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The American University in Cairo  
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**THE DISCOURSE OF DRUG USE IN EGYPT:  
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPLORATORY STUDY**

A Thesis Submitted to  
Middle East Studies Center

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

by Alejandro Gutierrez

under the supervision of Dr. Mohammed Tabishat  
December 2015

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to better understand how Egyptian society constructs and labels the ‘deviant’ behavior of drug use. However, it is not about drugs per se, it is about scrutinizing the complex process through which Egyptian society encounters, experiences, and regulates behavior. Through an interdisciplinary approach, it builds an alternative and critical understanding of a stigmatized group of individuals by describing how they shape or are shaped by the dynamic system in which they exist. Thus, it creates a conversation between the structures of power that regulate the moral economy of society on the one hand and individuals practicing a role with their substance use on the other. It explores the structural power that disciplinary mechanisms have over ‘deviant behavior’, while simultaneously illustrating that ‘deviant drug users’ are judged according to a variety of unique circumstances and spectrum of acceptability. While some are successfully stigmatized for violating norms, others are able to retain their autonomy and shape their own rules and value systems outside the judgment of mainstream society. So, by using drug use as a lens to examine society, this thesis analyzes the fluidity of power within society in this context and also the ambiguity of behavior within different times and spaces. Ultimately, this thesis shows that deviant behavior like drug use is essential to any society that designates boundaries and rules. For how do individuals know what roles, interactions, behavior, value systems, are legitimate if society doesn’t create a ‘deviant other’ whose transgressions teach right from wrong, lawful from unlawful, and the acceptable from the unacceptable.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	The Context.....	3
1.	A Brief History of Drugs in Egypt.....	4
2.	Drug Use in Contemporary Egypt .....	7
3.	Theoretical and Methodological Framework: Discourse Analysis and an Alternative Approach to Drug Research.....	8
B.	Methodology and Limitations.....	12
C.	Exploring Egyptian Society: Chapter Outline .....	13
1.	A Broader Drug Discourse.....	13
2.	Muhammad: The Repressive System and its Hold Over a Drug User .....	14
3.	Deviance, Labeling, Liminality and Communitas .....	14
II.	CHAPTER TWO: IDENTIFYING THE DRUG DISCOURSE IN EGYPT .....	16
A.	Introduction.....	16
B.	Drug Discourse and Power Relations in Egypt: An Assortment of discourse.....	17
C.	Prevailing Drug Discourse in Egypt: .....	18
1.	Governmental/ State Discourse.....	18
2.	Religious Discourse .....	25
i.	The <i>Fatwa: Hukm Ta`āti al-Makhadarāt</i> (The Rule of Drug Use).....	27
ii.	Dar al-ifta' .....	32
iii.	Perspectives from an Imam: Dr. Hassan .....	35
3.	Popular Culture: .....	39
i.	Amr Khaled's Anti-Drug Campaign: Hamāya /Stop Drugs. Change Your Life.....	39
ii.	Sha`ban A`bdal Rahim and Ahmad Mekky: Juxtaposing Egyptian Drug Songs .....	43
iii.	Drugs in Literature: Mahfouz and Youssef.....	49
iv.	Representations of Drugs in News, Television, and Film .....	54
B.	Conclusion: Creating A Broader Discourse of Drugs in Egypt.....	59

III. CHAPTER THREE: THE REPRESSIVE SYSTEM AND ITS HOLD OVER A DRUG USER .....	61
A. Introduction .....	61
B. Foucault and Goffman: An Integrated Approach to Studying Stigmatized Behavior .....	62
C. Muhammad the ‘Drug Addict’ Caught in a Repressive System .....	64
D. Muhammad: Escaping ‘Total Institutions’ .....	68
E. Family: An Institution within the Repressive System .....	71
F. Conclusion .....	75
IV. CHAPTER FOUR: DEVIANCE, LABELING, LIMINAL SPACE AND THE REALITY OF DRUG USE IN EGYPTIAN SOCIETY .....	77
A. Introduction .....	77
B. Defining Drug Deviance and Processes of Labeling .....	79
1. Becoming a “Deviant” Drug User in Egypt: A Users Perspective of General Conditions .....	81
2. Becoming a “Deviant” Drug User in Egypt: A Unique Experience .....	85
C. Liminality and Communitas: Creating Drug Space in Egypt .....	93
1. Drug-Selling Sites: From <i>Hashīsh</i> to Heroin .....	95
2. Nightclubs: The Drug Privilege .....	98
3. Southern Sinai/ Dahab and Ras Shaytān: A Drug Holiday .....	101
4. Recognized Drug Space in Egypt: Weddings, Cafes, and Cabarets .....	105
D. Conclusion .....	108
V. CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION .....	111
A. Findings .....	111
B. Theoretical Implications and Contributions to Drug Research .....	113
C. Limitations and Future Research .....	114
D. Conclusion: Ongoing Debates .....	116
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	118

## List of Illustrations

“The Drug Victims” .....	55
“A Healthy Man and A Heroin Addict” .....	56
“Receipt for a Pill” .....	103



## I. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis studies the process by which individual behaviors are constructed and labeled in Egypt. It focuses on drug use in Cairo, and examines differences between the way it is actually practiced and the publicly accepted narratives about it.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, it aims to show how behavior is shaped by a host of social conditions rooted in economic life and expressed in the powerful institutions of the media, the family life, and the law among others.

As part of the larger research field of deviance, this project creates a conversation between the structures of power that manage the moral economy of society through representation and the individuals who practice a role with their substance use. Consequently, it is not exclusively concerned with the drug user, but also the parties responsible for judging the individual and his/her behavior. As sociologist Kai Erikson writes, “the critical variable in the study of deviance is the social audience rather than the individual, since it is the audience which eventually decides whether or not any given action or actions will become a visible case of deviation”.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, this thesis takes up other shortcomings in the study of deviance and drug use.

Drug use research has generally been guided by the hegemonic health and public safety discourses, often failing to properly recognize drug users’ subjective interpretations of their own experiences. In the case of Egypt, the drug user is often stereotypically portrayed in film, literature, newspapers, and even talk shows, as a “deviant other”, i.e. a person to be punished or ostracized from society. Examples for this can be found in Egyptian films like *al-Kayf* (The High), where drug use is associated with individuals ruined by addiction and their inappropriate behavior threatens themselves and ultimately all of society. The Egyptian media further strengthens these representations by constantly reporting on arrests of *taggar al-makhadarāt* (drug dealers), drug busts, drug

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Tupper, "Psychoactive substances and the English language:

<sup>2</sup> Erikson, "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance: ." *Social Problems* (1962): 307-314.

related deaths, or drug epidemics of *bersham* (pills) and heroin.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, these representations, fail to properly identify drug users as individuals with dynamic links to society. Furthermore, research and particularly research targeting Egyptian drug users has failed to examine drug users as active social agents who negotiate their lived realities.

In categorizing drug users as *mūdmīn al-makhadarāt* (drug addicts), the drug users experiences, knowledge on cultural aspects of drugs, and power relations of substances are hardly given priority as areas of study. Generally, research and Egyptian research in particular has failed to examine drug users as active social agents. In fact, though it is understood they are “immersed in a complex social structure, relating to other actors in their social group”, they are still generally viewed as “isolated, passive and decontextualized individuals”.<sup>4</sup> It is imperative to challenge and change this research gap by interpreting deviance “not as a static entity whose causes are to be sought out, but rather as a dynamic process” of socio-symbolic interaction between deviants and the public they live and are made by.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis uses illicit drug use as a lens to gain insights into how Egyptian society sets its boundaries for the acceptable and the unacceptable. It demonstrates how the “moral conscience” (morals and law) of this society is able to over time produce a “grey area” that allows individuals to use illicit drugs while still being accepted in Egyptian society in general. Eventually, it attempts to discover how local norms are reproduced over time through processes of normalization that “transform some of this fluidity into more fixed forms (rules, categories, customs, symbols, rituals, organizations, and the like)”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A simple online web search at *Ahram Online*, Egypt’s state-newspaper, results in numerous stories and vivid pictures of police drug busts throughout Egypt.

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Barker, and Judith C. "Socio-cultural anthropology and alcohol and drug research: towards a unified theory." *Social Science and Medicine* (2001): 169

<sup>5</sup> Alex Thio, Jim Taylor and Martin Schwartz, *Deviant Behavior*, 11th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2012), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Sally Moore, *Law as process: An Anthropological Approach* ( London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 50.

In addition to extensive documentary research, this project is the result of ethnographic research conducted between February 2014 and May 2015.<sup>7</sup> This entailed qualitative interviews with drug users, drug dealers, and social actors related to the drug field. In addition to this, this thesis includes participant-observation that occurred at several sites like nightclubs, cabarets, or drug selling areas where the behavior was encountered firsthand. A crucial aspect of my research was concerned with the manner in which drug users identified themselves, if they contest labels applied to them. Ultimately I tried to examine the relationship between drug users and those with the power to label in society.

My research was affected and limited by the sensitivity of the drug-use topic. Some of the major issues included: difficulty finding informants, gaining their trust and insuring confidentiality, considering legal aspects, and ensuring the integrity of the information I acquired. Despite facing these issues, I have obtained invaluable data that problematizes the drug use phenomenon in Egypt.

## **A. The Context**

Little has been written about drug use as a social manifestation in a relatively conservative society like Egypt. Furthermore, anthropological research on alcohol and drugs has also generally failed to have any effect on theoretical developments, in either mainstream anthropology or in other anthropological sub-disciplines.<sup>8</sup> Thus, by breaking with the tradition of quantitative research, this work aims to open up a new avenue into the sociology of deviance and study of drug use in general.

This thesis is an academic-social commentary on contemporary Egyptian society and fills a gap in the study of drug use in Egypt. As an interdisciplinary project, it incorporates sociology, social anthropology, and cultural studies among other disciplines. First, the methodological approach employs discourse analysis in the second chapter;

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<sup>7</sup> This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the American University in Cairo, and all interviews and observations were conducted in accordance with the ethics of research involving human subjects by the IRB.

<sup>8</sup> Barker, and Judith C, 170.

using this strategy to analyze and contextualize various examples of drug discourse in order to create a broader, more complete definition of drug discourse in Egypt. This drug discourse is then used in the third chapter to examine the rigid structure of society and its power over regulating behavior of stigmatized individuals. The fourth chapter is grounded in current sociological theories of deviance in addition to the Victor Turners' (1969) concepts of liminality and *communitas* that are utilized to better describe space affiliated with drug use. Finally, the empirical research is based on the methodological structures derived from Bourgois' (1996), and Tabishats (2014) ethnographic monographs.

This combined theoretical and methodological approach uncovers how Egyptian society delineates specific boundaries for the acceptable (ex. *ḥarām* (forbidden), *ʿāīb* (shameful)), while simultaneously creating a “grey area” where drinking alcohol, smoking *ḥashīsh*, or using other drugs could be considered socially acceptable, although not readily so in all public spaces. Ultimately, this project aims to transcend current categories and moral categorizations in order to better examine the broader cultural value system of Egyptian society.

## 1. A Brief History of Drugs in Egypt

While this thesis focuses on the contemporary, it is essential to reflect on past drug trends throughout Egyptian history which, when taking a closer look is in fact quite rich. Scholars agree that as early as the eighth century A.D Arab traders brought opium to Asia, and by the tenth century were regularly trading the drug to all parts of Europe.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, manuscripts from the sixteenth century detail drug use in Turkey, Egypt, and Europe.<sup>10</sup> However, opium is just one of the many drugs that demonstrates how a substance intertwines with the social, political, and economic forces of society.

*Hashīsh/bāngu* (Cannabis) has always been one of the more popular drugs in Egypt, carrying with it a long and complicated history. Cannabis has been traced back as

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Brownstein, "A Brief History of Opiates, Opioid Peptides, and Opioid Receptors," *National Academy of Science* 90, no. 12 (1993) : 5391.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

an intoxicant as early as eleventh century, and despite repeated attempts at its eradication, its use continues to be ingrained in the culture and people of Egypt.<sup>11</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte was one of the first to encounter and attempt to restrict the practice of cannabis use. In his 1798-1800 Egyptian military campaign, he was so troubled by the mass usage of cannabis affecting his soldiers that he issued a decree stating, “strong liquor made by some Moslems with a certain weed called hashish as well as the smoking of the flowering tops of hemp are forbidden in all of Egypt”.<sup>12</sup>

Later in the nineteenth century we find additional accounts chronicling the widespread use of cannabis in Egypt. European travelers observed that individuals from all strata of Egyptian society used the drug, consuming it for both recreational and for medicinal purposes.<sup>13</sup> However, by the late nineteenth century authorities stopped turning a blind eye to drug use and became increasingly concerned: "worried by the number of young men who took to smoking opium or hashish, deserting families, jobs and society".<sup>14</sup>

Due to this shift in public and government opinion, local authorities began to more actively restrict drug use. In 1887, local authorities banned the import and cultivation of cannabis; later, with Britain replacing the Ottoman Empire, similar measures such as the closing *mashashas* (*hashīsh* dens) occurred.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, these early half-hearted attempts at restricting drugs failed, enforcement was sporadic and corruption was endemic. Despite their widespread use, hashish and opium were well

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<sup>11</sup> Gabriel Nahas, "Hashish and drug abuse in Egypt during the 19th and 20th centuries." *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* (1985) : 428.

<sup>12</sup> Silvestre Sacy, "Des préparations enivrantes faites avec le chanvre." *Bulletin des Sciences médicales* 4 (1809) : 201-06, quoted in Gabriel Nahas, "Hashish and drug abuse in Egypt during the 19th and 20th centuries." *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* (1985) : 428.

<sup>13</sup> Aubert-Roche, L. (1843). Documents & Observations Concerning the Pestilence of Typhus. (221-249), quoted in Rowan Robinson, *Great Book of Hemp* (Rochester: Park Street Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Brian Inglis, *The Forbidden Game. A Social History of Drugs* (London: Published by Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), "Chapter 11: Russel Pasha" <http://www.psychedelic-library.org/inglis11.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Nahas, 428.

entrenched and not perceived as a significant social ill.

It was not until the so-called “white drug epidemic” following World War I that serious efforts to combat drug use were implemented. According to reports, the use of “white drugs”, heroin or cocaine, quickly spread in Egypt as there was “no legislation against them and were sold by a burgeoning pharmaceutical industry looking for new markets overseas”.<sup>16</sup> An Egyptian periodical, *The Sphinx*, sums up the drug usage conditions of the time with the report of a drug incident:

Considerable interest was aroused this week through the police raid on the premises of one of the most notorious drug traffickers of Cairo, a man who, under the cover of a pharmacist’s business, has long played his illegal trade with impunity. A quantity of cocaine and other narcotics was seized and two assistants were arrested on the spot. The proprietor of the business was also subsequently arrested, but later let out on bail [...] In any case it is gratifying to note the increased activity of the authorities where the drug traffic is concerned, especially as this extra vigilance does not seem to be confined to the capital, but has spread also to the provinces<sup>17</sup>

By the end of the 1920s Egyptian authorities continued and broadened their efforts to combat drug use. Laws passed in 1925, focused on prohibiting the use and trafficking of substances derived from opium, coca leaves, and cannabis. By the end of the decade, seizures of drugs became common as customs and coast guard officials regularly confiscated tons of *hashīsh* and opium smuggled from Greece, Syria, and Lebanon.<sup>18</sup>

Thomas Russell, an early and prominent anti-narcotics advocate, praised these domestic and international efforts. In an address to the Egyptian government he stated, “Thanks to the work of the League (of Nations) and to the general tightening up of the controls in Europe, the stream of illicit drugs into Egypt is limited.”<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that in the following decades Russell would lead the anti-narcotic movement, later becoming the head of the Central Narcotic Intelligence Bureau (C.N.I.B.), a precursor of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “Drug Traffic.” *The Sphinx: The English Illustrated Weekly*. August 15, 1925 : 8.

<sup>18</sup> Liat Kozma, “Cannabis Prohibition in Egypt, 1880–1939: From Local Ban to League of Nations Diplomacy.” *Middle Eastern Studies* (2011) : 449-450.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

today's Anti-Narcotics General Administration (ANGA).

## 2. Drug Use in Contemporary Egypt

Following World War II and the anti-narcotic movement of the early twentieth century, the Egyptian government transformed its fight against drugs into a full-fledged war. Government agencies began to actively search for *hashīsh* and opium crops to eradicate, they authorized higher penalties and longer incarceration terms for Egyptians who used or sold drugs, and worked more closely with Foreign Governments to slow the flow of drugs into the country. This war on drugs was further bolstered by a fatwa issued by the Grand Mufti of Egypt in the early 1940s; equating drugs with alcohol, a substance that is explicitly forbidden in Islam.<sup>20</sup>

This trend of an aggressive anti-narcotic policy was continued into the 1960s, as new drugs such as psychotherapeutic drugs, barbiturates, tranquilizers, and amphetamines became increasingly popular. In turn, Egypt increased its drug war efforts: in addition to becoming party to the 1961, 1971 and 1988 international drug control conventions, it also strengthened its national drug control laws (ANGA). According to the United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Egypt continues the “strict enforcement of the antidrug laws, strengthening them to include life imprisonment and heavy fines for traffickers, and a minimum of six months in prison for personal use of an illicit drug”.<sup>21</sup>

Egypt now pursues a more balanced approach of targeting both the supply and demand of drugs. Not only does the government continue to fight trafficking and use of drugs, but also newer progressive anti-drug initiatives focus on drug prevention and rehabilitation.<sup>22</sup> However, it has been shown that public facilities of reduction and recovery are corrupt, inadequate, and limited; meanwhile, better quality private rehabilitation is far too expensive for the majority of Egyptians.

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<sup>20</sup> Helen Miles, "Drugs - Egypt takes on the traffickers." *The Middle East* (1995) : 35-37.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, (Accessed 2015) [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/egypt/egypt\\_country\\_profile.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/egypt/egypt_country_profile.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Miles, 35-37.

### 3. Theoretical and Methodological Framework: Discourse Analysis and an Alternative Approach to Drug Research

Firstly, this thesis employs concepts from Foucauldian discourse analysis in order to identify, analyze, and contextualize discourse and in this process create a more inclusive Egyptian drug discourse. This strategy reveals that discourse is more than an object, text, or speech; it is also the space where societies' actors, institutions, and powers converge to impose their narratives and dogmas, perpetually transforming discourse according to the concerns of the period. It is an instrument involved in a process of "truth making", with powers throughout society engaged in its creation. As Michele Foucault explains:

Each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true<sup>23</sup>

Thus, discourse becomes the "truth" that institutions and social actors produce and use as an instrument of control within culture and society. Furthermore, institutions, social structures, and practices limit the free flow of discourse; resulting in foundational narratives, or discourses, of society that help label and define behavior.<sup>24</sup> These major discourses in turn constitute and ensure the reproduction of the social system with their narratives, reflecting the struggle for power between institutions who label behavior and individuals practicing drug use.

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<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131.

<sup>24</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse." *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 56-57. For more on the definition of discourse used in this thesis read Foucault's' lecture "The Order of Discourse" (1970).



However, it is a mistake to reduce discourse to specific narratives, to forms of representation, to language, or to text alone.<sup>25</sup> It must also be understood in terms of “social action and interaction” being careful to stress both text and context in the study of discourse in order to corroborate findings to extra-textual dimensions, like those of “space (geo-politics), time (history), architecture or material forms of practice”.<sup>26</sup> So it must be placed in a socio-political context in order to gauge its power and purpose over individuals’ behavior. By going beyond text, this theoretical approach engages all manner of discourse emphasizing its existence throughout society in a variety of different forms (language, practices, material reality, institutions, subjectivity). Ultimately we can observe how enmeshed discourse and power is in terms of the relations between the social institutions with the power to label a behavior and the individuals who practice the prohibited behavior.

Following the discussion of a “broader drug discourse” is an examination of the repressive systems discursive power over an individual and his/her behavior. By scrutinizing the life history of Muhammad, a former heroin addict, the third chapter describes how a drug user gets trapped in the rigid social system created by the hegemonic discourse producers in Egypt.<sup>27</sup> Using his experience with drugs and drug use as an example, we can observe how drug discourse marginalizes individuals who are identified publicly as ‘deviants’ that fail to follow accepted norms and values. However, examining the power of discursive operations and its control over drug users like Muhammad in the second and third chapter just partially describes drug use in Egypt. In order to complete the picture, the fourth chapter highlights another dimension where individuals are active and creative social agents of their own social reality.

By integrating modern sociological theories of deviance and anthropological concepts of liminality, an alternative approach to the study of drug use in Egypt is

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<sup>25</sup> Derek Hook, "Discourse, knowledge, materiality, history : Foucault and discourse analysis." *Theory and Psychology* (SAGE Publications, 2001) : 530.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 539.

<sup>27</sup> The names of most individuals and locations have been altered in order to ensure confidentiality.

offered. The vast majority of drug research, especially in Egypt's case, employs a positivist approach, emphasizing its objectivity by the collection of surface facts and statistics such as: "poverty, lack of schooling, poor self-image, and low aspirations".<sup>28</sup> Conversely, the theoretical vantage point of this thesis takes a constructivist approach, which defines deviant behavior as a social construction, or "an idea imputed by society to some behavior".<sup>29</sup> This approach is much more relevant to the aims of this thesis as it focuses on the meanings attached to an act, instead of the act itself.

Part of the theoretical framework that lays the foundation for the fourth and final chapter of this thesis is Labeling Theory as understood according to the constructivist model. First introduced by French sociologist Emile Durkheim, he posited that deviant behavior such as crime should not be considered as a mere breaking of a penal code; instead it should be considered as an act that offends society itself.<sup>30</sup> Sociologists Edwin M. Lemert and Howard S. Becker furthered Labeling Theory in the 1950s and 1960s with their own research and ethnographic work. Becker (1966) in particular became the champion of Labeling Theory through ethnographic work he conducted with marijuana users in the United States. He argued that deviance is a consequence of the *successful application* by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender', concluding that the deviant individual is one to whom the label has successfully been applied casting them as outsiders.<sup>31</sup>

As previously mentioned, this thesis integrates Labeling Theory with the anthropological concepts of liminality and communitas. First introduced in his seminal work *Rites De Passage*, Arnold van Gennep (1907) coined the term liminality: a middle, or transitional stage/phase of a ritual where an individual undergoes a change of place, state, social position and age (Gennep 1960). Victor Turner (1960) furthered the concept, proposing that liminality is composed of three stages: separation, margin, and

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<sup>28</sup> Thio, Taylor and Schwartz, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (Illinois: The Free Press, 1949).

<sup>31</sup> Howard Becker, *Outsiders: Studies In The Sociology Of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 9.

aggregation.<sup>32</sup> He further employs liminality in a myriad of social contexts: from the Ndembu tribal society to the lives of court jesters, and even monastic orders, believing that the theory exists in all these cases in some shape or form (Turner, 1960). Seemingly unrelated, all of these persons or principles share social characteristics with drug users, namely that all of these social actors “fall into the interstices of social structure, are on its margins, or occupy its lowest rungs”.<sup>33</sup>

Along with the concept of liminality, this thesis also uses the concept of *communitas* to describe the social structures resulting from drug use in Egypt. *Communitas* form during the liminal phase: They exist outside of society, located on the margins where they transgress or dissolve “the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency”.<sup>34</sup> They exist where individuals go to lose their social identities, share a sense of equality, and live in the midst of undifferentiated social relations.<sup>35</sup> According to Turner:

There is a dialectic here, for the immediacy of *communitas* gives way to the mediacy of structure, while, in rites de passage, men are released from structure into *communitas* only to return to structure revitalized by their experience of *communitas*. What is certain is that no society can function adequately without this dialectic<sup>36</sup>

Thus, *communitas* serve as a place where drug users escape the structural system of customary society, forming protected communities with a unique organization, structure, and hierarchy where individuals go through a transformative experience.

Though the concepts of liminality and *communitas* are utilized outside of their usual anthropological context, they are still extremely useful to the study of drugs and study of deviance in general. Both show that drug use can be “regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action” and more importantly can be used as period of “scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which

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<sup>32</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Rochester: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 95.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (London: Routledge, 1999), 104.

<sup>36</sup> Turner, 129.

it occurs".<sup>37</sup> Thus, this theoretical framework scrutinizes how Egyptian society constructs and labels drug use, and also studies various manners of Egyptian behavior, spatial knowledge, and social interactions.

## **B. Methodology and Limitations**

This research is a result of over a year of ethnographic fieldwork in Egypt. Although some research was conducted in the Red Sea town of Dahab, the majority of the participant-observation and qualitative interviews were conducted at several sites throughout Cairo. Interviews were conducted in English, Arabic, and often in both languages. Though a translator was necessary in about half of the cases, rest of interviews had little to no communication problems. Instead, research was largely limited by the social stigma associated with drug use. Frequently, participants' families were unaware their family members were drug users, or their behavior was a complete secret except to a select few. Thus, developing trust with informants and maintaining confidentiality was a crucial aspect of my research.

In addition to the social stigma, there were also concerns over the feasibility of my research. On a few occasions I could not complete research due to safety concerns, which limited my research to locations and individuals that were assessed risk-free. There were also instances when I met or spoke with individuals who initially seemed enthusiastic and cooperated fully with my study, only to have them cease communication after a single interaction. Later, I would learn that this was motivated by suspicion and paranoia that I would expose their behavior.

Research was also hampered by legal concerns. Though I wanted to include governmental authorities in this study, I was often discouraged and even warned to circumvent such entities. I also had to be careful not to break or be associated with the breaking of Egypt's strict narcotic laws. With these warnings in mind, my research was limited to individuals and places that were regarded as "safe".

Due to these challenges I was limited to the quantity of work I could accomplish.

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<sup>37</sup> Turner, 167.

Although I was unable to work with or at every location I wanted, I still managed to find a wide spectrum of informants from an array of sites in Egypt. From drug users who could only afford “cheap” synthetic drugs, to those who could afford to spend several hundred Egyptian Pounds on illegal substances. My network of informants was sufficient to provide insights into how society constructs and labels the behavior of drug usage.

## **C. Exploring Egyptian Society: Chapter Outline**

### **1. A Broader Drug Discourse**

This chapter identifies and defines the different, sometimes conflicting drug discourses of Egypt. It will counter the claim that Egypt shapes its “moral conscience” according to the hegemonic discourse of religion; rather, Egyptian society is filled with different actors and mechanisms that define behavior. It shows that there are several prevailing, drug discourses that when taken together shape how the behavior of drug-use is constructed and labeled. Furthermore, it aims to show that these hegemonic producers of drug discourse form a repressive regime that are the major power holders of Egypt’s society; controlling individual bodies through self-discipline.

Hardly any society exists without major social narratives; thus, in order to contextualize my research, the second chapter analyzes recurrent drug narratives, or discourses (ex. religious, media, legal, or popular) found in Egypt. Examining this production of discourse is an integral step in creating a portrait/value system of mechanisms involved in shaping behavior within Egyptian society<sup>38</sup>. By scrutinizing this multifaceted discursive process this thesis frames diverse Egyptian-drug discourses together and ultimately explores the power relations between social actors and institutions in society.

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<sup>38</sup> I will occasionally use discourse, conversation, and narrative interchangeably. However, discourse will be the primary focus of my work.

## **2. Muhammad: The Repressive System and its Hold Over a Drug User**

The third chapter describes the life history of a drug user who is identified by society as a drug addict and so was ostracized due to his failure to conform to the rules and behavior established by the hegemonic drug discourse. It utilizes extensive information obtained through interviews and participant observation with the drug user Muhammad to demonstrate the power relations between major institutions and passive individuals caught in the repressive system. While most Egyptians conform to self-discipline as prescribed by drug discourse, Muhammad chose to practice one of the most stigmatized behaviors: heroin use. As a consequence, Muhammad, his family, and many of his closest relationships have been subject to society's judgment regarding his behavior. Thus, the chapter will demonstrate how discursive power and repressive structures manifest in the behavior of individuals and shape their reality.

## **3. Deviance, Labeling, Liminality and Communitas**

The fourth chapter aims to further describe deviant drug use and the drug users experience in Egypt. Firstly, using sociological theories of deviance and labeling, the chapter shows how individuals escape the label of drug addict and continue to use drugs despite the prohibitive drug discourse. Secondly, it focuses on the ambiguous liminal phase during which individuals become drug users in particular spaces where using drugs is normalized or socially acceptable. These spaces include: drug-selling areas, nightclubs, Dahab/ Ras Shaytān, cafes, weddings and cabarets. By creating these protected spaces of communitas that are structured according to unique structure, rules, and hierarchies, individuals escape traditional society and push the limits of behavior.

From the posh neighborhood of Zamalek, to the *al-ahyaa' al-sh'abiyya* (popular quarters) of *Mātireyya* or *Wast al-balad*, my study focuses on a great variety of people, drugs, and value systems by which individuals are judged. This chapter reveals the diverse nature of Egyptian society, which is constantly in flux and occasionally in conflict with its identity. The individuals I encountered are in the forefront in challenging Egyptian norms; they must no longer be ignored, or even worse, be lumped together in a

single “drug users” category. They come from different social strata and can be found in a varied collection of sites throughout Egypt; showing the complex nature of individuals and society.

## II. CHAPTER TWO: IDENTIFYING THE DRUG DISCOURSE IN EGYPT

### A. Introduction

The following chapter defines and problematizes Egyptian drug discourse. It begins with an overview of Foucauldian discourse analysis and identifies relevant theoretical concepts for the purpose of this study. This strategy scrutinizes discourse as more than static text or language concerning a particular topic; instead it emphasizes the complex process of production involving an array of social actors. By tracing this process, it becomes evident that drug discourse consists of multiple discourses, which constitute and are used as a form of repressive power that influences individual behavior. In this regard, discourse acts as a prism that allows for a better understanding of drug use and Egyptian society in general.

Through a broader more inclusive definition of discourse this project scrutinizes representations of drugs and drug use in Egypt. With Foucault's concepts of discourse analysis, this chapter not only scrutinizes drug discourse, but also recognizes the importance of engaging and contextualizing all manner of drug discourse encountered. Ultimately it reveals that discourse is "the violence" with which things are done in society, in fact, "discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle."<sup>39</sup> By engaging it critically, the aim is to "restore materiality and power"<sup>40</sup> to illicit drug discourse in Egypt and also to yield insights regarding the values, concerns, and motives of the producers of discourse and about the kinds of relations they have with Egyptian society.

After discussing the concept of discourse, the chapter moves to its primary objective of analyzing and contextualizing significant drug discourse encountered in Egypt. Islamic literature and Egyptian literature, Egyptian television shows, and even music videos concerning drugs are all used to gain insights into this behavior and the perceptions it carries in society.

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<sup>39</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse." *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Hook, 532.



This chapter will center on the analysis and contextualization of various forms of discourse that compose drug discourse in Egypt. It is structured by first introducing the discourse concerning the behavior of drug use and then focuses on contextualizing the discourse. Through contextualization, the discourse and the producer, in fact the entire process of drug discourse production will be better placed in the context of Egyptian society.

### **B. Drug Discourse and Power Relations in Egypt: An Assortment of discourse**

Like any other production of discourse, drug discourse in Egypt undergoes the same process of selection, exclusion, and domination by major institutions and social actors of society, resulting in an array of interacting and connected discourses with the power to define behavior. It is necessary to understand that for each institution and sector of society, there is an “indefinable and distinguishable mode of discourse” that when taken together creates a ‘broader’ discourse.<sup>41</sup> Consequently the production of discourse is diffused at different sites, where discourse manifests as types of knowledge that fit specific contexts and directly translates to power over the behavior of individuals in society.<sup>42</sup> Such is the case with the family, a key social institution that imparts a specific discourse: moral knowledge. Through the power of discourse, the family socializes “young children into modes of behavior that are not only ethical in principle but which also conform to the accepted values of society”.<sup>43</sup>

In other cases, such as the production of religious, medical or even academic discourse, key actors and institutions regulate the process. These authorities produce discourse using complex terminology, attaining power over the layperson that is excluded from the production of the discourse provided by professionals. Thus, discourse also helps to define a particular type of person or institution as suitable to have power and authority over others. It helps to define where exactly power will be located, and it acts as

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Oliver, *Foucault - The Key Ideas: Teach Yourself Paperback* (London: Hachette, 2010), 26.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

an advocate of power, helping to inform and persuade the majority of citizens to accept the exercise of power in certain ways, and not in others.<sup>44</sup> So, this project attempts to integrate and analyze discourse from various segments that make up Egyptian society; from the hegemonic religious discourse to the popular media discourse, this thesis maps and traces relevant drug discourse in Egypt that has been overlooked, underutilized, or not fully contextualized by incorporating them together.

This project focuses primarily on the previously mentioned “foundational narratives” or discourses that have the largest influence over illicit drug discourse in society. The state and other influential institutions (religion, media, families) and other social actors are just a few of these major producers of discourse that must be recognized in order to observe the different, sometimes conflicting, motivations and interests in creating and controlling drug discourse. By analyzing texts, speeches, and other forms of discourse, this thesis will establish the current trends, representations, and concerns regarding drugs and drug use in Egypt. Thus, this chapter provides a description of the socio-cultural environment surrounding drug use in Egypt, and linking discourse with the larger context of society.

### **C. Prevailing Drug Discourse in Egypt:**

#### **1. Governmental/ State Discourse**

Demonstrating that the Egyptian Government is both a major producer of drug discourse, and has a major influence over other production of drug discourse is fundamental to the argument of this thesis. By scrutinizing the state’s role in the production of drug discourse it is possible to observe its extensive power over defining drugs and drug use as a prohibited behavior that threatens the moral, social, and basic security of the country. Thus, this section will: First, briefly introduce the reader to the scope of Egyptian state power over major social institutions and actors in Egyptian society. Second, this section identifies and analyzes governmental-drug discourse,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

arguing that the state has consistently appropriated drug discourse produced by other entities in order to support its position that drugs are a threat to moral and health security.

With its powerful state-security apparatus (*makhābarāt*) and massive bureaucracy, the Egyptian state holds significant control and influence over drug-discourse producing institutions and social actors such as the media, civil societies' non-governmental organizations, prominent religious establishments like al-Azhar, and many other social institutions. Often citing state-security concerns, the state has censored and continues to threaten individuals who do not fall in line with the Egyptian State message.<sup>45</sup> For instance, new media falling outside the state news organizations consistently face strict censorship over their discourse, and even in the field of education renowned academics like Emad Shahin have been forced to flee the country under the threat of death for disagreeing with state discourse.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the narrative of state-security trumping other social or health concerns is a recurring theme in the production of all manner of state discourse. As demonstrated in this “security narrative”: state policies, narratives, and positions, are identified, analyzed, and contextualized in order to reveal the evolution of government drug discourse. This approach eventually reveals the Egyptian state's support for the “War on Drugs” as its main position regarding drugs and drug use.

As early as the fourteenth century, the Egyptian government and elite occasionally attempted to confront substance abuse concerns by prohibiting hashish, condemning it as an intoxicant detrimental to society and individuals. However, these attempts had little success at curbing the behavior since, *hashīsh* use had become a common social practice throughout the country. In fact some believe that “historically

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<sup>45</sup> Sophia Jones, “Egypt Wants To Jail Journalists For Not Falling In Line. It's Been Trained By A US Nonprofit,” *Huffington Post*, Accessed July 06, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/06/egypt-journalistsjail\\_n\\_7737878.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/06/egypt-journalistsjail_n_7737878.html)

<sup>46</sup> Emad el-Din Shahin, “Sentenced to Death in Egypt” *Atlantic*, Accessed May 19, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/05/death-sentence-egypt-emad-shahin/393590/>

Egyptians had turned to *hashīsh* as an alternative to the forbidden wine”.<sup>47</sup> Thus, authorities faced an uphill battle against prohibiting a normalized behavior that was already relatively well-engrained and socially acceptable in Egyptian society.

Not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did the Egyptian government establish strict prohibition policies for drugs and drug use; increasingly utilizing social and health concerns to justify its security-based drug discourse. In *Cannabis Prohibition in Egypt 1880-1939*, Liat Kozma argues that,

Disorder, the inability to discipline time, space and mobility rationally, was becoming a political issue. In this context, the idleness of the hashish smoker and his inability to control his mind and his time were emblematic of those traits that Egyptian society, and particularly its lower orders, needed to abandon to serve collective progress<sup>48</sup>

In response to these concerns, the Egyptian government implemented stricter anti-narcotics policies in the 1870s by banning the cultivation, distribution, importation of cannabis/*hashīsh*, and ordering the destruction of confiscated illicit substances.<sup>49</sup> Ultimately, both the elites’ social perceptions of modernity and the prohibitions on hashish reflected the Egyptian governments growing interest in public health and in public order.<sup>50</sup>

After WWI, government drug discourse shifted even further to a security-based strategy with the arrival of the “white drug epidemic”, which brought large-scale heroin, opium, cocaine, and other manufactured drug addiction to Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s. While *hashīsh* use was sometimes tolerated as an established or even harmless social practice, the white drug epidemic on the other hand was quickly perceived as a real public health concern that a strong centralized state needed to tackle. Even the Cairo police commander of this period, Thomas Russell, saw *hashīsh* consumption as a harmless habit while simultaneously comparing heroin and cocaine addiction as a

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<sup>47</sup> Kozma, "Cannabis Prohibition in Egypt, 1880–1939: From Local Ban to League of Nations Diplomacy", 444.

<sup>48</sup> Kozma, “Cannabis Prohibition in Egypt, 1880–1939: From Local Ban to League of Nations Diplomacy”, 446.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 445.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 447.

“plague” on Egyptian society.<sup>51</sup>

This “white drug” crisis brought about one of the first anti-drug campaigns led by the Egyptian Government. This campaign equated illicit drugs with disease, comparing them to a plague that attacked individuals as “the measles that attacked the islanders of the South Seas”.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, the governmental discourse of the time made clear distinctions between the victims of addiction, the fellahin, and the perpetrators that were “foreign nationals who were poisoning the Egyptian nation.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, a health and social concern was transformed into a security threat to the entire nation, forcing the state to pass one of the many anti-narcotics laws in March 1925, which prohibited the import, sale, purchase, and possession of heroin, cocaine, raw opium, cannabis and their derivatives.<sup>54</sup> The passing of these domestic anti-narcotic laws resulted in a more aggressive stance by the state and its law enforcement agencies; resulting in the first police raids in areas like *Bulaq* and mass incarcerations of drug users and traffickers.

However, prohibiting illicit drugs through stricter domestic legislation was just part of the states’ response to the growing illicit drug issue. *Hashīsh* and white drug use was just a local manifestation of a much larger global phenomenon that the state believed needed to be dealt with domestically and through international cooperation. Among several international agreements produced by the League of Nations, the Egyptian Government participated in several international drug treaties including the 1925 convention and the 1931 Limitation Convention. In addition to international cooperation through legislation, in 1929 the Egyptian Cabinet established the Central Narcotic Intelligence Bureau (C.N.I.B.) or today’s Anti-Narcotics General Administration (ANGA), which became part of the Ministry of Interior’s larger efforts to deal with

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>52</sup> Liat Kozma, "White Drugs in Interwar Egypt: Decadent Pleasures, Emaciated Fellahin, and the Campaign Against Drugs.", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (2013) : 91.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

international and domestic importation, trafficking, and consumption of drugs.<sup>55</sup>

Consequently, the Egyptian Government's drug discourse continued to be increasingly security-based at the start of the twentieth century. Appropriating social and medical concerns, drugs and drug use became defined as a prohibited behavior to be criminalized according to local and international law. By following Egyptian governmental-drug discourse, it becomes apparent that this was just the beginning of their participation in the "War on Drugs". Egypt further accelerated its law enforcement/security-based efforts in the second half of the twentieth century by increasing its prohibitionist rhetoric through stricter domestic legislation while also becoming party to even more United Nations Drug Control Conventions.<sup>56</sup>

It is critical to note that its participation in the larger global "War on Drugs", led by the United States, has led to the most significant influence over its drug discourse in the past few decades. On July 17, 1971, American President Richard Nixon declared that: "Drug traffic is public enemy number one domestically in the United States and we must wage a total offensive, worldwide, nationwide, government-wide, [...]".<sup>57</sup> With this statement began the so-called forty-five year "War on Drugs" that quickly grew to draw the participation of the international community, including Egypt.

Through participating in the contemporary "War on Drugs", Egyptian Governmental drug discourse has grown increasingly security-oriented based on American and international rhetoric and policy. Today, Egypt remains among the many states that participate in several international conventions banning the production, sale, and possession of all manner of psychoactive substances. In fact, in practically every

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<sup>55</sup> Anti-Narcotics General Administration, [accessed January 30, 2015,] <http://www.moiegypt.gov.eg/english/departments%20sites/anti-narcotics/historicaldevelopment/>.

<sup>56</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, (Accessed 20015) [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/egypt/egypt\\_country\\_profile.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/egypt/egypt_country_profile.pdf)  
The 1961, 1971, and 1988 international drug control conventions are just a few of the conventions Egypt participates in.

<sup>57</sup> Ed Vulliamy "Nixon's 'war on drugs' began 40 years ago, and the battle is still raging," *Guardian*, [accessed July 24, 2011,] <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2011/jul/24/war-on-drugs-40-years>

country, states and their law enforcement agencies are “deeply involved in investigating and prosecuting drug law violations; as even the rhetoric of the “War on Drugs” has been globalized.<sup>58</sup> Ethan Nadelmann compellingly argues that the regulation and control of illicit drugs has become part of a “Prohibition Regime” paradigm, where the drug policies of states like Egypt, have been coopted by the “perceptions, interests, and moral notions of dominant sectors of the more powerful states” along with exceptional influence of the United States and its preferred norms.<sup>59</sup>

This “prohibition paradigm” is most clearly evident through Egyptian law enforcement agencies cooperation with American anti-narcotic efforts inside Egypt. In a recently disclosed diplomatic cable the State Department states,

The Anti-Narcotics General Administration (ANGA) oversees most of the counternarcotic operations in Egypt. The ANGA is considered a competent and progressive organization, and cooperates fully with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) office in Cairo [...] The U.S continues to work on plans to increase joint operations with ANGA [...] <sup>60</sup>

This same diplomatic cable admits domestic programs focusing on demand reduction are not a large focus of the Egyptian government. The cable proves that demand reduction institutions, or anti-narcotics institutions that work on awareness or treatment for drug users like the National Council for Combating and Treating Addiction, actually have minimal capabilities and influence within Egypt. It further states that neither this council nor the Ministry of Health sponsor harm reduction education programs, and admits that the Government of Egypt does not even require licenses for rehabilitation centers, and has no “governmental standards for these private programs, or government oversight of the rehabilitation centers.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ethan Nadelmann, "Global Prohibition Regimes: The Evolution of Norms in International Society." *International Organization* (1990) : 503.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> United States Department of State. , "Egypt's 2009-2010 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INSCR) PART I." *Telegraph* (February 15, 2011) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/wikileaks-files/egypt-wikileaks-cables/8326890/Egypt-2009-2010-International-Narcotics-Control-Strategy-Report-INSCR-PART-I.html> [accessed June 17, 2015].

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Interestingly, even Egyptian neo-liberal economic policies implemented under former Egyptian presidents Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, resulted in closer cooperation with American drug policies. Through cooperation with several pieces of American legislation including the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the 1986 Omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act, Egypt became tied to the majors certification process which identifies two types of nation-states requiring disciplinary intervention; major drug-producing and major drug-transit countries,

The act also established an annual process of certification by which majors countries are to be classified as (a) cooperating with U.S. counter-narcotics goals and practices; (b) not cooperating, and (c) not cooperating, but certified for reasons of U.S. national interest [...] If the terms of cooperation are deemed insufficient, the President is required by law to apply a range of economic sanctions (Suspension of USAID) [...] The act then requires that the U.S. use its voice and vote in multilateral development banks to deny development assistance to any government which has been identified as not cooperating with counter-narcotics efforts<sup>62</sup>

Thus, Egypt, which has grown increasingly reliant on the economic assistance of neo-liberal institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary fund, was required to criminalize drugs and drug use in a “harmonization of local criminal codes with those of the U.S.”<sup>63</sup>

Ultimately, it becomes apparent that governmental-drug discourse is heavily based on prohibitionist and security-based notions, largely ignoring rehabilitation and preventive strategies that focus on a demand reduction agenda. For over a century, the Egyptian Government has appropriated and used social discourses like religion and health, in order to justify its prohibitionist and security-based drug policies. It then progressively pursued international cooperation in its anti-narcotic efforts, culminating in its collaboration with the American “War on Drugs”. Thus, Egyptian governmental-drug discourse has increasingly sought to criminalize and impose United States drug-related norms, meanwhile choosing to ignore preventative drug strategies or generally not

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<sup>62</sup> Dominic Corva, "Neoliberal Globalization and the War on Drugs: Transnationalizing Illiberal Governance in the Americas." *Political Geography* (2007) : 186.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



attempting to better understand reasons for drug use among individuals.

Through its extensive influence over all manner of institutions and social actors, the Egyptian government has been able to produce a hegemonic drug discourse within the larger drug discourse of Egypt. Later this chapter shows how these governmental prohibition and security-oriented positions work with and find support among other producers of discourse in order to control and regulate drugs and drug use behavior. In fact, the next section examines religious drug discourse, which constitutes another hegemonic producer of drug discourse in Egypt. While it largely supports governmental positions, more recently, it has sometimes served to offer an alternative drug discourse that goes beyond, and sometimes challenges, the governments' positions.

## 2. Religious Discourse

As the traditional moral authority in Egypt, religious discourse holds a dominant position in shaping drug perceptions in Egypt. Roughly ninety percent of the Egyptian population follows Islam, with the majority being Sunni Muslims. However, a variety of branches exist within Islam. From the spiritual Sufi branch to the conservative Salifists, a wide spectrum of Muslims follows some or another interpretation of the religion. Consequently, the majority of the population follows or is at least exposed to a variety of, sometimes conflicting, Islamic discourses.

However, the focus here is not a faction of Islam, but instead it is the major producers of discourse and the religious material they generate. Institutions such as al-Azhar, the Dar al-ifta' or influential religious authorities like Imams and the State Mufti hold major influence and power over much of the day-to-day religious discourse encountered in the country. The Dar al-ifta' alone produces approximately 465,000 *fatawa* a year orally (in person), in writing, by telephone, and even through email.<sup>64</sup> From a critical perspective, the positions and motives of these religious authorities are what control religious discourse like the fatwa.

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<sup>64</sup> "Chaos of Fatwas," *Ahram Online*, (2011), [accessed May 05, 2015,] Al-Ahram states that 465,000 fatwas a year are given by Dar al-Ifta, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1033/feature.htm>.

The fatwa is an example that effectively captures religion's role in the production of drug discourse, and also demonstrates the linkage between a traditional text and the larger socio-political context of contemporary Egyptian society. Through language and positions obtained from classical written material such as the Quran, Sunna, Hadeeths, that is, the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, and other major Islamic literature, *fatāwa* bring clarity to modern social issues for Muslims. In terms of epistemological research concerning a society with ties to Arabic and Islamic culture, analyzing *fatāwa* can be a gateway to Egyptian society as they represent a hybridity between traditional/religious thinking and contemporary forms of reasoning and regulation.

However, before analyzing a fatwa concerning drug use, it is necessary to first define and trace its evolution in Islam. Islamic legal literature claims the origin of fatwa or the act of *istifta/su'wāl* (inquiry), originates in the Quran; particularly in the verses, 4:127 and 4:176, which state, "They ask you (*yastaftunaha*) concerning women. Say: Allah answers (*yuftikum*) about them [...]" , it goes on to detail the rules about orphaned women, their property, marriage, divorce, and treatment.<sup>65</sup> With these passages, Islamic scholars reasoned that through the *fatwa*, qualified muftis could clarify concerns regarding religion, ethics, or law that were not clearly defined by Islam.

Islamic scholars have continued the tradition of the fatwa by keeping a particular form and defining characteristics. The *Adab al-Muftī*, or Manuals for the Mufti, details some of these characteristics by prescribing the qualifications for muftis and *mustaftis* (inquirer), providing specific instructions about how to write a fatwa, and also describing how to properly pose an *istifta*, or request/question. Generally the *Adab al-Muftī* state that a mufti must "be able to read and write and have studied the manuals of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), as well as the Quran and the Hadith."<sup>66</sup> They also make it understood

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<sup>65</sup> Muhammad Masud, "The Significance of Istiftā' in the Fatwā Discourse ." *Islamic Studies* (Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad , 2009) : 342.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 347.

that *fatāwa* are not universally applicable and can be limited in their application to specific cases.

Though they continued to keep a particular format and characteristics, *fatawa* have evolved through time. It was in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that *fatawa* and *istifta*’ became more closely associated with the current form we see today: Fatwa as Islamic edicts or opinions based on sharia law issued to the masses on behalf of religious scholars/Islamic jurists, institutions (al-Azhar or court) or religious authorities such as a mufti or Imam. As Masud (2009) explains, “Gradually, the real objective of *istifta*’ was lost. It is no longer a query about a complex legal issue; it is more and more a request for elaboration on a religious issue.”<sup>67</sup>

Importantly, although the production of *fatawa* has changed from its inception: the principle of religious discourse as power over individual behavior has not because “*Istifta* made the *mufti* recognize his position as a client to the mufti and to accept his authority”.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the mufti institutionalized his role as a religious and moral authority, while individuals continue to be the passive actor who accepts and follows the position of the authority wielding discursive power.

*Fatāwa* in the twentieth century have become powerful tools for their producers. In response to the initial *istifta*, a mufti is able to spread a particular version of Islam influenced by his individual positions, and who is also pressured from his various affiliations. The fatwa eventually becomes part of a “complex world where different interests and ideologies will compete to make use of it for their own purposes.”<sup>69</sup> In Egypt, this same process is observable when looking at social actors utilizing the fatwa as an instrument of power/control over behavior.

### **i. The *Fatwa: Hukm Ta’āti al-Makhadarāt* (The Rule of Drug Use)**

The fatwa, *Hukm Ta’āti al-Makhadarāt* (The rule/judgment/edict on drug use) illustrates the process by which an institution produces drug discourse that directly

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>69</sup> Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dar Al-Ifta* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997), 20.

influences behavior in Egypt.<sup>70</sup> This particular fatwa is part of the conventional religious discourse available to a majority of Egyptians as it was written by the *Dar al-ifta'*, a major religious institution, which is described in greater detail later in the chapter. After examination of the fatwa and its author, this thesis will further contextualize religious discourse by including a meeting with an Egyptian Imam with close connections to major religious institutions.

Though obtained through the *Dar al-ifta'*'s website, this fatwa contains traditional patterns and structure of the fatwa. Like most *fatatwa* it begins with the *mustafti*'s question regarding drugs

اطلعنا على الطلب المقيد برقم ٢١٤ السنة ٢٠١٠م المتضمن: هل تحريم المخدرات متفق في الشريعة الإسلامية, او هو من جملة ما وقع فيه الخلاف بين الفقهاء وما حكم متعاطي المخدرات, و هل له عقوبة شرعية معينة كشارب الخمر و الزاني و السارق و نحوهم

*āṭl'anā 'alā al-ṭilb al-muaqīd biraqm 412 al-sana 2010 al-mutaḍamin: hal taḥrīm al-makhadarāt mutafaq fī al-sharī'a al-āslāmiyya, 'aū hūa min jumlat mā uq'a fīhi al-khilāf bīn al-fuḡhā' wa mā ḥukima mut'āṭī al-makhadarāt, wa-hal lahu 'aqūba sharī'a mu'aīna kashārab al-khamr wa-l-zānī wa-l-sāraq wa-naḥūhum*

(We have examined the request under no. 214 for the year 2010 which asks: Is the prohibition of drugs agreed upon in Islamic Sharia/law or, has it been a topic of dispute among different Islamic scholars, and what is the rule of drug users and whether the act of drug using has legal punishment stipulated by Sharia like it has for alcohol drinkers, adulterers, and thieves)

The fatwa follows the request in a logical and structured manner with the answer, or *al-jawāb*. Firstly, it discusses the etymology of the word *makhadarāt* (مخدرات) (drugs) by identifying the root letters as خ د ر (kh d r) and proceeds to derive the meaning attached to this linguistic root with synonyms such as *al-kasal* (laziness), *al-faṭūr* (apathy/sluggishness), and *al-astarakha'* (relaxation). Finally, the fatwa uses the word in the context of a veil and cover:

امرأة مخدرة أي مستترة بخدرها  
*āmr'ā makhddarāt ā'ay mustatira bikhadrahā*

<sup>70</sup> “*Hukm Ta'āti al-Makhadarāt* (The Rule of Drug Use),” The Dar al-Ifta al-Masriyyah, February 5, 2010, <http://daralifta.org.eg/AR/ViewFatwa>. Throughout this section the *Hukm Ta'āti al-Makhadarāt* is used, a *fatwa* obtained through the official *Dar al-ifta' al-Masriyyah* website, will be cited in both Arabic and English [accessed March 10, 2015].

(From that they say: a women is covered behind her veil)

Following the linguistic explanation, the fatwa continues by defining drugs and describing the perceived effects it has on users. It states that drugs:

فالمخدرات تستر العقل وتغطيه و تحجب القلب عن النور والهداية كما يحجب الغيم ضوء الشمس  
*fāl-makhadarāt tasturu al-‘aqil wa-tughāṭīhi wa-taḥijbu al-‘qlb ‘an al-nūr wa-l-hidāyya kamā yaḥijibu al-ghīm ḍaū’ al-shams*  
(veil the mind and cover it up and also obscure the heart from light and guidance like the clouds obscure sunlight)

It then proceeds to define drugs through two Islamic scholars: the first, Imam Al-Quraffi, defines drugs in his book "*Al-Furūq*" ("الفروق") as:

ما غيب العقل و الحواس دون ان يصحب ذلك نشوة او سرور  
*mā ghuṭba al-‘aqil wa-l-ḥūās dūna ān yaṣḥaba dhalika nashūa ‘aū surūr*  
(anything that clears the mind and senses without being accompanied by euphoria or pleasure)

The second Islamic scholar, Ibn Hajar al-Haytami similarly defines drugs in his book "*Al-Zawager*" as any:

كل ما يتولد عنه تغطية العقل و فقدان الاحساس في البدن او فتوره و يسبب اضرار النشوة و الطرب و العريضة و الغضب  
*kul mā yataūladu ‘anhu taḡṭīyyat al-‘aqil wa fuqdān al-āḥsās fī al-badan ‘aū fatūrahu wa yusabibu āḍadād al-nashūa wa-l-ṭarab wa-l-‘arbada wa-l-ghaḍab*  
(substance that leads to the covering of mind, loss of senses in body, causing chills in the body, and causing states opposite of ecstasy and rapture, instead causing anger)

Interestingly, the fatwa also uses science to define drugs by stating,

والمخدرات في الاصطلاح العلمي المعاصر: "كل مادة جام او مستحضرة او مصنعة, يؤدي تناولها الى اختلال في وظائف الجهاز العصبي المركزي سواء بالتهيب او التنشيط او الهلوسة, مما يؤثر على العقل و الحواس, ويسبب الادمان  
*wa-l-makhadarāt fī al-āṣṭilāḥ al-‘alimī al-mu‘aāṣir: “kulu māda khām ‘aū mustaḥḍara ‘aū muṣan ‘aa, y’uādī tanāwulahā’ ilā ākhtilāl fī waṣā’if al-jahāz al-‘aṣabī al-marakzī saūā’ bālṭhabī’ aū al-tanshīṭ’ aū al-halūsa, mima yū’thr ‘alā al-‘aqil wa-l-ḥūās, wa yusabib al-ādmān*

In scientific terminology drugs are any substance raw, formulated or manufactured, that when consumed leads to an imbalance in the functions of the central nervous system, whether by stimulating, inhibiting or hallucinations, which affects the mind and the senses, and causes addiction

Though the fatwa includes linguistic and scientific accounts to support its judgement, ultimately it is *fiqh*, or Islamic Jurisprudence, which provides the key evidence for its position. These verses state,

(Surat al-Baqara verse 195): God the greatest said, 'And spend in the way of Allah and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction [by refraining]. And do good, indeed, Allah loves the doers of good'

(Surat Al-Neisa' verse 29): And God also said, "O you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful."

The fatwa argues that these two verses specify the "prohibition of self-harming and putting your human soul in jeopardy or damage". Furthermore, individuals must preserve the soul from risk because the preservation of the soul and the mind are fundamental Islamic purposes. Essentially, it argues that anything detrimental to the mind or soul is forbidden in Islam, since:

معلوم ان في تعاطي المخدرات هلاكاً ظاهراً و القاء بالنفس في المخاطر  
*m 'alūm āna fī t 'aṭī al-makhadarāt halākān zāhirān wa il-qā' bāl-naḥīs fī-l-makhāṭir*  
(It is known that abusing drugs causes visible harm and it puts oneself, or (soul), in danger)

In addition to the two suras, the fatwa uses a hadith, in its *fiqh*. The hadith states:

ومن الأدلة أيضاً ما رواه الإمام أحمد في مسنده وأبو داود في سننه عن أم سلمة رضي الله عنها قالت: >>  
نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم عن كل مسكر ومفتر  
*wa mina al-ā`dila āyḍān mā raū`ahu al-ā`amām aḥmad fī masnadihi wa `abū dāūr fī sinanihi `an āmu salma raḍīa Allahu `anahā qālat::<<nahā rasūlu Allah ṣalā Allahu `alayhi wa salam `an kulu maskar wa maftar»*

(From the evidence narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* and Abu Dawood in his *Sunan* (laws) from Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her: «That the Messenger of Allah peace up on him and his family forbade all intoxicants and tranquilizers »)

This hadith adds to the perceived evidence that any substance regarded as an intoxicant or tranquilizer is strictly forbidden in Islam.

It is important to note that although extensive arguments are given in support of the prohibition of drugs, it nonetheless provides an exemption for drug use. The fatwa makes it clear that the prohibition is lifted only if it is necessary and if the drug is:

هذه الحرمة تزول إذا تعيّن شيء من المخدرات طريقاً للدواء، وذلك من قبيل الطبيب الحاذق الموثوق به تخصصاً وأمانةً.

*hadhihi al-ḥarmatu tazūlu ā`dhā t`āina shaī` min al-makhadarāt tarīqān lil-daūwwa` , wa dhalika min qibal al-ṭabīb al-ḥādhiq al-maūathūq bihi takhaṣūsān wa `amānatan (proven to have a medical use. That should be decided by a moral, honest, trusted and reliable, experienced and professional doctor”)*

To support this argument, the fatwa cites Imam Nawawi’s work "*al-Roadā*" (الروضة) which states:

حرام، ولو احتيج في قطع اليد المتأكلة إلى زوال عقله هل يجوز ذلك؟ قلت: الأصح الجواز، ولو احتاج إلى دواء يزِيل العقل لغرض صحيح جاز تناوله قطعاً.

*ḥarām, wa lau āhtīja fī qṭ`a al-īd al-mutākila `ilā zaūāl `aqlahu hal yajūzu dhalik? Qultu: al-ā`ṣaḥ al-jūāz, wa-lau āhtāja `ilā dūā`in yuzīlu al-`aql ligharaḍin ṣaḥīḥ jāza tanawwulahu qaṭ`aan.*

(Any beverages that takes away the mind such as anesthesia is forbidden but if it is needed to cut a festered hand, then that is permitted, or if needed for any right reason)

Despite this very strict exception, the fatwa concludes that drugs, including the cultivation and trading, are akin to alcohol, which is strictly forbidden by Islam.

ولا تقتصر حرمة المخدرات على تناولها فقط، بل يشمل ذلك زراعتها والاتجار فيها، فالشرع لَمَّا حرَّم الخمر حرَّم أيضًا كل الأسباب المؤدية إلى تناولها، فلعن بائعها ومبتاعها وأكل ثمنها وعاصرها ومعتصرها وحاملها والمحمولة إليه، ويقاس على ذلك المخدرات؛ للجامع المشترك بينهما، وهو الاشتراك في مطلق تعييب العقل.

*wa lā taqṭaṣir ḥaramtu al-makhadarāt `alā tanāwulahā faqṭ, bil yashmalu dhalika zirā`atahā wa-l-ātajāru fīhā, fālashr`au lamā ḥaram al-mkhamru ḥuriam āyḍān kulu al-`asbāb al-mū`adīā `ilā tadāwulahā, fal-`ana bā`ā`hā wa mbatuā`ahā wa ākila thamanuhā wa `āṣiruhā wa m`ataṣiruhā wa ḥāmiluhā wa al-maḥmūla `alayhi wa yaqāsu `alā dhalika al-makhadrāt; liljām`ai al-mushtariki bīnahumā, wa huwa al-āshatrāk fī muṭlaqi taghīb al-`aql.*

(The forbiddance of the drug is not limited only to its intake, but it also includes the cultivation and trading; because when the law prohibited the alcohol, it also forbade all the reasons leading to its abuse. So it curses the seller, the buyer, the one who profits from it, [...] and the holder, the one who it was held for. And drugs are measured the same way, because the commonality between them both is their contribution in blanking the mind)

The position supporting the prohibition of illicit drug use is a foundational part of drug discourse in Egypt: indeed, it is a repeated narrative that has become a “truth” to many Egyptians. However, recognizing and examining content of the fatwa is just part of unveiling the process of discourse production. Just as important for this project is to contextualize the author of the fatwa: *The Dar al-ifta` al-Masriyya*, or the State Fatwa Office of Egypt.



## ii. Dar al-ifta'

The *Dar al-ifta'* is a key social institution that offers an opportunity to analyze beyond the fatwa in order to trace the complex process of discourse production. This section will contextualize the key actors, affiliations, and motivations that regulate the discourse of the *Dar al-ifta'* in particular, paying particular attention to the greater network of power relations involved in the overall production of Egyptian religious discourse.

First, it is important to recognize that the creation of the *Dar al-Ifta'* was part of a larger trend of the institutionalization of religion by the Egyptian State. In *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State*, Jakob Skovgaard (1997) argues that the founding of the *Dar al-Ifta'* in 1895 was the result of a “gradual institutionalization of the religious field” that arose from the Egyptian state attempting to gain control of the lives of its citizens in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, the formation of the *Dar al-ifta'* displayed the governments attempt to “unify and simplify the educational system, which—like the courts—had for so long been fragmented into a national, a private, and an Islamic system”.<sup>71</sup> This process of institutionalization arguably reached its zenith under law number 103 of 1961 when the most prominent independent religious institution in the country, al-Azhar, was reorganized into part of the state educational system.<sup>72</sup> As a result, over the past century it has grown closer to al-Azhar University where its institutionalization continues under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice.<sup>73</sup>

The *Dar al-ifta'* illustrates the state's active role in creating a new administration of religious institutions that could be directly controlled by the state. With the State Mufti at its head, it became a mouthpiece of for an “official/correct” Islam which opted for an “accommodation between state and religion and specifies solutions within the framework

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<sup>71</sup> Skovgaard-Petersen, 29.

<sup>72</sup> Through this law, it officially brought the entire “institution and its endowments under the formal jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Endowments”. For more see <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/11/07/egypt-s-al-azhar-steps-forward#>

<sup>73</sup> *Dar Al-Ifta Al-Missriyyah*, [accessed February 21, 2015].  
<http://eng.dar-alifta.org/foreign/Module.aspx?Name=aboutdar#1>



of existing state law”.<sup>74</sup> Ultimately, the state’s role in institutionalizing religions exemplifies the difficulty of tracing discourse to its original producer. Whether it is a product of the religious authorities that wrote the fatwa, or the Egyptian state that elected the religious authorities to their positions is sometimes obscure.

Still, institutionalization was not the only factor that characterized the development of the *Dar al-ifta’*, or general religious discourse in Egypt. A significant social development that transformed religious discourse in the twentieth century was the emergence of a reading public that came to challenge the traditional production of religious discourse.<sup>75</sup> Instead of originating from the specialist to the layperson through language and personal interaction literature became an alternative source of religious discourse for Egyptians. Though indirectly, this development minimized the authority of religious scholars who were no longer the major source religious discourse.

Conversely though, the printing press and other technological developments eventually came to be exploited by the state and religious institutions like the *Dar al-ifta’*. The printing of books allowed for the emergence of a State and Islamic press that could reach a larger audience. These developments allowed for new forms of issuing of *fatāwa* as muftis didn’t have to answer a particular questioner in a private manner. Instead he could simply issue a fatwa targeting a larger Muslim audience.<sup>76</sup> Coupled with the introduction of the telegraph, religious discourse production by institutions like the *Dar al-ifta’* led to a standardization and regulation of Islam in the twentieth century.<sup>77</sup> This implementation of technological advances highlights the fluidity of power and although major institutions eventually adjusted to a new literate public and technological advances, it is interesting to note that this power struggle continues, as new forms of communication like the internet allow the layperson access to a plurality of religious discourse that traditional religious institutions must contend.

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<sup>74</sup> Skovgaard-Petersen, 184.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 99.

Finally, a last consideration to broaden the context of *fatāwa* produced by the *Dar al-ifta'* requires examining the foremost position of this religious institution: the State Mufti, or Grand Mufti of Egypt. He personifies the limited independence of the institution since he is largely responsible for regulating the agenda and public positions of the *Dar al-ifta'*. His autonomy is especially evident in his *ijtihād*, or individual reasoning used to derive a ruling, which reflects his personal convictions, motivations and values. Ultimately, his individual decisions are what guide the agenda of the institution.

Comparing and contrasting the agenda of an array of State Muftis who have led the institution reveals the influence they have over the *Dar al-ifta'* and ultimately its discourse. First headed by the Hassuna an-Nawawi from 1895-1899, his 687 *fatāwa* mostly focused on economic issues and were heavily influenced by the Hanafi School of Islam.<sup>78</sup> His successor Muhammad Abdu was also closely associated with the Hanafi and the Salafi Movement, and mostly focused on issues regarding waqf, family, and finally retaliation and killing.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, under Muhammad Abduh, the fatwa evolved into a new kind of public fatwa: the daring well-researched statement, where the State Mufti reconsiders Islamic tradition taking into account the needs of the time.<sup>80</sup> However, not all State Muftis were as effective as Muhammad Abdu, and for several decades the *Dar al-ifta'* lost its prominence.

Not until the appointment of Ali Jadd al-Haqq in 1978, did the *Dar al-ifta'* reassert itself as a “competent and efficient institution ready to struggle for public recognition”.<sup>81</sup> The institutions’ role in Egyptian society was further reinforced under Sayyid Tantawi, who in the late 1980s led a public engagement in combating Islamic terrorism as well as other social issues including the struggle against drugs and the advocacy of family planning.<sup>82</sup> Tantawi frequently reiterated his *fatāwa* on drugs and extremism, using both his authority and that of the *Dar al-ifta'* to fight perceived social

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 256.

evils in Egypt. As you can see, under the influence of different State Muftis, the *Dar al-ifta'* has reflected different religious, social, and even political positions.

Contextualizing the *Dar al-ifta'* highlights the role of a major social institution in the complex process of religious discourse production in Egypt. Observably, the *Dar al-ifta'* and its leaders have understood their role as more than a state appointed agency, it has consistently opposed “the relegation of religion to the private sphere” by reintegrating its position as one of the legitimate sources of Islam in Egyptian society.<sup>83</sup> Ultimately, the State Mufti and the *Dar al-ifta'* see themselves as,

Defenders of the Sharia against the onslaughts of secularization, and have acted accordingly. They have been striving to Islamize, that is to re-conquer lost territory and incorporate it in an Islamic field of meaning, be that in the field of economics, public morality, or elsewhere.<sup>84</sup>

By examining the *Dar al-ifta'* historically, observing its institutionalization, and identifying key actors affiliated with the institution; this section contextualizes religious discourse produced by the institution. This approach reveals that as a major producer of discourse, the *Dar al-ifta'* functions as an institution that supports the reproduction of the social system. By issuing *fatāwa*, it helps defines accepted behavior and so is capable of imposing self-discipline on individuals. The fatwa and the *Dar al-ifta'* have thus reinforced the “truth” that drug use is an unacceptable behavior; unsurprisingly, this fundamental narrative of drug discourse is echoed by other religious authorities like local imams and muftis.

### **iii. Perspectives from an Imam: Dr. Hassan**

Today there is a pluralism of Islamic power structures most clearly evident in the existence of a large number of muftis and imams producing religious discourse in Egypt. In some cases even religious experts that already belong to established religious institutions contradict, challenge, and propose different positions than traditional positions. In a meeting with a mufti, Dr. Hassan, I was able to observe this

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 29.

circumstance.<sup>85</sup> As an Egyptian mufti with close ties to both al-Azhar and the *Dar al-ifta'*, he reflected their respective positions on illicit drug use while simultaneously expressing a personal religious discourse.

In the interview, Dr. Hassan used a similar strategy and reiterated arguments similar to those found in the *Dar al-ifta'* fatwa examined earlier. Like the fatwa, he stated that religious authorities including himself, are required to use trusted Islamic sources like the Quran, Sunna and Islamic jurisprudence, in order to give advice and opinions to fellow Muslims. Furthermore, in concurrence with the fatwa, he fundamentally believed illicit drugs to be *harām* and *prohibited (mamnū'a)* due to the “reins of your brain being taken” by drugs and causing your mind to go “*tadhab al-‘aql*” (تذهب العقل).<sup>86</sup>

Although his main arguments largely reflected the fatwa, there were still some clear differences in their positions. Though he firmly believed in the prohibition of drugs, he nonetheless departed from the major narratives of religious discourse by differentiating drug users. Unlike the fatwa, and the *Dar al-ifta'* which places users into one “drug-using group”; he believed there existed “a degree of drug users” who receive varying punishments according to “how dangerous it [their drug use] is to hurting others”.<sup>87</sup> He continued his argument by distinguishing between “recreational drug users” who “have a chance to change”, and addicts (*mūdmin*) who need to “stop immediately and receive treatment” since their drug use negatively effects more than the individual, such as the community around them.<sup>88</sup> In addition to this, addicts are also more likely to “harm another human being”; so according to Islam, the punishment (*al-‘aqab*) will be more severe.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Dr. Hassan, interview by author, Gutierrez March 5, 2015. The Imam has chosen to keep his identity confidential, his name has been changed to Dr. Hassan in order to protect his identity. He has clarified that he does not represent larger religious institutions in Egypt, but nevertheless is a religious authority able to speak on drug use since he is professionally trained as an Islamic scholar and researcher (*bahath*).

<sup>86</sup> Dr. Hassan, interview by author, Gutierrez March 5, 2015.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

This ability to differentiate between degrees of drug users, assign an array of punishments, and even define levels of prohibition including: *haram* (forbidden), *mamnū'a* (prohibited), or *makruh* (undesirable, but not forbidden) exhibits a “personal” type of religious discourse. Instead of a mass-produced or easily accessible fatwa written by a major religious institution, an Imam narrates a private and intimate religious opinion or advice that reaches individuals such as the roughly 22 million illiterate<sup>90</sup> in Egypt.<sup>91</sup>

It is difficult to gauge both the influence that religious discourse has over the behavior of individuals in Egypt and even more difficult to contextualize a personal religious discourse like Dr. Hassan's. However, the answer can be deduced in scrutinizing and crosscutting his religious background, recognizing his affiliations, and examining interactions with the Imam.

Firstly, through his similar positions to the fatwa produced by *Dar al-ifta'*, and his background as an Imam from al-Azhar, it can be reasoned that his positions are relatively moderate. He firmly believes that drugs were *haram* and were a grave social ill that affected a wide range of users. However, when pressed, he would not elaborate on his belief that there existed recreational users, a stance that, according to Dr. Hassan, many religious and governmental authorities do not support. Thus, although his religious discourse largely reflected the mainstream Islam he was affiliated with, it is critical to distinguish that he also expressed separate opinions in an attempt to personally connect with Egyptian society through his language and practices.

His moderate personal religious discourse was also expressed through his lectures, where his interactions with students were even more telling. During his lectures, his moderate religious views could be observed firsthand. He joked about radical Muslims among other topics, and treated his male and female students with equality. His students

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<sup>90</sup> “Egypt”, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO Literacy Figure <http://en.unesco.org/countries/egypt> [accessed July 11, 2015]

<sup>91</sup> Dr. Hassan has close ties to prominent religious institutions in Egypt, however he chose to keep his identity and ties confidential, stating that he was unable to speak on their behalf.

meanwhile, highly respect him, lining up to thank him and kiss his hand before leaving the lecture hall.

These observations aim to humanize and provide a context for Dr. Hassan as an individual producer of mainstream religious discourse and highlight that his positions are influenced by his own motivations and intentions. He consistently emphasized both the positions of the religious establishment and his own, and elaborated that drug use was a complicated issue with “a lot of aspects and reasons” that particularly affected an unemployed, poverty-stricken, and highly disappointed (*ah-būt*) Egyptian youth. Although he firmly condemned drug use, his religious discourse demonstrated understanding for reasons behind drug use. It is evident that he empathized with drug using Egyptians who “don’t realize their dreams” and have “the feeling of their future being blocked” (*manṣadad al-mastqbal*).<sup>92</sup>

Finally, in order to further contextualize Dr. Hassan’s religious discourse it is important to look at the social structure of the interview. From the beginning Dr. Hassan made it clear to distinguish me from his Egyptian pupils. It was evident that my identity as a foreign researcher affected our interactions and how he expressed his agenda towards me. Though his responses were extremely helpful, he made it exceedingly difficult to even arrange a meeting. Only after several weeks of attempts at arranging a meeting did he finally agree to meet in a madrasa, located in Sixth of October, a satellite town part of greater Cairo. In addition to this, the interview was not held at the appointed time. Instead, the meeting took place in his crowded office, after a three-hour waiting period, and only after he was finished dealing with his pupils concerns. Thus, it became obvious that he carried an indifference towards me. This disregard for a researcher, coupled with his self-censorship concerning his affiliations and controversial opinions, characterized his discourse.

Ultimately the religious discourse that Dr. Hassan presented during the interview was a product of several factors including: personal values/opinions, his attitude towards a foreign researcher, and in particular his affiliations with religious institutions. Though

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<sup>92</sup> Dr. Hassan, interview by author, Gutierrez March 5, 2015.

his drug discourse was especially characterized by established religious positions, ultimately Dr. Hassan represents a growing plurality of religious discourse that has come to challenge established institutions like al-Azhar and the *Dar al-ifta'*. Even though he was educated by them, and shares many of their positions, Dr. Hassan also expressed differing opinions concerning drug use. His role as an individual imam working with Muslims at the local level allow him to offer a different viewpoint/position where he describes drug use as a complicated issue that is not simply about being *haram*.

Increasingly the religious drug discourse in Egypt is attempting to understand the behavior instead of strictly stigmatizing it. These attempts to understand and treat drug use as a remediable social issue is part of a larger movement which increasingly illustrates a pluralism of religious discourses that has come to challenge traditional institutions, and their discourse or “truths”. Individuals like Dr. Hassan have become increasingly prominent and are increasingly producing alternative perspectives. Another such individual, famed televangelist Amr Khaled, provides a religious discourse that has resonated with a public looking for an alternative to institutionalized religious discourses.

### 3. Popular Culture:

#### i. Amr Khaled's Anti-Drug Campaign: *Hamāya /Stop Drugs. Change Your Life*

An accountant turned Islamic televangelist, Amr Khaled has expertly harnessed technological innovations like satellite television and the internet, in combination with a charismatic and colloquial style of preaching to build a massive following in Egypt, and all over the Muslim/Arab world. Ranked sixth in Foreign Policy Magazine's top twenty public intellectuals of 2009, Amr Khaled has gained popularity by producing a religious discourse not based on “traditional religious learning [...], but instead he defines himself as a *da'iyya*, one who carries out the call to Islam (*d'awa*) through recitation of Hadith”.<sup>93</sup> However, what is especially relevant for this thesis are his socio-economic service

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<sup>93</sup> Aaron Rock, "Amr Khaled: From Da'wa to Political and Religious Leadership." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2010) : 18.

programs, particularly the *Hamāya* (Protection) /حماية “Stop Drugs. Change Your Life” anti-drug campaign.

Contrary to the major drug discourses produced by religion and the state which focus on the strict prohibition of drugs, and punishment/enforcement of drug laws, the *Hamāya* anti-drug campaign engaged Egyptian society and mobilized a large number of individuals at the popular/local level. In an interview with Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahram*, Khaled argued that it was time for religion to come out of seclusion in regards to growing social issues like addiction, further stating: “[The campaign] is part of a modernized religious discourse that aims at achieving social development via faith”.<sup>94</sup> Like Dr. Hassan, Amr Khaled represents a new approach to drug discourse in Egypt. Instead of simply labeling drug use as *haram*, or drug users as addicts (*mūdmin*), his *Hamāya* anti-drug campaign utilized youth outreach to engage society and send a message of love and hope to addicts.

Initiated in 2008 and in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Right Start Foundation, and the Dubai Police, *Hamāya*’s main objectives were to raise awareness and help individuals struggling with addiction. In order to accomplish these objectives, the campaign wanted to get two million individuals to participate across the Middle East, and aimed to establish five thousand events/activities in order to raise awareness and treat drug addiction throughout the region.<sup>95</sup> In addition to this, it also sought to print two million stickers/posters with the *hamāya* logo, “Stop Drugs, Change Your Life” (وقف المخدرات , غير حياتك), in order post them in public areas. According to Khaled and several sources, the campaign was highly successful despite some resistance and reached many of its goals in the five weeks during which it was held. In the first two weeks alone, 100,000 people participated, thousands

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<sup>94</sup> “It Feels Good Being in Command,” *Ahram Online*, (2008), accessed June 9, 2015,

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/890/fo2.htm>

<sup>95</sup> Amr Khaled, [accessed March 8, 2015,]  
[http://amrkhaled.net/ak\\_private](http://amrkhaled.net/ak_private)



called the help hotlines, 1,470 individuals applied for treatment, and the campaign was able to print and distribute between four and five million logo posters and stickers.<sup>96</sup>

Despite these successes, resistance to this new popular/religious drug discourse was evident in many conservative sites of Egyptian society. Dr. Rasha Tawfiq, a well-known member of the campaign, recalls during outreach they faced some negative backlash from some of the schools they visited, stating that “Teachers and heads would either deem it an “unacceptable” topic to discuss with children” or many believed that drug use was not an issue, claiming only a small part of the population abused drugs.<sup>97</sup> Ultimately, the campaign was successful in terms of helping thousands to seek treatment, and being one of the first movements to breach the taboo topic of drug use in Egypt’s society.

Thus, Amr Khaled has been able to transcend traditional institutional religious and governmental drug discourse through his own popular-religious approach. Appealing to a massive audience through his charismatic style while still legitimizing his drug discourse with legitimate religious support including verses from the Quran which claim that the reward for saving one person’s life is worth the same as saving a whole universe.<sup>98</sup> It appears that Amr Khaled has been highly successful preaching his brand of popular-religious discourse, but it is crucial to understand that he represents a new discourse that must be placed in a larger context of drug discourses.

Interestingly, while Amr Khaled serves as an example of religious discourse outside the state’s control, his role as an ‘unofficial imam’ presents another opportunity to expose the manner in which religious discourse has been coopted by the state through successive Egyptian governments. In fact, regulation of religious discourse is so extensive in Egypt that the state produces religious elite that helps legitimize its power and also the narratives they produce. This religious base regulated by the state includes:

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<sup>96</sup> *Ahram Online*, “It Feels Good Being in Command”

<sup>97</sup> Nada El-Kouny, “Outcast: Egypt’s Growing Addiction Problem,” *Ahram Online* (Cairo), June 25, 2015, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/1/0/133715/Egypt/0/Outcast-Egypt-s-growing-addiction-problem-.aspx>.

<sup>98</sup> *Ahram Online*, “It Feels Good Being in Command”

Professional preachers, teachers and government functionaries who have been trained at al-Azhar University and employed in government ministries such as those of Justice, Religious Endowments and Education. As Gaffney notes, this class ‘plays an important part in the political legitimation of the regime’ and, while it is distanced from power, it retains considerable influence, particularly in matters of family relations<sup>99</sup>

However, with regard to the expansion of a religious pluralism in the past century, the state has been unable to maintain its all-encompassing control. Even mosques, a site of constant state regulation, have managed to challenge the legitimacy of state produced religious discourses. According to Rock, “between 1961 and 1979, the number of mosques doubled from 17,000 to 34,000 with, by 1979, six times as many private as ‘government’ mosques”. This expansion of mosques that fall outside of government supervision has allowed for the rise of “socio-religious organizations” and the growth of religious space outside the control of the state.<sup>100</sup> The Egyptian government continues to struggle to reign in this religious pluralism: in 2014 the “Ministry of Awqaf took direct control of several mosques operated by the Muslim Brotherhood”, and in February of 2015 authorities closed down 27,000 places of Islamic worship.<sup>101</sup>

Similar to the expansion of private mosques, Amr Khaled, through the aid of media including radio, television, satellite programming, and internet, provides a private religious discourse outside that of the state’s control. With books, cassettes, DVDs, and media like his popular television shows *Sunā’ a al-Hayā* (Life-Makers), he has successfully spread his message independent of government interference, setting him apart as a religious authority free of government control. In his religious discourse he does not issue official canon like *fatāwa*, but instead speaks of the “relevance of the Prophet Muhammad as a timeless role-model for mankind, and of the ways in which Muslim youth can honour the model of the Prophet”.<sup>102</sup> This moderate message allowed

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<sup>99</sup> Rock, 18.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Mary Atkinson, “Egypt to Restrict Activity of Mosques During Ramadan”, Middle East Eye, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypt-restrict-access-mosques-during-ramadan-190661969>

<sup>102</sup> Rock, 31.

Amr Khaled to create an alternative Islamic discourse that not only threatens to be more popular and better marketed than al-Azhar's official version, but also wreaks havoc with the state's attempt to categorize Islamists as 'poor, uncouth, fringe extremists' [...] Khaled's genius is to style himself as an Islamist who is one of 'us'.<sup>103</sup>

As a result of his brand of religious discourse, Amr Khaled has been highly successful in obtaining the moral and financial support of his followers. This has translated to even more independence from the state, and also further creates opportunities to spread his message. Through this kind of "developmental and socio-economic work throughout the Arab world that gives him the infrastructure to support his bid for religious leadership within the Arab world," thus, he is able to advance his own agenda and socio-economic programs.<sup>104</sup> One of his methods by which he appealed to a larger audience was popular music; cooperating with individuals like the *sha'abi* (popular) singer Sha'ban A'bdal Rahim who reaches younger/popular Egyptians that are more likely to use drugs.

## ii. Sha'ban A'bdal Rahim and Ahmad Mekky: Juxtaposing Egyptian Drug Songs

Like the alternative preacher Amr Khaled, Sha'ban A'bdal Rahim is not your traditional Egyptian singer. Typically known by his first name, Sha'ban is illiterate and originally from Shubra, an expansive lower-middle class district located northwest of central Cairo. Initially he trained as a *makhwagī* (laundry presser) and for twenty years he was relatively unknown as a singer and toiled in obscurity, until gradually attaining a degree of notoriety in the *sha'abi* genre of Egyptian music when he was included in the "1990 compilation of *jeel* and *sha'bi* music entitled 'Yalla hitlist Egypt'.<sup>105</sup> Because of his indigenous roots, he has come to be described as a "champion of 'working class pride' whose music 'affirm[s] the Egyptian-ness of *sha'abi* music as real Egyptian music

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<sup>103</sup> Lindsay Wise, *Words from the Heart: New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt*, (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2003), 10.

<sup>104</sup> Rock, 28.

<sup>105</sup> Joel Gordon, "Singing the pulse of the Egyptian-Arab street: Shaaban Abd al-Rahim and the geo-pop-politics of fast food ." *Cambridge Journals Online* (2003) : 78.

unaltered by the outside world.<sup>106</sup>

This appeal to a specific section of Egyptians through *sha'abi* music is crucial to understand, for it is the reason he was featured in the *Hamāya* anti-drug campaign.<sup>107</sup>

According to Gordon,

*Sha'abi* (literally 'popular') music is the hard-driving urban folk music with a strong rhythmic beat performed by singers who are often, but not exclusively male, and are favoured less for their pretty faces, sweet voices or tender laments than for the evocative power of an insistent beat, repetitive chant (or, rap as it has more recently been referred to) and a home-grown 'gangsta' persona.<sup>108</sup>

Though often considered 'vulgar or 'low-class' music, it continues to be popular among wide sectors of the population<sup>109</sup>, especially since people identify with content regarding "hard luck, illegal pursuits, illicit sexuality, and crimes of passion laced with urban slang, contempt for middle-class respectability, and a 'humorous even salacious spirit'."<sup>110</sup>

The ability to identify with locals and speak about taboo topics are the main reasons why *Sha'ban* was used in the *Hamāya* anti-drug campaign.<sup>111</sup> With lyrics stating:

ياللي انت ماشي ومتخدر  
*īālī ānta māshī wa mitkhadir*  
(Hey you (intoxicated person) walking over there 'high')  
لازم تفكر وتقدر، نصيحة مني لوجه الله بلاش تقاوح وتصدر  
*lāzim tifakir wa ta'adir, naṣiḥa minī liuḡī Allah balāsh ti'āūh wa tiṣadir*  
(You have to think and evaluate, advice, for the sake of God, do not argue) [...]  
غني لأهل الخير  
*ghanī al'āhli al-khīr*  
(Sing for the good people (referring to drug users))  
يمكن يتوبوا من تاني  
*yūmkinī yutūbū min tānī*  
(They might repent again) [...]  
انا عامل حملة على الادمان، عايزين نساعد بعضنا ونوعي شبابنا بكل مكان

<sup>106</sup> David Lodge, "'Cairo hit factory: modern Egyptian music: al-jil, shaabi, Nubian,'" *World Music: The Rough Guide* (1994) : 185.

<sup>107</sup> Interestingly *Sha'ban* has admitted to smoking *bāngu* and *hashīsh*, even defending the right to smoke cannabis during Ibrahim Issa's television show *Hamra-* <https://archive.is/zguE> (Al-Ahram Weekly, 2010)

<sup>108</sup> Gordon, 76.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>110</sup> Lodge., 186.

<sup>111</sup> *Sha'aban's* songs include topics ranging from his hate for Israel (*Ana Bakra Israel*) to songs concerning the swine flu.

*ānā ‘āmal hamla ‘alā al-ādmān, ‘āyzīn nisā‘aid bi‘adīnā wa nū‘ai shabābinā fikuli makān*

(I am starting a movement against addiction; we need to help each other raise awareness for our youth everywhere) [...]

عائشين في وهم

*‘ayshīn fī aū ham*

((Young people) living in hallucinations) [...]

انسان محطم نفسيا يقول حيزب جنسيا

*ānsān mahaṭam nafsiyyān i‘ul hīzabat ginziyā*

A person mentally devastated said it would improve his sex [...]

ترمل وامتول

*Tramal wāmtūll* (Tramadol) [sic]<sup>112</sup>

His song and its lyrics exemplify popular *sha‘abi* music as drug discourse that is aimed at affecting the behavior of individuals in contemporary Egyptian society. Though not directed at all Egyptian drug users, Sha‘ban uses “colloquial linguistic turns the working class accent, and the repetitive, driving beat” to reach his “*sha‘abi*” audience, almost lecturing them about the dangers of drug use.<sup>113</sup>

Meanwhile, in almost complete contrast stands Ahmad Mekky, a young and popular Egyptian director, author, actor, and rapper. While Sha‘ban appealed to an audience through his *sha‘abi* style, Ahmad Mekky prefers the relatively new medium of rap. According to an interview with the Egyptian hip-hop group *Arabian Knights Crew*, hip-hop and rap is a relatively new genre of music to Egypt, with no real “scene” to speak of until after the early 2000’s.<sup>114</sup> Thus, with this newer, “fresher” angle, Ahmad Mekky appeals to a hip, more modern audience. Analyzing his song *Qaṭr al-Hayāt* gives an insight to a modern style of music used to address the phenomena of drugs and drug use in Egypt.

Like Sha‘ban, the song *Qaṭr al-Hayāt* clearly serves as a warning associated with the dangers of drugs and drug use, however, Ahmad Mekky is able to create an

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<sup>112</sup> A common belief amongst drug users is that the tramadol, a cheap addictive pain killer, enhances his sexual performance.

<sup>113</sup> Gordon, 85.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander Billet, “Interview: rapper Sphinx on why Egypt uprising had a hip-hop soundtrack,” *Electronic Intifada*, January 24, 2012, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/interview-rapper-sphinx-why-egypt-uprising-had-hip-hop-soundtrack/10852> [accessed June 12, 2015].

alternative drug discourse where instead of lecturing drug users, he attempts to understand and empathize with them in his lyrics. He sings:

احساس قاسي وصعب لما الناس تشوفك فاشل  
*ihsās 'āsi wa ṣ'ab lama al-nās tashūfak fāshil*  
(It's a hard and cruel feeling when people see you as a loser)  
ابوك وامك واخواتك وصحابك شايفينك عاطل  
*ābūk wa umak wa ākhūātak wa ṣahābak shāifīnak 'aātal*  
(Your father, mother, brothers, and friends see you unemployed/useless [...])  
في كل مقابلة شغلانة يتقالى لف نفسك بشهادتك مدد بجنب اي حيط وخذلك بوسة  
*fī kuli m'aābla shighlāna ya 'āla lafi nafsak bishahādtak madad biganbi āya hīt wa khidlak būsa*  
(In every job interview I was told to turn around with my certifications and get lost) [...]  
وابويا هو الى لسة بيصرف ع البيت  
*wa ābūyā hūa 'ili lissa bīṣruf'ā al-bayt*  
(And my father is still the breadwinner of the house)  
بتعامل من عيلتي على اتي عالية وحالتي حالة  
*bit 'āml min 'aīlati 'ala āni 'aālla wa hālti hāla*  
(I'm treated by my family as a burden)  
ثقتي بنفسي راحت النجاح بقى استحالة  
*th 'ati binafsī rāht al-nagāḥ ba 'i isthāla*  
(My self-esteem is gone, success is now impossible)  
نفسى اهرب من نفسي ومن حالتي ومن عيلتي ومن الدنيا  
*nafsī āhrib min nafsī wa min ḥālti wa min 'ailti wa min al-dunyā*  
(I wish I could run away from myself, my status, my family, and from life)  
نفسى القى دنيا تانية اهرب ليها ولا حتى تانية  
*nafsī al-'a dunyā Tānya āharb līhā wa lā ḥata thānya*  
(Wish I could escape to another life even for one second)  
وفي يوم قالهالي صاحبي والى يبدلك عالطريق  
*wa fī youm 'ālhāli sāhibī wa 'ila yadalak 'aālṭriq*  
(And one day, my friend showed me the way) [...]

He then vividly describes drug use:

سالتو هاش ضحك وقالى ببسة قولتله لا ادمنها  
*sāltū hāsh ḍaḥik wa 'ālī bīssa 'āūiltlū lā ādminhā*  
(I asked him hash, he laughed and said bissa (heroin), I said I'll be addicted)  
قالى متخافش مش ممكن تدمن من اول شكة  
*'ālī matkhāfash mish mumkin tadmin min āwul shaka*  
(He said "don't worry you can't be an addict from the first shot") [...]  
مفاصلي ساحت وارتاحت وروحي راحت  
*mafāṣlī sāhit wārtāhit warūḥi rāhit*  
(My joints relax me and I can't feel myself)  
بكلم نفسي من جوة وبرغي من برة ساكت  
*bikalīm nafsī min gūa wa barghī min bara sākit*  
(Speaking to myself from inside and silent from outside)  
همومي شبه تاهت والرؤية بهات في باهت

*humūmī shibhi tāhit wa-l-r`uya bahā fī bāhit*  
(All my worries are gone, my vision is blurry)  
كل مشكلة كانت عندي في الدنيا ماتت وتاهت  
*kulu mushkila kānat `andī fī al-dunyā mātat wa tāhit*  
(Every problem I've had in life died and vanished) [...]

The song continues with the financial difficulties of keeping up his habit:

بدأت استتلف فلوس من كل الى اعرفه وأدوس  
*bid`at āstaliḥ falūs min kuli `ila ā`arīfu wa ādūs*  
(I started borrowing money from everyone I know) [...]  
خمسين جنية في خمسين في مية  
*khamsīn ginaī fī khamsīn fī mīa*  
(50 pounds, another 50 pounds, and another 100) [...]  
خلصت فلوسى لحد في يوم ماجتلى فكرة هيا هيا  
*khalṣat falūsi lahadī fī youm māgatli fikra hīā hīā*  
(Spent all my money, until I had a brilliant idea)  
ذهب امى موبايل اختى لآب توب اخويا  
*dahab āmī mūbāyl ākhtī laptop ākhūya*  
(My mother's gold, my sister's mobile, my brother's laptop) [...]

Until its climaxes in a fight with his entire family:

سحبت بنت اختى 3 سنين نحيت شباك  
*saḥbt bintī ākhtī thalat sinīn naḥīt shubāk*  
(I dragged my three year old niece towards the window)  
هاتو الفلوس لرميها فجأة زاد الأرتباك  
*hātū al-falūs larmihā faḡ`ā zād al-`ārtibāk*  
(Give me money or I'll throw her out, suddenly the tensions increased) [...]  
رميتلى فلوس وبصوت على مشوفش وشك تانى  
*ramitli falūs wa biṣūt `āli mashūfishi wa shak tāni*  
(She threw me money and screamed "I never want to see your face again") [...]  
خادت الفلوس وجريت عارف مش راجل بيتى تانى  
*khādat al-falūs wa garīt `āraf mish rāgl baṭī tāni*  
(I took the money and left, and I knew I'd never come back.)

Finally, he concludes the song with the consequences of his behavior:

خسرت كل اهلى وأصحابى بقيت وحيد  
*khasirt kul āhli wa `aṣ`hābi bi`īt wahīd*  
(I lost all my family and friends, now I'm alone) [...]  
الجرعة المعتادة خلاص مبقتش تأثر  
*Al-gar`a al-ma`atāda khalāṣ maftash t`athir*  
(The usual dose is no longer effective)  
شريط حياتى كلة بيتعرض قدامى اغبر فى اغبر  
*sharīt ḥayāti kula bīt`araḍ `adāmi āghbar fī āghbar*  
(My life flashed before my eyes, nothing good in it)



ضربت السم في عروقي وذودته اكثر واكثر  
*ḍaribt al-sumu fī 'arū' ai wathūdtuhu āktar wa āktar*  
 (I pushed more poison in my veins and increased the dose even more)  
 نفسى افنى وأخلص من الدنيا زى المية اتبخر  
*naḥsī āfna wa 'akhlaṣ min al-dunyā zay al-maya ātbakhar*  
 (I wish I would die, get rid of this life, and evaporate like water)  
 كمان زودته سنه جسمى لون أصفر  
*kamān zūdatu sana gismi lūn 'aṣfar*  
 (I increased the dose even more, and my body turned yellow) [...]  
 من خضتى جيت أصلب طولى جسمى على الأرض اترزع  
*min khaḍati gīt 'aṣlab ṭuwli gasmi 'ala al-'arḍ ātraz'a*  
 (I freak out, tried to stand up, but my body hit the floor hard) [...]  
 والدنيا بتضلم تديرجى واحدة واحدة أسودت  
*wa-l-dunyā bituḍlm tadrīgi wāḥda wāḥda 'asūdat*  
 (Everything is dimming slowly until its black) [...]  
 عمرى بسرعة انتهى  
*'amri bisur'a āntaha*  
 (My life ended fast) [...]  
 حياتى راحت منى كلها ضيعتها ندمان على كل لحظة غمقة فى يوم انا عشتها  
*ḥayātī rāḥt minī kulha ṣayyitahā nadmān kulī laḥẓa gham'a fī youm ānā 'ashtahā*  
 (I lost all my life, I regret every dark moment I've ever lived) [...]  
 دى حاجة صعبة فعلا اناك تختفى من الدنيا  
*dī ḥāga ṣ'aba f'alan ānak takhtifi min al-dunyā*  
 (It's really a really difficult thing when you disappear from the world)  
 والناس متفتكرتش بحاجة حلوة لوجه الله  
*wa-l-nās matfatikarkish biḥāga ḥalwa laūga Allah*  
 (Nobody remembers you by anything good for god's sake) [sic]

The accompanying music video follows along with the lyrics of a dejected thirty year-old Egyptian man looking for an escape from his miserable life. With its striking imagery and details, the music video displays the underlying message/motivation and intended audience of Ahmad Mekky's song.<sup>115</sup> The song clearly is meant to identify with a middle or upper income group since the drug user steals laptops, gold, and money from his relatively well off family in order to support his habit. Furthermore, his drug-using friends include men and women drinking alcohol together, a practice more prevalent among wealthier, westernized Egyptians. Even the drug den where they all meet to use drugs is meant to represent an upper class home as it is decorated by a sign that sarcastically proclaims in English, "drug free zone". Finally, some of the most shocking

<sup>115</sup> The music video for Ahmad Makī's *Qaṭr al-Hayat* can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyj14J-g43o>



images result from the actual drug using, which show needles and the more expensive heroin being injected. All of these imageries aim to capture the attention of a middle or upper-income drug using group that can identify with the lyrics and video.

Though the song serves to warn about drugs, more importantly, its lyrics and accompanying music video serve as examples of an alternative trend in drug discourse where the entire experience of drug use is examined through an impartial and non-judgmental perspective. From the drug users feelings of misery and gloom due to being unemployed, to his final regret over all his actions; the entire journey is captured through lyrical and visual means. In addition to this newer perspective on drug use, Ahmad Mekky utilizes newer forms of media including YouTube and the satellite channel Melody to broadcast his drug discourse outside of traditional state-sanctioned media. This “neutral” and ‘non-judgmental’ drug discourse supplemented by the ability to broadcast and appeal to a large audience characterizes alternative newer forms of drug discourse. Ultimately, the popularity of the song and video seem to have struck a nerve, since Ahmad Mekky released *Qaṭr al-Hayat* in 2012 it has been viewed over 16 million times in three years, compared to Sha‘bān’s drug song which has around 260,000 views in seven years.

### **iii. Drugs in Literature: Mahfouz and Youssef**

Egyptian literature is another site that can be used to identify and analyze the production of drug discourse. It allows for scrutinizing representations of a prohibited behavior in a variety of contexts. This section focuses on the works from Naguib Mahfouz and Essam Youseff as a case where two authors reflect on Egyptian society and its attitude towards drugs and drug use in their writing. It is important to note that they are both examined in tandem in order to compare two individual styles that present Egyptian society and its norms in two very different environments. While Mahfouz’s *Cairo Trilogy* (1956) and *Adrift on the Nile* (1966) focus on Egyptian social and political transformations during the twentieth century; Youseff’s *A ¼ Gram* (2010),

is a novel based exclusively on a true story of drugs and drug use in Egypt during the 1980s and 1990s.

Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* (1956) stands as a brilliant portrayal of social, political, and religious themes that Egypt underwent during the early twentieth century. Through his intimate folkloristic style, Mahfouz is able to penetrate into the "spheres of individual, family, and the nation as a whole and exposes the hypocrisy of people, most of whom are Muslims whose lifestyles are contrary to the faith they profess".<sup>116</sup> Though drug use is only mentioned sparingly, the reader can observe that drug use as a social phenomenon was a common and even normalized behavior in early Egyptian twentieth-century society. In one case, Mahfouz writes how the patriarch of the family, Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, was actually prescribed cannabis,

Hashish had been prescribed for him to stimulate his appetite, in addition to its other benefits. Although he had tried it, he had never been comfortable with it and had abandoned it without regret. He disliked it because it induced in him a stupor, both somber and still, and a predisposition toward silence as well as a feeling of isolation even when he was with his best friends. He disliked these symptoms that were in rude contrast to his normal disposition aflame with youthful outbursts of mirth, elated excitement, intimate delights, and bouts of jesting and laughter<sup>117</sup>

Later, the reader is shown a meeting between al-Jawad's son Yasin and his friends at a bar in which the conversation leads to the topic of drug use. Mahfouz writes,

His thoughts were interrupted by a man's voice which rang out, "Wine has nothing but benefits. I'll cut off the head of anyone who disagrees. Hashish, dope, and opium are very harmful, but wine is full of benefits".

"What are its benefits?" his companion asked.

"Its benefits! What a strange question!" the man replied incredulously. "Everything about it is beneficial, as I told you. You know this. You believe it..."

The companion said, "But hashish, opium, and other narcotics, are also beneficial. You ought to know this and believe it. Everyone says so. Are you going to oppose this popular consensus?"

The first man hesitated a little. Then he observed, "Everything's beneficial, then. Everything. Wine, hashish, opium, narcotics, and whatever comes along."

His companion retorted in a victorious tone, "But wine is forbidden by Islam"<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Mahbubur Rahman, "Najib Mahfouz's The Trilogy: The Portrayal of Social Aspects," *Pratidhwani the Echo A Peer-Reviewed Indexed International Journal of Humanities & Social Science*, (2014) : 1-5.

<sup>117</sup> Naguib Mahfouz, *Cairo Trilogy* (Cairo: Anchor Books, 1956), 25-26.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

Both these cases serve to show that despite being prohibited by the government and religious authorities, drug use has been an enduring and controversial practice in Egyptian society.

In another work of Mahfouz, *Adrift on the Nile* (1966), normalized drug use is even more apparent and is presented as a central act to the story and its characters, whose actions are vividly portrayed against the backdrop of social and political turmoil in Egypt. The novel tells the story of a group of middle class Egyptians who regularly meet on a houseboat on the Nile, where they smoke hashish in a water pipe, drink alcohol, and invariably end up discussing various existential subjects.

Unlike the *Cairo Trilogy* (1956), drug usage in *Adrift on the Nile* (1966) is often mentioned and described in great detail. Anis the main character seems to enjoy *hashīsh* in particular. He is described as the “master of ceremonies” since he is the custodian of the *hashīsh* water-pipe, and often wakes up with a cup of coffee that is mixed with “a little magic.”<sup>119</sup> Ultimately, the entire group of friends in the novel are habitual users, and their behavior is best described by the character Mustafa who states: “As for us, if we ever heard of a crackdown on drugs we’d all be at our wits’ end”.<sup>120</sup> It is in this drug-induced state that the group has its most profound conversations concerning the state of Egyptian society, and in which they reflect their own position within their transforming world. Notably, Mahfouz contrasts his main drug using cast with the non-drug using Samara who is explicitly described as an individual that does not smoke *hashīsh* since she does not wish to have the same ambivalence to society that the rest of the main characters practice.

Both of Mahfouz’s novels are great examples of Egyptian literature and drug discourse. Though known for his symbolism describing Egyptian society, both novels offer a window into the social reality of Egyptians in different contexts and prove that drug use, though prohibited, is an established behavior. Furthermore, the representations offer a chance to observe this behavior in popular culture where it is not strictly labeled

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<sup>119</sup> Naguib Mahfouz, *Adrift on the Nile* (Cairo: Anchor Books, 1994), 35.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

*ḥarām* or prohibited. Instead, Mahfouz shows how the acceptability/ambiguity of this behavior is continuously debated amongst Egyptians, who are constantly shaping their perceptions and attitudes towards drugs and drug use.

The last example of drug discourse in Egyptian literature to be examined is Essam Youssef's, *A ¼ Gram* (2010). Unlike Mahfouz who marginally touches on the topics of drugs and drug use in his writings, Youssef's novel is explicitly written to bring awareness to this social taboo. The work is based on the true story of a group of privileged, Careane middle and upper-class friends who struggle with drug use. Through a modern-colloquial style, Youssef is able to add to the authenticity of the story. He candidly details drugs and places that many Egyptians can identify with such as drugs named *Max*, *Abu-Saleeba*, *Farawala* (strawberry) or Brown Sugar/*bissa* (heroin) and locations where the drug using characters obtained drugs like Boulaq, Kit Kat, al-Shebbak, al-Batineyya, Suez, Ismailia, and Belbais.

The novel describes the experience of drug use through the eyes of Salah and his friends, whose journey is characterized by moments of both euphoria and tragedy. Initially, Salah and the other main characters enjoy using drugs as much as possible; Salah travels to the United States, shares *ḥashīsh* with American friends, and is introduced to cocaine.<sup>121</sup> Other portrayals include characters traveling to Amsterdam, who experience a completely different drug policy. Salah is so surprised that he proclaims, "Why could Egypt not have a similar law that allowed using drugs publicly like Holland? That's what I called real progress!"<sup>122</sup> Despite these experiences in foreign countries, most of their drug use takes part in Egypt where they easily and consistently find their own drug using sanctuaries, going from one drug den to another. Eventually, their drug using takes a dismal turn as they become addicted to heroin.

One by one, Salah and his friends fall to heroin addiction and become associated with the social stigma attached to the behavior. Bono and Baha for example, who are the first to use "brown sugar" regularly and often. Baha is described as a "full blown heroin

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<sup>121</sup> Essam Youssef, *A 1/4 Gram*. (Cairo: Montana Studios, 2010), 68.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

addict” who asks for money and tries to sell things in order to maintain his habit.<sup>123</sup> The reality of their situation finally hits with the overdose of Atef, forcing both the drug users and their families to recognize the widespread use of heroin. The characters slowly realize they have lost everything and have been increasingly ostracized by society.

Youssef writes about Ramy:

Where did his beautiful girlfriends go? Where was the guitar? Where? Where? Nelly, his girlfriend, ended their relationship after his reputation was ruined, and it became known that he was a junkie. “Ramy is an addict” was a statement repeated by everyone<sup>124</sup>

The main character, Salah best captures the moral struggle of using drugs and reflects larger social perceptions of the behavior in Egypt. First, he slowly realizes that his drug use has become a problem and so decides to stop drinking alcohol and using the ‘harmful’ heroin. It is interesting that he differentiates between illicit drugs since he does not stop smoking *hashish*, believing it was not haram or unlawful, “it was like smoking cigarettes”.<sup>125</sup> Later in the novel, he argues that *hashish* was not a drug, “its chocolate, the elixir of life”.<sup>126</sup> However, eventually Salah admits he has a drug problem, and even gives up *hashish*, “Why am I suffering like this?” Because you’re an addict. Although this was the first I had heard the word addict directly referring to me, I accepted it. I, in fact, agreed”.<sup>127</sup> Thus, he comes to the realization that he is ill and enters rehabilitation along with a twelve-step rehabilitation program in order to cure himself of his disease.

Both Mahfouz and Youssef’s serve as examples of drug discourse in Egyptian literature that allow the reader to better understand the fluid process in which drugs and drug use is perceived in society. Both authors demonstrate that like any deviant behavior, its acceptability is constantly being debated and judged according to religious, governmental, medical, and popular opinion/positions. This could be why “established” drugs like *hashish* are not stigmatized like heroin, which is viewed strictly as a dangerous substance by a majority of society. Ultimately, what is truly striking from these novels is

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 429.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 377.

the fact that drugs and drug use, although prohibited by various actors and social institutions, appears to continue being part of the social fabric of Egyptian society.

#### iv. Representations of Drugs in News, Television, and Film

A last social mechanism holding significant influence over the creation of drug discourses in Egypt that are examined in this section, are the various forms of mass communication and media including: Printed media, internet blogs, television shows, and film. These forms of communication greatly influence perceptions tied to drugs and drug use, and are an essential element to the fluid process that continually transforms and shapes perceptions over this prohibited behavior.

Probably the oldest case of drug discourse in mass communication comes in the form of printed media. Periodicals and newspapers have participated in the production of drug discourse for over a century and are a direct reflection of social phenomena at the time. Especially in periods when drugs and drug use were perceived as a growing threat such as the 1920-30s “white drug epidemic”, drug discourse became more frequent in print. The periodical *The Sphinx* exemplifies this drug discourse when in the 1920s and 30s articles concerning drugs became increasingly common. Headlines such as “Drug Traffic”, “Dope Traffic”, “Hasheesh Smuggling”, “Cairo’s Half-World” and “Vice-Unchecked” all portrayed the use of drugs as a growing threat to the security of Egyptian society.<sup>128</sup>

In some of this print media, sensationalism and use of powerful images with articles became a growing trend. The weekly *al-Dūnya al-Musawwara*, founded in 1929, is especially relevant in this type of early drug discourse production in print media since campaigning against drugs was part of its mission statement.<sup>129</sup> As early as 1930 the publication offered exclusive stories of police raids, and presented drugs as “Egypt’s powerful enemy” that “plunders souls, annihilates property, causes moral corruption” and

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<sup>128</sup> Headlines from *The Sphinx: The English Weekly* (1892-1930)

<sup>129</sup> Kozma, “White Drugs in Interwar Egypt: Decadent Pleasures, Emaciated Fellahin, and the Campaign Against Drugs”, 96.

basically turns humans into corpses.<sup>130</sup> However, the caricatures and images accompanying these articles were even more provocative: Like the images below, the first one shows a mother mourning her drug addicted sons, and the second image compares the bodies of a heroin addict and a “healthy man”.

Figure 1 The Drug Victims



131

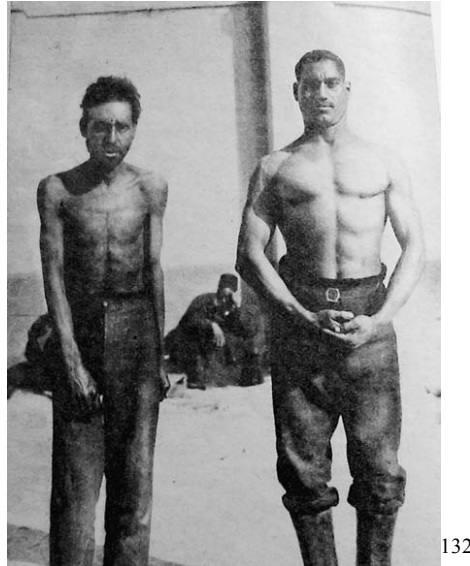
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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>131</sup> “The Drug Victims,” caricature published in *al-Dūnya al-Musawwara*, 20 July 1930 pictured in Kozma, “White Drugs in Interwar Egypt: Decadent Pleasures, Emaciated Fellahin, and the Campaign Against Drugs”, 98



**Figure 2 A Healthy Man and A Heroin Addict**



Interestingly, Kozma makes it clear that in this second image, the “healthy man” is actually a body builder, forcing us to consider the motivations of the publication.<sup>133</sup> Was it just another sensationalist strategy, or was drug use tied to individuals losing their masculinity? Printed media continues to be a major actor in the production of drug discourse, and also continues to use some of these sensationalist tricks to reinforce stereotypes of drugs and drug users.

Contemporary Egyptian newspapers like the state-owned al-Ahram, al-Masry al-Youm or Egypt Independent, and al-Sharouk continue to produce daily examples of drug discourse in their pages. In a simple search through any of these newspapers archives it quickly becomes apparent that there is a constant stream of drug related articles, and more importantly it is also clear that there are recurrent trends like constant reporting on

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<sup>132</sup> “A healthy man and a heroin addict”, *al-Dūnya al-Musawwara*, 15 January 1930 pictured in Kozma, “White Drugs in Interwar Egypt: Decadent Pleasures, Emaciated Fellahin, and the Campaign Against Drugs”, 98

<sup>133</sup> Kozma, “White Drugs in Interwar Egypt: Decadent Pleasures, Emaciated Fellahin, and the Campaign Against Drugs”, 98



drug raids accompanied by images depicting large quantities of confiscated narcotics<sup>134</sup>. Yet another recurring theme in these drug articles are the use of statistics to show the large number of drug users, money spent on drugs, or any other quantifiable data that can show the severity and threat that drugs and drug users pose.<sup>135</sup>

Contrasting this objective approach of newspapers, are the many television shows and film, which often offer alternative perspectives or opinions that contest the governmental or religious discourse. Though still sensational and often dramatic, television talk shows like “It’s Necessary We Understand ‘Drugs’” or “Tell You a Secret” include in-depth interviews with drug dealers, drug users, and in one episode a medical doctor even administers a drug to an unsuspecting rat.<sup>136</sup> One of the more surprising examples to broach the issue of drug use is the *musalsal* or soap opera “*Taht al-Saytara*” which was featured during Ramadan and tackled head on the taboo topics of drug addiction in Egyptian society. As one viewer named Mona stated, “Finally an honest show that depicts the reality of a world people chose to believe did not exist”.<sup>137</sup>

The last form of media drug discourse that is to be examined is film. Drug discourses in film has a long history as well and holds significant power of the depictions of drugs and drug use in Egyptian culture/society. Films like *al-Kayf* (The High), *al-Maṣlaḥa* (The Goods), and *al-Gazīra* (The Island) offer the viewer an opportunity to experience the social reality of drugs. For example, *al-Gazīra* is a film loosely based on

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<sup>134</sup> Mustafa Attia, “Drug Seizure: More than a quarter ton of Hashish and Bango within 24 hours,” *Sharouk*, (September 9, 2015), <http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=09092015&id=f7b5ffd7-cf00-4b22-99e3-e1857eaf17df>

<sup>135</sup> “Painkiller Tramadol number one drug abused in Egypt: Minister,” *Ahram Online*. Last modified September 22, 2015, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/142145/Egypt/Politics-/Painkiller-Tramadol-number-one-drug-abused-in-Egypt.aspx>

<sup>136</sup> This episode is available at, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZ1voRiq3QE>

<sup>137</sup> Rania Elembaby, “Taht El-Saytara: Reshaping perceptions of drug addiction in Egypt,” *Ahram Online*, Last modified July 26, 2015, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/32/136217/Arts--Culture/Film/Taht-ElSaytara-reshaping-perceptions-of-drug-addic.aspx>

the real-life capture of the Egyptian drug lord Ezzat Hanafy. Not only does the movie examine drugs in Egyptian society, but it also discusses issues like the corruption of police and the Egyptian government, exposing a long standing relationship between the state and criminals.<sup>138</sup> In *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State*, Salwa Ismail describes this intimate relationship<sup>139</sup>:

There is no doubt that some police officers were on the clan pay roll and that the police turned a blind eye to its illegal activities [...] On the one hand, the media, and off-the record analyses, spoke of a police alliance forged sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s. The alliance was part of the police battle with the Islamists<sup>140</sup>

Meanwhile the film *al-Maṣlaḥa* (The Goods), released in 2012, glorifies the police officer and security forces, which is contrasted to the stereotype of the Bedouin as a ruthless drug trafficker. Thus, these two films offer contrasting perspectives. While drug and drug dealers were almost admired in *al-Gazīra*, *al-Maṣlaḥa* portrays the state's security forces as the only institution that could save Egypt from drug related threats.

The impact of drug discourse in film cannot be underestimated, *al-Kayf* for example has attained cult status for many Egyptians, and *al-Gazīra* was so popular that a second part to the *al-Gazīra* story was released in 2014. *Al-Maṣlaḥa* meanwhile was able to make an LE20 million profit despite the turmoil Egypt was experiencing at the time of its release.<sup>141</sup> It appears that widely accessible films like these are integral in shaping the

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<sup>138</sup> For further information on the relationship between the Egyptian government and crime please read:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19467017>

<sup>139</sup> Though not a principle focus of this thesis, it is important to mention that contrary to the official state narratives; there exists a wide belief of governmental involvement in the trafficking of illicit drugs. For more regarding this corrupt relationship please read: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/23/looking-for-hashish-in-cairo-talk-to-the-police/>

<sup>140</sup> Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 167.

<sup>141</sup> Amany Ali Shawky, "On the many faces of the drug dealer in Egyptian Cinema" *Masa Masr*, February 23, 2015, <http://www.madamasr.com/sections/culture/many-faces-drug-dealer-egyptian-cinema>

Egyptian drug discourse because they are able to intervene and construct labels for individuals and behavior.

## **B. Conclusion: Creating A Broader Discourse of Drugs in Egypt**

This chapter examined a broader more inclusive discourse of drugs in Egypt in order to be able scrutinize the process by which individual behaviors are created and labeled in later chapters. It traced the multifaceted discursive process through which “truths”, or discourse, of drugs and drug use are produced. Ultimately, it revealed that drug discourse is produced throughout Egypt’s social institutions and actors and as a result is defined according to varying, and often changing, values, motivations, and beliefs. By analyzing and contextualizing drug discourse from these various sites, this chapter creates a conversation across Egyptian society, engaging the power structures that manage the moral economy of society who use discourse as a form of power to regulate behavior.

Using texts, interviews, news articles, television shows, and other various forms of discourse from the state, religion, and popular culture, this chapter traced the fluid process in which drugs and drug use are constructed as a deviant behavior and in the process identified the power holders of drug discourse production. From the government appropriating social and medical concerns in order to pursue its hegemonic prohibitionist and security-based policies, to the traditional role of religion maintaining that drugs are prohibited since they harm individuals and society. These two narratives have dominated drug discourse, thereby constructing the foremost positions of banning, punishing, and stigmatizing drugs and drug use. Ultimately, it becomes apparent that these social actors use their power over drug discourse to act as the principle moral authorities over the acceptable and unacceptable in Egyptian society.

However, the analysis of alternative forms of drug discourse highlights the changing attitudes regarding this behavior. Due largely to advances in mass communication, new entities have been able to challenge the previously mentioned hegemonic drug discourse that stigmatize or strictly prohibit the use of drugs, instead

focusing more on the individual and subjective experience. This is evident when analyzing newer forms of popular drug discourse, which increasingly use modern tools like satellite television and YouTube to appeal to a larger, younger audience. No longer are drugs and drug use simply understood as *haram*. It appears that there is a growing trend to bring awareness to this behavior through an impartial/non-judgmental manner. Over time these newer/alternative drug discourses challenge traditional representations of drugs and drug-users, demonstrating that behaviors are not simply perceived as good or bad in Egypt. Instead it is observed that there exists a “grey zone” of acceptability in Egyptian society that allows for even prohibited behaviors to become normalized to a certain extent.

This chapter does not claim to describe all of Egyptian drug discourse; however it provided a more nuanced drug discourse that better depicts the manner in which the moral authorities of Egyptian society define drugs and drug use. Analyzing discourse however, is only part of examining drugs as a social phenomenon in Egypt. In a manner, it simply laid the foundation for the next two chapters that focus on the socio-reality of drug using individuals. Now that the larger structures of drug use in Egypt have been revealed, the next chapter examines this phenomenon from a micro-perspective. Focusing on an individual that was labeled and stigmatized by the hegemonic prohibitive drug discourse, and as a result, struggles to regain his agency within this repressive system.

### III. CHAPTER THREE: THE REPRESSIVE SYSTEM AND ITS HOLD OVER A DRUG USER

#### A. Introduction

This chapter utilizes and builds on concepts of power, discourse, and truth that were examined in the previous chapter by going beyond drug discourse and focusing on the real-life processes of drug use. This approach reveals that through discourse production, major social institutions and actors in power control the value systems of society that influence the behavior of individuals. However, the focus here is to show the manner in which drug discourse and social institutions serve as repressive instruments through which Egyptian society regulates the behavior of individuals. Specifically, it examines the life of Muhammad, an individual who was identified as a drug user by society. As a result his everyday experiences became largely shaped by the repressive system he lives in, ultimately resulting in his exclusion and being labeled as an outsider.

Having already examined the larger structures of power that define drug use, this chapter utilizes the narrative of Muhammad to contextualize the individual reality of a stigmatized and marginalized drug user in Egypt. Utilizing concepts derived from the works of Ervin Goffman (1961) and (1963), reveals how individual behavior is shaped by both the constraints of social structure alongside his everyday interactions. Essentially, this chapter couples ethnographic research within Foucault's larger perspectives on institutional and societal regulation with Goffman's understanding of stigma at the individual level, in order to demonstrate how the repressive system manifests in the life of an individual drug user.

Importantly though, Goffman's theoretical insights can also be used in order to analyze the central interactions and relationships that exist within his reality. This chapter particularly examines his interactions with his family, studying it as both a disciplinary mechanism embedded inside the rigid structures of Egyptian society, and also as an institution that is simultaneously marginalized due to its association with Muhammad and his prohibited behavior.

According to this approach, it understands that stigmatized behavior like drug use, is not simply defined by the structure and rigidity of society, or shaped exclusively in

power relations, discourse, and governmentality. Along with these structural claims, the analysis of stigmatized groups must also be studied through individual and interpersonal interactions, where the day-to-day experience of the marginalized can be observed and examined. This method also reveals that while being largely marginalized within a repressive system, individuals like him continue to struggle to “protect and reclaim a spoiled identity”.<sup>142</sup>

## **B. Foucault and Goffman: An Integrated Approach to Studying Stigmatized Behavior**

By integrating theoretical concepts from Foucault and Goffman, here drug use is both defined by the larger structures of power and also shaped at the individual level where stigma is “structurally embedded in the cultural values, practices, and institutions of society”.<sup>143</sup> While Foucault’s top-down approach is directed at entire systems, Goffman’s bottom-up approach largely focuses on the “local incidents and idiosyncrasies”.<sup>144</sup> Though the two approaches seem incompatible at first glance, in this chapter they complement one another and are integrated in order to provide a theoretical framework that examines marginalized drug users like Muhammad more in depth.

First, it is necessary to study how Foucault and Goffman consider social structures, institutions, and their symbolic power of constraint over individuals. Instead of scrutinizing the discursive process, here the focus shifts to linking discourse with power in order to demonstrate how it manifests at the individual level. According to Foucault, discourse as power is applied to individuals through discipline, as a “set of strategies, procedures and behaviors associated with certain institutional discourses, which then pervades the individual's general thinking and behavior”.<sup>145</sup> Thus, discourse is expressed

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<sup>142</sup> Stacy Hannem and Chris Bruckert, *Stigma Revisited* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>144</sup> Ian Hacking, "Between Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman: between discourse in the abstract and fact-to-face interaction." *Economy and Society* (2004) : 288.

<sup>145</sup> Balan, "M. Foucault's View on Power Relations." *Cogito Open Access Journal*.

as disciplinary power, and so achieves control over the individual and as Foucault explains:

... Reaches the level of bodies and gets a hold on them, taking actions, behavior, habits, and words into account; the way in which power converges below to affect individual bodies themselves, to work on, modify, and direct what Servan called “the soft fibers of the brain.” In other words, I think that in our society disciplinary power is a quite specific modality of what could be called the synaptic contact of bodies-power.<sup>146</sup>

He further explains that discipline, is a type of self-regulation encouraged by institutions through which individuals create their reality. Repressive social institutions like the hospital, the church/mosque, or even the prison exert discipline as a form of power/control that is internalized by individuals and leads to self-discipline. The underlying assumption that repressive/hegemonic institutions, which regulate drug discourse, have power over individual behavior through internalized discipline is a critical theoretical concept for this project.

In *Asylums: Studies on the Social Condition of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961), Goffman studies the role of institutions over individuals, but instead of focusing on the larger structures of society he analyzes the ways in which roles are constituted in “face-to-face interactions within an institutional setting”, and also studies how norms and deviance work on individuals, and how they change those norms.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, he developed an analysis of the ‘total institution’ that he defined as locations where “like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life”.<sup>148</sup> Thus, Goffman’s considerations concerning roles, interactions, and most importantly his analysis of stigmatized groups and individuals within institutions can be used to highlight the everyday reality of marginalized drug users in Egypt.

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[http://cogito.ucdc.ro/nr\\_2v2/M.%20FOUCAULT'S%20VIEW%20ON%20POWER%20RELATIONS.pdf](http://cogito.ucdc.ro/nr_2v2/M.%20FOUCAULT'S%20VIEW%20ON%20POWER%20RELATIONS.pdf) (accessed June 2015)

<sup>146</sup> Sophie Fuggle, *Foucault/Paul Subjects of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 101.

<sup>147</sup> Hacking, 288.

<sup>148</sup> Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: First Anchor Books, 1961), 11.

It is within this setting of repressive structure, based on institutional discourse and power, that individuals like Muhammad shape both their identity and reality. Through his work in mental institutions, Goffman concluded that individuals who lived their lives in ‘total institutions’ had almost every aspect of their lives controlled. According to him, almost all activities are “organized by a higher authority according to a plan what represents the official aims of the institution”.<sup>149</sup> More importantly, he described individual behavior within these institutions; what they (be they staff or patients) did when “they were free of observation by superiors, but also involved in appearances, behaving ‘as if’ one were following the norms”.<sup>150</sup> Ultimately, this project borrows theoretical concepts alongside his ethnographic style as a template for further analysis of individuals within not just total institutions, but institutions throughout the repressive structure of society.

Essentially, Goffman and Foucault are utilized as complementary sides of the same ‘behavioral coin’. By integrating concepts derived from both of these scholars, we observe how individuals learn to behave “whether by concealing one’s feelings, by affirming one’s central role or by a tactical effacement”.<sup>151</sup> Applying this approach to the case of Muhammad reveals both the structural and individual stigma that drug users face within Egyptian society. More importantly it identifies how social institutions have the power to constrain behavior through interactions that shape self-discipline and behavior in general. Interestingly, in the case of Muhammad it becomes evident that the family, not ‘total institutions’ like prison or rehabilitation center, is the most important institution that regulates his behavior, and in which he experiences his most important interactions.

### **C. Muhammad the ‘Drug Addict’ Caught in a Repressive System**

Friendly and smiling, it was often difficult to recognize that Muhammad was a recovering heroin addict whom continued to use drugs despite initial disavowals. Yet, Muhammad’s story encapsulates the stigma and marginalization that Egyptian drug users,

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<sup>149</sup> Hacking., 293.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 293-4.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.



particularly heroin users, face when society uncovers their prohibited behavior. Caught within repressive structures, Muhammad struggles to move forward and distance himself from the label *mūdmīn* (addict). As a result, he has been relegated to the edges of society where he continues to be dismissed according to the discourse, power, and judgment of unforgiving social structures he cannot escape.

Before analyzing Muhammad's life as a drug user it is first necessary to place him in the context of Egyptian society. He is a twenty-six year old Egyptian male who comes from a lower-middle class family composed of his parents (father is a semi-retired civil servant and mother works in a medicine factory) and three younger siblings whom reside together in a semi-*sha'abi* (popular) neighborhood located in Cairo's district of Heliopolis. Though he considers his family to be a relatively conservative and 'traditional' Muslim family, he personally identifies as a liberal and non-practicing Muslim. Lastly, Muhammad is a continuing student at Mansoura University, where he majors in English, and hopes to graduate after more than seven years as an undergraduate.<sup>152</sup>

With his background in mind, we can investigate Muhammad's drug use, and observe how this attribute came to shape his identity and reality within Egyptian society. First, he stated that his drug use began around the age of fifteen when he was introduced to alcohol and cannabis. His drug use quickly progressed to the point where he was consuming a daily dose of several tramadol pills (painkiller) by the age of eighteen. Ultimately, his drug use intensified when a friend introduced him to heroin, where he admits to eventually becoming a full-fledged heroin addict. According to Muhammad, heroin took over his life at the age of twenty-one when an older friend introduced it to him:

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<sup>152</sup> Besides Muhammad, only his sister spoke an intermediate level of English. Due to my limited Arabic language skills, I cannot overstate how important his English language proficiency was for the rapport we built as a researcher and informant. Besides, majoring in English, he enjoyed watching foreign, particularly American films, in order to better his English.

I met him and told him I needed to buy some tramadol. He told me ok. That's how it started with heroin. He says that's ok but I'm going to get some heroin. I remember saying 'Oh my God. I want this'. So I went with him and was planning to sniff it, and after we go. He tells me, 'give me your hand'. I saw the syringe and I hate the syringe, since I was a kid, I am very scared of needles. I said no, but he said 'we have to share it since I put both our shares in the needle'. So I had to take it, and I was afraid, but when I took it. I asked for more, I liked it so much.<sup>153</sup>

This introduction to heroin was just the start of his self-described addiction, which for the next five years came to control most aspects of his life. For example, when asked about the how he obtained illicit drugs he described the difficulty and great lengths he would go through in order to obtain his "fix". He explained:

It's available here (Cairo), but it's too expensive. If you want a cheap price you have to go to the desert. I'd go walking, sometimes I didn't have a car, so I would go by the bus, and go down the road about two kilometers, it was a long way. And I would go there and get humiliated by 'Bedouin Drug Dealers', they knew you were addicted. So they treat you like a junkie, garbage. And you cannot say anything.

*Despite this you kept going?*

I couldn't stop, no one can stop. You are going there and there are five 'Bedouins' standing with machine guns and one is staying on the ground with a balance in front of him. I would go alone. It's about 120 Egyptian Pounds for a gram in the desert. In the city you pay 200 pounds for a gram and its not still not a gram exactly, maybe about 8-7 gram. Desert stuff is perfect [...] I'm not a rich man, and I'm not poor. I'm in the middle, so I can't afford heroin, I don't have enough money. So I was selling drugs. I had to so I can get my dosage and that's one of the consequences that didn't let me quit. If you want this high again, you have to take more dosage.<sup>154</sup>

Thus, Muhammad came to identify himself as a drug addict, but this personal recognition is just the starting point for describing the stigma and marginalization that shaped his interactions within Egyptian society.

Eventually, the label of drug addict came to influence and reach most aspects of his life as his family and society uncovered his deviant drug use. When asked how his family found out about his drug use he explained:

I think they knew for a long time, but they were not sure. They finally knew when, one day I took some heroin from a friend to sell. I told him there's a guy waiting for it and I'll come back with the money. So I took it, but went to the pharmacy and got some syringes,

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<sup>153</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez, January 23, 2015. I met and conducted several interviews with Muhammad. These interviews are used throughout this chapter and their dates include; January 23, February 12, April 14, and May 22, 2015.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

needles. I came home, used (his friends heroin), and forgot him. Later that night at two am he comes and knocks on my door and he talked to my father. My father later came to me and asked for the truth, I told him its lies, but he knew the truth.

*Did they know you were using heroin or other drugs?*

All my family knew. I was pushed away, everyone was pushing me away. When I was young all the people wanted to stay with me and be around me, but I had changed. If I showed you my I.D picture from five years ago, you would not recognize me.<sup>155</sup>

Essentially, Muhammad and his daily interactions exemplify how an individual becomes an outsider for straying from socially acceptable practices. Though some tried to help stop his deviant behavior, most came to stigmatize as the characteristic of drug use came to encompass his entire reality and identity. As Goffman explains, this happens as individuals who become identified with stigma are seen as having “an attribute that is deeply discrediting”, which reduces a person, in the minds of others, from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one”.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore this association with stigma results in avoidance, and discriminatory behavior by society, where it is realized in his interactions with other “non-stigmatized (“normal”) persons”. Significantly, it did not have to manifest as an overtly discriminatory action but instead, it “operates on a sub-surface level, coloring interactions and creating tension or avoidance behavior”.<sup>157</sup> As Muhammad explains:

When people knew (about his drug use) they pushed me away, they do not trust me, or even want to sit with me. Some tried to help like my best friend, but eventually they see you as a drug addict, they see there is not benefit from helping you. They see you focused on drugs, so they stop talking to you and don’t even say hi anymore. This makes you want to get even higher.<sup>158</sup>

Ultimately, instead of following the socially accepted norms and self-disciplining his behavior, he became the drug addict that the prohibitive drug discourse warned about. By being labeled as a drug addict, he became associated with all the negative representations and stereotypes that came with the label and so his entire morality: his “respectability,

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<sup>155</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez February 12, 2015.

<sup>156</sup> Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 3.

<sup>157</sup> Hannem, 15.

<sup>158</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 22, 2015.

trustworthiness, and/ or abilities” came to be questioned.<sup>159</sup> As a consequence, Muhammad and deviant drug users like him are considered a threat to society in general, and so must be controlled through repressive strictures/institutions, like rehabilitation centers, mental hospitals, and prison. However, as mentioned earlier, Muhammad’s reality did not come to be shaped by Goffmans typical ‘total institutions’, instead it was his family as an institution that came to regulate and discipline his life when he failed to do so himself.

#### **D. Muhammad: Escaping ‘Total Institutions’**

When studying society and its mechanisms/institutions of control, often the focus is on larger structures. For example, the state with its ability to police bodies through force, or religion with its symbolic power as the moral authority of society. However, what happens when an individual falls outside the gaze of repressive social structures and institutions? How is deviant behavior like drug use, managed and corrected? In the case of Muhammad, his family became the disciplinary mechanism, that echo Foucault and Goffman’s descriptions.

Before examining how his family became his primary disciplinary mechanism it is first necessary to describe how Muhammad escaped the surveillance and control of the archetypal ‘total institutions’. Drug users often find themselves in the grasp of jail/prison, mental hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and any other number of coercive social institutions, yet as Muhammad explains, he was able to largely circumvent them for a few reasons. First, he credits a lack of social responsibility for indifference toward addicts like himself:

Many people ignore drug addicts. Only if it was his son, do people care [...] they think people have a mental disorder when people have seizures, but actually have been using tramadol. When I was taking drugs. I was taking fifteen pills of tramadol sometimes, and if you take this amount of tramadol you get seizures, its like electric shocks and foam from your mouth. This happened to me many times. Poorer people know these side effects because they are exposed more, but they ignore them (addicts suffering seizures). They think addicts are a problem.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Hannem, 17-18.

<sup>160</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 14, 2015.

Because of this indifference or lack of empathy towards drug addicts, Muhammad was not only stereotyped, but was also actively and passively ostracized from mainstream society. Even the police, society's foremost disciplinary mechanism of social space, failed to help or simply keep him in jail. As he explains:

One day the police found me high, and so they know I was a junkie and took me to jail. They beat me, slapped me. I would have been stuck there, but my friend saved me. He was a police officer, one of them. He recognized me and helped let me out.<sup>161</sup>

This arrest story brings to the forefront the governmental discourse described in the last chapter. It shows that instead of rehabilitating drug addicts, or perceiving drug users as individuals that need to be treated for a health condition; the state's first priority is criminalizing drug users as individuals who have broken the law. As Mona Amer, a clinical psychologist and professor at the American University in Cairo who specializes on drug-use explains:

Egyptian law indicates that if someone is arrested for drug use, even for a small amount, they should be diverted to treatment [...] if there is a concern that the person is an addict than this person should receive health services. However, in reality people are arrested and put in jail because the addiction services that were conceptualized by law never materialized so they don't have the resources to get the support they need.<sup>162</sup>

Astoundingly, according to a 2007 Egyptian Government study, somewhere around 8.5% of the population (many specialists argue the number is much higher post- the 2011 uprising) are addicted to drugs, and yet the harm reduction and recovery facilities of the state only offer around 600 beds to recovering drug addicts.<sup>163</sup> Though healthcare is not a major focus of this project, it is necessary to describe drug treatment services and facilities in Egypt to understand why Muhammad failed to go to one of the most important 'total institutions' for drug users: the rehabilitation center.

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<sup>161</sup> Fieldnotes May 27, 2015. Muhammad recalled this story before I asked to record. So, I have summed it up but based on quotes I was able to write down.

<sup>162</sup> Mona Amer, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 15, 2015.

<sup>163</sup> Joseph Braude, "Drugs and Thugs in the New Egypt", *Al-Arabiya*, last modified November 30, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/09/05/236305.html>

The institution of the rehabilitation center is especially relevant to this study, since it is both useful in the analysis of the repressive structures of society, while also offering socio-economic knowledge concerning drug users seeking treatment. First, it must be noted that drug rehabilitation centers in Egypt vary greatly in quality, and more importantly cost. As Professor Amer explains, since drug use is seen as especially deviant against the religion and culture:

Many affluent communities send their children abroad to get treatment. There is research that points to a market for treatment of Egyptians [...] but unfortunately, we have facilities for affluent families and then we have few options for people that are poor. Then there are people in the middle class who can not afford some services and do not want to go to the what's perceived as the 'lower class' services. So there is definitely a shortage of treatments for the 'average Egyptian'.<sup>164</sup>

Muhammad and his family exemplify this 'average Egyptian' whom had few options in their search for drug addiction treatment especially since they could not afford those relegated to the wealthy. As his Alia sister explains:

We were trying to send Muhammad to a *ma'saha* (drug rehabilitation center), but it costs a lot of money, also he didn't have the 'ability to do it'. He doesn't want to change. He told my father once; 'if you put me there I will come out and start to drink again and use drugs'.<sup>165</sup>

In the case of Muhammad financial issues were just part of the reason he was able to circumvent this social institution. In our interviews he disclosed several personal reservations regarding drug rehabilitation in Egypt. Though he occasionally attended helpful Narcotics Anonymous meetings, describing everyone as welcoming and generous, eventually he stopped going, stating that he was still an addict and not ready to quit or willing to go to a rehabilitation center. Also, he generally described rehabilitation centers in a negative light, explaining:

There are a lot of grades. There is some rehab, that is free, the government ones, but they are garbage. In other rehab, where you actually pay money, its funny, you can pay staff. They can get you drugs, for example, a gram of heroin is 200 (EGP), but they will charge 400 (EGP).<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Mona Amer, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 15, 2015.

<sup>165</sup> Mona Amer, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 15, 2015.

<sup>166</sup> Alia, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 19, 2015.

Interestingly, even when his father gave him an ultimatum of seeking help or being forced from their home: he convinced them that rehabilitation would worsen his health, and would only rob his family of money. According to Muhammad, “I told my family that rehab only cared about money and commission for every addict they got. I had a friend who was seriously hurt during ‘treatment’”<sup>167</sup>. Eventually, Muhammad explained that he quit with the aid of his family. Describing how for five days he stayed at their home going through withdrawals, until eventually he quit. Thus, his family became his primary disciplinary institution that would rehabilitate behavior according to accepted norm.

### **E. Family: An Institution within the Repressive System**

Finally, this last section describes how Muhammad was unable to escape the stigma associated with his behavior, and more importantly, how he was unable to escape the grasp of the repressive system. In fact, we will see how stigma came to affect not only Muhammad but also his family, the institution that largely came to control and regulate his behavior. Ultimately, Muhammad’s case displays how even if an individual manages to ignore the prohibitive discourse and fails to self-discipline his behavior, eventually society’s repressive structures will find a way to bring order and establish the boundaries for the acceptable and unacceptable.

Before exploring the family as a repressive structure within Egyptian society, it is first necessary to describe how this institution itself became closely tied to the stigma of Muhammad’s deviant drug use. As Goffman (1963) explains, “the problems faced by stigmatized persons spread out in waves, but of diminishing intensity”; thus, stigma can be become attached to those around the stigmatized individual through “courtesy stigma”, where some of the negative attributes associated with the stigmatized become shared and

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<sup>167</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 14, 2015. Drug Rehabilitation in Egypt has been criticized as not being fully regulated, particularly after a prominent case of torture and death of a patient at a Rehabilitation Clinic in Cairo. For more information please read, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/64201/Egypt/Politics-/Aboutus.aspx> -



spread according to the level of association<sup>168</sup>. This occurrence is particularly true for Egypt where drug use is:

Very stigmatizing and because of the collectivistic society, this one person can bring shame on the whole family and it could affect even his sister not being able to get married, and things like that because of the reputation being tarnished. Most likely they (families) will try to keep it hidden as much as possible.<sup>169</sup>

Unfortunately, Muhammad's family was not successful in hiding his behavior, and as a result his family faced similar stigma and marginalization.

This case of "courtesy stigma" was apparent in his strained relationship with his sister, Alia. For example, when asked if she used drugs she stated:

No, no, no. Never, ever, No one in my family, only my brother Muhammad. You know my other brother Tamer. I love him so much, he don't bring problems to our home. You know what I mean. He's a very respectable man, but Muhammad, everyday, every single second he makes problems and this reflects on me and my family. It makes me ah! So angry 'I hate you' (referring to Muhammad) 'don't do this'. It's all about drugs and drinking with Muhammad. Getting drunk. He brings problems from the streets, with people always asking for him at the apartment. This is not allowed in society. He never makes a positive for my life. It makes the family look more than bad. Everyone in our neighborhood knows about Muhammad. Even if someone proposes to me, it still reflects on me that he's a dealer. It's really, really bad for me. If someone asks for me, they say her brother he drinks, he gets drunk, and and and so what can I do?<sup>170</sup>

Alia, further explained that this stigma is especially felt in her family because of their 'traditional nature'. She stated that even though she was in good standing with her family, she herself faced constant scrutiny and regulated her behavior according to their rules and values. For example, she admitted to smoke in secret, using chewing gum and perfume to hide the smell of smoke from her family. Also, her parents and brothers forbid her from interacting with males. Only at her university is she able to do so without any repercussions from her family. With this short description of his family as a repressive structure in mind, it is possible to examine how it functions as the primary disciplinary function in Muhammad's life.

Finally, through the integration of Foucauldian concepts of larger repressive

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<sup>168</sup> Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, 30.

<sup>169</sup> Mona Amer, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 15, 2015.

<sup>170</sup> Alia, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 19, 2015.



power structures with Goffman's approach to individual interactions, Muhammad's family can be suggested to represent an extension apparatus to a presumed panopticon operating at the level of society at large. The family is employed to put the sought regulation into action. Originally conceptualized by philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the panopticon served as a design for an ideal prison whereby, through constant surveillance (real or imagined), inmates internalize and self-discipline their behavior. However, as Foucault (1975) explains, the panopticon, thanks to its 'mechanisms of observation' that penetrate into people's behavior, is:

[...] polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centers and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons.<sup>171</sup>

Though specifically referring to the historical formation of the disciplinary society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Foucault's analysis of the panopticon as a repressive institution within society is useful to contextualize Muhammad's day-to-day interactions within the disciplinary structure of his family.

According to Goffman's analysis, both the panopticon and Muhammad's family can be considered as 'total institutions', or place of coercion that change individuals and their behavior within society. For Muhammad this coercion manifested in a number of ways<sup>172</sup>. First, it is important to identify that his family was his sole source of income for food, shelter, and other expenses such as his cigarettes. As a result, he was completely reliant on their generosity, and so was easily susceptible to their demands. Second, and more importantly, Muhammad was constantly under the surveillance and supervision of his family, particularly his mother who screened his calls and controlled which persons her son interacted with. Ultimately, she organized many of his daily activities and was constantly aware of whom he was with.

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<sup>171</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 204-5.

<sup>172</sup> Fieldnotes April 14, and May 27, 2015.

It is in this total institution of the 'Family Panopticon' where his familial relationships came to form the bulk of his daily interactions, and where Muhammad shaped both his lived reality and 'corrected' his behavior. It was through his family's constant surveillance and control that he self-disciplined his behavior. As he explains,

Till now I drink beer and sometimes hash, but not in front of my family. I cannot do this around them. There are traditions here; I cannot even smoke in front of my father. If I want I will, but I show respect to them.<sup>173</sup>

Ultimately, this 'respect' that regulates his behavior around his family highlights not only the internalization of behavior due to his family, but also demonstrates the different roles he used in his daily interactions. For example, a major reason he looked forward to our meetings seemed to be so he could escape the supervision of his family<sup>174</sup>. Around his family he was the 'recovering addict', trying to finish his undergraduate degree, and find work. However, alone in our meetings, free of surveillance and supervision, he played a different role, the role of a person who continued to hide illicit drugs in his home, and who admitted to occasionally using drugs in secret.

Despite displaying some sort of agency to act how he wants through his different roles and interactions. Muhammad has come to the conclusion that he cannot continue this deviant behavior within the rigid social system he is surrounded by. With little freedom and opportunity for a better future, the realization of his situation struck:

I saw my friends graduating and traveling to America, and Canada, while I was still in the same place. I wasn't working, earning money or doing anything useful in my life. And my younger brother is now the same grade as me. He's his fourth year in his university and my other younger sister is on her third year, and she's younger by 4 years. I felt so ashamed.<sup>175</sup>

Ultimately, he could not escape the repressive society that stigmatized him and marginalized him for deviating from the acceptable. Thus, he explained he is now attempting to get his life back on track by no longer using heroin, staying away from his drug using friends, and moving forward.

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<sup>173</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez, January 23, 2015.

<sup>174</sup> He constantly wanted to extend the length of our interview sessions, or would want to go to a café together

<sup>175</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez February 12, 2015.

## F. Conclusion

Based on a theoretical framework derived from Foucault and Goffman's works, this chapter has demonstrated the process through which marginalized and stigmatized individuals, particularly drug users, live within a repressive society. By focusing on the life history of Muhammad, we contextualized the socio-reality of an individual who was caught failing to adhere to the prohibitive drug discourse discussed in the previous chapter. By going against this discourse and the norms, values, and rules it creates: individuals and even their close contacts, become tied to the negative labels and representations associated with the stigmatized behavior.

Yet, despite being tied to stigma, this chapter shows how Muhammad's family served as the primary disciplinary mechanism that came to regulate his reality and behavior. Within the daily interactions between Muhammad and family this chapter identified and examined what Foucault described as "the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal".<sup>176</sup> Essentially, they became a 'Family Panopticon' that was constantly in surveillance of Muhammad, regulating and shaping his lived reality. Thus, by using Goffman's approach of scrutinizing individual social exchanges and interactions with Foucault's analysis of macro-systems of power, the individual experience of stigma can be better contextualized within a repressive society and its social institutions.

Importantly though, despite being caught in Egypt's repressive society, Muhammad still struggles to reclaim his agency and spoiled identity. By examining his interactions it is apparent that he sometimes plays a passive role of a recovering addict: while other times, when free of surveillance, he reclaims his agency by practicing drug use once more. Though he continues to struggle to escape the stigma associated with drug use, it seems that discourse and repressive structures in power have successfully branded him an outsider and a threat to social order.

Ultimately though, this thesis demonstrates that regulating behavior and boundaries within Egyptian society in general is much more complex than individuals

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<sup>176</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 199.

getting caught by stigma and society's repressive structures. Through ethnographic work with a larger pool of drug users, the next chapter scrutinizes in greater detail the phenomena of drug use throughout Egyptian society, and identifies and examines the creativity and agency of individuals who successfully practice prohibited and stigmatized behavior within rigid and repressive structures.

#### IV. CHAPTER FOUR: DEVIANCE, LABELING, LIMINAL SPACE AND THE REALITY OF DRUG USE IN EGYPTIAN SOCIETY

##### A. Introduction

Thus far, this thesis has focused on describing people's realities as shaped largely by disciplinary mechanisms and a repressive system; however, the agency of individuals and the flexibility of society need to be addressed as well. As previous chapters have alluded to, drug use is not a rare or isolated phenomenon. Despite a prohibitive discourse and structures that stigmatize and marginalize, there continues to exist significant drug use within Egyptian society. So, by utilizing sociological theories of deviance alongside the anthropological concepts of liminality and *communitas*, this chapter describes in greater detail the practice of drug use, its ambiguity throughout society, and how individuals continue to find ways to practice a forbidden behavior. Furthermore it will observe how boundaries on behavior are accepted and/or contested in Egyptian society.

First, it is important to recognize that in most societies, drug use is inherently defined as deviant behavior. But what is deviant behavior for that matter and why is it considered as such in Egypt? Some sociologists define behavior as deviant if it departs from social norms, or if it is as ruled an infraction against established rules of a society.<sup>177</sup> Similar to the fluid and ever changing drug discourse, so is deviance constantly being defined and redefined in society. Moreover, although deviance by its nature falls outside the norms of society, sociologists also maintain that it is an integral part of society since it helps define what is acceptable and what is not. It is in this process that shared standards shape values and behaviors.<sup>178</sup>

Based on Labeling Theory, this thesis considers deviance to be a socially constructed condition that is utilized as a mode of social control/order over society and individual behavior. Particularly Howard Becker's contributions are relevant for the examination of perceptions, attitudes, and *labels* attached to drug use and drug users in order to scrutinize the experience of individual bodies. Thus, by taking into account the

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<sup>177</sup> Marshall Clinard and Robert Meier, *Sociology of Deviant Behavior* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 5.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

unique experience, conditions, and motivations of individuals, this chapter identifies drug use as a complex multi-faceted process that is experienced as more than a prohibited act.

Consequently, this chapter also examines how drug users perceive and label themselves, whether they agree with the labels placed on them by society, or if they contest them by creating their own identities. Through qualitative interviews this thesis asks if, despite being stigmatized by conventional society, they have managed to create their own identities and space where their behavior is tolerated and even normalized. We will see how an array of labels define drug users and also how despite practicing a “deviant” behavior, still perceive it acceptable in their experience.

After defining drug use as a “deviant behavior” and examining *labels* of drug use, this chapter turns to Victor Turner’s concepts of liminality and *communitas* to further scrutinize the life of Egyptian drug users. Originally used by Arnold Van Gennep (1960) for the purpose of studying “liminal phases” in rites of passage, Turner furthered the concept of liminality by applying it to rituals in tribal society where individuals go through “a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action”.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, he tied liminality with *communitas*, which exists outside of normal social structures or on the margins of society. These two concepts, though stemming from a different research field, are integral when applied in this chapter since they allow an examination of how drug use manifests and how drug users have managed to create space along with a subculture for their prohibited behavior. Ultimately aiming to show that drug use, and deviant behavior in general, is a vital component of any society, since it both serves as a sort of “release valve” for individuals and also serves as a social marker through which appropriate behavior can be defined.

Through ethnographic research conducted in various sites in Egypt, this chapter further shows that despite the repressive system’s attempts at banning and prohibiting drug use, it nonetheless has become a normalized practice in a variety of locations including: nightclubs, tourist locations, weddings, cafes, and cabarets. By examining these locations, this chapter uncovers contemporary drug trends, and also reveals

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<sup>179</sup> Turner., 167.

differences between the drug using individuals/groups in Egyptian society. Intending to demonstrate, that despite the negative labeling they face, drug users are active social agents who participate in shaping their own reality.

## **B. Defining Drug Deviance and Processes of Labeling**

In the sociological field of deviance there are numerous definitions attached to and manners in which to study “deviant” behavior. There are sociologists like Ronald Akers who theorize a behavior is deviant if it warrants “major societal efforts to control them”, or others like Robert K. Merton who believe deviance refers to behavior that departed “significantly from the norms set for people in their social statuses.”<sup>180</sup> Ultimately, despite several theoretical approaches in the study of “deviance” it is clear that most, if not all, are fundamentally based on shared concerns for behavior that depart from social norms and whose reactions by society define it as *different*.

This focus on the notion of *difference* is essential to recognize for two reasons. Firstly, the study of deviance is the study of “differences in behaviors, values, attitudes, lifestyles, and life choices among individuals and groups”; and secondly, this thesis diverges from the negative value judgment associated with the word deviance.<sup>181</sup> Based on concepts from Labeling Theory, this study attempts to withhold judgment when examining drug use. Moreover, it allows this project to integrate the *difference* of this behavior instead of marginalizing it from society and its processes. Ultimately, the very process of inserting *difference* into this project is an act of power that is central to serious analytical perspectives of all sorts

However, Labeling Theory is used for more than its ability to remain nonjudgmental. Stemming from the broader Societal Reaction School, this theoretical approach is used in order to best examine both the social actors that label drug use and the individuals that are labeled. Founded in symbolic interaction (SI) theory, which focuses on:

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<sup>180</sup> Robert Franzese, *The Sociology of Deviance: Differences, Tradition, and Stigma* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 2009), 6-7.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

[...] human interaction, and the meanings and interpretations associated with human communication. As such it is an attempt to unravel and to explain the symbolic nature of cultures, in order to piece together the lives, values, and behaviors of people who reside in them (Cooley, 1902, 1909; Mead, 1934).<sup>182</sup>

Sociologists like Frank Tannenbaum, Edwin M. Lemert, and Howard S. Becker contributed and built on Labeling Theory, using it to emphasize the role of interaction in the construction of social labels and how individuals react to labels.<sup>183</sup>

Labeling Theory was notably developed in *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (Becker, 1966). Through ethnographic work with marijuana users and dance musicians, Becker observed that deviant behavior is fundamentally a product of responses of other people to a certain behavior, “Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders”.<sup>184</sup>

Furthermore, in *Outsiders*, Becker explicitly describes the process through which individuals become “deviants”. According to his work, Becker claims that individuals often start their “deviant careers” by performing an initial nonconforming act that breaks established rules. Individuals then increasingly are associated with deviance as they learn to participate in a subculture organized around this particular deviant activity.<sup>185</sup> Eventually, a person becomes identified with this deviant behavior and so becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts since they can no longer escape their label. As an example he describes how drug addicts often lose their employment due to their behavior, and since they cannot obtain drugs legally they must get them illegally where deviance is further expanded and even if they change their deviant behavior they continue to be labeled as addicts.<sup>186</sup> Interestingly, he also argues that some are less prone to deviance, stating that some individuals have “too much at stake” since they are invested and committed to

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 93

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>184</sup> Becker, 9.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 25-31.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 37.



conventional norms, so these are much less likely to follow through on their deviant impulses.<sup>187</sup>

Becker convincingly supports the arguments of this deviant process by applying it to marijuana users.<sup>188</sup> He explains how important it is for first time users to learn proper smoking technique, followed by individuals learning to perceive the effects. Becker makes it clear that this process is learned and solidified in a group that has the experience to teach new users.<sup>189</sup> Eventually, with increasing experience the drug user develops a greater appreciation of the drug's effects and so increasingly pursues the behavior and increasingly associates with this identity. Thus, in *Outsiders*, Becker describes the importance of focusing on *how* and not *why* deviant behavior happens.

The next section applies these concepts of Labeling Theory together with ethnographic fieldwork in an attempt to better understand the complex process of *how* a behavior becomes deviant and *how* a person can become a deviant/drug user in Egypt. Using in-depth and open-ended interviews combined with extensive field observations, this chapter describes conditions and motivations that lead to drug use in Egypt. Demonstrating that drug use is considered deviant because society's rules, values, and labels prohibit it, yet despite this, individuals continue to practice the behavior.

### **1. Becoming a “Deviant” Drug User in Egypt: A Users Perspective of General Conditions**

Though it would be too simplistic to draw direct causation of drug use in a simple cause/effect paradigm, this section uses drug users' perspective to explain *how* drug use happens is often defined by *why* it happens. While many drug studies focus on uncovering the reasons behind drug use in order to find ways to stop this behavior, this project simply wants to know the “*why*” in order to help contextualize and place individuals in the socio-economic environment. By describing some general conditions and later more personal motives that lead to this deviant behavior, we can better

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 52.

understand the entire process of becoming a deviant while also uncovering larger social, economic and political trends of Egyptian society. Later, the chapter describes in greater detail *how* complex social setups (relations) assist in creating and maintaining particular practices, and so, indirectly answer the question of why in a relational manner. However, here the focus is to describe the phenomena of drug use as it is perceived and experienced according to individual drug users.

Other drug studies along with my ethnographic work have revealed a “perfect storm” of conditions for this phenomenon to exist throughout Egypt and its social strata. Two of the more common causes that allow individuals to obtain drugs with ease are the availability and low-cost of drugs like cannabis (*hashīsh and bāngu*) and cheap painkillers (Tramadol). According to a study by United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP), *bāngu* is the most commonly used drug since it is widely trafficked/available and relatively cheap at around five-ten EGP per joint/cigarette. Tramadol, a prescription painkiller, is another more recent drug-trend that displays the relative ease of obtaining drugs in Egypt. Trafficked in large quantities through Indian and Chinese cargo containers, an individual can acquire a ticket/tab (*taskara*) of four-eight pills for as little as eight EGP.<sup>190</sup> Thus, at these prices, even the poorest among Egyptians can easily afford their daily fix.

In addition to information provided by authorities, personal fieldwork interviews consistently supported the argument that in Egypt, drugs are just ‘around the corner’. For example, Abdul a twenty-six year old drug-using participant from a low-income background and who studied at Cairo University, disclosed, “It so easy to get drugs. You can go into many shops or even stop someone on the street and they can help you find drugs”.<sup>191</sup> Though somewhat exaggerating, this was not an exclusive feeling. Along with other informants, personal observations confirmed this drug “condition” and on several occasions I observed drugs were simply a phone call away as users would often place a

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<sup>190</sup> According Faisal Hegazy a UNODC program officer, Egypt’s role as a large transit point of trade is a major reason for extensive drug trafficking.

<sup>191</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez March 30, 2015.

call to their drug dealer who would then meet them at a convenient time and location to deliver a drug of choice.<sup>192</sup>

When asked how easy it was to obtain his drugs, Rami a twenty-three year old drug-using male from an upper middle income background who studied at the American University in Cairo, summed up the reality simply:

“عادي جدا”/ *‘adī gidan* (very normal or ordinary) People used to think that getting drugs like hash was dangerous, but the reality is that it is an everyday thing [...] Drugs are out of control, they’re everywhere and cheap. Everyone does it, poor, rich”<sup>193</sup>

Ultimately though, availability and affordability are just two variables that drug users attribute to their behavior; another one of these ‘general factors’ that are commonly referred to by drug using respondents are the poor economic conditions they live in.

Many Egyptian drug experts and government authorities claim that unemployment, coupled with a large population of disenfranchised youth, lead many young individuals to fill their free time with drug use. Many of my respondents filled this description, but Mohammad (who was described in the last chapter) best represents this marginalized youth population. At twenty-seven years old he remains unemployed, is struggling to finish his undergraduate studies, and continues to rely on his parents as his main source income. Furthermore, after a few meetings it became obvious that he had plenty of free time since he was always eager and available to meet. Interestingly, after I inquired how he was able to afford his drug use while unemployed, he admitted that he could only support his drug habits by selling drugs to his friends.<sup>194</sup> Thus, just as Becker describes the deviant making process, Muhammad became a self-fulfilling drug deviant since his unemployment allowed him to have free time that he filled with drug use, which he could only support by becoming a drug dealer, further entrenching his deviant identity.

Though often rooted in their economic condition, Muhammad and several other respondents also commonly attribute their drug use to daily stress and “difficult circumstances” “الظروف الصعبة”/ *al-zarūf al-ṣ‘aba*. Ali, a twenty-one year old drug user

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<sup>192</sup> Fieldnotes April 7, 2015.

<sup>193</sup> Rami, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 3, 2015.

<sup>194</sup> Fieldnotes January 23, 2015.

originally from Cairo, but who currently works in Dahab's tourist industry described how, "Its become part of my daily routine, I take fifty pounds (EGP) or whatever I have and look for *hashīsh* or *bāngu* to smoke so I can forget everything that is happening to me, to forget about life".<sup>195</sup> When further questioned about his drug use, he revealed deeply personal, difficult circumstances that he blamed for his behavior:

*What drugs do you use? Bitishrab 'aih?*

Everything. *Kol ahaga. bāngu, bersham*, I've learned from the streets a lot of things. My family doesn't tell me, doesn't know. However, I don't use heroin. No heroin, because its expensive. It's all because of prices. With fifty pounds I can afford plenty of *hashīsh* and *bāngu*. But I just can't afford 100-200 pounds for a little heroin. Sometimes I use a prescription pill (*Arbatrril*), smash up this drug and take it, but it makes me want to see blood. (*'ayiz ashūf d'ām*) I've cut myself many times. Can you see my wounds? (Showing his arms).

*But why would you take this drug then?*

This drug makes me forget my problems, and feel invincible [...]

*Can you tell me more about yourself? What's your family and home like?*

I never went to school. I have five sisters and four brothers and everyone is married and has children. I am the youngest and I am not married

I have no money (*mafīsh filūs*) to get married. I was engaged in Cairo, but she turned out to be a horrible/crazy person. I spent 10,000 pounds in this engagement, and it all went to waste. I have problems at home. I now have a stepmother who doesn't allow me in my father's home. So I am no longer close to him and I want to try and gather money to start my own life.<sup>196</sup>

Ali's "difficult circumstances" reveal the complicated and unique process through which individuals often turn to drug use demonstrating that economic and social marginalization can push a person to become a deviant/outsider.

Ironically, it seems even employment can be considered one of these difficult circumstances that leads to drug use. Informants also disclosed that many people turn to painkillers, like Tramadol, in order to endure long shifts in difficult, physically demanding jobs, "Imagine working from the morning to night as a taxi driver or trash

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<sup>195</sup> Ali, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 6, 2015.

<sup>196</sup> Ali, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 6, 2015.

man. They could not survive without it”.<sup>197</sup> Faisal, a UNODC program officer with strict views on drugs explains<sup>198</sup>:

A lot of people who work in manual labor like *Hamalīn* (laborer) or *Atalīn* (construction workers) take tramadol to last a workday. Actually there were even reports that during the revolution (2011) it was used to maintain twenty-four hour efforts and protests in Tahrir.<sup>199</sup>

Thus, it seems drug use has simultaneously become an escape from reality for some like Ali, while others use drugs as an instrument that allows others to endure the pressures of life.

Though I have just described a few general conditions that allow many individuals to become drug users, it is a mistake to generalize all the reasons that can lead to this behavior/phenomenon. Availability, affordability, difficult/stressful circumstances, and poor economic conditions can lead to drug use, but ultimately they fail to acknowledge the diversity among drug users in Egypt. The next section focuses on identifying this diverse population of drug users. It examines their diverse personal reasons they attribute their deviant behavior to, and uses concepts from Labeling Theory to see how their behavior is defined by society.

## **2. Becoming a “Deviant” Drug User in Egypt: A Unique Experience**

Employing concepts from Labeling Theory alongside qualitative interviews, this section examines personal conditions and motives that often lead individuals to become deviant drug users. By contextualizing these individual reasons/conditions, this chapter reveals the complex and pluralistic nature of Egyptian society. It demonstrates that this deviant behavior occurs across Egyptian society and space, and is labeled according to different economic, social, and even cultural value systems.

Despite being labeled prohibited by the hegemonic discourses, my ethnographic research shows that there continue to be varying attitudes and perceptions regarding

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<sup>197</sup> Rami, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 3, 2015.

<sup>198</sup> Faisal disclosed that he personally believes drugs are a great sin that corrupt society.

<sup>199</sup> Faisal Hegazy, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 20, 2015.

drugs. For example, when asked about different drug users in Egypt, Professor Mona Amer explained:

There are so many groups. Within each social class there is diversity, within geographic areas there is diversity. Even here at AUC, when I taught a course related to drug use, I had a course with students claiming everyone drinks and smokes and gets high. Every time I go out there are people smoking pot, they said. Then I had another student who came to me afterwards and told me ‘I’ve never met anyone whose drank alcohol in my life, am I going to fail this course because I don’t know about it!’<sup>200</sup>

Thus, by comparing different drug using individuals and their descriptions of drug use, it becomes apparent that there exist different value systems of morality in Egypt that label drug use based on the individuals’ socio-economic environment.

One of the more clear examples of differing value systems becomes apparent when comparing individuals from rural and urban areas. According to several informants, there is a widely shared belief that individuals who live in rural areas often have more open attitudes and perceptions regarding drugs, particularly *hashīsh* and *bāngu*. For example, Abdul, the drug user we previously mentioned explains:

Actually it surprises me how much people smoke. In some places around Egypt, from my experience like Upper Egypt, in the north/delta, Alexandria, or even the western deserts. Those people in the oasis they... they think about smoking (hashish) differently. For them it’s a normal practice. They smoke them like cigarettes. Like people smoke cigarettes in the city

*Where is the government in these places?*

They don’t intervene in these places. They don’t want to see it. It’s a different life (rural) not like the city. Like a tribe system. As long as they’re not asked to interfere they (the police) will leave these areas alone.

Here in the city, normally a father wouldn’t let it (cannabis smoking) go, but that’s not normally the case in Upper Egypt. It is just acceptable. You can say that it’s a tradition in these places.<sup>201</sup>

In another case, Hussein a twenty-four year old former drug user from a lower income family of Monufiya, a rural governorate located north of Cairo in the Delta, clearly reiterated this rural/urban divide:

In the countryside, they watch movies they think it is cool. They go ‘crazy’ in the Delta. Because the media, and TV, mostly movies, make it look fun. [...] *bāngu* and *bāngu* are normal there. Also *barsham* (pills) they take it like crazy. But you don’t smoke or do

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<sup>200</sup> Mona Amer, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 15, 2015.

<sup>201</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

drugs in front of your family. ‘Officially’ you don’t smoke, but everyone knows. It’s a kind of respect.<sup>202</sup>

Though of course not all individuals in rural areas use drugs, these descriptions are helpful in showing varying values and normalized behavior in Egypt. For example, one informant described that he actually was raised around this type of behavior.

I am Muslim and *makhadarāt haram tab’an*, (drugs are of course forbidden)

*Haram but you use drugs?*

Yes, actually I smoke (cannabis) with my father, in fact my father taught me how to use *bāngu*, its *aadah, taqlid* (habit or custom). *Kūllu bitishrab bāngu* (Everyone smokes cannabis).<sup>203</sup>

Thus, although in particular spaces he would be labeled a deviant drug user, according to his social reality, he simply practices a behavior that has been defined acceptable by the moral authority of his family. As Pierre Bourdieu (1977) explains through the concept of habitus, this role of a drug user became habitual, part of his identity. This situation exemplifies the fundamental argument of Labeling Theory that deviant behavior like drug use is simply a behavior and is only considered deviant when societies repressive structures judges it so.

Though the moral authority and values of the family were surprisingly fluid, it is interesting to juxtapose it with religion, another traditional moral authority whose position regarding drugs remains prohibitionist. My research shows that despite religion’s extensive power over behavior, individuals continue their deviant drug use despite the negative labels attached to it. As Abdul explains:

This is the thing; it (Quran) specifically said no alcohol... but drugs... they are just not mentioned. Even though people know that hashish can alter your brain, they find this ‘workaround’ since drugs like *hashīsh* and *bāngu* are not mentioned. People just don’t want to see it.

*So what are the moral authorities in Egypt?*

Religion rules this aspect. It’s a bit contradictory. They (Egyptians) go and drink and smoke then pray on Friday. It’s not really, they don’t see the barrier. The greatest influence is religion. However, I have to admit that our generation is not listening as much to religion

*Does Islam/Religion make Egypt a conservative society?*

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<sup>202</sup> Hussein, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 14, 2015.

<sup>203</sup> Ali, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 6, 2015.

...(hesitant silence) yes... but it's a difficult question. Like with drugs. We just don't talk about it (drug use/deviant behavior). We don't talk about what is happening. Yes it is an Islamic society, but you can find bars everywhere. You can find people drinking and doing drugs everywhere. But you cannot say people are able to do whatever they want. You can never say that. Example I drink beer and that's legal not an issue at a bar [...] but if you get stopped by police then it becomes an issue.<sup>204</sup>

Based on this observation it appears that while traditional moral authorities label drugs prohibited, individuals continue to use drugs and justify their behavior according to provisional boundaries. For example, Hussein, readily admitted to smoking cannabis, however, he also said that would never drink alcohol since it was explicitly forbidden in the Quran. So, he feared that he would be labeled as a *Sakhran*, or alcoholic. Ultimately, my research shows that Egyptians are increasingly ignoring the hegemonic drug discourse produced by religion and the state in favor of more liberal, alternative discourse.

Due to newer forms of discourse like globalized mass media and more liberal, “Westernized discourse”, individuals are increasingly curious and willing to challenge traditional hegemonic drug discourse. As Rami states, “There is a changing attitude amongst the *shabab* (youth), A lot say its ‘*aadi* (familiar, ordinary, or regular) don’t worry about it”. When asked about these changing attitudes, Faisal the UNODC program officer elaborated:

Drugs go with culture, and don't count on religion to control drug use. For example, in Saudi Arabia, a really conservative and religious society, we have found a lot of drug and alcohol abuse. So I wouldn't say that it's important that it (drug use) is *haram* here in Egypt

*Why do you think this is?*

I blame globalization, foreign media, which is increasingly spread in Egypt. I mean, I've found over 120 sites on Facebook that support or in some way deal with drugs in a positive light, and they are becoming more prevalent

*Why do you think this is happening in Egypt though?*

I think more and more people are trying to escape their economic conditions but also social (conditions). Beliefs and values are changing here. I also think the influence of the family is weakening and influence of friends is increasing. As they say, “*mamnū 'a marghub*” (the forbidden is desired).<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

<sup>205</sup> Faisal Hegazy, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 20, 2015.



Thus, it seems individuals are turning away from the traditional moral authorities of the state, religious, and even family institutions as they are increasingly influenced by alternative sources like the changing media landscape or friends and peer pressure.

Shifting attitudes, perceptions, and *labels* towards drugs were evident throughout my research. As a result, individuals increasingly use drugs out of curiosity and for pleasure. For example, Hussein also argued that the Media like movies and television shows are increasingly making drugs look “cool” or funny. He further explained that he identified with these drug representations, describing how he also looks for this *kayf al-bahayim* / “high” or *kharban* “stoned feeling” that are portrayed in media<sup>206</sup>.

Like Hussein, Abdul was another key informant who identified with these newer perceptions concerning drugs. Claiming that traditional moral authorities had little effect on his choice to use drugs, instead it was primarily defined by his curiosity and social interactions with friends. For example, when asked directly which moral authorities most influenced his behavior, he stated:

I guess, the biggest influences over right and wrong are, it's a tricky one, because it is a whole mixed experience because I've been through a lot of shit. Been living on Azhar Street in a very *sha 'abi* area, then I moved to Faisal, close to the pyramids. *Sha 'abi* but not as authentic as *shārea al-Azhar*. I've had lots of experiences. But what is the top driver? Um... I guess its social interactions that I've been exposed to. I would say I've been exposed to situations the average person has not been exposed to. I've had a basic education, private school then I went to university. Not the best private school but I was thrown into a public school in high school and I was not prepared for that. Which was another experience because students don't care as much, students skip classes. Missing the awareness of how important education is. My classmates I would say came from 'lower'.... Backgrounds? So of course they had different values and priorities. They thought of things differently. They thought about working now to get money now. So I was thrown there and then went to a public university. Then later I was also exposed to expats society/community where I have a lot of foreign friends.

*So what did that mean for your behavior?*

They didn't judge me (behavior) ok not ok... Foreigners or people coming from the west. They give you more space, not like Egyptians. 'I appreciate what you want and what you do not want. Its your thing to do and I don't interfere'. Thus, drugs were more acceptable around them.

*Is this when you first started drugs?*

No definitely not. It was first year of college and I thought it was the time to try it. I tried it with lets say “experts” because they had been doing it for quite some time.

*Did you feel the effects right away?*

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<sup>206</sup> Hussein, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 14, 2015.

I definitely got ‘high’ right away. It’s an interesting story because it’s a funny story. When I started smoking for the very first time. When I tried *hash*. Um. I’ve had one of the hardest methods, or ‘advanced methods’. It’s like the same idea as a *shīsha* (water pipe), but using big water gallons where you put in another plastic 1.5 liter plastic water bottle. Then you put a *hagar* like *shīsha* on it.

*Is this like a bong?*

(laughs) Yes, but much bigger! And that was my first time

*(Jokingly)How did you survive this?*

(laughs), I don’t know I should be dead (more laughs) and that’s how I started. I got so fucking high. That I remember every detail of that day. I remember everything. I remember going home and eating. Eating pasta and chicken. Eating from the pot!

(laughs)

*But what motivated you to try this?*

I guess it was just out of curiosity and my friends.<sup>207</sup>

These descriptions of social interactions along with the intimate story of the first time he used drugs highlights the complexity of becoming a deviant drug user. Along the argument put forward by Becker within Labeling Theory, for Abdul the process of becoming a deviant involved an initial deviant act that was guided by a group of drug using “experts” who taught him how to properly practice *hashīsh* smoking in order to enjoy it. However, as Labeling Theory argues, just as important to understand this deviant making process involves contextualizing his experience in Egyptian society. He describes the different value systems he encountered between public and private school, and further explains that by being exposed to foreigners he obtained a different attitude towards drugs that encouraged him to try drugs, despite knowing it was prohibited by religion, the government, and particularly by his family.

Through his personal opinions, Abdul reveals the complexity of Egyptian society and shows how it is able to control individual bodies through self-discipline. For example, he claims that:

In Egypt we pay attention a lot much more than we should do. I mean people are smoking and they’re convinced that it ok but they would not say that out loud. They don’t want to be in a situation where they have to justify themselves. Here, we don’t have so much private space, and they interfere. Like if you see an accident or fight in the street, everybody comes around to watch and participate.  
[...]

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<sup>207</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

People don't want to be in a position where their (behavior is) questioned. We are so good at that, Egyptians. We're so good at looking at things and people. 'So you're smoking?' (gestures with his hand). Its either I want to be seen somewhere and show off or I want to hide and not be seen doing that because we care a lot about opinions. We don't want to be in the position of.... Society here is very critical. So that's why. When I smoked a lot in the past, I don't want to be looked at like an addict even though I wasn't doing it on a daily basis, still even though it was not affecting my life I did it for pleasure. I hid it. I didn't want people to say look at that person.

*Why is Egyptian society so critical?*

Because we are used to interfering with others personal space, private space, we're so much into each other. We're so close. It's a megacity full of people. I guess that has something to do with it.<sup>208</sup>

Thus, as Foucault describes the Panopticon controlling prisoners, so does Abdul equate society as a far-reaching entity that forces individuals to police themselves, or else fear being ostracized by being labeled an addict.

It is interesting to compare Abdul, with Hassan who is another drug user whom was exposed to alternative drug discourses, but who managed to escape the critical eye of society primarily through his advantaged socio-economic status. During our meetings, Hassan stated that he came from a privileged affluent family, had lived in the United States for a few years, graduated from AUC, and was currently employed in two well-paid jobs. Also, he primarily maintained relationships with foreigners or other privileged Egyptians, and as a result did not identify with "traditional Egyptian society".<sup>209</sup>

It is critical to take his socio-economic background into consideration since it directly defined his deviant drug use and showed yet another value system based on privilege. He completely opposed the prohibitionist policies of the state and religious establishment, stating that this "war on drugs" is a failure and labeling his own drug use as recreational. Thus, this "pro-drug" attitude alongside his socio-economic status has facilitated and even encouraged his drug use. For example he states:

I've tried many drugs, since they're all available to me. Yes, some are expensive because they're imported, but I can afford it. Ecstasy. LSD. MDMA, Coke, Ketamine, Weed, and of course Hash I've tried, it's generally not hard even though it's way much more

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<sup>208</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

<sup>209</sup> Hassan, interview by author, Gutierrez, Feb 17, 2015.

expensive in Egypt because drugs are smuggled. For 250 pounds or thirty-forty dollars I get a pill that I can pay 5 dollars for in Canada.<sup>210</sup>

Interestingly, though he maintains that he is a “*tafaryahī*” (recreational user/ or one who uses for enjoyment), ultimately he admits that larger Egyptian society is still highly critical of his behavior:

There is a ‘gap’, taboo of sorts; people don’t discuss it out in the open. There is an education issue, ignorance about actual drugs and drug usage. The drug craze is secret. Generally speaking it is not acceptable. So I only do it where I am most comfortable. This is totally forbidden for my parents and family to know.<sup>211</sup>

Based on the analysis of my ethnographic research I have described just a few personal conditions and motivations that have led to deviant drug use. Of course one cannot generalize this phenomenon from a small pool of informants to all drug users in Egypt. Nevertheless this chapter steps beyond drug discourse in order to better describe the entire process of becoming a deviant. It showed there are some general commonalities between drug users, and more importantly showed that for each individual the process and experience of becoming a drug user is determined by unique circumstances. Thus, revealing the fluidity and complexity of labeling/controlling behavior in Egypt. From individuals who know very little about drugs, to individuals who were taught by their parents to smoke cannabis, Egyptian society defines drug use according to a spectrum of acceptability.

We have seen that drug use is a socially constructed deviant behavior that is labeled according to value systems based on a variety of legal, religious, socio-economic, and even cultural controls. Though directly prohibited by the general society, a variety of individuals contest the “addict” label placed on them, instead they labeled/considered their behavior as appropriate in some circumstances, even normalized in others. Thus, we see that behavior is constantly being defined, and so drug users continue to find ways to practice and in fact label their behavior much differently than the traditional drug discourse. Ultimately though, describing the process through which drugs and the labels

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

attached to them are defined as deviant is just part of the aim of scrutinizing the phenomena. The next section utilizes the anthropological concepts of liminality and *communitas* to further describe drug use as an ambiguous act that exists outside the structure of mainstream culture, but within the structure of *communitas* at different sites throughout Egypt.

### C. Liminality and Communitas: Creating Drug Space in Egypt

Thus far we have defined deviance, described conditions and personal motivations that lead to ‘deviant’ drug use, and have used labeling theory to examine how society and individuals within it define this behavior. In order to further scrutinize drug use in Egypt however, it is necessary to explore and understand *how* the act manifests in space, and *how* individuals attempt to balance their identities in society. Based on the anthropological concepts of liminality and *communitas*, this section demonstrates that drug users negotiate between the acceptable and unacceptable by creating their own space where they become the moral authorities of behavior. By doing so, they challenge the prohibitive labels attached to themselves and their behavior by repressive society. Ultimately, by creating and appropriating space, we see that they obtain the power to label and create the rules for appropriate behavior.

Though the concepts of liminality and *communitas* are from a different research field, they are of great relevance to this project and help further our understanding of drug use in Egypt. Though originally conceptualized by Arnold Van Gennep (1960), Victor Turner (1969) further expounded the ritual process by focusing on the liminal stage and pairing it with *communitas*/ unstructured communities in a tribal society. In his work, Turner emphasized the ambiguous nature of liminal individuals:

Since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space [...] Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Turner, 95.

Turner explains that in the liminal period it is the marginal, inferior, or outsider who participates in the unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*.<sup>213</sup> Ultimately, just as sociological theories argue that deviance is an integral part of society since it helps define appropriate behavior so does Turner contend that the spontaneous, immediate nature of *communitas* can be grasped only in some relation to the norm-governed, institutionalized, abstract of social structure.<sup>214</sup>

Though being part of the anthropological field, liminality and *communitas* mirror the manner in which individuals become deviant drug users in a similar type of liminal phase, and who also form *communitas* in order to practice their prohibited behavior. Essentially, just as liminality and *communitas* can be regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action<sup>215</sup>; so can drug use be regarded as a deviant behavior that is practiced at the margins of society. As Turner claims, “No society can function adequately without this dialectic”.<sup>216</sup>

Throughout this thesis we have seen that despite the prohibitive labeling by moral authorities drug users continue to practice their deviant behavior; however, we have yet to describe *how* the phenomenon manifests in sites throughout Egypt. By analyzing ethnographic fieldwork within the framework of liminality and *communitas*, this section will focus on specific sites including; noted drug selling sites, nightclubs, weddings, Dahab/Ras Shaytān, cabarets, and cafes. All locations where drugs and drug use can be described as a normalized practice through the previously mentioned sociological and anthropological concepts.

While examining liminal individuals and drug *communitas*, this section identifies and examines two critical elements that characterize each type of drug site in Egypt: specific drugs associated with the drug site and descriptions of the individuals visiting these sites. By scrutinizing these elements, this section will help identify and examine the

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>216</sup> Turner, 129.

structure of drug communitas, revealing the relationship between specific drugs, persons, and sites in Egypt.

### 1. Drug-Selling Sites: From *Hashīsh* to Heroin

Though at first glance it might not be obvious, however, drug-selling sites are a case where liminality and communitas can be applied in order to demonstrate that drug use is forced to exist on the margins of society. They allow particular individuals to alternate between mainstream society and an entirely different domain centered on this prohibited act. While particular locations cannot be mentioned in this analysis, it will refer to drug-selling sites as general areas or noted locations known for drug dealing, which are considered “off limits” by the general population or even police. Some of the areas that are discussed include; so called *dūlāb* (a colloquial term for streets/alleys known to sell drugs), remote/largely lawless ‘desert’ territories, and drug-selling neighborhoods or districts in Cairo.

While liminality and communitas are originally conceptualized around religious ritual activities, they are also useful to examine drug-selling sites as a space or communitas where individuals transition into their liminal self/drug user, in order to perform an act that is otherwise forbidden. These sites are not welcome to just anyone, as they are only meant for recognized drug-using individuals with knowledge of the area or who know the locals. As Abdul explains,

In almost every *sha‘abi* (popular) neighborhood you can find a *dūlāb* or *ghurza*.  
*I’m sorry what is a dūlāb or ghurza?*  
It’s an alley, or small street in an area where you can buy and sometimes do drugs.  
Depends if you know the *fatuwwa* (local guardsmen)<sup>217</sup>. There are some famous ones and less famous ones, but you cannot stay in these areas if you do not belong<sup>218</sup>

Furthermore, several informants confirmed that throughout Cairo it is relatively easy to find a *dūlāb*, or drug selling area where most Egyptians and even the police are not welcome.

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<sup>217</sup> *Fatuwwa* can be defined as local men who are recognized as strong and provide a service of securing particular events, personnel etc.

<sup>218</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

There are many places, drugs are available everywhere. Street after street. I live in Masr al-Gadida and it's not a bad area but in ten minutes, near al-Tagheed in Zeitoon, I get my drugs. The gangsters (*baltagiyya*) run this place. Police do not go in, only in force. These gangsters are not afraid to show their guns and knives. You can find many drugs, and *mūdmīn*, even prostitution there.<sup>219</sup>

Though largely removed from general society due to its lawlessness, informants further explained that these drug-selling areas are in fact known, but ignored by general society. For example, Mahmoud a middle-income drug user and recent graduate of Mansoura University described normalized drug-using areas as:

Its not ok to do drugs anywhere in Egypt, but there are places people and police ignore [...] Heroin users go to the desert, these are the poorer ones. Rich people use the poor to buy it but at a higher price, and in safer areas in the city. There are even well known places like *Butniya*. Egyptians know about these places but don't go. They are 'invisible places'. The government doesn't go into these areas because they don't want to kill civilians. It's a police job, but the police in our country look for their own 'needs' *So you mentioned earlier about these drug-selling places in the desert but they don't know about them?*

The people who sell drugs and buy drugs are a little part of the population. Actually. In the desert are the sellers, then the dealers buy from them and sell in the cities. People who do drugs in Cairo don't know how to deal with people in the desert, but all of this just is a small number so people don't care. We have other problems, major problems in this country<sup>220</sup>

Although these areas are known for illicit activities, authorities often overlook or prefer to ignore them. Meanwhile, individuals are able to take advantage of this marginal space and actually create an alternative sphere that is guided by different moral values and norms that exist and center on drug selling and using.

Finally, in order to fully understand drug-selling areas it is necessary to examine the particular drugs and individuals found at these sites. Though they are visited by a variety of individuals in order to find a variety of drugs, often locations are more likely to have particular drugs, thus attracting a particular drug-using individual. For example, as Mahmoud and other respondents explain, areas in Dokki or Mohandeseen are known to sell strictly cannabis, while desert and other remote areas are where individuals go to find

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<sup>219</sup> Muhammad, interview by author, Gutierrez, January 23, 2015.

<sup>220</sup> Mahmoud, interview by author, Gutierrez, April 27, 2015.



“deals” on certain drugs like heroin. Thus, drug-selling areas range from locations that sell the relatively accepted *hashīsh* to those that are known to sell the completely stigmatized heroin.

Several informants revealed that of all the type of drugs, none is more taboo than heroin and to be labeled as a heroin user, or *sirangatī*, meant to be completely shunned by society. Consistently, informants disclosed:

*Hash* and *bāngu* are the most accepted, but pills are frowned upon. If I can think of something that is really not acceptable are powders- cocaine and heroin. Where you become *sirangatī*. A person who uses syringes is probably the lowest of the low.<sup>221</sup>

Thus, heroin users are regularly thought of as addicts and criminals, or generally as a threat to society.<sup>222</sup> In yet another interview whilst discussing heroin representations in Egyptian media and society, Khaled a nightclub owner from a high-income background and who was raised for many years in the United States, disclosed:

There are some films that definitely demonize drugs. If you use heroin your arm will fall off, or you will automatically die. It's a bit extreme. In the 70s or 80s it was like 'whoa he's smoking hash, and now he's a heroin addict'. To them all the 'hardcore drugs', to a common Egyptian, they were called anything like *bissa*, brown sugar/heroin or that can be snorted *shamam*, means a sniffer and that's a very derogatory term. If you call someone a *shamam* that means automatically they're *mūdmin*/addicts. People that inject are *sirangatī*, or he who uses a syringe. That's the worst though, if you're called that than you are a 'hardcore heroin addict'. That's one drug that I actually wouldn't try  
*So there is a spectrum of drugs, and this is the worst?*  
Yes heroin. People are ok if you do blow (cocaine), if you do e (ecstasy), but if you do heroin people would not want to be around you. Rightfully so, I've lost friends because of this drug.<sup>223</sup>

Therefore, sites, particular drugs, and particular drug users are all clearly interrelated. Furthermore, there is a range of drug users and drug selling areas largely characterized by the drugs they use or make available. So, some drug-selling areas could be known primarily for individuals looking to obtain *hashīsh*, which is perceived to be relatively harmless, compared to other areas that are associated with addicts looking for

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<sup>221</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

<sup>222</sup> The previous chapter described the life history of Muhammad a former drug addict who was particularly stigmatized because he used heroin.

<sup>223</sup> Khaled, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 18, 2015.

the highly taboo heroin. Ultimately, drug-selling areas are just one of the many drug communitas where individuals go to practice their liminal/drug-using identity.

Another more obvious case, where we can examine drug liminality and communitas are Egyptian nightclubs. This site has become associated with certain drugs and individuals looking to practice a prohibited behavior outside the gaze of mainstream Egyptian society.

## **2. Nightclubs: The Drug Privilege**

While drug-selling sites are characterized by a variety of individuals and drugs, nightclubs in Cairo as a drug communita are also defined by particular liminal individuals and particular drugs. As my research shows, certain nightclubs in Cairo are increasingly known as locations where individuals go to practice drug use for leisure, and/or recreational purposes. More importantly though, this section explores how certain drugs are used as a privilege for the wealthy, whom judge and are judged on an alternative value system of morality that doesn't affect the majority of Egyptian society.

Like any other country, the nightclub in Egypt cannot be simplified into a single locale; however, through ethnographic research it is possible to describe a certain type of drug communita increasingly found at this particular location. First, it is important to note that the nightclub drug-communitas mentioned in this thesis are based on two locations: Pure Nightclub and The *Hafla*. Both of these nightclubs are based in Cairo and are exclusive to an affluent population that can afford the 150-200 Egyptian pound cover charge. In addition to this, unlike the drug-selling communita, which is based solely around drugs, the nightclub drug-communita is grounded in both drug use and a larger party-scene.

An interview with Khaled, part owner of Pure Nightclub, further describes this drug communita and reveals how their locales are being used as a space where individuals go to practice drug use. It is apparent that the managers are clearly aware of drug use at their nightclubs, and in the case of Khaled, he embraces this association with the prohibited act:

Look The *Hafla* is super paranoid to be attached to drugs. One of the main organizers actually told me that before this season his strategy was to play lighter music so people would not want to do e (ecstasy) and just drink so that would make more revenue, and I told him as friend that ‘even though you’re my competitor this is going to give me more of your business, and it’s happened. People leave The *Hafla* on Friday and come to my after party because of its more aggressive music and if you are on e (ecstasy) you’re going to have a better time. If people are on some hard-core shit they want some beats

*Why did The Hafla get paranoid, while you seem to embrace drug use?*  
Honestly, I think the climate is scary and especially for them. They are a bit older (owners). So they’re trying to play it safe. At Pure we’re younger, we’re willing to take risks.<sup>224</sup>

When asked about the individuals he explains that there are a variety of people who visit his nightclub; yet generally speaking they are a young privileged drug-using crowd. He elaborates:

It’s a crowd that doesn’t give a fuck what they look like, and just come and dance [...] They’re the privileged, who interact with foreigners, but the are also downtown locals [...] Egyptians who have a buck or two to spend and want to go somewhere to party and listen to good music

*Do you think a large portion of your crowd does drugs?*

Yes, of course

*Why do you think this is? What kind of drugs are they using?*

Pure is a safe place to do drugs for two reasons. First reason is that a couple of us (owners) are doing drugs, so you won’t feel uncomfortable [...] We just don’t talk about it. We say on our Facebook page, no drugs and no PDA, and like a cheeky little bracket that says ‘we’d like to stay open’ so we joke about it to give people the hint that officially we’re saying this but we’re not going to bust you if you have any or use them. There’s definitely no one else that’s willing to take that risk. It’s a risk but it’s a necessary risk [...] If you make dance music, you need a dance crowd, and a dance crowd wants drugs, so if there are no drugs allowed they’ll just do private parties at their houses and do drugs there

*So is it a space, where it is normal to do drugs?*

Yea, it’s because the environment is safe. There is no one going around checking. It’s an open environment.<sup>225</sup>

Thus, it is evident that individuals at these drug-communitas are actively seeking and finding a liminal state, where they are temporarily able to commit a behavior banned by general society, but considered normalized at Pure and the *Hafla*.

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, the individuals found at this locations frame their drug use as recreational and fun. For example Khaled firmly believed that the drug use occurring at Pure was strictly recreational since:

Well technically you cannot be addicted to ecstasy, it's a recreational drug  
*But why is it recreational?*

Just speaking from the physical toll, and the harm on your body, makes it impossible to be a regular habit, people who do e (ecstasy) probably do it every weekend [...] I would say at least a good sixty percent at The *Hafla* are on ecstasy, and maybe eighty or eighty-five percent at Pure, on a Thursday or Friday.<sup>226</sup>

Hassan, a regular attendee of both Pure and the *Hafla*, believes in recreational drug-use and serves as an example of the privileged liminal that goes to nightclubs in order to find a “safe” environment to practice prohibited behaviors. During our interview he explained that along with a group of friends, he used a variety of drugs for enjoyment or recreation, stating that in his circle of friends it was “rare to find someone who actually is an addict”.<sup>227</sup> Additionally, he explained that he only used drugs in safe and comfortable places like Pure and The *Hafla*, which not only turned a blind eye to his behavior, but also was filled with drug users that he knew and felt comfortable with.<sup>228</sup>

Fundamentally though, it is evident that these drug communitas and liminal drug users are characterized by their privileged status. Only because of their affluent backgrounds are these individuals able to afford both the entry fee (150-250 EGP) and the high cost of Ecstasy, MDMA, Cocaine, and other designer drugs. Compared to a few Egyptian pounds for a Tramadol pill, the drugs used are certainly out of the reach of the average Egyptian drug user. As Khaled explains,

Ecstasy is easy to get. Cocaine is harder, but there is a transition, when I was younger cocaine was very scarce, someone would have to go to Amsterdam and smuggle it back in and it would be very limited, and that's it for a month or two nothing. And now, there is stuff coming in from everywhere. And a lot of the dealers that used to hash discovered that there's a market for cocaine with rich people.

*And what are the prices?*

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Hassan, interview by author, Gutierrez, February 17, 2015.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

On average it's about a thousand pounds for a gram, and good stuff will be 1200. That's the going rate.<sup>229</sup>

It is important to note that their ability to afford these expensive drugs is half of the analysis.

Placing drug users at places like Pure and The *Hafla* within their socio-economic status reveals the role that privilege plays within their drug community. Not only are these drug users well off, but many also come from respected and prominent Egyptian families. Even when caught using drugs by authorities they can use their status in society to escape punishment. As Hassan explains, though the police have caught him with drugs, “my name got me out of trouble [...] our class of society can get out of it”. Liminal drug users like Hassan exemplify how privilege characterizes both their individual experience and also that of their drug community at Pure and The *Hafla*.

Like drug-selling areas, nightclub-drug communities are great examples of individuals finding and creating a space where drug use becomes the norm. At drug communities like Pure and The *Hafla*, privilege allows individuals to go through a transition where they become a liminal drug-user, thus existing symbolically on the margins of society. Ultimately, it can be understood that drug community and liminal drug users interact in an interdependent relationship where one feeds off the other. This process where liminal individuals pursue a ‘safe drug-using’ space outside traditional society is fundamental to any drug community. It can manifest in nightclubs in Cairo where they exist symbolically on the fringes of society, or sometimes they manifest as geographically far-off tourist locations of Dahab and Ras Shaytān.

### **3. Southern Sinai/ Dahab and Ras Shaytān: A Drug Holiday**

The next cases of drug liminality and community to be scrutinized are Dahab and Ras Shaytān; a desert town and camp village in the Sinai that have become a space associated with drugs and drug use. Though writing about any topic concerning the Sinai often leads to several obstacles, the issue of drugs in the Sinai is especially challenging.

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<sup>229</sup> Khaled, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 18, 2015.

There is a range of issues to consider, but particularly relevant are security-oriented concerns like the narcotic smuggling and the insurgency of the *Wilayat Sinai* (Islamic State) in northern Sinai. However, this project is strictly confined to the drug liminality and *communitas* found in Dahab and a Red Sea camp in Ras Shaytān.

Dahab, a popular vacation town located in the Sinai Peninsula is known for its relaxed atmosphere and leisurely activities including snorkeling and diving at the Red Sea. Generally known as a traveler's destination for both Egyptians and foreigners, in recent years Dahab has seen increased development by both the government and private sectors. As a result, it is no longer a "sleepy backwater"; instead, "these days there are more pot-smoking backpackers than Bedouins"<sup>230</sup>. It is in this relaxed environment that drug users can find a drug community characterized by its geographic isolation as a small desert town with drug friendly locales.

According to the findings of my ethnographic research it became apparent that Dahab allows for individuals to practice drug use away from the gaze of mainstream Egyptian society. In several cafes and bars it is as simple as ordering drugs, typically cannabis, from your waiter. For example, after a conversation with a waiter at a local bar I was mistakenly charged for "a pill" that he was attempting to sell to me.

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<sup>230</sup> Rami Daher, *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change, and Transformation*. (Clevodon: Channel View Publications 2007), 249-250.

Figure 3 Receipt For a "Pill"

فاتورة  
تتبع رقم: ٢٠١١  
المطلوب من السيد:

الوصف	العدد	القيمة جنيه
كوكاكولا	1	10
سكوتلاند	11	60
ريتا	1	45
سكوتلاند	1	50
APILL	1	25
		190

Dahab - South Sinai - Egypt

231

Notably, many of the waiters openly attempted to sell to individuals who they perceived to be interested in drugs. In addition, when police visited their establishments they offered warnings to stop prohibited activities since “rutab”, or police officers with rank, were nearby.

This “drug friendly” atmosphere is also clearly evident when observing individuals who openly/publicly take drugs. While the most prevalent drugs seemed to be *hashīsh* and *bāngu*, in one case I met individuals who disclosed that they came to Dahab in order to use LSD, or Acid, the powerful hallucinogenic drug. Ultimately, it is difficult to describe a typical drug or drug user at this location. Though this project does not imply that the entire town is a drug-using site, it is obvious that Dahab is a space far from conventional value systems that judge drug use as unacceptable.

Despite the prevalence of drug use in Dahab, it is still more commonly known as a tourist destination, conversely though, sites near Ras Shaytān are increasingly associated with drug use and in particular Camp Riyad has been recognized as an established drug communita. About an hour and a half bus ride from Dahab and nearby the port town of Nuwayba brings you to several remote Red Sea Camps. With sporadic

<sup>231</sup> Fieldnotes April 8, 2015.

electricity, and little infrastructure besides the road you traveled on, these hut villages offer the perfect opportunity for individuals to find a distant environment where they can escape from the prying eyes of more populated areas.

Though the area attracts a diverse group of travelers, what is most relevant to this study are the drug users that go to Camp Riyadh, a Red Sea Camp with a particular reputation as a drug community. An interview with Maha a high income drug user who studied at the American University in Cairo and also a frequent drug-using traveler to southern Sinai, described the drug community extensively and also identified the type of liminal drug user found at this location. She explained:

Ras Shaytān isn't just one camp. There are a lot of camps; I'm not sure but definitely more than three or four. The most famous one is Riyadh and whenever I didn't stay at Riyadh, we would get our drugs from there. I think that's where people go to get drugs in Ras Shaytān. It's not just young people, there are families there, but Riyadh is also specifically known as like a 'hippie camp'. All the camps aren't like that. I've been to another camp and right away we knew we couldn't do drugs there, so we had to go far from most people to do drugs

*So how are Ras Shaytān and its camps spread?*

I would say the camps are spread out like every ten minutes there is another camp. The first time I went (to Ras Shaytān) it was to another camp and friends went to Riyadh to pick up (drugs) because at our camp there wasn't a guy walking around asking if you wanted drugs. And the kind of camp it was, it was much nicer. So I wouldn't say so much Ras Shaytān, so much as it is Riyadh [...] at Riyadh, everyone at the common area is just doing drugs, smoking hash at least.

*So is it ok to just use drugs there?*

I think in Ras Shaytān yes, like when I went there once, I popped acid with a few friends in Dahab, and by the time we got to Riyadh we were obviously tripping out in the open for maybe twelve hours and we were walking around like idiots. I thought the camp was huge and when we sobered up we realized it was not that big, and most of the people were probably aware of the fact that we were fucked up (laughs). I think it's naturally easier to do drugs because it is in the middle of nowhere, nothing except huts by the water. I guess it is place where people go to recreationally use drugs and not be judged by it, and there's easy access to them. Police must know that people are doing drugs in Ras Shaytān, which is why I think they are ok with people using drugs at Ras Shaytān, but when you leave you are often searched at checkpoints. They ask if you're coming from Ras Shaytān.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Maha, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 23, 2015.



After this detailed description of Ras Shaytān and Camp Riyad, the interview then shifted to the persons visiting this site. She described a wide range of individuals, from different socio-economic backgrounds:

*So are the camps mostly foreign tourists, or Egyptians?*

Well when I go during Eid there are a lot of Egyptians, but when I go offseason there are a lot of 'Israeli hippies', who are all probably smoking hash. I wouldn't say it's just rich people going to Ras Shaytān, it's cheap to go there and a night costs around forty pounds. So I don't think Ras Shaytān is a place where really rich people go. It's cheap you take the public bus for about ninety Egyptian Pounds from Cairo, you get there and its forty pounds for a hut that you can share with someone. So there are a large variety of people that go there. Foreigners, Israeli hippies, Egyptians of all spectrums, it's hard to tell.<sup>233</sup>

So, with this interview and through personal observation, it is clear that Southern Sinai is home to a thriving drug communitas.

This thesis does not view all of Dahab or Ras Shaytān as drug communitas; instead it proves that some sites in Southern Sinai like Riyad Camp or certain bars in Dahab have become safe spaces for this forbidden practice, allowing for individuals to go on a 'drug holiday' of sorts. Geographically isolated from major population centers, this area offers easy access to drugs, and more importantly is essentially free of traditional moral authorities. Thus, in this relaxed atmosphere the liminal individual leaves the structure of prohibitive society and finds the relatively 'unrestricted domain' of a safe drug communita where they can smoke heroin or use other drugs worry-free.

#### **4. Recognized Drug Space in Egypt: Weddings, Cafes, and Cabarets**

A last site this section scrutinizes as areas of liminality and drug communitas are some commonly known drug-using spaces. Though certain weddings, cafes and cabarets are identified as areas of study, it is not implied that every single instance of these locations represents a drug communita. Instead, like the rest of the drug communitas that are identified and examined, the only purpose is to address normalized cases of drug use at these sites. Some weddings, cabarets, and cafés in Egypt offer a safe space, figuratively

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<sup>233</sup> Maha, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 23, 2015.

detached from traditional society where individuals are able to transition to a drug-using liminal identity.

Though each is a unique location defined by unique conditions, they are presented here together due to some key commonalities. First, these three cases of drug liminality and *communitas* are commonly found in public space and offer a communal atmosphere where individuals often sit in open or enclosed areas of *sha'abi*/popular neighborhoods. Second, individual drug users often share a personal connection with the organizers of the site; they personally know the bride and groom, or are returning customers at cabarets and cafes. This is of extreme importance, because only through this personal relationship are individuals comfortable enough to partake in the prohibited act of drug use. For example, Abdul explains:

Many places like cabaret. Although technically not allowing, will not prohibit you from smoking *hashīsh* or *bāngu*. It's allowed to an extent. There are even coffee shops, but it has to be one where you are known and go a lot. I've done that myself at my favorite coffee shop. We were sitting there we had a tea and I smoked a joint. If you know them and they accept it then they would be interested in getting some. Like police here. If they catch you. Many times they take your drugs, but only so they can use it later. They'll even take a few of your cigarettes and tobacco papers to use for a joint (laughs).<sup>234</sup>

While other drug *communitas* are characterized by a variety of drugs and individuals, these areas are characterized by a low-income population whose preferred drugs are the fairly affordable *hashīsh* and *bāngu*. For example in the case of weddings the generosity of the host can be measured by the amount of cannabis he provides.

Through a personal account of a friend's wedding Abdul explains,

How people perceive weddings, it's a special event. It also shows how wealthy you are, and their generosity, if you give bigger quantities. I've been to a wedding like this. What happens is you get in there. My friend knew the groom. We had very special treatment because he knew the groom. My friend owned the shop where the groom worked. Since he was the boss we had the very special treatment. What happened is they got us a very special table with lots of food. And then they gave us a big piece of hash, and the groom said 'no, no, no, you will not roll (a joint) yourself. I will bring you someone for you and you sit there and smoke'. It was great service! I was amazed to be honest.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

In another striking account concerning these sites of drug use, Hamed a *hashīsh* and *bāngu* dealer explained:

These places that I named are easy, weddings are known for this. I've sold large quantities to weddings. Like at my wedding we made an arrangement with police officers and bribed them. I distributed fifteen bags of hash. It shows me being generous and hosting your friends. I want them (my guests) to be happy like I am happy on my wedding day.

*So, is this a tradition?*

Yes it is from the *zaman* (past), it's a more than forty-year tradition we have been doing this. Since my grandfather's time.

*Are there other places where it's acceptable to use drugs?*

If there are arrangements with the government like at some cabarets, or like I did at my wedding. Then it's ok people do drugs, but in some areas you cannot do this, you must find hidden areas.<sup>236</sup>

Thus, as Hamed explains, certain sites have grown a reputation as a drug communitas for cannabis drug users in popular/ *sha'abi* areas. For example, some cabarets in Egypt are yet another case of these drug communitas where it has become a tradition or common practice to smoke *hashīsh* and *bāngu*. I observed particular drug users openly preparing and smoking hashish cigarettes in different *sha'abi*/popular cabarets found throughout downtown Cairo. Similar to certain weddings and cafes, this drug communita was also characterized by low-income individuals who frequently visit the same cabaret. As Abdul elaborates:

You can also see that with who is using *bāngu* for example and who is using *hash*. Again that's lower-income groups, but I have to tell you that people are also treated differently by the police if they're smoking *bāngu* instead of *hash* because it's cheap. They look at you like you're also this cheap thing.<sup>237</sup>

Thus, as we have seen in previous drug sites, the liminal drug user, the drug being used, and ultimately the drug communita itself are interrelated. Just as certain affluent liminal drug users know that they can obtain ideal conditions for their behavior at nightclubs like Pure and The *Hafla* so do certain liminal drug users know they can find a suitable space where they can enjoy *hashīsh* or *bāngu* at particular cafes, weddings, and cabarets.

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<sup>236</sup> Hamed, interview by author, Gutierrez, May 23, 2015.

<sup>237</sup> Abdul, interview by author, Gutierrez, March 30, 2015.

## D. Conclusion

This chapter goes beyond the repressive regimes' discourse and demonstrates that drug users in Egypt are not just passive individuals who self-discipline their behavior according to the hegemonic prohibitive discourse. Instead, they are active social agents who struggle with the labels placed on them and more importantly, create their experience through liminality and drug communitas. Ultimately, this multi-faceted process shows that behavior, particular drug use, is constantly being defined and redefined according to a variety of value systems found throughout Egyptian society.

Though drug use is largely defined as deviant behavior, this chapter approaches drugs and drug use in a manner that identifies “deviant drug-users and deviant drug-use” as a socially constructed behavior that should be studied by *how* it happens and not *why* it happens. First it describes general conditions and motivations that led individuals to practice deviant drug use, showing that in Egypt there exist several types of drug users who are labeled on a “range of deviance” that is based according to the drug being used, and also according to the value system they are judged by. So, while cannabis is often considered relatively harmless due to a variety of reasons such as its established history as a prevalent practice in Egypt; other drugs, like certain pills and especially heroin, are completely taboo and stigmatizing for a drug user. As a result, some individuals label themselves and are mildly labeled as a *mahashīsh* (cannabis user), *kharaban* (intoxicated) *mastūl/sochran* (alcohol users), or even *tafaryahī* (recreational user); meanwhile on the opposite spectrum are those offensively ostracized as *sirangatī* (needle user), *shamam* (sniffer), or *sayi* (delinquent).

Although drug use is fundamentally a prohibited behavior, this chapter demonstrates that individuals are judged according to a variety of value systems available in Egyptian society. For example, in some cases of rural drug use, individuals grew up and were even taught by their family to smoke *bāngu* or *hashīsh*; thus, the moral authorities they were judged by allowed for drug use to become a normal and accepted practice in their locality. However, in another example of moral system we observed how affluent Egyptians could not only afford a privileged type of “high” through expensive

“designer drugs” like cocaine and ecstasy, but who could also easily escape the judgment of traditional moral authorities because of their high socio-economic status. Thus, we see that although hegemonic labels, representations, and overall drug discourse produced by the state, religion, and media set a “standard behavior” for Egyptian society: ultimately, individuals also play a role in negotiating that defines his/her behavior and so choose which norms to practice.

The last focus of this chapter concerned how drug use manifested through liminality and *communitas*. Based on the findings of ethnographic research, this chapter shows that individuals practice drug liminality where they move between the structure of traditional society that bans drugs use, and the relatively unrestricted domain of a drug *communitas* where drug use was an accepted practice. Essentially, we observe that the relationship between the type of drug user, drug used, and the very location of the drug *communitas* is highly complex because different rules, organizations, ranges of accessibility, and even hierarchies characterize the range of sites studied. By identifying and examining a variety of drug users and drug *communitas*, from the wealthy individuals that can afford to use drugs at expensive nightclubs, to individuals seeking a relaxing trip near the Red Sea, drug users of all types can find a variety of space where their behavior is accepted despite its prohibition.

Though the focus of this chapter was to demonstrate the reality of drugs and drug use in Egypt, it also showed the ambiguity and necessity of deviant behavior alongside a variety of moral codes values, norms, and behavior that fluctuate across time and space of any society. Demonstrating that morality is not static and can be negotiated when people negotiate the limits of accepted behavior. Essentially this ambiguity manifests as grey zones or drug *communitas* that exist on the fringes where drug use and other deviant behavior are no longer forbidden, but instead are tolerated by society and embraced by deviants’.

It must also be noted that although the chapter discusses specific, established drug *communitas*, liminality and *communitas* also encompass ephemeral liminal drug identities and *communitas* that individuals often find in everyday interaction. This means that that

something as discreet as a quick “hash smoking session” with a friend can be considered a temporary and ambiguous space that exists outside the confines of the structure of society.

To sum up, deviant drug use is a behavior that is both a part of, and separate from, Egyptian society. It is a necessary component in any society in order to define the borders of acceptable/unacceptable behavior, but more importantly also becomes a necessary outlet for some individuals. By this process, they are allowed to escape the structure of society, in order to become their liminal drug self and return to their regular identity revitalized by their experience in drug communities. Ultimately, drug users are not just caught in a repressive system; through liminality and communities, many have found a way to traverse the acceptable and forbidden within Egypt.

## V. CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### A. Findings

By establishing a dialogue between the structures of power that regulate the moral economy of society on the one hand and individuals practicing a role with their substance use on the other, this thesis set out to better understand how deviant behavior, particularly drug use, is constructed and labeled in Egyptian society. The general theoretical literature on the study of drug use in Egypt has been lacking, primarily emphasizing quantitative data to support the hegemonic prohibitionist discourse that aims to ban the behavior. However, by using a combined sociological and anthropological approach that analyzed both the macro and micro processes through which behavior is defined appropriate, this thesis qualitatively examined the complex process through which behavior is regulated in Egyptian society. Furthermore, it highlighted the role of drug users as more than passive individuals acting within a repressive system, demonstrating that some drug users struggle to move beyond the stigma attached to them, and yet others successfully contest the labels attached to their behavior and even create space where drug use has become normalized.

In the tradition of Foucauldian discourse analyses, Chapter Two: *Identifying The Drug Discourse in Egypt* provided the foundation for this conversation by composing a broader more inclusive drug discourse. By analyzing both the hegemonic and alternative discourse producers in Egypt, the chapter identified and examined representations and narratives of drug use from all manner of social institutions and actors throughout Egyptian society. The findings from the discourse analysis showed that the structures in power have successfully used drug discourse to frame drugs and drug use as an act that must be prohibited since it is both harmful to individuals and larger society in general. However, newer trends in drug discourse are increasingly challenging the prohibitionist narratives in favor of more open attitudes, which aim to understand the behavior instead of strictly stigmatizing it and the individuals who practice it. In the process of refining the drug discourse in Egypt, the chapter simultaneously identified the overarching repressive system that controls individual's behavior and which also disciplines those who decide to break the prohibitionist narrative.

Chapter Three: *The Repressive System and its Hold Over a Drug User*, goes beyond drug discourse and focuses on the case of Muhammad. An individual who was successfully labeled a drug addict by the repressive structures of society and who, as a result, came to face stigma and marginalization throughout his socio-reality. Based on an integrative theoretical framework derived from both Foucault and Goffman, this chapter examined both the larger structure of society alongside individual interactions, to demonstrate the underlying processes of stigmatization that some drug users experience. Eventually we saw that stigma came to affect Muhammad's entire reality, including his familial relationships, which in turn also became stigmatized by his drug use. Furthermore, by examining his day-to-day interactions through interviews and observation, the chapter identifies his family as the primary disciplinary mechanism that ended up supervising and regulating his behavior according to accepted social norms. Ultimately, scrutinizing the life history of Muhammad helps expose the rigidity of Egyptian society for those who have been successfully labeled a drug addict.

In the fourth chapter, *Deviance, Labeling, Liminal Space and the Reality of Drug Use in Egyptian Society*, another other side of society is put on display. Where an emphasis is put on the agency of individuals in order to show the creativity and resiliency of individuals who engage in prohibited behavior despite the repressive system. It applied sociological and anthropological concepts alongside ethnographic accounts and fieldwork demonstrating that drug users are more than passive self-disciplining individuals. Instead, we see that many Egyptian drug users are active participants in society who contest the labels attached to their behavior, and who have even managed to create identities and space that allow for their prohibited drug use. With the aid of Becker's Labeling Theory the chapter describes deviant drug use as a socially constructed behavior and asks *how*, not *why*, drug users decide to act against established rules. The findings expose that drug users are judged by moral authorities according to a variety of value systems that also label a range of deviance according to the kind of drugs that are used. Later, the chapter applies the concepts of liminality to emphasize how some drug users negotiate with prohibitive drug discourse and norms by using specific sites in Egypt to form *communitas*



where they practice a temporary drug-using role away from the gaze and judgment of repressive society. Ultimately, this multi-faceted process demonstrates that behavior, including drug use, is constantly being defined and redefined, changing according to particular times and spaces.

## **B. Theoretical Implications and Contributions to Drug Research**

This thesis builds on existing understandings of deviance and drug use, and furthers research in these sociological and anthropological fields by employing an integrated approach that studies both the structures of society along with the socio-reality of individual drug users. Furthermore, rather than study drug use through the hegemonic medical and governmental discourses that largely focus on addiction prevention or public health policies, this project opens a newer interdisciplinary avenue in the tradition of Middle East studies to expose the wider implications this behavior has for Egyptian society.

Importantly, this project fills a gap in the study of drug use that Middle East Studies is perfectly suited for. As Judith Barker (2001) explains,

There are, of course, anthropologists and qualitative researchers working in Europe and elsewhere (for example, Brady, 1992), but much of their work is inaccessible to the wider alcohol and drug research community as it appears in documents with limited circulation, either by language or region. Thus, the U.S dominates the alcohol and drug literature.<sup>238</sup>

Through the combination of Grand Theories with contextual data, hallmarks of Middle East Studies, this thesis helps fill the void of drug research in a non-Western context by providing original analysis of this phenomenon from within the specific setting and culture of Egypt. It utilized the local language, history, culture, and traditions to contextualize a social phenomenon in the larger study of drugs. Demonstrating that area studies, as an interdisciplinary field is relevant and a useful entry point to a variety of academic studies that research particular cultures and regions (Tessler 1999).

Ultimately, the findings and approach of this study are part of a new trend in the drug research field, which brings to light the everyday lived experiences of individuals

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<sup>238</sup> Barker, 168.

and which emphasizes drug users as active social agents immersed in complex social structures. This approach is consistent with the stigma research presented by Hannem and Bruckert (2012), which utilizes a ‘nuanced integrative theory’ by combining concepts from scholars like Foucault (1977) and Goffman (1963) to demonstrate how stigma affects individuals in the ‘intrapersonal and structural levels’.

However, this thesis builds on this theoretical framework by also employing sociological and anthropological concepts from Becker (1966), and Turner (1969) to further complicate the macro and micro processes through which behavior is regulated in Egyptian society. With this holistic approach to studying drug use in Egypt, this thesis moves past the hegemonic medical and state policy oriented drug research. Instead it identifies and examines a wider social context of repressive structures of control that anthropologists often ignore in drug research, while also providing the lived experiences and interactions through which drug users practice their prohibited behavior<sup>239</sup>.

As a result, this thesis brings attention to the power relations between the regulators of the moral economy and individuals who practice behavior. Demonstrating how social institutions and actors in power manage behavior through a variety of mechanisms like discourse and self-discipline on the one hand, while also showing how in the face of structural repression drug users “are actively engaged in meaningful activities and relationships seven days a week” on the other.<sup>240</sup> Thus, it scrutinizes the role of power over behavior as existing within larger repressive structures but also within the agency of individuals. Ultimately, this integrative approach emphasizes the importance of studying drug *use* as a complex process and not drug *abuse* as a simple social phenomenon.

### C. Limitations and Future Research

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<sup>239</sup> For more information regarding the gaps in this field please read, Singer, Merrill. "Anthropology and addiction: An historical review of ." *Addiction*, 2012: 1750

<sup>240</sup> Edward Preble and John Casey J, “Taking Care of Business: The Heroin User’s Life on the Street,” *International Journal of Addiction* (1969): 4.

In the case of this thesis it is important to identify various limitations, which were encountered during both the research analysis and fieldwork phases. Firstly, the limited scope of this project must be acknowledged. It does not offer solutions to the drug use phenomenon, in fact it does not take the critical perspective that it is social a problem. Through the use of personal narratives contextualized within the larger structures of society, this project simply brought to light the reality of drug use. From the harsh experience of a self-described addict to the ‘recreational users’ who use drugs for pleasure; the goal was to indiscriminately describe the lived experiences and interactions of drug users in order to recognize how their behavior is regulated within Egyptian society. Thus, although it attempts to integrate this phenomenon into larger global trends and patterns of drug use, ultimately it is a study concerning a specific setting with a unique process of regulating behavior that can differ from other locales.

However, the limitations of describing the reality of drug use must also be acknowledged. Though fieldwork included a wide spectrum of individuals and locations from throughout Egypt, ultimately, it is a mistake to generalize and make claims that this thesis describes the definitive drug use reality of Egypt. Nonetheless, the qualitative data obtained still offers a compelling entry point into the reality of drug research and shows that this approach merits further research.

In addition to theoretical limitations, methodologically this project faced various obstacles. As previously discussed, drug research is heavily western-oriented, with literature regarding the region and specifically Egypt rare and difficult to obtain. For example, although Egypt’s drug enforcement agency (ANGA) states on its website that it has a library of extensive drug-related literature at the Interior Ministry Headquarters in Cairo. For security reasons professors discouraged me from going to or even contacting authorities for help with my project. This sensitivity to the topic of my thesis manifested in many forms, especially when attempting to conduct participant-observation. Such as a planned trip to a wedding in Shar’aya, where a week prior to the wedding the groom was arrested for possession of hashish, canceling the wedding. Thus, fieldwork faced several

sensitivity, security, and logistical limitations that limited research to a limited number of participants I could obtain information from.

Nevertheless, in the future it would be considerably worthwhile to investigate more locations and cases of drug use to get a more nuanced picture of this phenomenon in Egypt. Due to time constraints and security concerns it wasn't possible to travel to many locations or study the structure and organization of drug communities in greater detail. Thus, the majority of the fieldwork was conducted in and around Cairo, missing valuable data from rural locations and other cities. So, in the future it would be much more beneficial to conduct research in areas lacking substantial research instead of relying on second-hand information obtained through participant interviews. Also, the scope and sensitivity of the topic resulted in an interview with only one female participant. Though the focus of this thesis was not concerned with gender-based issues, it would still be of considerable relevance to pursue more research based along gender lines. Revealing whether, the limited number of females was due to sensitivity of the topic, or because there is a limited number of female drug users. Consequently, the behavior of drug use in Egypt merits further investigation on multiple fronts.

#### **D. Conclusion: Ongoing Debates**

This thesis is not about drugs per se, it was about scrutinizing the complex process through which behavior, particularly drug use, is encountered, experienced, and regulated throughout Egyptian society. Through an objective and interdisciplinary approach it built an alternative and critical understanding, or knowledge of a marginalized group of individuals by describing how they shape or are shaped by the dynamic system they exist within. It showed the structural power that disciplinary mechanisms have over 'deviant behavior', while simultaneously showing that 'deviant drug users' are judged according to a variety of unique circumstances and spectrum of acceptability. While some are successfully stigmatized for violating norms, others are able to retain their autonomy and shape their own rules and value systems outside the judgment of mainstream society. So,

by using drug use as a lens to examine society, this thesis has analyzed the fluidity of power within society and also the ambiguity of behavior within different time and space.

Reframing the question from *why* to *how* drug use happens has been integral to this study as it allows research to move beyond the negative connotations of deviance and so humanize drug users. Essentially, this thesis recognizes drug users as more than *outsiders*, instead they are an integral part of the same repressive society that judges and stigmatizes/marginalizes them. As Erikson (1962) explains, the ‘deviant’:

Shows us the difference between kinds of experience which belong within the group and the kinds of experience which belong outside it. Thus deviance cannot be dismissed as behavior which disrupts stability in society but may itself be, in controlled quantities, an important condition for preserving stability.<sup>241</sup>

In other words, deviant behavior like drug use is essential to any society that aims to designate boundaries and rules. For how do individuals know what roles, interactions, behavior, value systems, are legitimate if society doesn’t create a ‘deviant other’ from those who act against accepted norms. Ultimately, this is how individuals learn right from wrong, lawful from unlawful, and the acceptable from the unacceptable.

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<sup>241</sup> Kai Erikson, "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance: ." *Social Problems* (1962) : 310.

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