No Stress	0	4 %	57 %	29 %	9 %
Causes Little Stress	25 %	24 %	0	29 %	23 %
Neutral	0	28 %	0	0	23 %
Causes Moderate Stress	38 %	29 %	29 %	43 %	30 %
Causes Much Stress	37 %	15 %	14 %	0	16 %
Total Count	8	93	7	7	115
Total Percentage Within High School Attended	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

The Chi-square value for Table 4.9 is 36.863 with the p-value equaling .000 which indicates a significant relationship. The students educated outside of Egypt are less stressed by their families perhaps because their families do not live in Cairo with them. Among the 93 respondents who indicated they attended a private secondary school in Egypt, 68% specified that family expectations cause them some amount of stress on a

daily basis. A few of my interlocutors believed that the privileged status of their students' families did not cause distress but instead produced a sense of entitlement that lends itself to students misbehaving, failing classes, and skipping school. While statistically significant, it is worth noting that family expectations in contemporary Egyptian society remain influential forces regardless of educational background.

Conclusions

Using survey methods and analysis, I demonstrated in this chapter how particular values of Egyptian society and an ethical project of late liberalism are embodied within the social worlds of particular Egyptian university students. There was not a statistically significant relationship between nationally affiliated private schools and the dependent variables I investigated. It is difficult to compare those who went to international schools versus public schools because so few went to public schools. It cannot be conclusively stated that those who went to international schools or private schools in Egypt were different from those who attended public schools in Egypt based on my sample, but there are suggestive figures differentiating students' perceptions of globalized notions of well being and care depending on the secondary school they attended.

Perceptions of individual freedom and well being were similar among students who attended public schools in Egypt and private schools in Egypt. Still, those who went to private schools were more likely to disagree with the statement 'Individual freedom improves one's individual well being' than those who attended public schools. The students who identify themselves as more religious were more likely to disagree with the

statement, ‘The demand on one’s ability to please their family has increased.’ Forms of self-care such as professional psychological counseling and reading self help books were not popular ways of alleviating stress. Students’ perceptions of their own religiosity and ways of alleviating stress tended to have a stronger statistical relation. Those that were more religious were more likely to pray to alleviate stress, which suggests the striking availability of prayer as a way to deal with the burden of freedom. Finally, concern for one’s stress and sense of well being was prevalent among students from public and private educational backgrounds in Egypt, including students attitudes toward family expectations impacting their daily stress levels.

The collected data cannot be generalized to a larger population because of my sample. It also cannot be concluded whether or not the discourse of international schools researched in previous chapters has had a significant impact on students’ perceptions of notions of globalized well being since responses were similar among students who attended public or private schools. Nor can it be concluded that the work of private school teachers and counselors has left a significant impact on this cross-sectional sample of Egyptian students in regards to how they care for themselves or come to relate to their own pain, suffering, and distress since so few of the students choose to partake in professional counseling or read a self help book. Despite the limitations of this survey and data, it can be inferred that the ethical project of late liberalism remains elusive but present in Cairo, where other forms of ethical commitments and desires are embodied in elite subjects as they endeavor toward “the good life.” More research needs to be conducted at public and private schools in Egypt, including larger and more representative sample sizes, in order to better understand how cultural forms of caring for

one's self and perceptions of globalized notions of well being have an effect on Egypt's elite youth.

V. Conclusion

A psychological being is now placed at the origin of all the activities of loving, desiring, speaking, laboring, sickening, and dying: the interiority that has been given to humans by all those projects which would seek to know them and act upon them in order to tell them their truth and make possible their improvement and their happiness. It is this being, whose invention is so recent yet so fundamental to our contemporary experience that we today seek to govern under the regulative ideal of freedom—an ideal that imposes as many burdens, anxieties, and divisions as it inspires projects of emancipation, and in the name of which we have come to authorize so many authorities to assist us in the project of being free from any authority but our own (Rose 1996:197).

This research project has critiqued privilege for how it works to reconfigure our interiority, but at the same time, it sheds light on the significance of privileged individuals and institutions as a point of social science research in contemporary society. It has not been an easy task. As an American middle-class female born in the early 1980s, I am a privileged, liberal subject. My privilege has directed the course of my life and the labor of becoming myself, fulfilling my potential, and my capacity to suffer autonomously and responsibly. I cannot escape this ethical project. I want “the good life” as much as my interlocutors or the students I surveyed, but I do not want to be a slave to it.

When I began working with Middle Eastern students in the United States in 2006, the seeds of this research project were planted though I could not see it then. All of them, who are now close friends, were in conflict between being an autonomous free subject in America and honoring their family and religion. They often expressed to me that they could not find peace of mind, and they doubted their individual choices on a daily basis. I wanted to study this conflict and expose it because I believe, like the theorists I have used here, it is radically changing what it means to simply live and survive in today’s

world. The ethical power of late liberalism embellishes the ordinary in such a way that leaves us longing, and often times it is precisely the embellishing that cruelly gets in our way of ever actualizing what we longed for in the beginning. It is masked so tenuously; we must daily “contort” our “voice and body to fit its shifting horizon” (Povinelli 2006:58).

My original aim was to investigate whether various “elite” institutions of education function as transmission points for the globalization of particular categories of well being, suffering and care, along with specific notions of self-realization. Based on my survey results, it cannot be concluded that the site of international schools is significantly influential of these categories and perceptions of well being in liberal thought. My interlocutors and the discourse of international schools, however, provide evidence that an ethical project of inventing one’s self through formal education is tightly bound to neoliberal economic ideology. The teachers and counselors I interviewed throughout the course of this project also provide evidence of how particular practices and perceptions are dispersed to Egyptian students in order to “help” them survive as a liberal subject. All of the evidence presented in this project draws attention to “the set of dissolving assurances [...] the sense that liberal-capitalist society will reliably provide opportunities for individuals to carve out relations of reciprocity that seem fair and that foster life as a project of adding up to something and constructing cushions for enjoyment” (Berlant 2011:3).

More research needs to be conducted in order to better understand the many facets of this project in contemporary Egypt including issues of gender, class, and political orientation to better apprehend its potential “trickle down effect” on how suffering and

social injustices are understood and affect the well being of citizens and Egyptian society.

In my own future research, I aim to conduct ethnographic fieldwork of Egyptian expatriates with the purpose of gathering more in depth accounts of how their efforts toward “the good life” have negotiated manifestations of culture, care, and freedom.

There will always be new modes of inventing ourselves, and the social sciences should be concerned with how these individual practices impact and perforate every aspect of social life.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY

IF YOU ARE NOT 18 OR OLDER, PLEASE DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN THIS SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to better understand how students attending international schools in Cairo perceive and come to know about concepts of well being, personal fulfillment, and personal achievement. The survey takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. You are not required to respond to this questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary. This is an anonymous, confidential survey and no information, which could identify you, will be recorded with your responses. Your answers will remain strictly confidential, so please be as honest as possible. Thank you for your participation and help in obtaining my graduate degree.

Please circle only one answer for the following questions.

1. Sex:
 Female
 Male

2. Religious Orientation:
 Agnostic or undecided
 Atheist
 Christian
 Jewish
 Muslim
 Other, please specify: _____

3. Relationship Status:
 Married
 Engaged
 Single
 Have a boyfriend/girlfriend

4. Current Education Level:
 Freshman
 Sophomore
 Junior
 Senior
 Graduate Student

5. Major(s) or Field(s) of Study: _____

6. All countries for which you hold a passport/nationality:

7. Which university(ies) are you currently enrolled in? (please select all that apply)
- German University in Cairo
- The American University in Cairo
- Other (please specify): _____
8. What kind of high school did you attend?
- Public/Government school in Egypt
- Private school in Egypt
- Public school outside of Egypt (please specify where): _____
- Private school outside of Egypt (please specify where): _____
9. Was your high school associated with a religion?
- Yes (specify which one): _____
- No
10. Was your high school associated with a specific country (i.e. international school)?
- Yes (specify which country/countries): _____
- No
11. What language(s) would you consider yourself a native speaker? (Please check all that apply):
- Arabic
- English
- German
- French
- Other (please list): _____
12. On a scale from 1 (=not religious at all) to 5 (=extremely religious), how religious do you consider yourself? _____
13. Have you ever used the counseling services on your campus?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know what that is
14. Have you ever read a "self-help" book?
- Yes (specify the topic/s): _____
- No
- I don't know what that is
15. How concerned are you with your level of stress?

- Very concerned
- Moderately concerned
- Slightly concerned
- Not concerned

16. On a scale from 1 (= causes me no stress) to 5 (= causes me a great deal of stress), please rate how the following things affect your daily stress level:

- Romantic relationships
- School work and assignments
- Current political situation in Egypt
- School grades
- Physical appearance/attractiveness
- Family expectations
- Friends
- Getting married
- Money
- Future career
- Finding work outside of Egypt

17. Please check the things you do on a regular basis to alleviate stress:

- Talk to a friend
- Talk to a family member
- Smoke
- Drink alcohol
- Exercise
- Pray
- Journal/blog
- Read a book
- Seek professional counseling
- Meditate
- Shop
- Spend time alone
- Other (please

specify): _____

Indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how much you agree with the following statements.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral/ Undecided

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

18. The demand on one's ability to please their family has increased.	
19. The pressure placed on individuals to achieve in all spheres of life has increased.	
20. The pressure placed on individual productivity has increased.	
21. Well being can be defined as one reaching their full potential in life.	
22. Individual freedom improves one's individual well being.	
23. People should take responsibility for their suffering.	
24. The more choices one has in life, the happier they are.	

Please read each statement and choose a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 that indicates how much the statement applied to you **OVER THE PAST WEEK**. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement. The rating scale is as follows:

0= Did not apply to me at all

1= Applied to me to some of the time

2= Applied to me to a good part of time

3= Applied to me most of the time

25. I found it hard to relax	
26. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	
27. I thought highly of myself	
28. I found it difficult to work up the initiative (or motivation) to do things	
29. I felt anxious and panicked	
30. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing	
31. I enjoyed life	
32. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	
33. I found myself getting easily irritated	
34. I felt down and sad	
35. I felt I could reach my full potential	
36. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	
37. I felt responsible for my own fulfillment in life	
38. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	
39. I felt that life was meaningless	

On a scale of 1 to 3, indicate how likely you are to voluntarily attend the following wellness programs if they were offered on your campus:

1= Not Likely

2= Somewhat Likely

3= Very Likely

40. Effective Time Management	
41. Nutrition and Exercise	
42. How to Quit Smoking	
43. Coping with Grief/Bereavement	
44. Stress Management	
45. Improving Family Relationships	
46. Discovering Your Personality	
47. Money Management	
48. How to Be Happy	

Thank you for your participation and willingness to complete this survey. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of the survey or my interview procedures, please

do not hesitate to contact me at aecaldwell@aucegypt.edu or Dr. Sylvain Perdigon at perdigon@aucegypt.edu.