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The Literacy Learning Experiences of Egyptian Students at the American University in
Cairo: At the Intersection of Transnational Dimensionality and Intranational Flow in
Literacy Studies

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

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The Literacy Learning Experiences of Egyptian Students at the American University in
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Literacy Studies

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by

James Paul Austin

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I would like to begin by thanking my committee for placing their trust in me over the past five years. You supported me, collectively and individually, in ways that are too numerous to name here. I very much appreciate your interest in me and my work.

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ABSTRACT

The Literacy Learning Experiences of Egyptian Students at the American University in
Cairo: At the Intersection of Transnational Dimensionality and Intranational Flow in
Literacy Studies

by

James Paul Austin

This study examines the experiences of five Egyptian undergraduate students at the American University in Cairo (AUC) from different educational, class and geographic backgrounds. This study finds that students from public schooling and lower socioeconomic backgrounds arrive at AUC with significant language, literacy and social deficits compared to counterparts from private schooling and high socioeconomic backgrounds. The study considers how participants, based on the backgrounds, become involved with transnational literacy practices in university writing assignments. The study draws upon scholarship in transnational literacy studies, to inflect how New Literacy Studies considers global and local literacies with concepts of capital and positionality drawn from Pierre Bourdieu. The study conceptualizes student educational and class backgrounds as forms of cultural and social capital which, when deployed at AUC, result in differing participant positionality along educational and class lines. Although this distribution creates challenges for students from public schooling backgrounds, the study also finds that a student from a public schooling background exhibited unusually adaptive qualities, resulting in novel approaches to

completing a complex literacy task. The study concludes by arguing that transnational literacy studies be extended to account for intranational movements within uniquely configured embedded, hybrid and permeable transnational spaces that serve local interests.

Keywords: Egyptian higher education, Middle East higher education, transnational literacy studies, college writing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Chapter Summaries..... | 5 |
| CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE..... | 12 |
| Domain One..... | 14 |
| Literacy Studies..... | 14 |
| Transnational Literacy Studies..... | 23 |
| Transcultural Literacy Studies..... | 30 |
| International Composition Studies (ICS)..... | 34 |
| English as a Second Language/L2 Scholarship..... | 45 |
| Domain Two..... | 50 |
| International Branch Campuses (IBCs)..... | 50 |
| Education, English and Writing Research in MENA..... | 57 |
| MENA Education..... | 57 |
| English in MENA..... | 60 |
| Education in Egypt..... | 63 |
| English in Egypt..... | 69 |
| Education and English in Lebanon..... | 71 |
| MENA Writing Research..... | 77 |
| Domain Three..... | 82 |
| MENA/Arab Students in North American Institutions..... | 83 |
| First Generation Students..... | 89 |
| Conclusion..... | 93 |
| CHAPTER 3. HISTORIES OF EDUCATION AT AUC and AUB..... | 97 |
| American University of Beirut (Syrian Protestant College) and Lebanon..... | 99 |
| American University in Cairo and Egypt..... | 107 |
| Conclusion..... | 117 |
| CHAPTER 4. METHODS AND PROCEDURES..... | 119 |
| Initial Contact..... | 119 |
| Interviews..... | 120 |
| Analysis and Design..... | 121 |
| Educational Histories..... | 121 |
| Initial Positionality at AUC..... | 122 |
| Situated Literacy..... | 123 |
| Significance and Limitations..... | 124 |
| Participant Profiles..... | 125 |
| CHAPTER 5. ESTABLISHING POSITIONALITY: EDUCATIONAL HISTORIES..... | 126 |
| Frame..... | 128 |
| Nour..... | 129 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Educational History..... | 129 |
| Language and Acceptable Topics..... | 132 |
| Sanaa..... | 132 |
| Educational | |
| History..... | 133 |
| Acceptable Genres and Topics in English and Arabic..... | 134 |
| Summary..... | 138 |
| Karim..... | 138 |
| Educational History..... | 138 |
| Acceptable topics in English and Arabic..... | 141 |
| Summary..... | 143 |
| Farah..... | 144 |
| Educational History..... | 144 |
| Acceptable Writing Topics..... | 146 |
| Aalaa..... | 147 |
| Educational History..... | 147 |
| Acceptable Writing Topics in English and Arabic..... | 149 |
| Summary..... | 151 |
| Discussion..... | 151 |
| CHAPTER 6. INITIAL POSITIONALITY AT AUC..... | 156 |
| Nour..... | 156 |
| Language Adjustment..... | 157 |
| Academic and Social Flexibility..... | 157 |
| Writing at AUC..... | 158 |
| Summary..... | 159 |
| Sanaa..... | 160 |
| Sanaa's Social Adjustment..... | 160 |
| Sanaa's Academic Adjustment..... | 161 |
| Growth in Topic Selection..... | 162 |
| Summary..... | 164 |
| Karim..... | 164 |
| Social and Academic Adjustment..... | 164 |
| Writing at AUC..... | 167 |
| Summary..... | 169 |
| Farah..... | 170 |
| Language Adjustment..... | 170 |
| Social and Academic Adjustment..... | 172 |
| Writing at AUC..... | 175 |
| Summary..... | 176 |
| Aalaa..... | 176 |
| Social Adjustment..... | 177 |
| Academic Adjustment..... | 178 |
| Writing at AUC..... | 179 |
| Summary..... | 180 |
| Discussion..... | 181 |
| CHAPTER 7. SITUATED LITERACY..... | 187 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Writing Processes..... | 188 |
| Sanaa..... | 188 |
| Assignment..... | 188 |
| Sanaa's Process and Use of Resources..... | 188 |
| Nour..... | 192 |
| Assignment..... | 192 |
| Nour's Process and Use of Resources..... | 192 |
| Research Requirement..... | 193 |
| Aalaa..... | 195 |
| Assignment..... | 195 |
| Aalaa's Process and Use of Resources..... | 196 |
| Farah..... | 200 |
| Assignment..... | 200 |
| Farah's Process and Use of Resources..... | 200 |
| The Mind Map..... | 202 |
| Farah's Personal Agenda for Service..... | 204 |
| Hedging on Findings Regarding Farah..... | 206 |
| Discussion..... | 209 |
| CHAPTER 8. Synthesis and Conclusion..... | 214 |
| Final Significance..... | 220 |
| REFERENCES..... | 227 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 1. Farah's Mind Map..... | 205 |
|---------------------------------|-----|

LIST OF APPENDICES

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Appendix A: Solicitation E-mails..... | 242 |
| Appendix B: Interview Protocols..... | 244 |

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is situated at the intersection of recent scholarship within the fields of literacy studies, international composition studies and ESL/L2 scholarship. Specifically, the study offers a defined configuration of global-local literacy learning within a specific international location, considered from the perspective of five student participants from a range of sociocultural and educational backgrounds. The purpose of the study is to account for what discrepancies exist in the educational, language literacy and sociocultural adjustments of these Egyptian participants to the unique context of the American University in Cairo (AUC), by taking into account prior school literacy learning, their experiences of educational and social acculturation to AUC, and the challenges with literacy they encounter on a specific AUC writing assignment. In so doing, the study will expose limitations in the dominant frames within the three main areas of scholarship, and will consider the ways in which existing frames can be extended and expanded to account for both the unique setting for the study and the ways in which students flowed into and participated within this site.

This study frames the American University in Cairo as a transnational educational site, where Egyptians attend an English-language university modeled after educational and literacy patterns found in the United States. This includes the transnational “flow” of U.S.-based rhetoric and composition studies, embodied through the AUC writing unit, its instructors trained in the discipline, and the program and its curriculum, into the transnational AUC context. Once there, students from a range of sociocultural, economic and educational backgrounds from within Egypt, some of whom have had prior experience with transnational flows in their previous education, flow into and participate with the ideologies, pedagogies and literacies associated with the context. Those students from

affluent backgrounds often have had more exposure to English and some of the academic literacies associated with the language, while those from outside the affluent classes typically attend the Egyptian public school system, which provides little to no access to English and its academic literacies. This study will show that those students from affluent backgrounds have an advantage in that they have prior experience with transnational flows of English language and literacy. This form of capital translated into a position of advantage over those students from lower socioeconomic classes and public schooling backgrounds. The study will show that, given the correlation between social and economic class and access to English language and literacies, students from affluent classes are more likely to be prepared for the transnational AUC context, in terms of language and literacy, than those from lower classes. This means that, for students from the public schooling system, their adjustment to AUC includes not only language and literacy, but likely social and cultural adjustments, as well. This access to English language and literacies correlates strongly to increasingly limited career opportunities in sectors of the Egyptian professional classes requiring English, underscoring the advantage enjoyed by affluent Egyptians who acquire these forms of capital as a matter of course. As such, the Egyptians who participated in this study experienced the transnational site as a unique kind of transnational context, one infused with U.S.-based ideologies, pedagogies and literacies that also serves educational, sociocultural and economic needs within Egypt. This university, for example, represents everything from an opportunity to reproduce social and cultural status for affluent Egyptians to a high-stakes and socioculturally fraught opportunity for those from public schools to experience economic, professional and social mobility in a country where such circumstances are exceedingly rare. This blending of a transnational context, and the ways in which the intrinsic agendas and priorities of Egyptian students and their families are taken

up within the site, underscores the need to reconsider and extend frames in the main areas of scholarship within which this study is situated.

In order to account for the ways in which student priorities are taken up within the transnational site, the study must first account for the formation of these priorities through earlier educational experiences and family agendas. Accounting for these priorities can also frame the range of educational experiences by socioeconomic class—participants from higher socioeconomic classes attend private schools that bring many advantages, while those from lower socioeconomic classes attend a public schooling system they describe as nationalist and ideological, priorities which are taken up through language and literacy practices. The ways in which these agendas, and the experiences that helped form these agendas, impact the positionality and participation of students within AUC can help this study account for the differing “natures” of crossing from one scene to another: from the home culture of family, secondary education and geographical location to the transnational AUC site. Once these participants have entered the site, in what ways do they participate with the ideologies, pedagogies and literacies of the context? In what ways does the capital they bring to AUC and the positions they take up within the site impact their participation with ideologies, pedagogies and literacies within the site?

This study seeks to draw explicit connections between these three areas: prior experience, initial positionality, and development through participation. In making these connections, the study will consider the relationship of schooling background and family agendas, and the socioeconomic status that correlates with this background in many ways, to initial positionality (educational, language, sociocultural) to AUC, and the relationship of prior history and acculturation to the features of situated literacy among the participants, including the experience and resolution of writing challenges. This process allows for the

study to account for the ways in which capital and positionality are reflected and/or taken up through participants' experiences and resolution of literacy challenges. This, in turn, can provide insight into the nature of the "flow" of Egyptians from various backgrounds into a transnational site with both "American" ideologies for literacy and consequences for Egypt and the Egyptians who attend AUC.

The first three research questions below address the three interlocked dimensions for this study, as described above. The questions following these research questions will be taken up at various points in the dissertation, including the review of literature, the concluding discussions for each chapter, and the conclusion. These questions are designed to address the anomalies revealed within the literature by this study's design and findings.

Research Questions

1. What kinds of experiences have participants had with literacy and English in their high schools, and what is the relationship of these experiences to the kinds of schools they attended (public versus private) and their socioeconomic class?
2. What kinds of linguistic, educational, pedagogical and literacy ideologies did these students encounter when they became students at AUC, and in what ways did their participation with these ideologies determine their initial positionality at AUC?
3. In what ways did participants experience literacy and writing challenges while working on a writing assignment at AUC? In what ways were these challenges resolved? In what ways do these challenges and resolutions correlate with or confound expectations based on the socioeconomic and educational backgrounds and acculturation of participants?

Questions of the Literature

4. In what ways does current scholarship in literacy studies, composition studies and L2/ESL scholarship account for the contexts and the experiences of students?
5. In what ways does the study's anomalous findings reveal ideological, paradigmatic and methodological limits in this scholarship? What new questions and ways of knowing emerge as a result?

The research questions will be addressed as follows. Each analytical chapter, which corresponds directly to the first three research questions, will present relevant findings from each participant in the form of individual "cases," followed by an analytical, end-of-chapter discussion that considers the cases in context with one another, offering findings intrinsic to the context and participants. At the same time, these end-of-chapter discussions will address questions four and five by considering what the findings reveal about the limitations of transnational literacy studies, international composition studies and L2/ESL scholarship in accounting for this context and the nature of student flow into and participation within the transnational context. Consideration of the limitations within literature will reveal space for the extension of current frames within literacy studies, and the application of these extended frames onto composition and ESL scholarship. A concluding chapter will offer extended framing within literacy studies and will argue for the usefulness of the more expansive frames of literacy studies for composition and ESL scholarship. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of the ways in which study findings can be applied at existing transnational sites to meet the needs of students from any backgrounds.

Chapter Summaries

In this section, each dissertation chapter will be summarized and its contribution to the study will be described. Chapter Two of the dissertation is the literature review, which

addresses several areas of scholarship relevant to this study. As stated earlier, this study is situated at the crossroads of three primary areas of scholarship. The review probes each of these areas with depth, considering the ways in which transnational “flows” of people, materials and ideologies at AUC may interact with claims made in ICS and ESL/L2 that U.S.-based composition models make monolingual assumptions or fail to account for rhetorical and linguistic patterns. Limitations of the “fit” for each of these overlapping areas will also be addressed, and new ways to combine paradigms to offer fresh perspectives will be addressed. After these major fields are reviewed, the chapter addresses several other areas which also contribute meaningfully to the study. The chapter reviews scholarship regarding educational challenges in Egypt, Lebanon and the Middle East/North Africa region and finds that there is significant ambivalence regarding the presence of transnational English within in the region. On the one hand, it is acknowledged that English is lingua franca for many areas of business, commerce and other intellectual and knowledge-based domains with international reach. On the other hand, there are concerns about the presence of Western ideology and culture and their potential deleterious impact on Arab culture and Islamic society. Nevertheless, the demand not only for English-language instruction, but competent, regionally based higher educational opportunities has contributed to the recent development of U.S.-styled universities. This phenomenon is addressed in the section of the review covering international branch campuses (IBCs), a particular and recent form of transnational “flow” into the region. This section of the review confirms the phenomenon of expansion of IBCs into the region and beyond, while also underscoring the rigid, often unreflective exporting of U.S.-based models into other cultures. This provides ballast for arguments made within ICS and ESL/L2 literature that international and cross-cultural educational endeavors should take into account cultural, rhetorical and linguistic traditions of host

nations, even as this argument fails to fully account for the unique circumstances within which this study is situated.

Other sections of the review consider the experiences of Arab students studying in United States universities and of first-generation university students in the United States. The section considering the experiences of Arab students in U.S. universities further describes the ambivalence of many Arab students and their families toward the Western culture that accompanies English-language higher education. Additionally, this section on Arab students also uses surveys and other social science methodologies to capture these views on a large scale and helps to capture the kinds of sociocultural challenges inherent in transnational border crossings involving Arab students and U.S.-styled institutions. The latter area of literature, that addressing first-generation students, uses narratives, interviews and similar methodologies to consider with depth many of the social, cultural and educational adjustments experienced by first-generation university students. This literature reflects the approach taken in this study, of offering individualized narrative “cases” to capture differences in participant backgrounds, and initial positionality and the resolution of literacy challenges.

Following the review of literature, two preliminary chapters precede the primary analysis. Chapter Three provides historical and regional context for the study by describing the introduction of English into Egypt by the British, who were invited into the country by the debt-ridden Ottoman rulers in the late 19th century, the establishment and development of AUC throughout the 20th century, and the establishment and development of the AUC writing unit up to the time period covered in this study—2013-14. This chapter also includes a history of education in Lebanon, the establishment of the American University of Beirut (AUB), and a history of the writing unit at that university. The purpose for this history

is to draw parallels and points of contrast between recent histories of education and language at two different countries in the Middle East, between AUC and AUB, and between the writing units at these institutions. These comparative histories can help determine what makes the Egyptian context distinct in the region, as well as where the histories of education, institution and writing unit overlap, suggesting regional significance for this study. This chapter also describes the ways in which AUC and the writing unit developed into the kinds of educational contexts that they are. The various transitions through time are seen from the perspective of transnationalism, as a way to account for various ideological “flows” and the relationship of these flows to localized sociocultural, economic and/or political exigencies at different points in the histories of these institutions.

Chapter Four describes the methods, procedures and participant profiles for this study. The chapter begins by describing the manner in which I made initial contact with potential participants in this study and the incentives offered to participants. Following this, the structure and purpose for the interviewing sequence is provided, and a coding schema provided. Next, the three main areas of analysis are described: educational histories, acculturation to AUC, and situated literacy. These three areas correlate directly onto three of four analytical chapters, which will be described below. Following this, participant profiles are included. These profiles give a pseudonym for each participant, describe the kind of high school attended (public, private, American, Egyptian) and identify the home governorate and home town. This chapter concludes with sections describing the significance and limitations of the study.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven are the primary analytical chapters for the dissertation. In each chapter, participants are discussed individually, followed by a concluding discussion that considers compares findings from the individual cases. Chapter Five, “Establishing

Positionality: Educational Histories,” examines the pre-tertiary educational experiences of the participants. The greatest focus was on secondary schooling experiences, but several participants discussed earlier schooling experiences and other extra-curricular activities; when relevant, these were included in the study. Primarily, however, this chapter focuses on participants’ experiences with literacy learning in their high school, with main attention given to the social rules, inherited in policy and through teaching, governing what topics they were able to write about, which languages correlated to which topic, and what attitudes they were able to express about these topics.

Chapter Six, “Initial Positionality at AUC,” describes the sociocultural and educational adjustments experienced by the participants, and the way in which these adjustments reveal distributed positionality among participants related to their background. Among the participants, those who had had preparatory experiences similar to the social, educational, literacy and language expectations of AUC experienced much less difficulty in their adjustment across these areas. Participants from higher social classes tended to have had these experiences during the natural course of their education, while those from lower social and economic classes lacked these experiences or found them through supplements to their education that are unusual in the Egyptian context. Likewise, students from higher social and economic classes tended to experience a limited range of adjustments—Nour, for example, experienced language adjustments but little social, educational or literacy adjustments—while those from lower social and economic classes tended to experience a greater range of adjustments. Farah, for example, reported experiencing ongoing language, educational and social adjustments, all of which correlated to her educational background and her social and economic classes.

Chapter Seven, “Situated Literacy,” uses findings from the second participant interviews. These cognitive interviews asked students to describe their process in writing a university-level essay, with particular focus on what they considered challenging and what they did to resolve these challenges. Participants who had greater familiarity with Western-styled teaching methods appeared to be more comfortable with the transnational writing pedagogies, and tended to experience advanced in literacy and identification as writers. Students with less familiarity tended to use available resources, such as librarians and the writing center, for additional academic support. Interestingly, the participant who reported the most significant challenges in language, literacy, educational and sociocultural adjustment also elected to take on the most complex and difficult writing task, with much less instructor support than was reported by the other participants. The implications and larger significance of Farah’s choice is considered in this chapter.

Chapter Eight considers the ways in which frames within literacy studies offer useful ways of thinking about the relationship of the participants to the transnational AUC context, while at the same time proposing extensions to existing frames that can account for the unique nature of AUC and the intranational movement of students into AUC. These new frames are then considered within the context of international composition and ESL studies, both of which offer limited approaches to the complex nature of global-local interactions of composition, language and literacies. The dissertation concludes by considering the ways in which the frames and findings for the study can be used by transnational institutions such as AUC in providing support for students.

A final note on significance before proceeding with the study. This chapter has largely described the scholarly significance of this study for areas within literacy and composition studies. However, this study also addresses a significant intercultural

phenomenon, that of an agreement between the United States and Egyptian governments to collaborate on a higher educational circumstance unlike anything else in Egypt. Indeed, despite the growing presence of international branch campuses in oil-rich areas of the Middle East, and a new generation of private universities appearing in Egypt, AUC—like the American University in Beirut (AUB)—is a unique presence in the region. Given that the typical profile for United States presence in the region is military, the ongoing presence of AUC offers a different image of U.S.-MENA relations, one upon which governments and citizens can build. Additionally, this study takes as its primary focus the experiences of public high school graduates, many of whom hail from areas with little opportunity for high quality education and the many personal and professional benefits that can result from such an education. In Egypt and elsewhere in the region, young people facing these obstacles experience frustration—especially as a small, elite class claims opportunity and wealth as birthrights. This study examines the experiences of those students who do not typically come to AUC, and considers their experience along the three trajectories—background with literacy learning in high school, acculturation to AUC and situated literacy at AUC—in context with those students whose background is more typical of AUC students. In so doing, the study may be able to discover what challenges these public school graduates encounter that other students did not, and what kinds of measures can help these students succeed in the very different academic and social culture of AUC.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature will consider relevant areas of scholarship across three primary domains: first, the relevant literature in literacy studies, international composition studies and L2/ESL scholarship; second, literature addressing education in the Middle East region, including the development of Western-styled universities and the presence of English in the Middle East; third, scholarship that addresses two phenomena significant to the study: the experiences of Arab students in U.S. universities, and the experiences of first generation students at universities. The first domain will consider not only the history and development of these closely related areas, but the ways in which transnational literacy studies offers useful frames that can be extended to account for the specific circumstances of AUC and its students. The second domain will account for the nature of transnational educational sites within the Middle East, in order to differentiate national contexts and histories from one another and to differentiate different kinds of transnational sites from one another. This will help define what makes Egypt and AUC unique national and educational spaces, and will resonate with claims made about the limitations of existing scholarship in the first domain. The third domain will address the differing nature of Arab student experiences at universities in the West and first-generation university students within the United States. These areas of scholarship resonate with and contradict different aspects of the experiences of students included in this study, who enter the transnational space across differing class and educational backgrounds from within Egypt. The ways in which student agendas and experiences in this study align (or do not align) with those in the scholarship can also help to account for the limitations in the first domain of literature, in that findings can expose limitations to the ways in which transnational spaces are taken up by individuals who are not themselves transnational.

The following areas and sub-areas will be reviewed:

Domain One:

- Literacy studies
 - Transnational literacy studies
 - Transcultural literacy studies
- International composition studies (ICS)
- English as a Second Language/L2

Domain Two

- International branch campuses (IBCs)
- Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
 - Education regionally
 - English regionally
 - Education in Egypt
 - English in Egypt
 - Education and English in Lebanon
 - MENA writing research

Domain Three

- Arab students in American universities
- First-generation students

Domain One

This section of the review will account for three closely related areas of scholarship that are also relevant to this study: literacy studies, international composition studies (ICS), and ESL/L2 literature. Each sub-area within this section will account for the development of current scholarship in the field, and will describe the ways in which the scholarship in these areas has limited applicability for the present study, creating the need for extended frames that can account for the relationship of the context and participants. Of particular interest will be paradigms such as transnational, transcultural and translingual and the ways in which they are developed in current scholarship. Transnationalism, as it is developed through literacy studies, accounts for global “flows” of people, materials and ideologies across national borders, often for reasons of economic exigencies. While this framing accounts for the development and current orientation of the American University in Cairo, the emphasis on the crossing of national does not account for the flow of intranational people who participate in the context for reasons both individual and national. When this area of the literature is reviewed, limitations in the scholarship will be considered. This domain in the review of literature will account for the anomalies in the scholarship that have been described above, with additional attention to the ideological limitations within international composition studies and ESL/L2 scholarship.

Literacy Studies

Early work—i.e., the “first wave”—in literacy studies has been retroactively labeled “suspect and repugnant” (Brandt and Clinton 2002, p. 338) by current practitioners of the New Literacy Studies (NLS). In particular, NLS scholars object to the work of scholars such as Goody, who they believe claims a “Great Divide” between literate and non-literate societies and places too much emphasis on an “autonomous,” transformative impact of

literacy on society—essentially, that literacy development encourages everything from reasoning ability to democratic tendencies. While some aspects of this past scholarship may betray a deterministic bias regarding the stability and predictability of literacy’s implementation and specific use by societies, Goody’s primary claim appears to be that that literacy, as a technological development invented by humans for human endeavor, enables types of organizations and activities which had not been possible prior to the development of literacy, such as the invention of recordkeeping and the standardization of legal and religious texts.

It is relevant to this study to consider the claims made against Goody and the “first wave” of literacy studies scholarship by subsequent practitioners of the NLS, in order to represent the history and development of the field, and the tensions that have arisen between past and present scholarship in the field. This integrated perspective on literacy studies will help this study transcend the binaries (in this case, past-present and autonomous-ideological) that have characterized the field and, at times, limited its ability to consider more dynamic contexts for literacy development and practice.

To that end, Goody (1968) argues against a deterministic reading of his scholarship when he writes that

[o]ur original argument was not phrased in terms of technological determinism; it attempted to review the liberating effects of changes in [communications] technology. The article [“The Consequences of Literacy”] should perhaps have been entitled the ‘implications’ rather than the ‘consequences’ of literacy, but it seemed unnecessary to insist (more than we did) that other factors could militate against the realization of its potentiality for change. In the study of behaviour there are few, if any, “sufficient causes”; we are interested in the potentialities of literate communication. (p. 4)

Goody further stated that “in taking writing and written tradition as my topic [...] I do not imply for one moment that these are the only factors involved in any specific situation, only that they are significant ones” (1986, p. xv). Goody’s historical work might seem to overemphasize the role of literacy as a variable in certain domains of societal development, opening him up to accusations that he was being “deterministic.” Still, it seems clear Goody was not applying autonomous traits onto the development of literacy; he was studying wide swaths of human society historically, and charting the relationship between literacy development and other forms of societal development. It would misrepresent his work, as well as his explicit statements to the contrary, to suggest that Goody considered literacy and specific domains of development linked in only one way, that only one pathway of development would result from the invention of literacy, and that the results of his work should be used to predict the consequences of literacy development across all cultures and societies. This is a view shared by Collin (2013), who claims that the bias of current sociocultural literacy studies scholars against Goody leads them to undervalue the unique place of literacy in sociocultural development, and to reify local literacies without fully considering the limited scope of their impact.

In arguing against simple causality and of literacy as the dominant variable in sociocultural development, Goody anticipates arguments that would arrive almost twenty years later, when Brian Street (1984) would introduce an “ideological” model for literacy, with increased focus on how local contexts develop their own literacy practices and adapt existing practices that arrive from distant stations—temporally, culturally or geographically. In the New Literacy Studies (NLS), ethnography and not history became the primary method for study—the present and not the past—as evidenced by Street’s (1984) landmark

ethnography of an Iranian village. In this study, Street discovered that a village considered illiterate by outsiders was infused by literacy practices and events; as a result, he came to question how literacy was defined and what purposes and outcomes it was assumed to produce.

This work came during a period when organizations like UNESCO had launched literacy campaigns within what were considered under-developed countries. Inherent in many of these campaigns was the assumption of illiteracy based upon distant definitions and needs for literacy. As a result, distant definitions of literacy became associated with distant definitions of advancement. Graff (1996) describes this approach as an assumption of “literacy as the central variable among that complex of factors that distinguished modern, developed or developing, and advanced societies *and* individuals from the lesser developed areas and persons of the world” (p. xxiv, emphasis original). Indeed, these campaigns may not have considered that concepts like “development” and “advanced” are socially situated and may betray specific values contained within the culture enacting development and literacy campaigns, and that each “illiterate” culture may have its own complex set of social practices that may interact or come into tension with foreign interventions in unpredictable ways. Such initiatives may also have misunderstood the findings of research such as Goody’s, which, while describing the dramatic impact of literacy on human societies, did not regard literacy as the only—or necessarily the most significant—factor in societal change, and did not claim that literacy resulted in stable and predictable societal development.

Graff’s (1996) consideration of literacy as a dependent variable heralded the contextualized perspective on literacy that would characterize the work of Street and the beginning of NLS. This “social turn” was interested in how local contexts adapt literacies for

local purposes—a departure from Goody’s macro-historical perspective on literacy’s history and impact. Underlying this approach was an assumption in the multiple forms and purposes for literacy practiced in local communities, and a differentiation between literacy events—specific moments of culturally-sanctioned literacy-in-practice—and literacy practices—the underlying social rules that govern what is written and what is read. According to Street (1995), literacy practices are “pitched at a higher level of abstraction [than literacy events] and refer to both behavior and the social and cultural conceptualizations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing” (p. 2). In this formulation of literacy, literacy practices generate the contexts wherein literacy events occur and take on meaning. At the same time, one might argue that literacy *habitus* is built one literacy event at a time and not the other way around. Importantly, Baynham (2004) claims that Street developed these concepts through adapting scholarship in communicative ethnography (Hymes 1996) and critical anthropology, though Baynham points out that Street and other NLS scholars are interested specifically in “the power relations which are played out in literacy activity” (2004, p. 286), a nod to the work of foundational scholars such as Bourdieu, Marx and Foucault.

This focus resulted in ethnographies of “localized” literacy, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between social activity and literate practices across a wide and varying range of contexts. One of the most seminal of these works, Heath’s *Ways With Words* (1983), examined the literate practices of two rural communities in one area of North Carolina. Her research, based primarily in long-term participant observation and interviews, revealed widely varying literate practices, attitudes toward formal education, and relationships between social, literate and oral practices. Barton and Hamilton’s *Local Literacies* (1998) examined the literate practices of a single, working-class neighborhood in

Lancaster, England. Using several interviews with residents and analysis of relevant writing artifacts, their research discovered a wide and diverse array of everyday literacies tied to various “ruling passions” for the individuals upon which their research focused. These “ruling passions” included everything from epistolary correspondence to involvement in local community organizations, and ranged from formal to informal, from public to private forms of literacy. These literate practices mapped on to various social activities and underscored the idiosyncratic nature of what literacy is and what are its forms and functions. Brandt’s *Literacy in American Lives* (2001), however, tied localized literacy practices to wider economic developments in the United States throughout the 20th century, a variable that will be found again during a later review of transnational literacy studies scholarship. This important work was part of a larger ethnographic project that saw Brandt interview dozens of subjects over several years; the book focuses in on only a handful of these interviewees.

In coining her phrase “sponsors of literacy,” Brandt refers to “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (2001, p. 19). These sponsors enable (or disable) literacies and literacy learning for reasons of economic exigency, and are part of a larger story than a singularly localized study could ever capture. Brandt’s findings seem particularly well suited to this study, for the Middle East has experienced volatile economic change that is linked to various forms of social, cultural and political change. These factors impact opportunity and sponsorship, especially for the graduates of public schools who already may have access to fewer opportunities and sponsorship than their affluent counterparts. The opportunity to gain academic and other

English literacies, already relatively rare in their home communities, may be in greater demand due to local, national and regional economic, social, cultural and political developments, such as the Arab Spring, the overthrow of the Morsi government and the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood (and the resulting social insecurity) in Egypt, and the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, taxing an already burdened infrastructure. Such changes can impact sponsorship and educational opportunity and may be cited by informants during interviews.

These seminal texts in NLS reveal an important aspect of the field, that of linking individual or local literate activity to larger developments in economic, cultural and social worlds that impact what is written and read, how it is composed, by whom, and for what purpose. In Brandt's study, individuals are enabled (or disabled) as literate individuals through developments far beyond their capacity to control or even know directly. Heath and Barton and Hamilton, on the other hand, focus on individual or community literate activity, focusing on the diversity of literate practices and their relationship to localized social activity, thereby disrupting the oral-literate binary. By going local, these studies suggest that universal claims about the impact of literacy on a people are based in researcher assumptions more so than the actual impact of literacy. As Street (1995) describes in his summary of his ethnography of an Iranian village, the introduction of literacy and books did not "transform" the village in a stable way, but opened a rift between young people who were reading school books rife with government-sponsored "history" and older people who, lacking alphabetic literacy, relied on oral myths for their understanding of the world. Neither side seemed to consider the possibility that the "history" books might also have been mythological (and were certainly ideological), or that literacy was being used to further governmental

ideological agendas. Likewise, the pattern of rote memorization in education was not disrupted simply because literacy was introduced. If anything, these ethnographic studies reveal widely varying uses for literate activity across a wide range and scope of contexts.

Recent scholarship in NLS has considered the relationship between “local” contexts—however the term is defined for a particular study or by a particular scholar—and “distant” agendas that arrive at and impact local sites. Street (2003) describes the social activity of literacy as “ideological” and always contested, and further claims that “particular versions of [literacies] [...] are always rooted in a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and marginalize others” (p. 78). Under this framework, a dominant literacy agenda is linked to a world view and system of social practices and beliefs that essentially imposes itself on others. While it is problematic to assign essential behavioral traits to *any* world views and social beliefs, Street’s claim could be based in a history of colonial attempts to “overwrite” the societies of peoples considered by the dominant culture as less civilized, and in the post-World War II globalization of American economic, political, cultural and military influence. Interestingly, post-colonial scholars like Edward Said would argue that colonialism was never an *a priori* disposition of one part of the world toward another. His book *Orientalism* (1979) claims that colonial attitudes were developed not through essentialized world views, but through deliberate, ongoing interaction between Occident and Orient. These interactions, and the texts and practices generated by such interaction, gave rise to cultural beliefs in the less civilized nature of people in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia—which provided the “civilized” Occident its rationale to impose its will on the Orient. These beliefs informed the colonial enterprise both directly and indirectly, and further generated scholarship and departments on this particular

construction of the “Orient.” This resulted in military, cultural, social and academic dominance of the region by those who believed in the social fact of cultural superiority. This dominance included the introduction and teaching of English for administrative, cultural, judicial and social purposes; because English was a language from an “advanced” culture, it assumed high status even among the colonized. In essence, Said was doing historical work in New Literacy Studies in the 1970’s by focusing on how literacy practices both reflect and generate the attitudes upon which colonialism was formed. His work reveals some of the foundations upon which the present study are built, as will be discussed in a later chapter that discusses the introduction and development of English as a language of exchange in the Middle East.

That Street essentializes the qualities and aims of distant literacies invites further consideration of the local-distant binary. Brandt and Clinton (2002) significantly question the field’s tendency to focus primarily on local contexts to the detriment of how the local and the distant interact with one another. While Brandt and Clinton also advance the possibility that literacy materials can act as sponsors that far outlive any individual or group, the aspect of their argument most relevant here is their claim that local contexts “reconfigure” social practices of literacy—even those, I would claim, originally introduced through colonialism. They cite Besnier’s (1995) study of an isolated Polynesian culture as an example of this (p. 343) and further claim that the “social-practice perspective has provided the field of literacy studies with overwhelming evidence that human agents, individually and collectively, mediate literacy practices wherever they take them up—imbuing them with local intentions, resisting their often hegemonic currents, recrafting them to fulfill needs at

hand” (p. 346). This advance invited the field to look beyond the local-distant binary and the fixed constructions of local and distant that result from binary patterns.

While this scholarship provides a broad context within which to situate this study, more Recent developments in the field of literacy studies utilizes transnational and transcultural framing to address Brandt and Clinton’s call to transcend local-distant binaries, which oversimplify the complex ways in which local sites interact with global ideologies and literacies. This more expansive approach offers useful frames for this study, which can also be extended in important ways that are not yet reflected in the literature.

Transnational Literacy Studies

Transnational literacy studies grows out of scholarship within literacy studies that seeks to transcend global-local binaries by accounting for the many ways in which global-local literacy can be configured, as well as the reasons driving these configurations. To achieve this, this sub-field draws upon concepts developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986, 1991, 1992,) to account for the different ways in which individuals, groups, ideologies and materials cross national borders, the implications for such crossings, as well as the global dynamics driving these many kinds of crossings. In this sub-field, scholars consider literacy as a form of social and cultural capital that determine the ways in which individuals and groups are positioned within the “logic of practice” in differing social fields, the ways in which positionality changes as individuals and groups cross national borders, and the ways in which language and literacy determine positionality as people cross from one scene, from one national context, to another. While this scholarship often addresses the experiences of migrants, immigrants and diaspora groups as they use literacy practices to navigate positionality across borders, it nevertheless offers the most suitable home for this study,

given that this sub-field offers relevant concepts and paradigms relevant to the study that can be extended to account for new kinds of transnational spaces and interactions of global-local literacy. Likewise, this area offers expansive possibilities for framing global-local interactions of literacy in ways that will be crucial to this study. This area of the review will account for the rich diversity of scholarship within transnational literacy studies, with particular focus on the areas where this dissertation is aligned with existing scholarship and the ways in which existing frames will need to be extended to account for the nature of the transnational AUC context and the interaction of Egyptian participants with the context.

According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital exists in three closely related forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalized. Embodied capital takes the form of habitus inasmuch as “long-lasting dispositions of the body and mind” are established through the inculcation of “external wealth [being] converted into an integral part of a person” in the form of individual self-improvement. This form of capital is notable in that it takes time; it cannot be established instantaneously. Bourdieu states that the variable of the time it takes to acquire this form of capital results in an uneven distribution among individuals and groups according to who has the time to “satisfy the specifically cultural demands of a prolonged process of acquisition.” The process of acquisition leads us to the second form of capital, that of objective capital. This capital can take the form of material goods, such as books, instruments, other kinds of materials, and their acquisition and use indicates that economic capital has been used to acquire the goods to be converted into added cultural capital. Finally, institutional capital refers to the creation of institutional credentialing, such as formal education, which confers economic and cultural status on those who acquire it. Bourdieu also argues that the increase in those attending school implies greater changes in the way in which capital is acquired and distributed for the purposes of achieving profit and

status. This uneven distribution of these forms of capital, and the ways in which they are deployed in the acquisition of profit, status and other forms of mobility, result in uneven distributions of individuals in social fields.

This study examines a moment where one form of institutional capital, that of a high school education, was parlayed into another: a specific kind of university education that held the promise of reproducing cultural status, offering economic and social mobility, and/or providing professional and ideological training, scarce within Egypt—especially given that they are contained within a transnational space with the unique qualities of AUC. The uneven fit of the educational backgrounds of participants with the academic and social culture of AUC correlated with the type of school attended and the class status of participants, strongly indicating that economic and objective capital, in the form of material wealth and access to tangible materials both in and out of school settings, resulted in unevenly distributed positionality of participants upon entering AUC. This is particularly true in term of literacy, an embedded form of institutional capital: participants from higher socioeconomic classes and private schooling backgrounds had gained literacy experience that more readily carried over into AUC, placing them at an initial advantage within the site. As this study will demonstrate, this positionality impacted the ways in which participants from backgrounds not typical of most AUC students adapted to address shortfalls in literacy, in that such participants made use of non-institutional forms of capital for institutional purposes, resulting in surprising findings in Chapter Seven.

Lam and Warriner (2012) have summarized dozens of studies focused on the literacy practices of transnational migrants, ranging from studies in anthropological and sociological literacy in transnational contexts (Smith 2006, Davies 2003, Farr 2006, Guarnizo 1997, Guerra 2004, 2007, and others) to sociolinguistic studies of language and transnational,

multilingual spaces (Blommaert et al. 2005, Silverstein 2003, and others), to literacy practices in transnational, migrant communities (Sarroub 2009, Farr 1994, Guerra 1998, Ek 2009, and others).

Additionally, Warriner (2008) reviews other complex sub-areas of transnational literacy studies. Building upon Brandt and Clinton's (2002) call to transcend the local-distant binary and to consider literacy materials as equal to individuals who enact literacy events and practices, Warriner describes many of the issues present in recent scholarship in this area. Luke (2004) and Baynham (2004) call for increased attention to educational contexts and the groups who have access to "transnational, regional and local flows of information" (Luke 2004, p. 331) in educational contexts, as a way to identify ethnographically the interaction of global languages and information in localized settings. Claiming educational contexts as a legitimate space for literacy studies research—indeed, as one of several localized contexts—bridges past research in teaching and learning in literacy studies with the "social" turn that constructed literacy as a social practice in contexts of various configurations. Baynham (2004) also considers the impact of NLS on pedagogical research into literacy and argues that issues of pedagogy and education are often implicit in current literacy research. Medina (2010) presented a study of immigrant elementary school students and how they reflect and produce transnational identities through engagement with literature—an engagement, Medina argues, that can be useful in generating pedagogies appropriate for students who move "across places, time and people" (p. 40) as part of their complex transnational identities.

In many respects, this dissertation would fit well within the frames of transnational literacy studies, as the context is an educational one and involves access to flows of information, materials and people from other nations to some groups within Egypt. It also

disrupts the split of educational from other contexts for literacy research by considering the social and cultural adjustments experienced by public high school graduates as they entered universities known as home to elites with private, secular education and ready access to English language and writing. That said, this literature does not account for a phenomenon where a transnational space is populated by non-transnational people, as is the case with AUC. This calls for a new frame that can account for the interaction of intranational individuals within a transnational space that exists within their country and not beyond it. Likewise, the case of AUC offers a situation where the space, and the faculty, curriculum and educational ideologies accompanying it, is a transnational agent that serves needs within Egypt; AUC, has flowed into Egypt for reasons catalyzed by Egyptian leaders for Egyptian purposes. These “purposes” are manifold and will be accounted for in Chapter Three.

Warriner and Lam summarize additional debates in this sub-area, which include debates over the definition of “transnationalism.” She notes that many scholars would identify that transnational literacy studies is related to “macroeconomic forces of global migration” (Smith 2003, p. 468), a perspective found in recent transnational migration studies (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, and many others), a field that falls beyond the scope of this review. Other researchers (Portes et al. 1999) problematize the turn toward globalization by suggesting that the phenomenon is portrayed as both old and new by different researchers, while others (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004, Guarnizo and Smith 1999) suggest that transnationalism, far from being emancipatory, only underscores the boundedness of identities and the complex contexts that create them. Other ethnographic research into transnational social spaces seek to describe the “reality of the transnational field,” including its “internal heterogeneity” (Portes et al. 1999, p. 233). This area includes work by scholars who call for studying transnational literacy as social practice seen “from below”—as

migrants and other groups who cross transnational boundaries also traverse social hierarchies in the process. Smith (1998) also points out the “bewildering tensions that can result from the differing class positions, cultural orientations, and role expectations that often forms within transnational migrant circuits” (p. 204). This can be seen as a return to the local as a site for ethnographic literacy studies work, but with more deft instrumentation and consideration of variables unaccounted for by the previous local-distant binary. In doing transnational ethnographic work from the ground up, one can account for both sides of the “border crossing”: the sociocultural contexts from which a group comes and into which they arrive, and the various kinds of literacy practices that appear before, during and after such crossings. This area is deeply relevant to the present study, as this study follows participants as they accrue capital through secondary education and find themselves in different educational and social positions upon entering AUC as students. In this respect, their experience is a border crossing into a unique space: an English-language, American-style higher educational context within the borders of their country, a context where American education, the dominance of English, and national/regional affluence intersect. These three variables may be foreign to the graduates of public high schools when they first arrive at AUC. What literacy practices survive the transition, and/or how they develop and recruit new practices for the new context, is of primary interest to this study.

Despite the usefulness of grounded transnational literacy ethnography for this study, there are limitations that need to be addressed. As Smith points out, border crossing is not a lateral move. Inherent in any border crossing must be attention to the social hierarchies on both sides of the border, and how these hierarchies impact specific groups before, during and after any “border crossing.” Throughout much of this area, however, the word “national” is meant to represent physical national borders. Adapting this area for the current study would

involve a reconfigured framing of the concepts *border* and *national*, as these students flow from within Egypt to a transnational site. Extending these concepts can account not only for the kind of crossings experienced by AUC students, but the ways in which their prior experiences are taken up as forms of capital within the transnational space.

While this literature is focused on local sites and the positionality of groups and individuals within a complex nexus of competing or conflicting language, cultural and literacy practices, it is also about the adaptation of localized practices within larger, more dominant language, literacy and cultural practices. This dissertation focuses on language, literacy and other transitions students experience as they become involved with transnational ideologies, pedagogies and literacies within the transnational AUC context. This participation also involves the adaptation of existing capabilities for the new environment, even as students acquire new abilities and dispositions in the new environment. The dissertation will argue that the capital students deploy from their backgrounds within the transnational AUC context is distributed unevenly along educational and class backgrounds, and that this, in turn, results in positionality within the context that favors those from high socioeconomic classes and private schooling backgrounds.

Finally, Hornberger (2007) portrays economic exigency as the dominant variable driving transnational migration and the resulting cultural and literacy practices that develop. Such research focuses on how groups maintain “affinity ties” with both home and host countries, a practice that can—and often does—include literacy practices. She also summarizes scholarship in how these groups utilize transnational spaces to construct themselves as “academically or socioeconomically successful” (p. 2) within the limited range of identities available to them. She also summarizes scholarship critical of educational practices that fail to include transnational literacy practices in the educational experiences of

transnational groups (Warriner 2009), relying instead on a limited range of standardized processes that do little to stimulate English language learning. This echoes some of the findings in Baynham (2004) summarized earlier. Hornberger also summarizes scholarship in transnational multimodal literacy, with focus on how transnational groups utilize writing, video, sound and other imagery to construct transnational identities.

Some of the scholarship summarized by Hornberger is useful to the present study and may be reflected in some of the findings. Specifically, the educational experiences of public school graduates in the Middle East mirrors in some ways the experiences of transnational groups in the United States, as both groups may find themselves ill-served by their educational encounters with English language learning.

Notably, scholarship in Hornberger's area of transnational literacy studies focuses on non-North American groups within the borders of the United States. The present study focuses on groups who remain within their home *countries*, but not necessarily their home *communities or cultures*. The overt focus on sites within the United States, and the literal conceptualization of "national" and "borders," imposes limitations on the applicability of these areas of transnational literacy studies for the present study. Because of this, the frames within transnational literacy studies need to be extended and reconfigured. The field introduces paradigms useful to the study, even if the most basic dynamic characterizing the field—the physical crossing of discrete national borders, often for reasons of economic exigency—does not fully account for the situations of study participants and other AUC students. Because of this, the study will argue for and create extended frames within this scholarly field that can account not only for the unique nature of this transnational space, but the interactions of Egyptians within the space.

This sub-area within NLS is adjacent to that of transnational literacy studies, and is generally not as thoroughly developed as a sub-field than transnational literacy studies. Of particular interest to this area are groups that exist *between* discrete stations of constructed (national, ethnic, religious, and so on) identity and the literacy practices that characterize them. Australian scholars Kostogriz and Tsoldis (2008) claim that diasporas are transcultural, for they “extend beyond the binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’ as these are lived within and between nations” (p. 125). They borrow heavily from spatial theories (Soja 1996, Bakhtin 1981) in describing how marginal groups exist between two discrete, constructed identities. This “thirthing” opens up a range of identifications, for marginal groups not only resist domination by more powerful groups, but are also *part of* that group—thereby disrupting claims of ideological, national, ethnic or language purity often used by more powerful groups during arguments regarding, among other things, educational policy. Kostogriz and Tsoldis claim that this spatial definition of identity, of which they consider diaspora groups a useful heuristic, is more useful to literacy studies than “boundary politics,” which, while useful for “understanding inequalities and technologies of power in literacy education, [...] can be also a means for portraying places and spaces as homogenous and uniform” (pp. 130-1). They warn that this approach may reproduce reified or false constructions of national identity, as well as fixed binaries of local and distant which “construct ever-new ‘strangers’ as polluting elements” to be expelled or assimilated (p. 131). They call instead for increased attention to “in-between spaces” (p. 135) where transcultural literacy is practiced “through interlocking histories and cultures and by a transformed sense of belonging to several sociocultural spaces—and thus no particular place” (p. 134). This close attention to in-between spaces may help to account for

distinctions between more and less powerful, between the mobile transnationals and those who are locked in certain spaces and less mobile, between those who can transcend borders relatively easily and those who feel how borders are backed up by force of law, economic and political power. This also makes us mindful about other axes of difference such as different histories of migration and/or displacement, and certainly about social, gender, religious and other differences within diasporic communities. (p. 135)

Indeed, this quotation strongly echoes many of the arguments within this study.

Egyptians from high socioeconomic classes gain many forms of mobility through their status, including access to capital that eases their transition into the AUC context. The graduates of public schools, on the other hand, hail from areas of Egypt where many people are indeed “locked in place [...] less mobile” than their affluent country men and women. Kostogriz and Tsoldis also understand the dangers inherent in portraying Egypt, or any nation, as a singular national entity rather than a dynamic and complex nexus of classes and cultures, a reality which is reflected through the different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of the Egyptians who participated in this study. Likewise, for participants who came from the public schooling system, their crossing into AUC takes on the characteristic of being “in between” cultural stations, as they do not readily fit into the social milieu of AUC, while their crossing simultaneously differentiating themselves from others in their home communities. These realities, reflected in the literature in transcultural literacy studies, will be combined within the dominant frame for this study, transnational literacy studies, when the study argues for extended frames that can account for the multi-faceted nature of national identities, the ways in which capital is accrued differently through class and education within Egypt, and the ways in which this impacts positionality and participation within a transnational site with unique characteristics of its own.

Other researchers have conducted research consistent with Kostogriz and Tsoldis’ transcultural, diaspora heuristic. Marshall et al. (2012) conducted a study of students at

multilingual Canadian university who were required, based upon low test scores, to take an introductory writing course before being allowed to take a full range of courses. This experience left students feeling marginal and not fully a part of their university, an experience that resonates with study participants whose language profile, when combined with their social and class status, left them feeling alienated from the university culture. Additionally, Charlton et al. (2011) combine recent developments in NLS with the transcultural perspective of Tsoldis and Kostogriz and other scholars (Moje 2004, Leander and Sheeny 2004) in calling for an overt research agenda that “spatializes” literacy research by following the place-related identities of children. Wyse et al. (2012) take up this call by adapting spatiality and transculturalism in their study of elementary school children in eastern England to reveal dynamic aspects of self-identity, ranging from local to distant, static and mobile: an illustration of Kostogriz and Tsoldis’ transcultural “in-betweenness” and an expression of the ambivalence that is likely to accompany such articulations of identity. This is a particularly useful study for the current project in that it makes concrete the abstract concepts of spatiality, transculturalism and being “in-between” binary stations of culture and identity. This study also addresses these issues, albeit through a different methodology and design that will be described in later chapters.

Finally, others Freebody and Freiberg 2008 focus on the “thirding” possibilities of transcultural literacy as a means of resistance to the hegemonic currents of dominant (often English-only) literacies. While these scholars rightly point out the problems of globalized (English) literacy and offer “thirding” spaces of resistance to marginal groups, the Third Space and post-colonial frames do not account for the kinds of sub-groups such as the students who are the focus for this study. As stated before, these students seek access to social, cultural and economic capital through access to education and literacy in a domestic,

English-only higher educational setting already defined as transnational. While they may experience ambivalence during this process, they do not actively seek to resist or subvert it. This study is interested in the nature of their agendas for education and literacy, and the ways in which their varying intra-national origins and movements impact their participation in the transnational space.

International Composition Studies (ICS)

International composition studies is a compact sub-field within composition studies. Much of the significant literature over the past decade has been written by a handful of scholars such as Christine Donahue, Bruce Horner and John Trimbur. The broad perspective of the sub-field notes the global dominance of English and ties this dominance to globalization and economics, as well as legacies of colonialism and imperialism. This dominance may be expressed through English Only policies and other monolingual attitudes that serve to conceal inherently heterogeneous linguistic practices, both in the United States and elsewhere. The field calls for greater attention to multilingual and translingual practices, both culturally and in students and classrooms, while some ambitious scholars call for a radical change: the creation of multilingual universities and writing classrooms/programs within the United States. Other scholars call for increased attention to the histories and rhetorical traditions of audiences outside the United States in developing writing curriculum, rather than exporting uncritically a North American composition model to foreign sites. While the primary warrant is valid—that of questioning non-reflective exports of U.S.-based educational models for foreign sites and calling for increased attention to local linguistic and rhetorical practices—the sub-field tends to reflect a pattern of binary opposites in their critique of U.S.-based approaches and preference for locally-based practices.. Likewise, the sub-field seems to assume a malignancy in the U.S.-based export of these educational

models, similar to the way in which Street and other NLS scholars presume distant hegemony over localized sites and practices. Given that AUC is an example of a U.S. educational “export,” as seen from the perspective of transnational literacy studies, this study must take up the arguments of this branch of composition studies in order to account for the limitations in the perspectives and the need for a more expansive view of U.S.-based educational models in other countries, that will account for the AUC context and those like it.

Work in this field has developed from critiques of monolingualism specific to United States politics and culture that has impacted composition pedagogies, resulting in explicit calls for translingual writing pedagogies. Horner and Trimbur (2002) claim a tacit monolingualism in U.S. composition based upon “reifications of languages and social identity” (p. 594). They further claim that these assumptions resulted in English Only policies and attitudes toward basic writers who, in the era of increasing enrollments, were perceived by some as diluting the quality and purpose of university education—a reification of both the university and the mythological competence of “prepared” students. This resulted in a perspective toward writing that ignored “heterogeneous and shifting practices” (p. 614), the proposal of English Only policies, and a shifting of responsibility away from institutions and blame onto individuals. Matsuda (2006) extended this point by claiming that composition as a field had assumed an English-only attitude, relegating language instruction to specialists despite the ongoing presence of language difference in composition classrooms. Horner, Lu, Royster and Trimbur (2011) built upon the critique of monolingual practices and reified identities of idealized, monolingual and competent American students by calling for a translingual approach to writing instruction that would make explicit language and other linguistic differences in the writing classroom. They point out the

heterogeneity of all languages and suggest again that the myth of a “standard” English is an ideological tool out of which current-traditional pedagogies have been crafted. They call instead for an approach that defines proficiency as “the range of practices [learners] can draw on; their ability to use these creatively; and their ability to produce meaning out of a wide range of practices” (p. 308). This integrated approach would not place languages in opposition to one another, but would provide students with a wide range of communicative and meaning-making tools. They also describe the challenges faced by monolingual scholars and writing programs in generating translingual approaches to writing instruction. While the arguments in favor of adaptive pedagogies are valid, the claims underpinning them—that of the idealized, monolingual student and a linguistically homogenous academy driving policy and pedagogy—do not easily translate to the AUC context. At AUC, English is not used as a screen upon which to express nostalgia for a mythological academic ethos. Instead, English language and literacies are crucial forms of capital with a range of applications within Egypt, for reasons enabled by Egyptian actors (see Chapter Three).

Still, Horner and Tribmur’s (2002) arguments offer a relevant perspective to this study, as public high school graduates who are a significant focus for this study are much less likely to have had extensive experience in English writing and literacy practices in their backgrounds, unlike their more affluent counterparts who represent the vast majority of the student body. These students may be characterized—by peers, teachers, administrators and/or researchers—as incompetent English writers, in need of a current-traditional “correction” that can bring their writing into mainstream competence. These critiques of writing may have some relevance, even if the pedagogies and policies that develop in response to the challenges faced by these writers may betray the various reifications described by Horner and Trimbur and ultimately would not serve the interests of student

writing development. Students who report such experiences during the interview process express the linguistic nature of their “in between” status: they have been admitted to AUC, but their lack of linguistic and other forms of capital prevent them from participating fully in the site. . Additionally, the work of Horner, Lu, Royster and Trimbur (2011) is relevant, as the translingual writing in Arabic to English writing is one area of interest to the study. In this study, only Farah engaged in translingual composing, but the usage of and purpose for English and Arabic are less ideological than practical and audience-based. The relative lack of translingual writing, or of a willingness to acknowledge translingual composing, suggests that this approach, while ideologically palatable to scholars, may not be present in certain kinds of transnational contexts where the lingua franca is English. The inclusion of student perspectives in studies of translingualism, multilingualism, language transfer, and international educational contexts may provide valuable insights into the reality of the writing classroom and the students who populate them, in particular student attitudes about translingualism and the status of English as a lingua franca, which shape their literate practices. Otherwise, the scholarship discusses students in the ideological abstract, as passive subjects onto which the ideological construct is applied. This limits the applicability of the sub-field for the present study; the study, however, exposes a need for the inclusion emic student attitudes and agendas toward English and the educational models that accompany it within international composition studies, particularly in transnational contexts with unique characteristics, such as AUC.

Other scholars offer historical scholarship to illustrate either how a present phenomenon developed, or to show the facility in adopting perspectives outside those of Western rhetorical traditions. Trimbur (2006) offers a historical perspective on the social development of monolinguist attitudes in the United States, tracing back to the Founding

Fathers' decision to make no explicit policy regarding language, thereby restricting language to the private domain that "virtually guaranteed the inevitable Anglification of language in the United States through the workings of labor relations, the market, and civil society" (p. 577). Indeed, Trimbur claims that the lack of robust language policy meant that the usage of all languages became subject to asymmetrical balances of power. He points out the dominance of English in classrooms and other institutions despite the heterogeneous language use in the United States, and claims that writing done in these languages is largely invisible in school settings Trimbur concludes by asking "how such available linguistic resources can be tapped to promote biliteracy and multilingualism [...] to imagine a new configuration of languages in the U.S. university and in U.S. college composition that realigns the old Anglo-American linguistic dyad, making English not the center but the linking language in multilingual writing programs, multilingual universities, and a multilingual polity" (p. 586). These comments are tailored specifically for a heterogeneous linguistic landscape such as the United States. Interestingly, Egypt has a largely homogenous linguistic landscape, with Arabic dominant. English appears only in certain sectors of education and society, and those who seek out English do so for intrinsic reasons that have been enabled through Egyptian national policy decisions, as will be argued in Chapter Three. This may account for the fact that study participants did not appear to perceive Arabic as a method through which to develop English abilities: Arabic is not under threat of erasure or marginalization. An all-English context like AUC is anomalous in the country even as it serves specific Egyptian interests, but its presence does not threaten the status of Arabic within Egypt. Instead, English is a unique form of capital that can be applied onto various professional and economic sectors within Egypt. You's (2012) history of the salt and iron debate in China readily joins in critiquing the dominance of English language, rhetorics,

literacies and pedagogies, suggesting that economic globalization provides “opportunities to reassess American rhetorical education, and to engage other traditions of rhetorical education and practices” (p. 367). He claims that Chinese ascendancy creates the need to learn more about Chinese deliberative rhetoric—even though it is unclear whether (or how) this rhetorical tradition operates within the paradigm of economic globalization. You credits for the international ascendancy of Chinese culture. The remainder of his article describes ancient Chinese politics, official discourse and Confucianism during a period described as the “salt and iron debate” (p. 381). You further claims that this period is apropos for the present time because it reflected the heterogeneous practices of different groups within China, and represents a belief in human dignity that You implies is needed in an era of vast globalization and the continued commodification of individuals. Unfortunately, much of You’s argument is based upon a familiar binary: criticizing American policy and practices toward Native Indians and other marginal groups globally. Even though the critique is valid, it exposes a binary: global Americanism (bad) versus Chinese rhetorical tradition (good). It would be interesting to see if the calls for a greater understanding of multiple rhetorical traditions would generate the same interest if it was not built upon a post-colonial, anti-imperialist critique of the United States of America. If nothing else, this binary simplifies what was discovered in this study: that the study participants evidenced ambivalence toward the United States—wary of its government, its pro-Israel stance, its meddlesome influence in the Middle East—even as they actively pursue a domestic, American-style education in English and enjoyed American aspects of popular culture (movies, music, television, etc.). The potential for such complex attitudes invites ethnographic scholarship (or scholarship that uses ethnographic methods) to explore the attitudes and agendas of students who may both desire and resist English and North American culture within their borders, and to see

how (and why) they make use of what (and how) they learn at their institutions. Current literacy studies scholarship (see above), with its interest in ethnographic methodologies and the ever-complex interaction between differing kinds of local and distant literacies in national and cultural configurations, is an appropriate area to consider such phenomena. Such an orientation could enrich the claims made within this strand of composition studies, as will be argued in this dissertation.

Donahue (2009) points out that the term internationalization and/or globalization are often used to describe the trajectory of American higher educational models outward, to international sites and/or international audiences who come to the United States to study. She includes the teaching of speech and writing, as well as scholarly activity, in this phenomenon. Because of this, Donahue claims that a misleadingly homogenous picture of American education is formed, while at the same time, the rest of the world is portrayed as some sort of “other” in need of American educational intervention. She claims that globalization policies have driven an English-first shift around the globe, and that composition studies should avoid a non-critical “export” of North American writing classrooms onto sites distinct from the academy in the United States. Donahue suggests that teaching “mother tongue” writing in other countries has caught the attention of American and other scholars and is a viable alternative to English-language dominion over international academic sites. Likewise, she calls for international writing research from multilingual writing researchers from across the globe. Given the recent success of the Writing Research Across Borders triennial conference, and various books on international writing research published through The WAC Clearinghouse and other publishers, it would appear that Donahue’s call has been heeded.

The issues discussed by Donahue are relevant to the present study. The uncritical adoption of an American educational export is problematic, as can be seen in the literature pertaining to international branch campuses (IBCs; see below) that have grown in popularity in the Middle East and Asia, where economies are developing while higher education development is lagging. Still, any valid critique must also take into account the linguistic, educational and economic agendas for the non-American sites that result in English-language, U.S.-styled educational models. Taking these circumstances into account should include emic perspectives by those whose agendas for language and education have been impacted by global flows, yet another call to fuse the “situated-ness” of composition studies with the expansive paradigms, methodologies and concepts of literacy studies.

Likewise, Queen (2012) and others have criticized the presence of “American” higher educational values, including liberal arts and academic freedom, in countries where a central government censors the books in the university library, or where classes are segregated by gender. These claims complicate Donahue’s broad argument of respect for cultural traditions, given that the practices in Kuwait and elsewhere in the Middle East strike at the core values of Western-styled academic freedom and gender equality. Likewise, the nature of AUC’s long presence in Egypt, which will be developed thoroughly in Chapter Three, complicates the binary opposition upon which Donahue’s argument is based. Additionally, local policies have often driven the status of English in these countries. In the 1970’s, Egyptian president Anwar el Sadat overturned his predecessor’s nationalist “Arabization” policies in favor of foreign capital and the return of English as a language of commerce and high status, a development which will be described in its historical context in Chapter Three and which undermines any arguments based upon a global-local binary. A result of this sponsorship would be the way in which it restored English and foreign

investment as form of localized capital, but resulted in the creation of distributed access to these forms of capital through educational backgrounds that correlate with socioeconomic class. This study addresses the relationship of this transnational contexts to prior experiences of study participants that impact the ways in which they participate in the transnational context. The study accounts for student agendas for language and education, what they encounter after arriving, and how they adjusted to changed circumstances, both educationally and socially.

Baca (2009) responds to the “global turn” in international composition studies by questioning the relationship of that turn to economic policy. Instead, Baca offers a Chicano perspective on the global turn—that it happened hundreds of years earlier with the arrival of colonial Europeans who brought religion, language literacy and other cultural practices with the assumption that their ways were superior, and that New World savages should submit to Christian doctrine (even if they did not understand the edicts issued in English by colonial missionaries). This, according to Baca, included the “Aristotelian syndrome [...] of reinventing the cultural Other as a periphery that is declared as such by the colonizing center” (p. 230). It is this that gave rise to the expansion of global capitalism and that the current “global” turn that Baca claims, in the context of more than five hundred years of European global dominance, is late-stage global capitalism. This late stage, he argues, gave rise to the modern university—including the creation of a composition studies that he says is “always already a product of asymmetrical exchanges and global and colonial power” (p. 231). Baca’s work raises the question of the extent to which post-colonial nations can transcend the dynamic of “othering” inherent in colonialism and capitalism by repurposing languages and associated infrastructure that were once colonial tools to meet evolving local needs. In relying on the emic perspectives of student participants and the historical “flow” of

language and ideology within Egypt and AUC, this study argues that such adaptations are possible, and attempts to account for the ways in which individuals within Egypt are attempting to meet globally-infused local needs through interaction with the transnational AUC context.

This global turn and its relationship to multiple cultural and literate backgrounds is of concern to Hesford (2006), who claims that a resurgent, post-9/11 nationalism reinvigorated the national and language myths that scholars in this field have identified over again as the foundation upon which monolingualism in the composition classroom is built. She cautions against a retreat to mythological academic and disciplinary identities in the face of an evolving university mission (brought about by globalization and economics) that raises new questions about interdisciplinarity and the “transnational identifications and negotiations of students and teachers” (p. 789) that occupy the interest of areas such as multiliteracy, multimodality and the maintenance of cultural difference. This comment may help explain that, while there are many active calls to transform composition studies to account for internationalism and/or multilingualism, there have been few concrete proposals for what such a transformation might look like, and how it could be achieved. One such approach could be that of code-meshing (Canagarajah 2006, Lee 2013), where multiple Englishes and languages can be brought into the class “as [students] see it to be useful to their interests, and to fill in the gaps, so to speak, with words and constructions that more comfortably represent the linguistic, metalinguistic, and rhetorical awareness they possess in relation to any languages with which they already feel comfortable” (Lee 2013, p. 6). Additionally, multimedia assignments such as digital literacy narratives that do not rely entirely upon spoken or written English have become part of “the translingual approach, represented by code-meshing” (p. 10). However, these arguments do not address the

perspectives of study participants, whose English language agenda does not involve an existential threat to Arabic; indeed, while Egyptians on the AUC campus engage in linguistic code-switching and code-blending in dialogue, there is a clear distinction between Arabic and English writing and literacies, as these languages and literacies serve distinct needs for the individuals within Egypt.

Another area of interest within this field is the area of academic scholarship and the dominance of English. Canagarajah (2002) describes the challenges faced by Sri Lankan scholars, who face not only material limitations—ranging from unreliable mail service to inconsistent access to academic scholarship—but limitations in their English writing ability that places them at a disadvantage in disseminating their scholarship. He calls for the increased acceptance of global English in academia to reflect the increasingly diverse “Englishes” in post-colonial nations with their own traditions of English. Lillis and Curry (2010) describe the ways in which English-language experts are brought into the networks of non-English speaking scholars in Europe, in order to provide language and literacy practice support for those who do not speak or write in English. Their research shows how non-English scholars can borrow language expertise from others, but their findings betray a strong European bias (all the participants are from Europe), which might only underscore the challenges faced by non-European scholars such as those described Canagarajah. The present study examines students from several educational and language backgrounds and considers the ways in which language ability, combined with other challenge factors identified throughout the study, impacted the ways in which they participated in the transnational AUC context.

In summation, this area of composition studies seems stalled. A problem has been identified—the myth of monolingualism in composition classrooms, even those that are

abroad, and the shunting of lower-status language instruction to ESL specialists and writing centers—and a broad call to action has been issued. The problems identified are valid and the calls to action, while radical, bear consideration. That said, the current study argues that English serves localized purposes within Egypt and maintains significant value as a form of capital within the Egyptian context. This dissertation will argue further that reconfiguring international composition studies such that it can take into account the paradigms and frames of literacy studies offers expansive possibilities for framing many kinds of interactions between global languages and literacies and their many kinds of uptake in localized settings.

English as a Second Language/L2 Scholarship

An area adjacent to that of international composition studies is studies in the teaching of English as a second language, or ESL/TESL/L2. Mastusda's (1999) useful history describes the growing presence of international students in United States universities following World War II and the identification of second-language writing challenges among international students. This phenomenon overlapped with the emergence of composition studies and the creation of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), which for many years discussed the challenges encountered by second language writers and their teachers. Matsuda argues that the professionalization of composition studies and TESL sundered these fields into separate professional and academic communities. One consequence of this separation has been (as of 1999, the date of publication for this article) a lack of dialogue across disciplines and, among composition specialists, the naïve assumption that ESL writers can be "fixed" by a semester or two of intensive language training. To the contrary, linguistic challenges are likely to persist even after years of intensive training (p. 715), a claim which is supported in this study through the experiences of Farah. Scholarship by Spack (1997) and Williams (1995) illustrate the ongoing challenges faced by ESL writers

and the need for continued support. Matsuda concludes his history by calling for increased involvement by composition scholars in the vast scholarly and professional work of ESL. This study speaks to some of the experiences of study participants, in particular Farah, whose background in English prior to AUC did not prepare her for a full-English academic environment. Based upon the way she narrates her challenges at AUC (see Chapters Six and Seven), it seems likely that her ongoing language challenges were not addressed in all her future classes: in essence, they wanted a “finished” linguistic product. Notably, Farah’s language difficulties also impacted her social acculturation to AUC, as will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The trajectories of these two fields—composition studies and ESL/TESL—appear to have come together again after years of disciplinary wrangling and hierarchizing. In particular, the field of international composition studies represents a combination of perspectives from the two fields, with composition specialists critiquing the myth of the monolingual classroom and calling for increased attention to the rhetorical and linguistic backgrounds of students. In this respect, it would appear that these scholars heeded Matsuda’s call to consider how second language instruction can be integrated into composition studies and other forms of global English and academic writing. Still, there are important distinctions. Many L2 scholars focus on the domestic United States classroom in scholarship, ranging from the needs of international students to those who are from immigrant and language minority backgrounds (Kells 2002 and others). The scholarship on language minorities is relevant here, but only if it is tweaked: Arabic is the dominant language in Egypt, and all the participants were fluent in this Egyptian dialect of the dominant regional language. Access to the dominant language is not at issue here: instead, it is the nature of their English language profiles, and the relationship of this linguistic

background to the class, educational, and language background, that is of interest. English is a minority language within Egypt, but it is a language of consequence for these participants: this study learns something of that consequence. In another study, Matsuda, Saenkhum and Accardi (2013) report the findings of a survey of composition instructors who, while they identify L2 writers in their classrooms, often do not make special provisions to meet the needs of these students. The authors identify the policies of writing programs, the lack of professional development and a lack of common curriculum and assessment materials. At AUC, all the students are L2, but *English* is the second language, very much the opposite of U.S.-based ESL/L2 studies, where English is assumed to be the majority language. That said, the need for pedagogies and strategies to meet the needs of students with varying English-language linguistic profiles, is relevant to AUC and to study participants, given that this study will argue that this form of capital is distributed unevenly along socioeconomic strata in Egypt. .

While international compositionists are interested primarily with the export of composition and other North American educational models to international sites (see above), both fields are fundamentally concerned with the alienating consequences of writing programs and pedagogies designed for monolingual students from homogenous backgrounds—a student type, both fields argue, that is non-existent in the modern university. This is relevant to the transnational AUC context, where the “flow” of English into the university to meet national and regional needs interacts with students who come from within Egypt with varying English language and literacy backgrounds.

An alternative in the literature to full multilingualism is World Englishes. Canagarajah (2006) calls for an integration of World Englishes—those non-Western standard forms of English indigenous to post-colonial sites across the globe—with Standard

English as a way to pluralize academic writing and resist monolingual assumptions in composition. He describes his native Sri Lanka—one of many post-colonial sites that have adopted and adapted English—possessing an English that is not considered acceptable for educational and professional purposes. He notes that L2 writers and speakers will soon outnumber those with “Metropolitan English” who hail from countries with a long history of English. As a result, he claims that all people, even those from dominant countries, must “be proficient in negotiating a number of World Englishes” (p. 591). He also claims that L2 scholarship reveals that institutions that demand only one form of standard English often fail to recognize the assets of a World Englishes approach and may alienate students who resist standard English even as they embrace a less standard form of the language. Canagarajah brings up relevant points about multiple Englishes, but it is not clear how his agenda would be received by the participants of this study, whose agendas for pursuing English and an AUC education correlate to a range of individual, family and national needs. These participants want very much to be “good” at English and to become effective communicators, and their definition of does not match Canagarajah’s arguments so much as it reflects economic, professional and other intrinsic exigencies within Egypt..

These closely related areas of scholarship, international composition studies and L2/ESL scholarship, are relevant because they concern the ethics of global-local interactions of literacy learning in internationalized settings and/or multilingual composition classrooms. International composition studies is broadly suspicious of exporting composition models abroad, calling for increased attention to the rhetorical and educational contexts of non-U.S. sites, and includes calls for code switching among multiple post-colonial Englishes as a way to diversify access to academic English and publication. On the other hand, L2/ESL scholarship has critiqued monolingual assumptions in composition pedagogy in the United

States, claiming that, while the recent influx of international students has made this apparent to new audiences, universities and composition classrooms have long been multilingual spaces. This resistance to non-reflective importing of U.S. composition models abroad, and a re-examination of monolingual assumptions informing composition domestically, is relevant to the study because this study is situated within a specific type of global-local interaction of literacy learning: a United States-based model for education and literacy learning through writing. The needs and agendas of public school students in Egypt for whom AUC represents a rare opportunity for educational, social and economic mobility—in essence, the best chance to change their circumstances. This emic perspective is absent from much of the scholarship, and when it is present, it is often anecdotal. The present study offers emic student perspectives gathered through transparent methodologies, which provides for a perspective—agendas for entering a U.S.-styled transnational institution and participating in literacy learning closely associated with the U.S. model for localized reasons—that a strictly ideological approach to the issue can fail to recognize. Scholarship in this area that could account for the experiences and attitudes of students and other multilingual learners could help confirm arguments in these areas of scholarship, and could also yield surprising insights about student agendas and adaptations. This work can be done in various configurations and settings, both in the United States and abroad—wherever monolingual assumptions meet multilingual learners. Literacy studies offers a ready approach, that of conducting ethnographic research, combined with theorized historical study, to situate literacy experiences across a diverse range of settings, experiences and agendas. By situating these areas of scholarship at least partially within recent developments in literacy studies scholarship, scholars would have at their disposal more expansive frames: transnational, transcultural, intranational, intercultural. This study, through its theorizing, analysis and

findings, argues for the use of literacy studies framing within composition and ESL studies to account not only for the uniqueness of the context and participants in this study, but for other, similar contexts and interactions.

Domain Two

This domain of scholarship will consider several configurations for higher education in the Middle East that can be considered transnational, and the issues and concerns inherent to these sites, in order to argue for a specific configuration of AUC as a transnational site. Additionally, this section will consider scholarship regarding the presence of English in the Middle East region, and contemporary challenges with higher education within Egypt and Lebanon, and throughout the region. Again, this scholarship will help define the nature of the transnational contexts within Egypt and AUC by considering the ways in which Egypt and AUC are consistent with both regional ambivalence toward English and educational challenges in the region.

International Branch Campuses (IBCs)

This section of the review will discuss the presence and recent proliferation of international branch campuses (IBCs). Literature in this section will be driven by educational policy scholars and university administrators who promote the export of American higher educational models, and educational researchers critical of American educational presence in the region. Consideration will be given to the conditions that have fomented the development of IBCs and the challenges/limitations faced by these institutions. The findings in this literature will be continually applied onto Egypt and AUC, as a way to situate the transnational context within related contexts and phenomena in the scholarship, thereby contributing to a site-specific consideration of the ways in which AUC is transnational. By

defining the context in this way, the study can better account for the nature of participant crossings into the transnational space, which will be taken up throughout the study.

At present, those American-style universities proliferating most commonly are international branch campuses (IBCs). The majority are located in wealthy Persian Gulf countries and housed in specially-built, segregated, sanitized communities such as Education City in Qatar and International City in Dubai. These communities are located in countries that have experienced an economic boom resulting from mid-1990's trade policies that increased global trade (Harding and Lammey 2011), thereby creating an increased demand for education in the region (Spangler and Tyler 2011). Given the difficulty experienced throughout the region regarding education and training (see below), these nations have begun seeking locally-situated support from universities throughout the world, including those in the United States. These phenomena are similar to that of Egypt and AUC, where economic policy changes in the 1970's, driven by political and ideological shifts, changed the economic landscape and created a need for a local site that could enable Egyptians to gain an education with international relevance. The primary difference Egypt had a locally-situated institution that had already survived through many changes in Egypt, and has been able to build AUC as a transnational institution since the 1970's, when changed conditions within Egypt made possible the transition of AUC.

At the same time that IBCs are being established throughout the region, a new brand of "American Universities of," modeled on those in Cairo and Beirut, have been established. These institutions represent cross-governmental agreement and collaboration and are meant to address regional educational challenges by providing a U.S-styled education in English. These universities are located in different kinds of places, such as Dubai, Sharjah and Kuwait, as well as Iraq and Afghanistan. Though they share the "American" branding of

institutions such as AUC and the American University of Beirut, they are part of a recent phenomenon meant to address educational shortfalls in the region that also includes IBCs. Indeed, AUC and AUB stand alone in the region for their longevity.

Practical challenges experienced by these institutions will be discussed first. According to Lane (2011), there are several practical challenges faced by IBCs as their home campuses develop, open and manage sites in the Middle East—challenges that extend to the other categories of American-style universities. For example, many students may only begin to focus on college the summer before their first semester, and may expect to be admitted with minimal preparation. This scenario stands in marked contrast to the experiences of many American students, who often prepare for university years ahead of time (p. 9). This is also different from AUC students in this study, whose agendas for education and attending AUC seems to have been long in development. Also, students at some of the newer sites may not have taken standard English-language examinations or may have scored poorly on them, creating challenges for written and spoken communication between students, professors, and other campus initiatives (p. 9)—a problem also experienced at the American University of Kuwait (Queen 2011). This challenge is reflected in some of the findings for this study, most notably in the experiences of public high school graduates; however, the study also finds that many AUC students arrive with significant English language and literacy training, and that this capital correlates to socioeconomic status.

These transnational campuses must compete with local sites, some of them long-standing and others new. In Egypt, a law banning private universities (for which AUC had been granted a waiver) was lifted, creating a significant number of “private” universities with international affiliations: Future University in Egypt, Canadian International College, the German University in Cairo, and British University in Egypt. This represents a

significant shift within Egypt: whereas once AUC stood alone as the only option for private, English-language education in the region, now there are several options. However, it is possible that these newer universities are experiencing growing pains not unlike those experienced by AUC during past transitional phases, and that they share more in common with new campuses in other parts of the Middle East than AUC. Again, part of the transnational makeup of AUC is its longevity. The nature of this longevity is taken up in Chapter Three, which offers a history of the institution within the frame of transnationalism and further defines its specific transnational configuration.

These challenges are being addressed through marketing approaches such as building a brand name and creating demand, and conducting on-site research into the particular challenges presented by each site. Wood (2011) describes building the “brand name” of Texas A & M University at its Qatar branch, in order to establish a “strong institutional ethos” that can establish, perhaps even replicate, the “student culture” found at the home campus (p. 30). Students may be more likely to identify as members of a particular university, which in turn may build the university’s local “brand” and generate demand for that specific institution. Also, administrators interested in expanding to a distant site may visit the location, seeking geographic suitability, understanding of local customs and firsthand knowledge of the region’s stability (Kinser 2011). These findings further differentiate AUC, as an institution with longevity that has adapted to many economic, political and ideological changes in Egypt over time, from IBCs, which are envisioned as extensions of “home” institutions in the United States and are situated in countries which are likely to experience the turmoil that has embroiled Egypt in recent years. This seems directly linked to AUC’s ability to adapt for almost a century to regional circumstances, and the ways

in which these adaptations have represented a shift away from extrinsic agendas (colonial and missionary) and toward intrinsic needs.

Other areas of scholarship address the tension between reflecting U.S.-based educational values and regional cultural norms regarding critique of governmental and cultural practices. James McDougall (2011) claims that the recent uptick in U.S.-styled universities has resulted in “the creation of an “American identity that uses national myths, such as American exceptionalism and American multiculturalism” (p. 131) to generate “locally determined ‘pop images and stereotypes’ about an American university experience” (p. 136) that never materialize. McDougall claims that the ideal of an “American” education is a floating signifier utilized by marketers to sell their brand in competitive, often for-profit spaces. Similarly, Queen (2011) describes as the “*performance of diversity*” (emphasis original) at the American University of Kuwait’s International Week, where regional cultures are transformed into easily consumable pieces while complex histories of tension and conflict between and within cultures are ignored (p. 181). This conflict between “critical thinking” and glossed-over “multicultural” celebrations implies a deeper conflict between the American-style university’s financial interests, their educational and ideological purpose, and what the region wants from these institutions. Some of these tensions are reflected in AUC, which stresses critical thinking in its mission. This study will argue that, while participants were authorized to address social, political and cultural challenges in Egypt through their AUC writing, the magnitude and long-term relevance of this activity is unclear.

Other scholars address the tension between the urgency to rapidly create an educated class in the region, and ambivalence about U.S. ideologies and values that are bound up in U.S. educational models. Tetreault (2012) suggests that the educational focus on training workers for regional industries underscores reluctance on the part of these same

governments to consider reforming restrictions and other policies censoring knowledge generation and use (2012, p. 56). McGreevy (2012) states that Saudi elites once sent their children to AUB instead of the United States, as stateside education “empowered Arabs to ask dangerous questions” (p. 47), only to discover that AUB graduates were also capable of engaging in civil disobedience for political purposes (see the history of AUB in Chapter Three for more information). Likewise, the government of Kuwait regularly bans books and restricts access to websites considered insulting to the government, critical of Islam, that they consider sexually deviant, address homosexuality, or question traditional values of the family (Tetreault 2012, pp. 60-1). This sometimes resulted in direct attacks on the values and courses of some professors by the Kuwait Private Universities Council (PUC), which has accused professors of propagating anti-Islamic values in their classrooms. This example describes the kinds of challenges that institutions based on secular U.S. ideologies of education can encounter in the Middle East, while also underscoring the absence of such interventions by Egyptian authorities regarding AUC. Egyptian authorities have proven themselves willing to intervene into activities by foreign actors that are seen to challenge the authority of the government or the ethos of the nation, but so far, this kind of intervention has not happened directly at AUC. This further defines AUC not only as a transnational space with longevity, but one with autonomy, which is a significant difference from many other regional U.S.-based educational endeavors. This autonomy is similar to that which is enjoyed by the American University of Beirut and may be related to their long presence in the region. These institutions, through their long presence, have developed an ethos more integrated into their local contexts, different from the recent transactional dynamic characterizing more recent initiatives in the region. Recent developments appear to offer the region a rapid way to train and credential their citizens while offering the institutions greater

revenue streams and an opportunity to establish a global branding presence. This transaction is practical and is qualitatively different than transnational sites like AUC and AUB, whose original purposes were missionary and were authorized by European colonial authorities. These institutions have adapted to many changed circumstances, thereby tightening their relationship to the local context. As a result, an institution like AUC serves a range of local needs for individuals, employers, and the state, to name a few. The site also welcomes critical thinking about issues germane to Egypt, owing perhaps to its longevity and the limited magnitude of impact for such critical thinking, as it is unclear how much this form of thinking resonates beyond the protected space of AUC.

In sum, this section has situated AUC within the context of other similar transnational sites within the Middle East, specifically IBCs, “American Universities of,” and new private universities within Egypt. These “brands” of the U.S.-styled university are intended to meet the urgent educational needs of the region, which is driven by economic exigencies. This results in a transaction, whereby universities and nation can “brand” and export their educational names and models for foreign sites. In this respect, the calls for restraint in IBC literature (see above) is valid: there appears to be many educational endeavors that do not account for local practices, thereby resulting in universities such as the American University in Kuwait, where an epideictic “American” mission rings hollow in a monarchy that stifles critical thinking and marginalizes people considered socially deviant by the kingdom. This contrasts with a transnational site like AUC, which has witnessed several sociocultural, political and ideological over nearly a century in existence. Its mission has adapted to these changing circumstances. As a result of this longevity and adaptiveness, two significant qualities that differentiate this transnational site from others, AUC also enjoys relative autonomy on comparison to other sites. The university can engage with social

issues within Egypt during a time when the leaders of non-governmental organizations and political dissidents are being deported, detained and/or sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The ability to adapt appears to have fomented longevity at AUC, given that it has resulted in engagement with national and regional issues across a wide band of disciplines. This longevity has resulted in autonomy; unlike many other universities in Egypt and the region, AUC is able to conduct its affairs with relatively minimal governmental interference. This results in a unique transnational site into which intranational, intercultural peoples, such as the student participants for this study, “flow.”

Education, English and Writing Research in MENA

This section will review a diverse area of scholarship regarding education, English and emergent writing research in the Middle East and North Africa. Much of the writing research involves ESL/EFL/L2 English writing instruction and learning and will be discussed in this context. Of particular interest are the methods and procedures used in this emergent area of research. Additionally, much of the scholarship addresses the history of education and or English in the region, and, while much of this scholarship is used in a later historical chapter in this dissertation, it is also reviewed in this section alongside other areas of relevant scholarship. This scholarship will be considered alongside the literature discussed above, in order to provide greater context for English and education in the Middle East, as these issues are of relevance to the way in which a transnational site like AUC would adapt through time. The different parts of the scholarship will be discussed below, and relevance to AUC as a transnational site will be addressed.

MENA Education

Some sources in this part of the literature describe the nature of the educational challenges facing the Middle East. Akkari (2004), for example, describes many of the

educational challenges impacting the post-colonial Middle East. Many countries have identified education and access to literacy as important priorities; focus on and increased expenditures in public education increased throughout the 20th century. Depending upon the country, these gains can differ along gender lines, particularly regarding literacy rates (although Akkari cites evidence that shows that the gap in literacy rates between genders has closed in recent decades). Additionally, population growth has made it difficult for countries to match infrastructure with needs. Those who suffer in poverty tend to have less access to quality education, particularly in Egypt, where fewer than 50 percent of children are enrolled in school at age 14 (p. 149). This growth may be driving the proliferation of new educational opportunities and underscores the relative rarity of a selective institution like AUC. At the same time, emergent private education offers middle class and affluent families a range of educational opportunities for their children, consistent with findings above. Rugh (2002), on the other hand, describes positive changes to Arab education, notably in the areas of educational access and literacy rates. Like Akkari, however, he hedges on the quality of such educational opportunities, and also notes that increased access has not reliably resulted in improved economic viability for individuals with access to education. This may underscore the unique value of AUC: its longevity has made it reliable; employers know the value of an AUC education, and students know He identifies a recent trend toward privatization in Arab higher education after a long period of free public education that was beset by significant infrastructural and quality control problems, which is also consistent with previous literature. Interestingly, Rugh notes Lebanon's unique position regarding education. More than half of Lebanese students enroll in private institutions, compared to fewer than 25% elsewhere in the Arab world (p. 402). He further notes that Lebanon spends more than three times more on private than public education, also in stark contrast to other countries in the region. This

phenomenon is likely due to Lebanon's long difficulty in developing a public educational system to compete with various private educational endeavors tied to religious and sectarian groups in the country. Heyneman (1997) argues that educational challenges in the region are not the fault of insufficient funding, but of inefficient use of available resources. He suggests several remedies, including privatizing the development of textbooks, coherence between curriculum, teaching and testing, and improved statistical methodologies for measuring student progress. He places this in the larger context of improved economics, which is also consistent with the literature reviewed above. His remedy: international competition and decreased public sector involvement. In many ways, Heyneman foresees the internationalization of higher education when he states that significant expenditures must be made in education in the region. This once again situates AUC as an anomaly in the region and may help account for its special status among study participants, who see it as an opportunity to reproduce social status to a singular opportunity for upward mobility.

A different perspective of an educational setting is offered by Gillespie and Riddle (2004), who identify claims from regional business leaders who complain that the graduates of Middle Eastern universities are often ill-suited for a live work environment because of training based on rote learning and memorization. To solve this problem, they suggest a business pedagogy based on the "case method," a scenario-driven approach that would hypothetically allow students to develop suitable analytical abilities by considering the highly contextual nature of different businesses. As part of this method, the authors suggest that smaller class sizes and homogenous classes (by age and gender) might net more effective results as this would encourage group collaboration during case studies. Also, Gillespie and Riddle note that many texts used in the region are translations of Western business texts; they further suggest that business texts written by and for a regional audience

may help generate a more relevant case-study method approach. This is another source that defines the nature of the educational challenges throughout the region; in this case, it's the reliance on rote memorization in secondary education. Findings will show that this is consistent with the experience of some study participants who attended public high school, which contributed to their lack of ready capital within the transnational site; however, findings also will argue that most AUC students graduate from private secondary schools, which use different teaching methodologies, and gain positional advantage over those who come from different classes and educational backgrounds. This helps to account for the kinds of backgrounds AUC students typically come from, and implies that students who come from educational cultures of rote memorization are more likely to encounter challenges in higher education.

English in MENA

In this sub-section of the review, development of the teaching and learning of, and attitudes toward, English in the region will be reviewed. This section will include sources pertaining to spoken English and is used to chart the development of the presence of the English language in the region, which is relevant to the development and present situation of AUC. Written English and forms of emergent writing research will be reviewed in the next sub-section.

There are studies which consider the attitudes toward English among language learners in the region. Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) present the results of a study of Petroleum Engineering students' attitudes toward and uses of English at a Yemini university. Through analysis of questionnaires and interviews, the authors discover that the target group place high value on learning English for "utilitarian and academic reasons" (p. 29), while many claimed to dislike the Western culture with which English is associated. Still, many

subjects also evidenced interest in Western films and other similar aspects of the Western culture, seemingly contradictory to other findings. These findings underscore the difficulty of disassociating language from culture, and helps to account for the ways in which English, as an aspect of the transnational AUC context, is a crucial form of capital. Al Haq and Smadi (1996) conducted research into the attitudes of Saudi university students towards learning English. Using a questionnaire administered to almost 1200 undergraduates, the authors found that Saudi students were generally concerned that learning English might corrupt their values or detach them from their home culture somehow. The results are complex. On the one hand, respondents strongly indicated that learning English created social prestige and helped develop their personality and cultural experiences. Also, many respondents indicated that they listened to English radio and watched English television (interestingly, a much smaller number stated that they read English press). Most did not perceive this as becoming Westernized. At the same time, respondents reported a preference for Arabic books and language, and almost half reported a feeling that English was a threat to Arabic. In this case, the medium matters: Western television and movies are acceptable, perhaps because they involve orality, whereas media composed using English is less acceptable. This may help define the nature of concerns about Westernization: films and television shows are not as much of a threat as English-language writing, which may express political and social views that could be perceived as advocating counter-cultural activities and ideologies. Given this, as well as information revealed in the section on IBCs, it seems as though there is concern about the way in which writing and literacy specifically can enact activities and ideologies that threaten established orders. The study will find that this concern likely informs the experiences of public school graduates who participated in this study; at the same time, these

findings underscore the uniqueness of the transnational AUC context, which we will see allows for a culture of literacy that includes views critical of Egypt.

Some sources consider the growing role of English in Middle Eastern society. Hamdan and Hatab (2009) offer an analysis of job ads in Jordan over the course of thirty years, in order to demonstrate the extent to which English ability has become a prerequisite for many professional positions in that country. By comparing ads from 1985, 1995 and 2005, the authors discovered that jobs ads in general increased threefold, but that the rate of ads requiring English jumped from 4% to 29% of all English ads (p. 397). Interestingly, in 1985 the only requirement for English was general fluency, but by 2005, writing had become a significant requirement and appeared in three separate analytical categories: writing and conversation, reading, writing and conversation, and reading and writing. This development was matched by several changes in education policy, including: increasing the number of years of English instruction in Jordanian schools from eight to twelve years, and making English the language of instruction at national universities. This helps underscore not only the growing status of English as lingua franca of commerce, but the way in which this has been taken up in a Middle Eastern country through its educational policies and the development or adaptation of educational institutions. Al Musa and Smadi (2013) consider English in Jordan in the context of globalization. By providing context into the phenomenon of globalization, the relationship of English to globalization, and the role of English in Jordan during this period, the authors claim that English is playing an ever-larger role in Jordanian society, from the tourism sector to higher education. They note that Jordanians perceive English for specific purposes (ESP) as crucial to their economic futures, and that societal elites often study socially significant subjects and professions at English-language institutes both in and out of the country. They close by calling for English teachers in Jordan

and elsewhere to instruct students in the “proper” use of English in order to avoid adopting too many foreign values that might undermine the local culture. This article offers recognizable themes: the importance of English for economic and employment reasons, and anxiety that Western values transmitted through English may impact negatively Arab culture. Mahboob and Elyas (2014) focuses on English in Saudi Arabia and investigates whether there is a “Saudi English.” After providing a brief historical overview into the development of English in Saudi Arabia, they on Saudi English textbooks, which are highly regulated and may not reflect actual written or spoken English in the kingdom. Through this analysis, they establish the long presence of English in the kingdom, tied first to British and then to American interests, and that this has led to formal education in Saudi Arabia schools. The changing circumstances of English, and its origins in British colonialism, is consistent with findings regarding English in Egypt and at AUC, which will be explored in Chapter Three.

Education in Egypt

In addition to scholarship that addresses regional phenomena on English writing and literacy from regional perspectives, there is a corpus of scholarship that addresses Egypt specifically. Several of these sources discuss the challenges of introducing Western education into the region. Cook (1999) examines the challenges of introducing Western-style education into Islamic countries. Although Western education is introduced to supplement a domestic shortfall in adequate educational infrastructure, Cook explains that many citizens in these countries are concerned that a secular education may cause individuals to lose their “traditional” Islamic values. Using Egypt as an example, Cook explains that Western help with developing technical and scientific education is crucial because the West leads the way in these areas and is assumed to have best practices. Still, the ongoing challenge is

modernizing educational and other sectors while avoiding overt cultural transformation, a tension seen in other sources as well as in some of the informants who have participated in this study. This also helps to underscore the unique nature of AUC as a transnational space with longevity. Cook (2000) further examines the relationship between an educational policy elite and rank-and-file Egyptians who may want Islamic values more prominently represented in national education curriculum. He provides historical context claiming that Islamic societies enjoyed strong education, material riches and technological advancement until Western colonial incursions into the region beginning in the 19th century. This background would appear to support the concerns of many Arabs regarding Western-style education and the increased use of English in the region, and further underscores the exception that AUC has long enjoyed, which has enabled its ongoing presence. Likewise, Ashkenazi (2009) summarizes the history of education since the British incursion beginning in 1882 and Mohammed Ali's Western-style education reforms, describing the ongoing tension between secular education and the Islamic values upon which education in the region was once based. This helps to account for the kinds of tensions over education, culture and religion that form some of the significant debates about education in Egypt. It also shows how globalization has changed the nature of education, with secular education and abilities appropriate for professional sectors gaining prominence over religiously-based education. As we will see in Chapter Three, AUC adapted through many changes during this transition before taking on its contemporary form.

Other sources discuss the needs for and challenges of introducing education reform in Egypt. Shann (1992) updates Egyptian educational reforms in three areas: controlling admissions, improving quality and managing finances. She offers several recommendations for improvement in these areas, including competent, functional curriculum development

and improved pay for teachers at public institutions. It is worth noting that, twenty three years after this article was first published, many of the same problems continue to plague Egyptian public education. This may explain why a ban on private institutions was lifted in the late 1990's, leading to the establishment of many foreign-sponsored private universities in the country. This may also help account for the unique status of AUC in Egypt: in a country where all-access public education has resulted in exhausted infrastructure and underpaid teachers, AUC offers a transnational configuration with rare features: a small, private university with international faculty that is taught in English, whose graduates can parlay capital accrued at AUC into social and cultural status, various kinds of professionalization and upward mobility. Richards (1992) identifies the memorization and regurgitation pedagogy of public education, along with lacking infrastructure and a government employing far too many of Egypt's university graduates, as the primary reasons driving the need for educational reform in Egypt. He also discusses the dysfunctional Egyptian economy and places educational and economic reforms in relationship to one another. He points out that university graduates often have difficulty securing relevant employment. The lone exceptions are AUC graduates, who experience little difficulty. This fact underscores the high priority placed on receiving an AUC education by informants in this project. Additionally, Richards pinpoints challenges to public education that will be repeated in study findings. ElNagar and Krugly-Smolska (2009), meanwhile, consider some of the ways in which Western pedagogies may have influenced Egyptian educational culture by discussing some of the similarities between John Dewey's beliefs toward education and those of Egyptian scholars such as Taha Hussein. In particular, Dewey's belief in the pupil as an active participant of his/her own learning, and in the design of curriculum meant to create a stimulating learning environment for the students, are compared with the beliefs of

Egyptian education scholars. This article offers an interesting mesh of the perspectives of Western and Egyptian educators, but it also represents a disjunction between the principles of the educators and the ongoing reality of public schooling in Egypt.

A significant collection of essays, *Cultures of Arab Schooling* (2006), focuses on public education in Egypt with a specific methodological and ideological focus called critical ethnography, described by the editors as drawing on a number of disciplines, focusing on politics and capitalism, based upon the premise that the world is driven by power and inequality (which they claim is distinct from traditional ethnography), empowering individuals and groups through the process of being researched. Because these chapters offer a singular ethnographic perspective, and because they represent unique entries into educational research in Egypt and throughout the region, they will be considered together. The assets and limitations of the critical ethnography approach will be considered. Likewise, the methodological approaches, when warranted, will be considered, as will the relevance of chapters for the present study. This can help account for the kinds of experiences some students brought into the study.

Herrera and Torres (2006) describe in their introduction to *Cultures of Arab Schooling* the many challenges faced by educational ethnographers in the Arab world. They claim that prestige and cultural capital are afforded to scholars who practice quantitative research using macro-data. At the same time, “universities and research centers in the Arab world, the hubs of knowledge production, tend to be located within authoritarian or surveillance systems that seriously impede academic freedom” (p. 6). This is true throughout the region, although again, AUC appears to have some degree of autonomy from such surveillance, further establishing it as an anomaly in the country. Additionally, Herrera and Torres claim that Arab culture is less interested on the whole in scientific research than

religion, although it may be a false dichotomy to place these areas of knowledge and belief in conflict with one another. This also does not reflect educational reforms and other initiatives reported in literature throughout this domain of the review. Still, the authors advocate for education for purposes of democracy and liberation. It should be noted, however, that the publication of the book for which Herrera and Torres have written this introduction, *Cultures of Arab Schooling*, was published several years before the Arab Spring ousted long-term autocrats, destabilized Syria, and introduced a new, military-focused leadership in Egypt. If anything, the case for academic freedom in Egypt may be both more pressing and increasingly unlikely, as religious and intellectual dissent has met stiff resistance from the new government in Cairo. This again underscores the uniqueness of the academic freedom at AUC; as we will see, study participants were encouraged to write critically about Egypt, a practice that is forbidden elsewhere in Egypt. It also begs the question of the transferability of AUC-based critical literacies beyond the ideological parameters of the institution.

Herrera (2006a) reviews relevant literature in describing the disparate dynamics that are disrupting the traditional education landscape in Egypt. According to Herrera, these include a cultural shift towards Islamism, increased privatization of the education sector, and non-state groups like business people and female youth. While Islamist-based schools may promote their own authoritarian visions, Herrera suggests that business leaders tend to have secular motives for education while female youths may “contribute to an opening of school cultures towards a questioning of norms” (p. 25).

Naguib (2006) conducts an ethnographic study of ten public schools in order to examine the role of schooling on the cultural production of individuals. He claims that the authoritarian culture of school is a microcosm of the authoritarian nature of the Egyptian

government, and that this approach tends to reinforce passivity and helplessness in students. Naguib also describes his procedures and methods. He observed ten lower-income public schools in Alexandria over nine months. He interacted with fifty-four students, forty teachers and twenty administrators through interviews, participant observation and focus groups. The chapter itself includes extensive quotations from many of the participants, but, given the number of people involved, the total number of quotations seems small. Still, findings reveal that public schools tend to reinforce passivity in students through the memorization of received knowledge. This study will show that, for those participants who graduated from public schools, the ideology and perceived incompetence of their secondary education resulted in difficulty adapting to the new educational culture at AUC. This further establishes that, while AUC is constructed as a transnational space, it is experienced by participants as a cultural space, where “American” implies an ideology of education, and a linguistic profile, with many kinds of relevance for individuals and the state.

Saad (2006) reports on the conditions in a public school in an impoverished area of Cairo. He described the neighborhood surrounding the school, including the government housing where many of the school children live, and provides a basic description of the people who live in this area. He also describes the poor condition of the school in strong detail, his interactions with students who have been absent for long periods, and the indecisiveness and cruelty of the school’s principal. Additionally, he describes moments in the class where students would repeat information from state texts without appearing to understand what they were saying or doing. These findings reflect findings from this study, strongly indicating that problematic patterns in public schools are both entrenched and widespread.

Herrera (2006b) describes the results of participatory action research at an all-girls public school focused on improving the school's facilities. She reflects on the relationship of peer facilities to educational quality, the way in which class and gender can be changed in school culture, and in how participation, rather than passivity, can encourage change among students. Her research offers an approach—participatory action research—that could transform an educational system beset by passivity, rigidity and incompetence, given that this approach breaks down traditional barriers between researcher and subject in ways that can be developed into pedagogy and policy. The nature of these challenges helps define the nature of Egyptian education, and offers contrasts with the transnational AUC context, where students come from many educational profiles that correlate to their socioeconomic class. As this study will show, students from public schooling backgrounds had the greatest range of challenges.

English in Egypt

Several other studies have considered the role the English language has come to assume in Egyptian society. A review of this literature is relevant in that it reveals the various attitudes displayed by Egyptians toward English, and the ways in which these attitudes mirror those in other Arab countries. Likewise, these attitudes help contextualize the attitudes about English and American-style education expressed by informants during interviews, thereby revealing the relationship of English as a form of capital for individual and collective agendas within Egypt. Schaub (2000) summarizes the history of English in Egypt, dating back to the arrival of British occupiers in the late 19th century. He also claims that English has assumed significant status for economic reasons in Egypt, and that many universities offer English courses that are enrolled by Egyptians from across the social and economic spectrum. He cites local professionals who state that high English-language

proficiency is essential for employment, which gives AUC graduates an advantage over other Egyptians. This closely reflects the attitudes and beliefs of subjects for the study, who view their affiliation with AUC as essential to their professional and economic success. Likewise, this source describes the way in which the status and use of English in Egypt gradually shifted from a colonial language to one serving local needs, though it is also clear that English has maintained a high social status in Egypt. This history and status helps to account for the kinds of ambivalent and resistant attitudes toward English discovered in previous literature, as well as the changing relationship of English within Egypt. Haeri (1997) considers the relationship of the “official” language of Arabic to the socially and culturally powerful language of English in Egypt, noting that higher social classes tend to have poorer Arabic reading and writing ability than those from lower classes. This is an interesting claim in that it suggests that the concern about becoming Westernized by English may be primarily a concern of those who have greater abilities in Arabic, who nevertheless seek the advantages they perceive English would bring. This may help account for the English language agendas that exist despite ambivalence to the language in Egypt. As we will see, the present study accounts for the way in which these agendas develop and are taken up in the transnational AUC context.

Finally, Lewko (2012) conducted a research study which found that many undergraduate Egyptians who use English nevertheless do not exhibit “ownership” of the language, even as they deploy English-Arabic mixtures to identify and affiliate with other English-speakers. He suggests that affiliation and ownership can be increased through a translingual approach: integrating Arabic into the English-language classroom, and discussing Egyptian topics in English. Earlier literature has established calls for translingual pedagogies in composition studies; similar to these sources, Lewko raises a provocative

approach but does not appear to account for emic agendas. As we will see in this study, students who entered the transnational AUC context came with clear English-language agendas that did not include translingual composing. Likewise, additional findings will reveal the stratification of literacy by language, where Arabic and English served distinct educational and literacy purposes.

Education and English in Lebanon

Unlike Egypt, there is not a wealth of recent scholarship regarding Lebanese education and the role of English in the country. There are two sources, however, which summarize the educational history of the region known as Mt. Lebanon, which would later become the modern nation of Lebanon. Ashkenazi (2009) describes the heterogeneous religious composition of the country. This makes Lebanon unique to the region and has complicated attempts to create a national ethos and a coherent educational system. Each religious community created and maintained its own schools and systems; these private sectarian have become part of the national system and have complicated attempts to utilize the education system to create a national ethos. Frayha (2003) criticizes educational policymakers in Lebanon for what he considers a naïve belief that a homogenous society could be created through school curriculum. He points to two post-independence civil wars as illustrative of Lebanon's complex problems. He also explains that the wars, particularly the one from 1975-1989, were deeply disruptive to any attempts at coherent educational policy. This may explain why the current system reflects an ad-hoc sectarian approach and why Lebanon spends more on private than public education. These sources underscore not only the differences between Egypt and Lebanon, but the unique and complex nature of Lebanese society and the impact of this complexity on education in the country. They also explain how missionary incursions into 19th century Mt. Lebanon contributed to the current

private, sectarian system, which is decidedly unlike Egypt, where missionary schools generally failed.

Aside from these macro-histories of Lebanese educational history, there is little current educational research coming out of Lebanon. In one of these sources, Bahou (2012) reports the results of a pedagogical experiment with middle school students in Lebanon based on the principle of “students as researchers” (SAR). The logic of this approach presumes that students who are research participants, instead of merely research subjects, will develop into more active learners. It is unclear if she conducted her research at a public, private or sectarian school; however, she does indicate that the chosen school is in an impoverished area. Additionally, she states that Lebanese educational policy has been revised according to constructivist principles. Bahou discovered that students did, indeed, experience greater agency during SAR treatment, which resonates with earlier research conducted by Herrera (2006b) in Egypt. In Herrera’s approach, participatory action research was used to counteract a culture of passivity in an Egyptian public school classroom. Given this, it seems likely that Bahou was responding to a similar perceived dysfunction in Lebanese schools, with a treatment that was also intended to encourage activity and initiative in the students. This supports the possibility that the challenge of passive student experiences in secondary classrooms is not limited to Egypt, but is a regional concern. This casts the challenges of study participants who came from public schools in a regional light. Likewise, the ways in which students who come from passive cultures of education experience the acculturation to transnational sites like AUC, with different ideologies of education, might also bear relevance to students who come to AUB.

In other educational research, Shuayb’s (2005) and Akar’s (2009) doctoral dissertations reveal continued focus on rote learning and memorization in Lebanese schools,

despite reforms intended to increase student involvement in the learning process. This research supports the earlier claim that passive learning in schools is not simply an Egyptian challenge. Abouchedid et al. (2002) claim that the post-Ta'if failure to create a central textbook for Lebanese schools, coupled with the reluctance of the government to address religion as a national topic in education, has led to an ineffective curriculum. Because the researchers believe that teaching religion in schools can increase “multi-faith knowledge” and thus a better understanding of Lebanon’s multi-sectarian nature, they conducted a study at seven religious “confessional” schools around the questions of how policies and pedagogies may encourage multi-faith understanding, and how much students think they know about other faiths. They interviewed more than one hundred students from many religious faiths. Although the research questions are phrased problematically, this work reveals a significant difference from the Egyptian context, which is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim and ethnically Arab. This study will argue that Egyptian public schools operate under strict social rules regarding what students can write and say about Egyptian ethos. This enforcement of a unified ethos seems directly linked to the homogenous religious and ethnic profile for Egypt, offering an important aspect of the Egyptian context that will be addressed through the study: the similar literacy and language expectations for public school graduates across the country.

The edited collection *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion* (2012) includes several chapters that address Lebanese education specifically. As with many of the sources in this section, these chapters address the educational challenges of this multi-sectarian nation, with particular focus on educational reforms following the most recent civil war, which ended in 1990. These chapters address the tendency to reify Lebanese national identity through curriculum to the exclusion of its multi-sectarian nature, the difficulty of developing

a singular national textbook, the problem of insufficient infrastructure, and the tendency to rely on didactic teaching methods despite reforms intended to develop active and critical thinking abilities among students. This source confirms that the tendency to reify a national ethos is not unique to Egypt; attempts to create a Lebanese national ethos have been conflated with such qualities as unity and similarity, and these qualities are taken up in the ways in which Lebanon is portrayed in national school curriculum. Still, the motivation for this reification in Lebanon seems different than in Egypt. Lebanon is a post-colonial nation whose borders were created by colonial authorities. This is different from Egypt, with its prideful ethos drawn from 5,000 years of contiguous existence and its relatively homogenous demographic composition. This ethos is inherited in policy and impacts the literate practices of students, as will be seen throughout the study.

Farha (2012) provides a historical overview of education in Lebanon dating to the 16th century. He describes the creation of missionary schools in the 19th century that were perceived to serve Western colonial and religious purposes and were often seen as threats to the central Empire. Much later, when the French mandate established the modern state of Lebanon, the new government repeatedly refused to invest in public education, and became increasingly reliant on an increasingly sectarian private schooling system. These sectarian schools were seen as incubators for sectarian tension and may have also replicated many of the social and educational inequities observed among the sects. Despite later attempts to utilize public education to promote a sense of national unity, Farha critiques the state of such schools and the message of national unity that often ignores the complexities experienced by many who live in the country. This offers a significant difference from Egypt. While Egypt found missionary and colonial ideologies in its country like Lebanon, the nation decided to invest heavily in public education during Nasserite pan-Arabism and use it as a tool for

developing a national and ethnic ethos, the consequences of which resonate through this study.

Assali (2012) describes some of the results of post-civil war educational reform. He discovers that the curriculum was intended to promote a sense of national unity and encourage active learning among students. He further claims that the success of these measures has been mitigated by several factors, such as poor educational infrastructure, the inability to produce a singular history textbook for the country, a tendency to rely on memorization and lecture in education. This underscores the difficulty of introducing a radical change in educational culture and the challenges of creating a single history from among many sects. While some of these challenges are similar to those found in Egypt, the heterogeneous makeup of Lebanon again offers a significant difference from Egypt, as this sectarian makeup appears to have resulted in additional challenges for education in Lebanon.

Frayha (2012) describes some of the difficulties of post-civil war education reform from the perspective of the head of the Educational Centre for Research and Development (ECRD) during a time of reform. He claims that the creation of a national ethos through educational textbooks, while important, was undercut by disagreements over what history should be told; some other educational policy colleagues objected to Lebanese identity being promoted over Arab identity. Frayha clearly believes that national unity could and should be promoted through national curriculum and that religious education, with each sect developing its own textbooks and other curricula, is a barrier. This source establishes that, once again, sectarian tensions have impacted the development of Lebanese educational policy in ways that are not found in Egypt.

Shuyab (2012) offers an empirical analysis of the way in which attempts at social cohesion have been enacted in public and private secondary schools. Through semi-

structured interviews with principals and teachers of civic education, social studies history and religion, and a survey of principals, teachers and 900 students, she discovers five distinct approaches to teaching social cohesion: passive, avoidance, extra-curricular, multi-dimensional and structured, and paradoxical. She concludes that, while some of the approaches are relatively successful, didactic school culture remains a serious impediment for the development of critical thinking abilities, which she sees as important to the shaping of students' socio-political attitudes. This offers further support that one area of similarity between Egypt and another regional country concerns the authoritarian role of the school and the resultant passivity of the students.

Akar (2012) considers the recent history of Lebanese educational reforms as attempts to generate active citizenship in the Lebanese nation-state. He summarizes some of his past studies, which were comprised of interviews with teachers and Likert-scale questionnaires for teachers and students in public schools, which discovered that a reified national identity found in textbooks was an impediment for most students, as the story of Lebanon did not reflect their own sectarian identities. Likewise, a pedagogy based on rote learning was not considered effective by students and teachers in helping to generate social cohesion, especially when curriculum did not reflect the lived realities of many of the students. That said, Akkar does report that some students did experience charged conversation in class over Lebanese identity and that teachers sometimes experienced success with these moments of tension by employing reflection journals to release tension and continue the conversation.

This section on the Lebanese context for education helps situate Egypt by drawing similarities and differences between another regional country with a university similar to AUC. While offering many insights into the Lebanese context, this section is most useful to this study in that it establishes that rote memorization and passive learning is not limited to

the Egyptian context. As a result, findings from this study that correlate to these kinds of educational experiences in participants may have regional relevance. Additionally, this section of the literature has revealed that Lebanon is a post-colonial, multi-sectarian nation, which has resulted in civil wars and serious challenges for developing a national ethos through educational policy. This offers a contrast with Egypt, which is relatively homogenous in its sectarian composition and features a strong national ethos. This means that Egypt offers strict and coherent rules about educational policy and the ways in which national ethos are inherited through literacy and education in ways that are different from Lebanon and, one would assume, other regional countries with multi-sectarian profiles. As we will see, these findings can help account for the conditions within which study participants are educated, which informs the kinds of challenges they encounter upon entering the transnational AUC context.

MENA Writing Research

In recent years, a small corpus of writing research has emerged relevant to English writing in the MENA region. This research focuses almost exclusively on developmental ESL/L2 writing. This focus may reflect some of the ambivalence toward English in the region seen in other areas in this section of the literature review. Some of these recent studies will be reviewed, their methodologies and findings considered. Benefits and limitations of this corpus for the present study also will be considered.

Much of the corpus focuses on ESL/L2 writers studying English in the region. Among this research, Ahmed (2010) and Hussein (2013) use methodological approaches that allow for the gathering of large amounts of data in order to make generalized conclusions. Ahmed (2010) reported the results of a study done on 165 student teachers of English in Egypt. Using a mix of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, he found that such

teachers struggled with cohesion (the relation of meanings within a text) and coherence (the logical organization of ideas). Overall, this study focused on the formal aspects of writing that reflect cohesion and coherence, rather than the content of the “meanings” and “ideas” themselves. This source offers some relevance to this study because, as we will see, some participants struggled with cohesion and coherence to such a degree that it continued to impact their writing and literacy practices during the period of the study. Hussein (2013) conducted a study regarding anxiety levels among Arabic EFL students in the United Arab Emirates. Questionnaires and student writing were used to identify ten high anxiety writers and ten low anxiety writers. These subjects were then interviewed; findings discovered that testing was anxiety-inducing and that pedagogical practices, such as feedback, did not produce significant anxiety. This finding is relevant in that it correlates with pedagogical differences between high school and AUC for some study participants, specifically that public high schooling is replete with testing while the transnational AUC context included mediation and dialogue, which is consistent with this study’s findings. Based upon this source, then, part of the transnational ideology underpinning AUC writing instruction would be intended to decrease anxiety; as we will see, increased dialogue with instructors appeared to resolve confusion and clarify next steps in the writing task for some participants.

Other studies focus on cohesion and coherence in student writing, as well. In one such study, Al Haq and Ahmed (1994) studied the argumentative writing of students at a Saudi university. They collected more than sixty samples of student writing in order to analyze the intelligibility and quality of argumentative writing samples. They considered formal aspects, such as thesis statement and topic sentence, alongside concepts such as coherence and cohesion. Each quality was measured on a five-point scale by a reader. The results indicate that, according to the measures applied by the readers, each of the qualities

were roughly forty to fifty percent present. The authors found that the students struggled with argumentative writing, but tended to place high priority on formal aspects of writing (in particular, topic sentences and thesis statements) over the presence of content. All results are quantified; no samples of student writing are used as evidence in the study. This focus on surface-level correctness recalls some of the arguments in ICS and ESL/L2 literature, where scholars advocate for translingual pedagogies as a means to help multilingual students engage in the meaning-making process through writing and literacy. This source underscores the nature of that challenge, as many students and teachers in other places associated English writing competence with formal correctness, a phenomenon which is also reflected in study findings.

Rahman (2013), also interested in cohesion and coherence, compared the descriptive writing of Omani EFL/L2 English writers to that of native writers. Rahman discovers that the Omani writers had a relatively limited range of ways to create coherence, relying heavily on repetition. Further findings indicate that more experienced students have slightly greater connective abilities, but that the number is still far short of the connective strategies employed by the native writers. He also discovers that the Omani writers tend to focus on sentence-level coherence; as a result, they “ignore the relations of meaning that exist within the text” (p. 9). From a methodological perspective, there were three groups: first-year Omani English students, third-year Omani English students, and native speakers who worked at a local university. They were asked to write on the topic “A Day to Remember” because it was seen as similar to the writing topics that would be assigned locally. This is consistent not only with ambivalent attitudes toward English in the region reflected in previous scholarship, but this mirrors findings in this study for students across a range of educational backgrounds. In secondary schools, English is rarely used to address social or

national issues in the region; in high schools, it is used for only the most general topics. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion framework was applied onto the writing to generate results. Raja and Zahid (2013) examine academic writing development in English at a university in Saudi Arabia. They used a questionnaire to ascertain faculty attitudes about "significant aspects of writing [...] organization, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, vocabulary, and grammar" (p. 2). The results reveal that teachers view students as generally incapable across all categories. Accompanying samples of student writing are meant to support the challenges to English writing experienced by these university students. The article ends with some teaching strategies for addressing the challenges identified in the study. Overall, this portion of the literature reveals a persistent focus on surface features of English writing and formal sentence-level and genre coherence. This is consistent with attitudes about English in the region reflected in prior literature, where residents actively seek English literacy but are uneasy about the cultural views that can accompany these literacies, particularly writing and reading. This also underscores the nature of the challenges for study participants, some of whom come from cultures of writing where literacy is highly regulated.

Of the available sources, Othman and Shuqair (2013) offer a summative perspective by considering the effectiveness of EFL courses in the Arab world. Through a synthesis of existing research on the question of remediation in this context, the authors claim that such courses have not been effective at improving English language ability. This claim might have been strengthened if it had been accompanied by an original study that took a position based on findings. Still, this synthesis underscores the array of English language agendas for many residents of the Middle East, which includes the participants in this study, whose

entrance into the transnational AUC context represents a unique kind of access to English and to the ideologies and literacies associated with it.

Overall, writing research in the MENA region has focused largely on developmental language competence, with most focus on formal features of writing (organization, thesis, topic sentence, even spelling) and basic thematic competence. None of the available research address the topics about which students write, the attitudes expressed toward these topics, and the relationship of these to the language (English) of writing or to writing development overall. This limits the usefulness of this corpus of literature for the study, but also underscores the unique space this study, and others like it, can occupy within MENA writing and literacy research. Given the ambivalence toward English expressed in earlier areas of this review, this area of the literature further reflects the preference for a decontextualized English—that is, English as a language with economic and educational potential, free from the values and ideologies of its originating culture(s), particularly when it comes to reading and writing (Western television and movies appear to generate less ambivalence). The present study considers topic selection and attitudes expressed in both secondary schools and at AUC, in part to consider the ways in agendas for English literacy and Western education are taken up in the transnational site and are intended to meet localized needs. As such, the present study addresses more than alphabetic literacy or language competence; it considers the ways in which participant agendas and past experiences interact with a transnational site that is tilted toward Western ideologies for literacy and writing, yet seeks to serve needs relevant to Egypt and the region. The ways in which this interacts with transnational pedagogies and literacy ideologies, and considerations of the future role for the kinds of literacies practiced at AUC, is taken up through this study.

In sum, this domain of the review has served two important functions. First, it has helped situate AUC, which was established as a transnational context in the first domain of literature, within national and regional frames for education and English. The literature has revealed robust agendas for English in many countries in the region, but also an unease with the Western ideologies that might accompany English-language literacies. This ambivalence has been accompanied by the rise of IBCs and other U.S.-styled universities in the region, which address a shortfall in viable educational alternatives in parts the region (most notably Persian Gulf countries). These kinds of educational initiatives are different from AUC and AUB. These recent initiatives address time-specific needs and offer an opportunity for U.S.-based universities to expand their branding and revenue initiatives, while AUC has existed for nearly one hundred years and, through this longevity, adapted to changed national and regional circumstances several times. This may account for the relative autonomy enjoyed by AUC, where Western-styled ideologies for literacy and writing, which includes consideration of sociocultural, political and economic issues in Egypt, appears to be unregulated by the Egyptian government. As such, it seems as though AUC's longevity, adaptability and autonomy are unique characteristics of its transnational profile, which gives it a unique status within Egypt.

The second important function for this domain of the literature involves learning about the kinds of educational cultures where AUC students, and in this case study participants, come from. Knowing about this context is important because, as we will see, the study addresses the different ways in which students deployed available capital as they participated with pedagogies and literacies.

Domain Three

This third and final domain of literature will consider areas that can frame the experiences and adjustments of study participants as they enter the AUC transnational context that has been situated through earlier domains of literature. This framing is necessary because the paradigms presented within the primary domains of scholarship, transnational literacy studies and transcultural literacy studies, do not fully account for the ways in which a transnational space may interact with intranational people. Given this, it has been necessary to first establish paradigmatic limitations of existing scholarship and then to define the nature of AUC as a transnational context. The purpose for this domain, then, is to frame the nature of participant “flows” into the transnational space. This framing will take up two areas of relevant literature: the experiences of foreign Arab students in United States universities, and the experiences of first-generation students in the United States. Both areas address significant aspects of participant “flow” to AUC: ambivalence about interaction with Western ideologies (in this case, through Western-styled education) and the unique challenges encountered by first-generation students, who do not come from prototypical backgrounds. Through considering these areas of literature, the review can account for the kinds of cultural experiences participants encountered upon entering the AUC transnational space.

MENA/Arab Students in North American Institutions

There has been much research conducted on the social, cultural and educational challenges experienced by international students studying at universities in the United States, a phenomenon that has increased greatly since the end of World War II. This section of the review will consider scholarship in this area that is relevant to students from Middle Eastern countries studying in the United States. The reason for the presence of this section in this literature review is to ascertain from prior scholarship the kinds of social, cultural and

educational challenges these students faced in their new environments, and to connect these challenges to the present study. This will help frame the experiences of study participants within existing scholarship.

This sub-area of the literature on international student experiences at United States universities can be divided into two broad categories: those that are methodological and research-based, and those that appear to rely upon extant cultural assumptions.

Of the reviewed literature in this section, only two studies appeared to offer no methodological basis for their findings. Al-Issa (2005) describes some of the cultural differences an Arab student may encounter at an American-style university, citing the American University in Sharjah as an example. He describes Western culture as individualistic and Arab cultures as more collectivist; for this reason, misinterpretations of student and instructor behavior may plague classroom dynamics. These broad differences are relevant to the study, inasmuch as the rules governing literacy in Egyptian public schools concern the portrayal of a collective, Egyptian ethos. At AUC, students are encouraged to offer critiques on a range of national issues through the development of Western-styled essays. Meleis (1982) attributes several educational challenges experienced by Arab students in the United States to cultural difference. Although this piece is lightly referenced and offers no explanation or methodological approach for gathering and analysis of data, it may nonetheless be useful for painting in broad strokes some of the challenges students may face in an American-style institution and classroom. He identifies Arab “social properties” such as need for affiliation (owing to their relationships with their extended families), preference for verbal over textual messaging, and an unquestioned respect for authority and hierarchy. As we will see, study participants reported educational cultures that included unquestioned respect for authority and hierarchy, which drove the rules governing their educational and

literacy experiences and impacted their initial positionality and participation within the transnational AUC context.

Those sources which used research-based approaches to data collection tended to rely heavily on questionnaires. Several of these sources will be reviewed below, followed by a single source that utilized interviews. Kamal and Maruyama (1990) use contact theory to interpret the findings of their study of 223 Qatari students studying in the United States. Their findings indicate that simply living in the United States does not impact the attitudes of these students toward their new surroundings. Instead, specific types of prolonged contact, such as the development of friendships and attending American social gatherings, helped these students adjust to their new surroundings. This is relevant to the present study to the degree that it considers the relationship of educational, social and cultural contexts as interrelated variables impacting the ways in which a group of Arab students acculturate to a U.S. context.

Razzouk, Johar and Muna (2008) offer a curious, perhaps cynical, entry into this area of literature. They identify ambivalence toward Western culture among Arab students studying in the United States, and offer methods to “tap the potentially lucrative market” created by the presence of these students in the United States. By capitalizing upon their feelings of cultural marginality and ambivalence that creates a “love-hate” dynamic between these students and American culture, marketers can develop strategies for advertising to this group. Although this study does not share the values or disciplinary orientation of this study, its findings are relevant. The researchers analyzed the findings from 118 questionnaires returned by Arab students studying in the United States. Among the most relevant findings were aspects most liked in Arab culture (family ties, religion, hospitality and others), aspects least liked in Arab culture (little or no democracy, extravagance, no respect for time and

others), aspects least liked in American culture (weak family relationship, sexual freedom and immorality, individualism/selfishness/no concern for others), and aspects most liked in American culture (freedom/democracy, respect for time, work ethic and others). These findings help account for what aspects of American culture generate the most antipathy among Arabs in a U.S.-based educational context, and can reflect the ways in which literacy rules in secondary school reflect a deference for authority and collective identity consistent with the values found in this source.

This portion of the literature explores the *attitudes* of one group toward another group or another culture, rather than their *experiences*. This may be a byproduct of the preferred method for gathering data, the questionnaire. This method allows researchers to gather information from a large number of subjects; they can also control for the specific qualities of interest to their study. The present study is concerned less with overall attitudes and more with individual experiences of a sub-group within a defined educational context. As a result of this more defined sub-grouping of Arabs in a more focused context, the study provides depth and details regarding the experiences of the five participants. The macro-views described in this part of the review are nevertheless helpful in contextualizing the experience and attitudes of students within wider frames of Arab student experiences in U.S.-styled educational and social contexts.

The lone study to use interviews as a data collection method for this section of the literature was Al-Harhi (2005), who reports the results of a series of interviews with graduate students from the area of the Arabian Peninsula taking distance education courses from United States institutions. Among the results were several important findings. First of all, students who were unsure what to write or how to write it (in English) were more likely to defer participation until they felt more comfortable. These students felt less anxiety about

this deferral than they would in a live classroom. Additionally, female students who wore *hijab* were more comfortable participating, because they did not fear that cultural assumptions would be made against them by the Americans in the room, despite what they reported as “limited” knowledge by Americans of Arab and Muslim culture. That said, other woman reported logging out of online interfaces when she encountered a male student who was friends with her husband, because she was concerned how she might come across to this man, even though she did not have the same concerns about her American counterparts and teacher. Interestingly, students also reported difficulty with the reading and writing assignments in English. Al-Harhi claims that this is because the Arab students hail from a “high context” culture, where hand gestures and other non-verbal signifiers play a significant role in comprehension. One student reported feeling as though she did not have all the communicative tools to which she was accustomed, a finding which is also reflected in this study inasmuch as those students who lacked capital relevant to AUC were not always able to draw upon other forms of capital through their transition. At the same time, other students appreciated being able to read online assignments posted by Americans, for they could see firsthand what the “American standard” looked like. This finding is consistent with a preoccupation for “standard” English in other areas of this review, and may reflect a desire for competence in English for specific purposes (ESP) without additional Western-cultural attachments.

Additionally, in the reviewed literature, Arab or Middle Eastern are generally static terms, applied universally. In the case of this study, educational, social, economic and geographic differences *among* Arab students is crucial. In fact, this study considers the ways in which participants might view these differences between themselves and more dominant (i.e., affluent, Westernized) Arab students who typically attend AUC and AUB. Godwin

(2006) places recent educational change in the United Arab Emirates in the context of the history of the region and explains how declining numbers of UAE students has placed pressure on the nation to educate more of its citizens with greater success. A major part of this strategy includes the invitation of several international universities to build branch campuses in “knowledge cities” built specifically for the purposes of housing the IBCs. Godwin further acknowledges that these IBCs allow their home institutions to tap into an affluent new market and generate revenue. This source resonates with earlier portion of the literature, most notably the section on IBCs and the concerns voiced by composition scholars about the export of U.S. educational and composition models in other countries. Godwin voices the transactional nature of IBC development: revenue and brand expansion for universities, and for Middle East nations an opportunity to resolve ongoing shortfalls in educational opportunity and quality. The success of this endeavor would seem to require the kind of integration of local values and practices advocated by Donahue. It is also worth noting that the transnational context of AUC is different from these IBCs owing to the unique qualities of longevity, adaptability and autonomy established in an earlier section of the review.

The scholarship in this section underscores the ambivalence in the Middle East region toward English language and the Western culture that accompanies it, while also reflecting expanding agendas for certain kinds of English literacy in the region. This phenomenon is also reflected in an earlier section of the review addressing education and English in the region generally, and in Egypt and Lebanon specifically. The literature reveals a willingness to engage with some aspects of Western culture, ambivalence toward sectors of Western culture seen as incompatible with Arab cultural values and Islamic teachings, and sustained interest in English as *lingua franca* for various professional and educational

opportunities. Along with the earlier section that addressed such concerns from within the region, this section frames the nature of English literacies in the Egyptian secondary schools and the stratification of the social rules guiding literacy by language—one set of rules for English, another for Arabic—that will be seen through this study. This study also reflects the role for English in the region by accounting for the English language and literacy agendas of students across a range of educational, economic and sociocultural backgrounds, which is also useful for this study as participants “flow” into the transnational AUC context from many different socioeconomic and educational positions. Their positionality impacts the nature of their crossing and the kinds of social and educational experiences they have. As we will see, this study accounts for the ways in which the socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of a small cohort of participants reveals with depth the idiosyncrasies that characterize individual experiences. These findings will be considered within the context of some of the findings in this section of the literature, accounting for similarities or anomalous findings,

First Generation Students

This section in the third domain of literature accounts for the experiences of first-generation university students. This literature can help frame the kinds of experiences of Egyptian public high school graduates who come to AUC, as these students are often first-generation students and who do not have family and friends with affiliations to AUC. This literature also accounts for the relationship of educational and sociocultural challenges encountered by this group, who often face unique challenges in this area. This section of literature also focuses on the idiosyncrasies of individual experiences, employing narrative and interview-based methodologies intended to capture the individualistic nature of these kinds of experiences. This section thereby supports the design and methodological choices

for this study as it considers the ways in which a small cohort of Egyptians enter the transnational AUC context from a range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

According to Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini (2004), the growing body of research into first-generation college students, a phenomenon created by increased enrollments and access to higher education among previously non-traditional groups, falls into three categories. The first category compares first-generation to other students in terms of academic preparation, selecting a college and expectations. The second category focuses on the academic, social and cultural transitions of first-generation college students. The third category focuses on the persistence, degree attainment and early career outcomes. The research in all three areas reveals that first-generation students face significant challenges when compared to students who have had family members attend college previously. For the purposes of this study, this section of the review will focus primarily on foundational literature in the second category: the academic, social and cultural transitions of first-generation university students. The reason for this focus is that the graduates of public high schools who attend AUC are likely among the first members of their families to attend university, if not the first members. As such, they face an interrelated range of academic and sociocultural transitions; the nature of these transitions involves the relationship between the transnational AUC context and the intranational “flow” of students who, based upon their backgrounds, encounter varying intercultural adjustments to AUC.

Some studies in this sub-field focus on first-person narratives of first-generation experiences. Lara (1992) narrates her own experience as a self-described “Latina of African descent” (p. 67). She writes that, while her transition to community college was not difficult as she was able to live at home, her transition to a four-year liberal arts institution was challenging because it “devalued one’s contribution because of one’s race and cultural

background” (p. 67). This is relevant to the present study in that participants who were public school graduates had to relocate from outside Cairo, whereas most students lived in the Cairo area and commuted from home. As we will see, participants who experienced loneliness and alienation at AUC found these difficulties exacerbated because they were living away from their home communities. Likewise, the lack of ready social and cultural capital presented significant challenges for both Lara and some of the study’s participants, which results in one of the most significant findings for this study. Rendon (1992) considers her own experience in the context of the experiences narrated by Rodriguez (1975), who was a first-generation college student whose parents possessed limited English. In both cases, their parents saw English and education as the keys to attaining higher social status. Rendon describes the resistance for her educational agenda among her family, who told her that college was for wealthy families. These kinds of agendas are also borne out through findings in this study, as we will see. Like Weis, Rendon attended a community college near home before transferring to the University of Houston—a transition fraught with racial and ethnic isolation and separation from family. Gradually, Rendon discovers that her family may resent how her acculturation to the university has changed her values and ambitions and left her beyond their reach. While his aspect of participant experience is not addressed in this study, it is a logical extension of the study’s findings and could inform further research of these or other participants.

These first-person narratives are powerful methods that account for these kinds of students and their experiences. By narrating their own experiences, or through having their experiences represented by scholars who draw upon research methodologies that allow for first-hand accounting, scholarship can capture the contextual and idiosyncratic nature of these kinds of student experiences. Through these different kinds of stories, trends and

contrasts can emerge; findings in the present study attempt to synthesize the ways in which students from several backgrounds are taken up in the transnational AUC context.

Other studies follow a more methodological approach in gathering information about the experiences of and challenges faced by first-generation students. These allow for greater breadth of the kinds of experiences shared by first-generation students. Weis (1992) reports the results of a one-year ethnographic study at a community college in the “urban ghetto.” The purpose of the study was to make visible the many “discordant or nonsynchronous voices *within* institutions and communities” (p. 13, emphasis original). The reason for this, she claims, is to see not only tensions between communities but within them—perhaps to resist homogenous portrayals of the various subgroups that attend the community college, a possibility which echoes other domains in this review. While Weis focuses on African-American students, she notes that class and gender tensions are also present, and these variables become intertwined with race in complex ways, even for a study such as hers that focuses primarily on race. At an institution where white students are the minority, they critique absenteeism and what they perceive as a lack of seriousness among African-American students. Additionally, tensions in the “black community” were seen along class and gender lines, though Weis notes that students do not typically address the larger cultural dynamics that have contributed to the tensions they observe. While race and ethnicity are not significant variables in Egypt and AUC, where most students are Arab, Weis discusses several kinds of variables that can account for the different kinds of experiences students can have at a single institution. Additionally, she focuses on differences within institutions in a manner reminiscent of Kostogriz and Tsoldis’ (2008) articulations of transculturalism. Terenzini et al. (1994) report the findings of a multi-university study using focus groups to identify and probe several different types of students. One such group was first-generation

students, who experienced attending college as a major disruption in the normal trajectories of their families—whereas other groups, by contrast, experienced college as a continuation of their family trajectories. First-generation students tended to defer extracurricular and social involvement because they anticipated a heavy academic workload, which is consistent with some findings in this study. In their implications section, the writers argue that students from non-traditional backgrounds—first-generation, racial minorities, and others—face more difficult transitions that are at once academic, social and cultural. These transitions have the potential to radically alter their familial relationships and their futures in ways that situate them as “in between” their home communities and the new possibilities enabled through their university experiences. Like the students in Terenzini’s study, participants in this study face a range educational, language, social and cultural transitions when they enter the transnational AUC context. Some of them defer social integration, consistent with findings in Terenzini, and experience AUC as a new sub-culture within Egypt that is informed by U.S. and Egyptian cultures, but which is unique unto itself. In this respect, then, the “in between” nature of cultural experience from transcultural literacy studies intersects with the transnational AUC context in a way that calls for extensions and new combinations of existing scholarship within literacy studies.

In this brief review of some of the foundational studies in this area of the literature, several themes have emerged that bear relevance to the present study. Throughout this literature, first-generation student adaptation to higher education occurs across social, cultural and economic domains. Likewise, these students tend to feel alienated by geographical separation from their families and home cultures. Finally, first-generation students also tend to see English and higher education as both closely related and necessary means for social and economic mobility. As we will see in this study, these agendas are also

active for participants, particularly those who graduated from public high schools. Finally, this area of literature has used first-person narratives or ethnographies in sharing these stories. This seems consistent with the individualistic and idiosyncratic nature of these kinds of stories and, given the small cohort of participants for this study, can help frame the methodological and design approaches for this study, as well.

Conclusion

This review has considered three related domains of literature within which the study is situated. In the first domain, limitations in the frames of transnational literacy studies and transcultural literacy studies reveals the needs for new ways to think about the relationship of transnational sites, such as AUC, that are populated by people, such as the study's participants, who traverse intranational space when they enter AUC. Through its analysis, the study will account for the ways in which these areas within literacy studies can be extended and combined to account for the nature of the transnational AUC context and the ways in which study participants took up positions and participated within the context. In doing this, the first domain of the review took up arguments and ideologies in related scholarship, that of international composition studies and ESL/L2 scholarship. While they offer valid arguments, these areas often rely on binary oppositions that consider foreign and/or distant interactions with local sites malignant, harmful or untrustworthy. For this reason, these areas cannot readily account for the kinds of transnational spaces and interactions of local people within these spaces developed through this study; as such, this study will argue for ways in which extended frames within literacy studies can be applied to composition and ESL studies to offer expansive frames for the intersection of composition and ESL pedagogies and ideologies with many kinds of non-U.S. audiences.

The unique nature of the transnational AUC context has been developed not only through the review of literacy studies scholarship, but through placing AUC in context with other regional educational contexts and attitudes toward regional English that comprise the second domain of this review. This domain reveals the ways in which current challenges for education in the Middle East have provided an opportunity for U.S. universities to expand their branding and revenue initiatives. This also contextualizes AUC and its counterpart in the region, AUB, as unique transnational spaces, in that they have longevity, adaptability and relative autonomy when compared with more recent transnational educational spaces in the region. This domain also reviews regional attitudes toward English, which includes an undeniable increase in demand for professional English, while also showing ambivalence about the Western culture that may accompany English literacy and writing. This domain has also revealed much about the kinds of educational and cultural backgrounds of students, which can help frame the kinds of backgrounds study participants come from.

The third domain has accounted for the experiences of Arab students in U.S. institutions and first-generation students. This is intended to provide framing scholarship for the kinds of educational and cultural challenges experienced by these groups, as they bear some similarity to the kinds of students who flow into AUC from sites within Egypt. When combined with literature in the second domain, consideration of the nature of the transnational space of AUC, as it has been conceptualized through literacy studies scholarship and contextualized within other transnational sites and English language developments in the region, takes on a specific configuration. The development of this configuration through time—i.e., the way in which it became the transnational site that it is—will be taken up in Chapter Three. Literature that addresses education and English in Egypt and the region, as well as Arab student attitudes toward U.S. universities and the

experiences of first-generation university students, can help frame the various ways which study participants “flow” into the transnational AUC context.

CHAPTER 3. HISTORIES OF EDUCATION AT AUC AND AUB

Two seemingly contradictory phenomena characterize modern higher education in the Middle East and North Africa: an increase in educational opportunity, and, despite some gains, continuing challenges in educating students in the region to “keep pace” with other parts of the world (Akkari 2004, Chapman and Miric 2009). Increased opportunity has typically taken the form of new universities, and many of these universities have resulted in the presence of educational models from Europe and the United States. One such type of new university is the international branch campus (IBC), an offshoot of a university with a main campus abroad, typically in the United States and Europe. These kinds of new universities have flourished in the Middle East and elsewhere over the past twenty years; in the MENA region, these IBCs are usually found in wealthy nations in the Persian Gulf area. In Egypt, new universities are often private institutions that represent accords between the Egyptian government and Western governments. Since a law banning private universities was revised in the 1990’s (a law for which AUC had been granted an exception since the law’s passage), several private universities have been established in Egypt, involving such nations as Britain, Scotland, Germany and Canada.

Two universities in the region, the American University in Cairo and the American University of Beirut, stand alone for their long ties to the region, their origins in missionary zeal, and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances over long periods. As was established in the review of literature, this ability to adapt has resulted in longevity and autonomy in a region where educational institutions are often carefully monitored by the state. These characteristics are unique among transnational educational sites, such as IBCs. This chapter will consider the histories of these institutions alongside one another, in order to further differentiate their presence from the more recent transnational “flows” of

educational ideologies and materials into the region. Particular emphasis will be placed on AUC and Egypt, given that these are contexts of focus for this study. At the same time, this chapter will account for points at which multi-directional transnational flows interacted with the AUC and AUB contexts at key points in the development of these institutions and their writing units. To achieve this, these institutions and unit histories will be contextualized within recent histories of education in both Egypt and the modern state of Lebanon. This will account for the influence of colonial and missionary activity as transnational agents, and will locate moments when these universities adapted their purposes to meet new needs in response to changed sociocultural, political and economic circumstances in Egypt. The chapter will link these adaptations to the ways in which writing and literacy practices changed at AUC. While AUC is the primary focus for this chapter as it is the home context for the study's participants, it will be compared with AUB, a similar institution, in order to consider what differences exist between them, and what, in turn, makes AUC a unique transnational space.

Considering the development of the AUC environment for literacy and writing from the perspective of transnational "flows" can help account for the changing types of, and roles for, Western ideologies at AUC and in Egypt. We can observe, for instance, that transnationalism gradually flowed away from colonial and religious ideologies and toward Western educational ideologies. We can further observe the changing purpose for learning English and acquiring literacies associated with the language as AUC became increasingly focused on meeting Egyptian political and economic needs through Western-styled education and languages. Likewise, we can observe that AUC is a unique kind of transnational educational space within this phenomenon, given its longevity, adaptiveness and autonomy, qualities which are identified through the review of literature and which will

be further developed through this history chapter. Seen from this perspective, AUC is not a static, decontextualized environment waiting to be occupied by students seeking Western-styled higher education and social status, but a dynamic transnational context always already bound up in the ongoing interaction of local and distant ideological (sociocultural, political, economic) developments in Egypt. It is within this churning environment that the study is situated; as such, the study must account for the fact that the study's participants, like all AUC students, are flowing into an environment that is itself constantly flowing and changing.

As stated earlier, AUC and AUB will be considered alongside one another, in order to consider what “flows” and other developments have impacted both institutions, and which are unique to AUC. Recent national educational histories will give way to institutional histories, which will lead to writing unit histories. Following these histories, a conclusion will consider the unique circumstances characterizing AUC during the 2013-14 period during which research was conducted for this study.

American University of Beirut (Syrian Protestant College) and Lebanon

The modern nation-state of Lebanon has long been known as a heterogeneous, multi-sectarian area that has been part of many empires, including those of the Egyptian, Mamluk, Phoenician and Ottoman empires. Present-day Lebanon includes such religious communities as Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Druze, Sunni and Shi'ite Islam, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and several others (Ashkenazi 2009). Such a diverse number of religious faiths in such a compact area (Lebanon is relatively the same size as the state of Connecticut) has led to ongoing sectarian tensions in the area, most notably in the 1860's and again during the nation's two civil wars in the late 20th century. This heterogeneous nature of the area has also impacted education in ways that are ongoing

to the present day, and which differentiates it from Egypt and AUC. This part of the chapter will consider the history and development of the Lebanese education system. This section will also consider the development of the American University of Beirut and its writing unit in ways that will frame AUC and AUB as similar kinds of transnational educational institutions within Egypt, which nevertheless have key differences.

The region known as Mount Lebanon was part of Syria within the Ottoman Empire for much of recent history; despite this (or perhaps because of this), no singular public school system was developed. Individual communities created schools based on their religious affiliation, except for the wealthy, whose children received education from private tutors (Frayha 2003: 78). Additionally, when Western missionaries began traveling to Mt. Lebanon under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire, these groups created their own schools for the purpose of proselytizing. These schools, often taught in English and French, operated outside any civil authority even as they became significant parts of what was becoming an ad-hoc educational system (Ashkenazi 2009). Muslim families, it should be noted, declined to send their children to these schools; today, Muslim sects suffer from some of the highest rates of illiteracy and poverty in Lebanon. Because of these sectarian divisions, education tended to reinforce existing religious identification and exacerbated cultural tensions, which, as was described in the review of literature, frustrated attempts to use education to construct a coherent curriculum and national identity (Ashkenazi 2009: p. 900).

Following the end of World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, France was given a mandate over Lebanon. During this time, the modern nation-state was formed with borders drawn to favor the Maronites who could work effectively with their French overseers. The French made no attempt to integrate the different school systems; it was not until 1943, when Lebanon was finally granted independence, that unsuccessful attempts

were made to integrate the differing systems and utilize school curriculum to create a sense of national ethos (Ashkenazi 2009). In the late 1960's, reforms attempts were made in the aftermath of the Six-Day War between Egypt and Israel, which divided the Lebanese and made agreement over curriculum more difficult; in the 1980's, textbook reforms tended to focus on domestic harmony while oversimplifying sectarian complexities in order to construct an unconvincing portrait of Lebanese national unity (Frayha 2003: 78). The civil war of 1975-1990 nearly crushed the states; upon its conclusion, attempts at educational reform had to be reset. One such reform attempt, the Ta'if Agreement of 1989, called for two dominant modes of identity: as a unitary nation comprised of Arabs. This ethnic, nationalist ethos was immediately beset by sectarian struggles over the construction of history textbooks; indeed, no standard history could be constructed, given the heterogeneous groups and their respective perspectives on Lebanese history (Abouchedid 2002). Rather than building a text that could represent the struggle experienced by the nation because of its multi-sectarian composition—including struggles experienced across the religious spectrum—individual groups tended to lobby for the dominance of their own worldviews in the way Lebanese history would be written. Additionally, education reform tended to focus on high-stakes examinations and an “overloaded national curriculum” (Abouchedid 2002: 73) rather than addressing the complexities of Lebanese history through its curriculum. The regime of testing is similar to that of the Egyptian national system and may have resulted in a similar educational approach, where students are required to memorize and regurgitate large amounts of information. The inconsistent policies of the Ministry of Education, as well as disagreement over the role of education in fostering a national ethos, also have contributed to a school system that is not fully integrated and which may both reflect and perpetuate sectarian tensions. Additionally, the major civil wars of the 20th century resulted

in greater attendance in sectarian schools and less in public schools meant to encourage tolerance and nationalist ethos (Shuayb 2012), removing temporary gains made after Lebanon's initial independence from France.

The upshot of this story is that Lebanon's national educational system remains fractured along sectarian lines, despite extensive attempts and money spent to promote a nationalist ethos through education. Additionally, expenditures in education rose following independence from France and following both civil wars, in part to restore decimated educational infrastructures and to promote a sense of unity. Despite the attempts to promote national unity and religious tolerance through curriculum, and the development of a robust public system, the Lebanese public school system manages to attract fewer than 50% of all students, even though it is free. It appears that families prefer to spend on private education, which may help explain why Lebanon spends an outsized portion of its gross domestic product in education—9.3% as of 2003, with more than half spent on private education (Frayha 2003). Interestingly, research indicates that public school graduates do have more open and tolerant attitudes toward other religious than private school students, which would imply that these schools have successfully encouraged tolerance among those who have chosen to attend (Frayha 2003).

The next part of this history will place the founding and development of the American University of Beirut within the wider context of Lebanese education. The American University of Beirut was originally founded by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1866 during the era of Western missionary expansion into the region; as Lebanon was still a part of greater Syria at the time, the university opened under the name Syrian Protestant College. The initial goal was to capitalize on an educational need in Syria by providing Arabic language instruction in a

classical Western curriculum, with an additional focus on Protestant Christianity. This represents an initial transnational ideological conceptualization for this kind of education in Lebanon: to deliver Christian religious instruction to a largely Arab, multi-sectarian population. Over time, the switch was made to an English language curriculum for reasons both practical (the difficulty of translating English-language texts into Arabic) and ideological (the purported benefits of English language and literature on an Arab student body, another transnational ideology linked to the perceived social and cultural status of English) (Anderson 2011). Regardless, the Christian value of “unity of thought” prevailed at SPC at a time when liberal education was taking root in the United States. Part of this was based in Orientalist views of the region as “heathen” and “nominal[ly] Christian” (40), very much in need of an infusion of civilizing American Christianity. This transnational dynamic is similar to what will be seen at AUC: a distant authority authorizing a university with a religious mission.

The college was influenced by several outside factors throughout the late 19th century, most notably a commencement speech by a professor who praised the work of Charles Darwin and questioned the “unity of truth” doctrine that had characterized the school’s ideological approach to education. This speech introduced a secular transnational ideology that angered the university’s founder and president; when the faculty member who gave the address was fired, students began to protest the administration by refusing to sing hymns at morning church services and boycotting classes (42-3). This represents a conflict in transnational ideologies—religious versus secular belief—which was taken up by the student body in the form of resistance to one form. This was also the first of many protests between students and the administration over the next century, and it indicated the first sustained desire among students to be presented with multiple, sometimes contradictory,

ideas and possibilities—a hallmark of liberal education. By the end of the 19th century, SPC had introduced elements of evolution into its curriculum and had otherwise introduced elements of liberal and professional education to meet the interests and needs of students (52). These changes indicate the beginnings of a shift to different transnational agents—moving away from a missionary transnationalism with Orientalist attitudes toward students and toward secular educational transnationalism.

By the time the name of SPC was changed to the American University of Beirut in 1920, liberal education had become an overt focus for the university, due to reforms initiated by the university's second president (who was also the son of its first president). Still, an idealized Protestant American character was portrayed as an ideal worth striving for; in this respect, AUB firmly retained its Orientalist underpinnings based in transnational missionary ideology. Interestingly, it was during this time that students began to adapt the practice of active participation crucial to liberal education for their own purpose, mainly by protesting the religious element of the university. Muslim students in particular wanted to establish an autonomous Muslim student union, while Jewish and non-Protestant Christian students also began to resist the Protestant values underpinning the university. Despite the religious affiliations of these students, and the fact that the conflict is focused on religious freedoms, their active resistance resembles another transnational ideology, that of secular liberal education, revealing increased “outflow” of transnational religious ideologies during this time.

Student resistance to over transnational religious ideologies overlapped with an interwar period saw Arab nationalism rise across the region. This influential development saw AUB students become more concerned with issues of Arab nationalism in their own country. When the university administration curtailed student activism, many students noted

the hypocrisy of a university based upon the values of the liberal arts, which would seem to encourage student activism. This tension exploded again in the years after 1968 and before the Lebanese civil war, when students began to demand a more active role in the administration of the university, due in part to increasing tension between an Arab student body and an American liberal arts tradition that reified the American character to the detriment of the Arab character. These reifications of transnational religious and national identities became more difficult for AUB students to accept during a period of Arab nationalism and increased student resistance to the perceived oppression of distant ideologies.

In their unpublished history of the Communication Skills Program and writing instruction generally, Arnold and Zenger describe varied and multilingual writing practices. Before beginning their unit history, the authors explain that SPC, and later AUB, survived and adapted through many regimes, including those of the Ottoman and French. Because of this, many languages were taught and learned on the campus according to the opportunities of the moment: during the Ottoman period, for example, Turkish was taught on campus for those students who wished to attend medical school in Istanbul. Still, the “official” language had been English since transitioning from Arabic in the late 19th century. This finding complicates the simple transfer of transnational language and ideology described earlier in this history; still the eventual establishment of an “official” language of English aligns the language with the ideological mission of the university at that time.

When the modern state of Lebanon was formed under the French mandate and the university given its present name, additional majors and programs were also developed. In time, a writing program was formed with two freshman-level and two sophomore-level courses. According to the history of the Communication Skills Program, writing tended to

focus on literary analysis through the late 1970's, very much in line with the way writing programs developed in the United States (Crowley 1998). During this time, the Lebanese civil war disrupted access to English-language education. In this case, the concept of a transnational "flow" does not account for the literal violence that severed the presence of English as a language within the transnational site. As a result, it appears as though the faculty, largely trained as literary scholars who were accustomed to interacting with students who came to university highly English-literate, saw the need to introduce overt writing instruction. A collaboration between the English Department and the Center for English Language Research and Teaching (CELRT) resulted in a redesign of courses within the Communication Skills Program to provide language support, a redesign which remains in place today. This approach to supplementing English is similar to what will be seen at AUC. The crucial difference is that the civil violence that embroiled Lebanon and threatened its viability not only severed English as a transnational agent, it nearly resulted in the permanent closure of AUB during a time of war and instability that saw the campus and its faculty become targets for violence in large part because of beliefs about the malignant influence of Western ideologies in Lebanon.

The current configuration is a three-course sequence that offers introductory college writing up through advanced academic writing, a traditional sequence in U.S. writing programs. There is an intensive language course for students with language training needs, similar to second-language centers embedded within many U.S. institutions as well as the English Language Institute at AUC. Additionally, there are courses in business and technical English designed to meet the needs of students who will communicate in these areas, which implies that the local agenda for English and Western education involves the kinds of language and literacy training relevant to certain kinds of professional classes.

The story of the writing unit at AUB echoes themes observed in writing instruction in the United States and at AUC. On the one hand, the focus on literary analysis is reminiscent of English departments in the United States throughout much of the 20th century, indicating that this transnational ideology informed writing instruction at AUB. At the same time, disruptions and instabilities created by civil wars altered the language profile of students, as transnational languages and educational ideologies flowed away from Lebanon. Indeed, AUB's ability to function was disrupted due to the various threats and instabilities in the region. Because of this, overt writing instruction was a compensation for what was missing from students, not unlike the establishment of an English language program at AUC during Nasserite Arab nationalist educational policies (see below). The reasons may have been different—sectarian war in Lebanon versus ethnic ideology in Egypt—but the upshot was similar: increased attention to language instruction to compensate for changes in the linguistic profiles of AUB students. As with AUC, these language courses remain in existence today, even as their purpose has changed: they provide language support for students who may need it, allowing those without robust language training to proceed onto writing courses and other aspects of the English-language curriculum. The development of a diverse writing curriculum reflects changes in the United States and at AUC, where business, technical and grant writing represent significant offerings and correspond with disciplinary and professional practices. In this respect, both AUB and AUC (see below) responded to changes in transnational flows by providing a foundation for language support and, in time, expanding offerings in line with developments in United States-based writing units.

American University in Cairo and Egypt

In the centuries before the British arrived in Egypt, education in Egypt consisted of many systems, including those of the Mamluks and the Janissaries. These systems afforded its graduates “elite social status, political power, and military prowess” (Cochran 2008: 38) that also provided religious training (and often overt conversion). Both Mamluks and Janissaries came to Egypt as warrior-slaves and were often young Christian boys. Mamluks were first recruited by Caliph al-Mu’tasem in the 9th century; they were brought to Egypt, trained in either Turkish or Arabic, converted to Islam, and taught loyalty to the Caliph. Over time, these Mamluks could earn their freedom, and eventually many became influential in religion and politics. When Ottoman Selim I conquered Egypt in 1517, he left a Mamluk commander in charge of a new military class, the Janissaries. Like the Mamluks, the Janissaries were immigrant slaves who were converted to Islam and trained in military skills. Over time, the Janissaries grew from an initial group of 5,000 to 135,000 at the height of their power (Cochran 2008: 33). In the case of both the Mamluks and Janissaries, religious conversion was both crucial to the Ottoman mission, and hard-earned: religious education had no printing press, and so memorization and oral recitation—a hallmark of educational systems influenced by Koranic teaching—was crucial. The stories of these groups reveal that changes in social status were possible—to rise from a slave class to high cultural status within a single lifetime was not unusual—and that these slave classes were uniquely situated in Egyptian society to become educated and gain financial, political and religious status.

This fusion of education in Egypt with foreign influences continued under Khedive Ismail, the grandson of Mohammed Ali and an admirer of European culture (he is known for building new areas of Cairo to resemble the avenues and squares of Paris, including the now-famous Midan Tahrir). It was during this time that modern nation-states began to form, resulting in an infusion more closely resembling modern transnational infusions of distant

people, materials and ideologies into localized, national contexts. Ismail expanded secular education to include foreign European languages, such as French and English. The linking of foreign languages to Egyptian secular education helped to create sociocultural conditions that the British would exploit in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It also offers some differences from Lebanon and AUB, where English was utilized as a proselytizing instrument during the initial switch from Arabic to English. In Egypt, English was always a language used for secular purposes, a dynamic which will also be reflected in study findings.

When the British assumed governing power in 1882, they developed a “separate economic and social stratum for themselves” (Cochran 2008: 41) that involved secular English. While Egyptian outside the social and cultural elite were educated in *khuttabs*, or schools attached to mosques (Cochran 2008: 41), secular schools became associated with the English-language British bureaucracy. As a result, English became associated with the status afforded by secular education in Egypt. This education was also seen as a way for Egyptians to gain access to and employment in the higher-status social, economic, political, and judicial infrastructure created by the British for their governing and social purposes. This was a departure from Mamluk and Janissary education, where religious education was integrated with other modes of education, and high social status included religious, military *and* financial status. By the time the British arrived, *khuttabs* provided religious education to the poor, while secular education had become associated with higher social status, professional training and financial means. It was into this dynamic the British implanted their own systems and language.

This dichotomy also created two different models of and attitudes toward education. Those educated in the *khuttabs* would have been more likely to view the British presence and secular education as a malignant threat to the Islamic character, whereas other Egyptians

who had learned to benefit from the British presence would prefer secular education. Indeed, “by the turn of the twentieth century, most Muslim countries had newly created elites who had a vital interest in preserving and maintaining Western cultural tradition” (Cook 1999: 340), Egypt among them. Even by this early point, it was already clear that in the matters of literacy, language, and education, a class of Egyptians had emerged that benefitted from the British influence on Egyptian society.

Within this context for English, literacy and education, the American University in Cairo was founded in 1920, with the support of this British protectorate. Formed in part by the American Presbyterian Church Board of Foreign Missions, the original purpose of the university was a seemingly odd mix of missionary zeal, fine arts finishing school for social elites, and English-language secondary school (Sharkey 2008). The university, unsuccessful in its attempts to convert Muslims to Christianity, quickly adapted its missionary purpose and sought purchase with the wider community through such programs as the Department of Public Service (DPS), which exists still today as the School for Community Education (SCE). The SCE offers non-degree programs in several areas of English literacy, such as English for specific purposes and conversational English, skills with some economic benefit in sectors of the Egyptian economy. This early adaptability illustrates a significant difference from AUB, where the missionary purpose lasted for decades, and ideological changes to the university were not initially embraced by its administration. The quick change at AUC is indicative of its sensitivity to the local context and the desire to integrate its transnational presence for the needs of local constituents. .

The university faced significant challenges in the face of the “Arabization” policy of Gamal Abdel Nasser following the 1952 revolution, an event which eliminated the final vestiges of Ottoman and British rule. This removed the social and political infrastructure of

British occupation and created a change in status for English in Egypt. Part of the Arabization policy involved the closure of foreign language secondary schools and an increased ideological focus on Arab language, literature and history. The number of students with the ability to speak and write in English plummeted as a result of this policy, which acted as a kind of transnational sponsor resulting in the “outflow” of English. This created a serious complication for AUC, which adapted by creating the English Language Institute (ELI) in 1956. This English-language program was intended to compensate for the diminished presence of English language instruction, a direct result of the Arabization policy. The ELI allowed AUC to take on students it would not normally accept, given their insufficient English language preparation. This is another instance of AUC’s adaptability to changing political and ideological circumstances within Egypt. The ELI still exists today, not to compensate a shortage of English-literate Egyptians (that number is higher than ever), but to provide extra language support for students who may require it, including students who do not hail from social and cultural elite classes—yet another adaptation. The modern ELI is less about compensating for an absent English-language instructional infrastructure, and more about providing opportunity for students in need to develop language competency before continuing with their academic careers at AUC. As we will see in the study, this includes students from a range of educational backgrounds.

As we can see, the presence of English in the country was perceived by Nasser as a threat to a vision of Arab culture they hoped to restore. In this zero-sum view, enhancing one meant diminishing another. From the perspective of transnationalism, this ideology created policies and practices whereby English language and styles of education associated with Anglophone countries flowed temporarily out of Egypt. Interestingly, AUC was still permitted to exist (other non-Arab language schools were shuttered) under an exemption to

Arabization laws authorized by Nasser himself (Murphy 1987). The rationale for this exemption was that AUC represented a cultural exchange between Egypt and the United States. Despite Nasser's Arabization policy and his attitude toward Egyptians learning English, AUC was able to remain in existence as an English-language institution. An upshot of this was an increase in English-language instruction at the university to compensate for the effect of Arabization elsewhere, an adaptation that helped ensure the university's survival.

Nasserite Arabization remained relatively stable until the next president Anwar Sadat, enacted economic reforms and an ideological reorientation in the 1970's. His "open door" policies encouraged foreign investment in Egypt and proved a boon to AUC, which became a preferred destination for elite Egyptians who sought a degree that would garner the attention of the foreign firms investing in Egypt. Indeed, employers began to explicitly request graduates from AUC, knowing that such graduates would bring strong abilities in English (Schaub 2000: 228). The fact that AUC offered English-only instruction and professional training in Egypt had become a particular reason for its appeal, as English was a language of the international commerce Sadat hoped to join. New wealth flowed into some segments of Egyptian society, and the children of these families (known as the *nouveau riche*) also sought social status by attending AUC. This change in economic and ideological status—Sadat realigned Egypt with the United States and eschewed ties with the Soviet Union—resulted not only in the increased flow of transnational educational ideologies and English into Egypt, but resulted in an economic boon for a new class of wealthy Egyptians. In the years to follow, AUC would increase its offerings into areas such as marketing, finance, accounting and administration (Murphy 1987), which in turn created the need for reorganization of departments into schools. In 1993, the School of Business, Economics and

Communication (BEC), the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSS), and the School of Sciences and Engineering (SSE) were formed (Russell 1994), cementing an American organization structure to accompany its English-language curriculum. In recent years, the School of Business (BUS) was formed as a separate entity, SSE diversified its course offerings and engineering majors, and the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) was formed as a replacement for BEC, with a greater focus on establishing AUC as a center for Middle East and American studies, journalism and women's studies. Likewise, the Graduate School of Education was formed in 2009. These recent developments further situate AUC as a center for academic scholarship, research and teaching in English for Egyptian and regional purposes. This also indicates that the direction of the university has not been focused on departments and programs in HUSS, where the Department of Rhetoric and Composition is located. To the wider AUC community, the department and its minor are most likely footnotes to the wider transformations that have occurred at AUC in the past six years. Still, these developments indicate increased transnational flow of educational ideologies and organizations, adapted for localized purposes, despite the tumult of the Arab Spring and the increase of statewide activity against dissent.

These developments have solidified AUC's status as an English-language institution with administrative organization similar to those found in American universities that served the professional and technical needs of Egypt, a status linked to Sadat's reorientation of Egyptian economic and political policies after Nasser. Gone were ties to the Soviet Union and close adherence to socialism; in their place, relations with the United States and other Western countries, and an economic approach encouraging investment and foreign capital. This opened the door not only for economic expansion and political realignment with the West, but the introduction of transnational educational ideologies, materials and peoples.

This led to the educational and administrative developments described earlier, and fostered the development of the writing unit into one more closely aligned with United States-based programs.

The program that would eventually become the RHET department was formed in the 1970's, during the university's expansion in response to more favorable economic and sociocultural conditions in Egypt for trained, English-speaking Egyptian AUC graduates. Prior to this period, the writing unit—formed in 1957, very close to the time when the ELI was formed—consisted of a two-course sequence taught by a small contingent of faculty who held bachelor's degrees. In the 1970's, master's level faculty were hired for the specific purpose of teaching writing, with particular focus on addressing problems with English-language writing ability among AUC students. This would be consistent with the dramatic change in the status of English under Sadat's political and economic postures and the expansion in AUC's offerings and administrative infrastructure corresponding with these developments. As such, the reorganization of the writing program during that period was tied to the economic and political changes in Egypt that had created the "inflow" of transnational educational ideologies into AUC.

The three-course sequence developed in the 1970's was deliberately focused on the students in their first year, was pass-fail, and included a tutorial wherein students received instruction in writing for their majors with a writing tutor. In 1979, the Freshman Writing Program replaced the tutorial approach. The program consisted of two courses, one in rhetorical modes and another in research writing. Foreign hires from abroad increased, a development that correlated with political, economic and ideological reprioritizing by the Sadat administration. This finding clearly links developments in the Egyptian state to

transnational “flows” in a Writing Program that was beginning to resemble those located in the United States.

The unit was renamed the Writing Program and began to position itself as an American-styled composition program in 2001, when course offerings and requirements were revised to reflect the WPA Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition. These revisions were made in part due to student perception of the writing courses as irrelevant and persistent complaints among AUC faculty that students could not write at a college level. Closer adherence to program and pedagogical orientations in the area of North American composition studies was used to bring about improvements to the program that overlapped with, and perhaps enabled, a move toward independence from ECLT that will be described shortly. This also demonstrates the way in which the transnational “flow” of disciplinary ideologies and orientations was enabled through earlier flows described earlier, which correlated to changes in Egyptian state ideologies, politics and economic policies.

The centerpiece of this revision was a three-course sequence in analysis, argument and research writing was developed. These courses were graded. Upper-division courses in business communication, technical communication and writing in the humanities and social sciences were created, which is a more expansive version of upper-division offerings at AUB.

According to Van Dyke, the RHET department’s associated chair and a teacher and administrator in the unit since 1981, this revision was among many measures taken by the Writing Program to secure independence from the Department of English and Comparative Literature, where it had been housed since the 1970’s. Since that time, the unit had expanded to include dozens of faculty. By 2004, the Writing Program had achieved budgetary independence from ECLT; the following year, the program won independent hiring

authority. Two years later, the program's petition for severance from ECLT was granted, and the independent Department of Rhetoric and Composition was formed. One of its first initiatives was the development of a proposal for the Rhetoric and Writing Minor. All of these developments are in line with disciplinary developments in writing and composition studies dating back to the 1980's, when an increased call for unit independence from English led to standalone writing programs and departments with robust major and minor programs in addition to the traditional first year writing program. This further demonstrates that, for the writing unit, the transnational flow of writing and composition studies developments in the United States, empowered through earlier transnational flows linked to local developments, was a deliberate action that would benefit the unit by aligning it with recent developments in writing programs in the United States it had come to closely resemble through the years.

The development of the writing unit since the 1970's runs parallel with other departmental and administrative developments that created a university orientation and infrastructure more closely resembling those of universities in the United States. That the writing unit would eventually adopt WPA outcomes, seek independence and develop a minor is consistent with wider developments in writing programs and departments in the United States. At AUC, these developments were built upon changes in society, culture, economics and politics in the 1970's that brought about demand for highly English-literate Egyptians to work in the changing economy. The writing unit is bound up in these changes and developments, just as it is also bound up in the move toward independence and disciplinarity characterizing writing units in the United States (O'Neill, Crow and Burton, 2002). At the same time, the unit was hiring a diverse array of faculty from several countries and several academic and professional backgrounds, with varying attitudes toward the status

of AUC as Egypt's flagship university and the increasingly Americanized views toward literacy learning in the writing unit. These attitudes and agendas are part of the culture of a new department that undertook the task of establishing a writing minor in two steps: development and passage followed closely by revision. This is part of what makes the department a "contested" space wherein the various "mixed motives, antipathies and ambivalence with which so much literacy is learned and practiced" (Brandt 2001: 8)—tension between the orientation of the university and the department and the values, attitudes and backgrounds of those teaching courses and developing curriculum. How this tension is infused with the process of curricular revision as an aspect of the department's culture that this study seeks to describe.

Conclusion

These histories show that both AUC and AUB are unique transnational locales in the Middle East, in that they have been present in the region for a long period of time. Because of this, these institutions have adapted through many political, cultural, social and sectarian changes, which have impacted various transnational flows of ideologies, materials and peoples into and out of the region. Likewise, the nature of these flows has changed. These universities were founded by missionaries with the authorization of colonial authorities; in recent decades, these institutions have deliberately oriented themselves more closely with the style of U.S. institutions, which has led to an influx of transnational educational ideologies, materials and people into these countries.

For Egypt and AUC, the transnational flow of language and educational ideologies from the West was slowed during the period of pan-Arab nationalism. When this period ended, the local needs for English language and associated professional and academic literacies transformed the purpose of an AUC education. As Egypt welcomed foreign

businesses and investment into the country, and as President Sadat realigned Egypt with the United States over the Soviet Union, AUC's English-language education grew increasingly relevant to Egypt's new situation. This altered "flow" of transnational educational ideologies, peoples and materials into the country in the late 1970's was catalyzed by the economic, political and ideological shifts in the country. Because of this, AUC began to build the programs and organization more closely resembling those of U.S. institutions. This change also impacted the writing unit, which in 1979 was renamed the Freshman Writing Program. In time, this unit purposefully aligned itself with the WPA learning outcomes. This not only began a more overt alignment with rhetoric and composition studies in the United States, it also reflected the relative ease with which transnational ideologies can be accessed, transferred and integrated into a geographically foreign site in the time of the Internet. It also suggested that a university increasingly aligning itself after the U.S. model had created dilemmas for the writing unit not unlike those found at universities in the United States. Together with sections of the literature review, which differentiated AUC and AUB from IBCs and other, recent transnational educational endeavors in the United States, this history chapter has described the ways in which AUC has succeeded over the long term in adapting to changed circumstances, and how it benefitted from changed priorities in the Egyptian state that resulted in a more pronounced "inflow" of U.S.-based educational ideologies and organization. This chapter has also considered the ways in which AUC and AUB are similar and different as unique transnational educational sites in the region.

CHAPTER 4. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Initial Contact

Participants were undergraduates enrolled in writing courses at the American University in Cairo in 2014. Initially, the study sought to interview only graduates of public high schools in the region, as this group is the primary focus of the study. However, during the process of seeking participants, several students who were not public school graduates volunteered for the study. This made it possible for the study to consider a range of schooling backgrounds—including public school graduates—and to contrast the experiences and backgrounds of public school graduates with students from other backgrounds. Providing for a range of student backgrounds could help to contextualize the experiences of public school graduates within the study, and would diversify the ways in which intranational people experienced different kinds of intercultural adjustments as they entered and participated in the social and academic culture of AUC. In total, five AUC undergraduates participated in the study.

Subjects were identified using the following procedures. Writing faculty and administrators in the writing unit at the Department of Rhetoric and Composition at AUC distributed an e-mail written by me (see appendix) to their writing classes, inviting any student who graduated from a public high school in the Middle East to participate in the study. Interested students contacted me directly. As stated earlier, some non-public school graduates contacted me and volunteered to participate; given the aforementioned advantages to the study of interviewing students from a range of backgrounds, I decided to interview students regardless of background, so long as public school graduates were included and the total number of public school graduates interviewed was not disproportionately small compared to the total number of participants. Interested students were asked to respond with

the following information: their year at university, the writing courses in which they were presently enrolled, their home city/town/village and governorate, and the name of their public high school from which they graduated. This information would help ensure diversity of geographic and schooling backgrounds. Participants provided this information directly to me by e-mail. Five students contacted me, and I interviewed all five for the study. Students were asked to provide an essay from a previous writing class that would be used as part of the study (see below). Farah volunteered an essay from a non-writing course but, as the topic of the essay she provided was of great personal importance to her and addressed both her home community and an important affiliation she had developed with a non-governmental organization (NGO) at home, the essay appeared particularly apt for the study.

An incentive was provided to those who participated: AUC students were paid \$20 (approximately 140 Egyptian pounds).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted on Skype, recorded using Audacity, and were comprised of two parts. The first interview was an educational history interview. Participants shared their educational backgrounds, ranging from their home communities to their experiences at their undergraduate institutions. Of interest in this interview: the culture of their home schools and communities, challenges experienced by these students upon entering university, educational models in their public schools, attitudes toward English writing, educational and career agendas, role of educational context in topic selection and in attitudes expressed toward topics.

The second interview was cognitive, where participants were asked questions about pieces of writing, produced in writing classes at AUC, which they volunteered for use in this study. Subjects were asked to describe their writing process in composing the essays they

volunteered for the study. Of particular interest: challenges encountered while working on the writing assignment, strategies and resources used to address these challenges.

The purpose for the two interviews was to link students' perceptions of their sociocultural experiences in and agendas for education, ranging from secondary school to the university and including attitudes and perceptions about the purpose(s) for an American-style education, with their choices and processes regarding specific writing assignments at AUC, in order to consider the ways in which their backgrounds correlate with academic, language and sociocultural challenges that are taken up through literacy learning experiences. See appendix for interview protocols.

Transcripts from interviews done with AUC participants were done by Joseph Watson, an undergraduate at the University of California, Santa Barbara who enrolled in an independent study to earn course credit for his work. Audio files and transcriptions were transmitted using Dropbox, a secure, encrypted transmission method. Participants were provided with transcripts of the interviews and were permitted to redact any information they considered too sensitive or revealing; however, no participants asked for any information to be redacted.

Analysis and Design

The analysis is based on findings generated by the coding schema and will be comprised of the following parts.

Educational Histories

The educational histories of the participants will be narrated; wherever possible, these stories will rely on the words of the participants themselves. There are several areas within these narratives relevant to the study which warrant analysis.

These educational histories focus on the educational culture of participants' home communities. These will be focus on their education in writing (in both English and Arabic—and in one case, in French), including the nature and quality of their education in writing, the types of and purposes for writing tasks, the topics and attitudes permissible in secondary school, and differences in their experience in university writing classes compared to high school. This is significant for the study as it characterizes the nature of participants' intranational positionality in terms of education, literacy and language, which will impact the ways in which they enter AUC, a transnational site, and experience varying cultural challenges as they participate socially and academically at AUC.

Following the educational narratives of the five participants, findings will be considered and analyzed. Similarities and differences in the following areas will be discussed: educational culture in secondary school (including infrastructure, teaching methods and curriculum), writing instruction (in English, Arabic and/or additional languages), differences in writing instruction by language, acceptable writing topics and attitudes about said topics. From this, the relationship between participants' home communities and schools, and their experience with English and other forms of literacy, can be extrapolated. Likewise, comparisons and contrasts between participants can be drawn. Of particular interest will be findings that identify what makes the backgrounds of public school graduates unique from those students who hail from other backgrounds, particularly in the areas of language and literacy. These findings will be considered with paradigms and limitations of the reviewed literature in context with subsequent findings in later chapters.

Initial Positionality at AUC

Following discussion of educational histories, the next chapter will consider the varied nature of participant acculturation to the social, educational and linguistic culture of

AUC as they traverse intranationally and interculturally into the AUC context. The limitations in the relevant scholarship will be addressed at this time, and new configurations that can account for the interaction of a transnational context such as AUC with intranational people traversing intercultural borders will be described. Of particular interest is the nature of the “crossing” socially, academically, linguistically and in terms of literacy, and the ways in which the positionality established in the previous chapter connects with the ways in which participants experience challenges in this “crossing.”

Situated Literacy

Following the narration and analysis of the educational life stories and acculturation to AUC, participants’ experiences with situated literacy will be described and analyzed. Each participant provided a writing sample from a university class; these writing samples will be summarized briefly.

There are two primary areas of interest for description and analysis. The first area of interest concerns the resources upon which participants drew while completing the assignment. In this area, the composing process for each participant will be described, with particular focus on what kinds of literacy challenges each participant encountered, the ways in which these challenges were or were not resolved, and the kinds of resources and activities were used for this purpose. Resulting analysis will consider the ways in which findings represent participants’ participation in the process of literacy learning at AUC.

The second area of interest in this chapter concerns topic selection and attitudes and views expressed toward writing topics as one specific measure of their participation in the process of their literacy learning. The study will consider the relationship between topic selection and attitude toward topic and students’ writing instruction in English and Arabic (or, in one case, French), as well as other aspects of their backgrounds. Through this

analysis, participants' original positionality will be considered, in order to individually characterize the ways in which the experience of writing challenges, the use of resources for literacy and the ways in which participants address available topics at AUC frame the different ways in which these intranational people have traversed intercultural borders when they come to AUC, and the different ways in which participation in the AUC context, as a transnationally-constructed space that is experienced by participants as an intercultural experience, is enacted through literacy.

Significance and Limitations

The central significance of this study connects educational life histories with specific instances of writing development, considering the variables of their educational backgrounds as forms of positionality that inform the nature of their "crossing" into an AUC context that is characterized as both transnational (from the perspective of the formation of the space through time) and intercultural (from the perspectives of the participants who, in traversing an intranational border, experience AUC as a cultural space socially and academically). This allows us to observe the ways in which participants from different educational backgrounds encounter educational, social and linguistic challenges when they enter AUC, experiences which are seen as primarily cultural by the participants. The ways in which participants participate in literacy learning experience can account not only for the relationship of this participation to their previous positionality and the nature of their acculturation to AUC, but, most centrally, the ways in which their interaction with a sustained literacy experience at AUC influenced participant outlooks about the purpose and possibilities for literacy at AUC and beyond, as well as the ways in which these encounters may have influenced participant identity and future possibilities.

This central significance is accompanied by several limitations. Because this study focuses on a small number of participants, findings cannot be generalized onto the entire student population or even specific sub-group of the population. Likewise, a representative demographic sample was not sought, which further limits the generalizability of findings. Any attempt to utilize findings for the purposes of generalizable analysis or commentary would be erroneous. However, given the cultural preference for questionnaires and other form of macro data collection, this study may represent a relatively rare opportunity to gain in depth what its methodological focus may sacrifice in breadth.

Participant Profiles

Aalaa. Public school graduate from Beni Suef, a rural governorate and city in Middle Egypt.

Karim. Attended a private school but switched to a national curriculum following 10th grade. He is from Cairo city and governorate.

Sanaa. Attended private American high school. Attended several different schools prior to joining the American school. She is from New Cairo city and Cairo governorate.

Farah. Public school graduate from Zagazig in the governorate of Sharqia in the Nile Delta

Nour. Private, French-language school graduate from Cairo city and governorate.

CHAPTER 5. ESTABLISHING POSITIONALITY: EDUCATIONAL HISTORIES

Now that the unique and specific nature of the transnational AUC context has been established through a theorized transnational history and the review of literature, the next concern for the study is to establish the backgrounds that form the grounds upon which the positions of study participants at AUC are established, who are Egyptians who “flow” into AUC from a range of educational and literacy positions. In this chapter, then, the educational histories of participants will be narrated and compared, as a way to gauge the basis for the positionality they will assume upon entering AUC. Through this, the study can characterize the nature of their “crossing” into the transnational AUC context (see Chapter Six). Of particular interest will be their educational cultures and the kinds of literacy practiced in these educational cultures: the kinds of topics about which participants were authorized to write, the kinds of attitudes they could express and the languages available will be used to characterize the kinds of educational, language and literacy capital each participant accrued prior to coming to AUC. These findings will then be used to frame the different ways in which these intranational participants intersect with the transnational AUC context, as well as the ways in which they participate and are affected by the social, educational and literacy cultures.

Achieving this requires extensions of concepts established in previously reviewed literature. Levitt and Schiller (2004) extended Bourdieu’s concept of the social field to frame the nature of transnationalism in migrants, a frame that will be useful to this study. Bourdieu’s conceptualization of the social field involves individuals within a structured space, in which “people’s relation to one another are determined by the relative distribution of different kinds of resources or capital” (Warriner and Lam 2012: p. 194). Capital, according to Bourdieu, can take the form of social capital (affiliations and networks) and

cultural capital, which includes knowledge, skills and credentials. The field considers literacy a form of cultural capital.

In transnationalism as defined within migrant and literacy studies, Bourdieu's conceptualization has been extended to include the interactions between migrants and people and institutions across borders in many studies (summarize), thus the conceptualization of the transnational social field. In this study, the conceptual extension by Levitt and Schiller will be configured to address a related, but unique, interaction between actors and the fields within which they interact. For Levitt and Schiller, individuals cross borders and interact with social fields on the other side of the crossing, leading to many kinds of interactions based upon the ways in which resources and capital are taken up within the transnational social field in a migrant's new situation. For this study, it is the *field* that has "flowed" across borders. As described in earlier chapters, AUC is a specific kind of transnational space, infused with people and ideologies associated with higher education in the United States, but which is uniquely Egyptian in that it serves a range of social, educational, professional and economic needs within the country. This field is peopled primarily by students who come from *within* Egypt, the nature of whose movement is intranational (moving within Egypt) and whose interaction with AUC is intercultural, that of crossing into a new social field infused with U.S. ideologies which is nevertheless an *Egyptian* social field, albeit a unique and unusual one.

The purpose for this chapter is to establish the ways in which educational, literacy and language, as forms of capital, developed through the educational experiences of participants prior to arriving at AUC. To achieve this, the chapter will be organized as follows: the chapter will be situated within existing scholarship in literacy studies and Middle East education research. Next, each participant will be discussed individually, with a

summary of their educational history and consideration of their experiences with literacy in English and Arabic (and in one case, French) in secondary school. A concluding section will analyze participants' educational histories and experiences with literacy in context with one another and in the context of relevant scholarship in literacy studies, with particular emphasis on what this discussion reveals about the educational and literate cultures of public school graduates. Subsequent chapters will contextualize these findings by accounting for the ways in which this capital is taken up within the field as participants report on the ways in which they participated. A concluding discussion chapter will frame the way in which intranational, intercultural movement into transnational spaces, particularly those involving education, literacy and language, requires an extension of existing concepts within literacy studies that can account for this kind of configuration.

Frame

This chapter is situated broadly within New Literacy Studies scholarship, most notably within Street's (1995) argument that literacy, as an ideological instrument, generates socioculturally situated literacy practices, which "refer to both behavior and the social and cultural conceptualizations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing" (p. 2). Indeed, this chapter focuses on literacy practices within Egyptian secondary schools, the social and cultural consequences for participants in the study, and the ways in which these practices reflect "power relations which are played out in literacy activity" (Baynham 2004, p. 286). The activities and practices of literacy among the participants accounts for their positionality in relationship to one another, in terms of education, literacy and language, at AUC This study is situated between local literate practices, such as those schooling literacies described by students in their schooling environments in this chapter, and the distant ideological agenda of the state that determines what is written about in each language and in

what way it is written about. The nature of this “situatedness” reveals positionality. In this respect, the chapter considers how “regional and local flows of information” (Luke 2004, p. 331) within educational contexts in Egypt reveal asymmetries of power through literacy sponsorship on the part of distant government and administrative authorities, who “regulate, suppress, [and] withhold literacy” (Brandt 2001, p. 19) from public school students and, to a lesser degree, those from private schools. This regulation of regional and local flows of education through educational policy and literacy practices, and the ways in which this differs among the participants, will also reveal their relative positionality. This positionality will also be reflected through discussion of relevant scholarship.

In describing the different educational circumstances of a range of students, the particular challenges encountered by public school graduates in a rigid ideological and nationalist educational setting will be a priority. As we will see, participants in public schools and/or the national curriculum were aware that Arabic and English literacies were ideological tools of the state, with the social rules governing literate practices resulting in reified nationalist themes in Arabic writing and utilitarian, non-ideological English literacies which, though they were designed to meet the basic requirements of the Egyptian national curriculum, reflect regional ambivalence about the presence of English as a cultural apparatus of the West (Al Haq and Smadi 1996, Al-Tamimi and Shuib 2009) and a preference for rote memorization over invention and originality in writing.

Nour

Educational History

Nour comes from a bilingual Arabic and French-speaking family and attended a French-speaking private secondary school in central Cairo. She described her school in largely positive terms. Unlike “Egyptian school,” her private school included all grade

levels, so she “didn’t have like three years here and three years here and so on.”

Additionally, Nour estimated that her school had only three to four hundred students in total, including the grades beneath the secondary school level. She described her classrooms as orderly and comfortable, and that her schedule ran from eight in the morning until five in the evening. There were no evening courses or private tutoring, unlike those who attended public school.

A prominent theme in Nour’s educational history was the presence of choice, associated with both her schooling and socioeconomic class. At several junctures, Nour had options and could select the ones that she preferred or which would give her what she considered the greatest advantage. For example, she had the opportunity to study either a French or Egyptian system, similar to Karim’s choice between an American or Egyptian system (see below). She selected the French system in part because she disliked the Egyptian system’s focus on memorization: “[In the Egyptian system,] you have to go to school and then take private lessons [...] you will pass your exams by memorizing, and that’s not what I wanted.” That she had an option and was aware of the differences among her options indicates that she had already had prior exposure to these different approaches and had developed a preference based on these experiences. This ability to choose implies the complex interplay of economic, cultural and social capital as a result of her privilege. As she makes clear below, those Egyptian who are wealthy enjoy social capital, such a, that can be parlayed into the kind of cultural capital beneficial that can be taken up within the transnational field of AUC.

Nour explained that Egyptians “who have money” are able to send their children to private schools in Egypt that charge tuition, and that those Egyptians from lower economic classes do not enjoy these options and are relegated to the public schools. She described her

family as one of financial means, and because of this, they were able to secure education for their children in a private school. As we will see with the other participants, economic capital in the form of a family's material wealth is parlayed into forms of social capital, such as the choice to select tuition-based private schooling, that generates the kinds of knowledge, skills and credentials that would more easily transfer into the transnational field than others. She also considered French "one of her favorite languages" and wanted an opportunity to learn this language, which is associated with her family background (there is a small minority of French speakers in Egypt, and a limited number of French-language schools). Interestingly, Nour's affinity for French is one aspect of her family's capital profile that limits her transfer into AUC, as she finds herself lacking the English background that many wealthy Egyptians are able to secure for themselves.

There are two other ways in which her educational story is characterized by choice. Nour cited having choice in her selection of classes, as she was able to pick from many possible classes the ones that suited her interests. This indicates that the curriculum in Nour's school offered an expanded curriculum from which students could select focus areas according to their preferences, a form of cultural capital that was enabled through her ability to select the kind of school she wanted—which was based in the economic profile of her family. In their descriptions of the Egyptian public schools, Karim, Farah, Aalaa indicated limited electives, describing instead a rigid, standardized curriculum with strict social rules governing literacy (see below). Finally, Nour stated that she preferred writing as a method of assessment, and that she was "not really good at multiple choice because I'm not used to it." This indicates that she was experienced with producing kinds of writing and literacy capital that included relative freedom of expression, a disposition that lent itself to a comfortable transition into the transnational field of AUC.

Language and Acceptable Topics

Within the area of literacy production, Nour lacked significant experience in English, which was her third language after French, the family language, and Arabic, the national and regional language. Lacking significant English language capital impacted her transition to the transnational field, as we will see in Chapter Six. According to Nour, she would sometimes engage in simple, short answer reading comprehension questions, or in translating short passages from English into French. She did not write a complete essay in English in high school, which she suggested accounted for much of her difficulty in adjusting to an English-only educational context AUC. Because of this, and despite her many educational advantages, the extent and type of Nour's English language and writing education more closely reflects the graduates of public schools than Karim or Sanaa, both of whom studied English from an early age. For example, her experience with English appears to be non-ideological. English writing was not used to address social, cultural or political topics, but, as described above, was used only for basic comprehension and translation exercises. As a result, Nour practiced a non-ideological production of English-language literacy, which indicates that even among wealthy Egyptians with agendas for English-language education at AUC, there is ambivalence about the ways in which English, a needed form of linguistic capital, should be taught and learned in school. That said, Nour did not experience overt control over the content of her writing like those who graduated from public school (see below). These findings are consistent with scholarship in the review of literature about regional attitudes regarding English, and the ways in which Nour's literacy profile as an experienced writer with limited English language ability is taken up within the transnational field will be taken up in Chapter Six.

Educational History

Sanaa comes from an affluent family in New Cairo, one of the new suburbs arising in the high desert above the din and pollution of the Nile River Valley. She described her high school system as “American” and noted the regular absence of teachers from the United States as indicative of the relative poor quality of instruction. For her, the social capital of affiliation not just with an American educational “brand” but with Americans themselves is an important measure of her school’s status, and may help account for her particular interest in attending AUC. This also reveals a preoccupation with social and cultural status that may be driven by a family agenda. She further noted that she had been at many different kinds of schools before joining her American high school, including a German school and an Egyptian school. At the Egyptian school, they were “supposed to study in English but [...] professors just took the easy way and explained it in Arabic because they weren’t really that good in talking in English.” This is the first of many times when Sanaa indicates a preoccupation with spoken English as a kind of social marker indicating status. She reported that it was her mother’s desire for a strong education for her daughter that led to so many changes in Sanaa’s schooling and her eventual arrival at an American, English-language high school. This is consistent with her description of her upbringing, which focused on English over Arabic and included sustained access to English-language capital:

Ever since we were children, my parents would only let us watch English movies, English cartoons and [...] our toys and our games and everything and to the extent that when I was a child, my sister and I, we never communicated in Arabic. At the ages of about six, seven, eight, and nine we never communicated in Arabic—we talked in English and only in English. [...] My mother thought that if she exposed us to English cartoons and everything in English when we were children we would grow up acquiring the accent even if we didn’t get it in school.

Notable in this quotation is the fact that Sanaa and her sister did not communicate in Arabic, but only in English. They also watched English-language entertainment programs and played with English-language toys, forms of cultural capital that, when combined with an earlier of spoken English, appears to indicate that a certain kind of spoken English had significant social status within this family. Likewise, for Sanaa and family, access to English itself was not sufficient; it appears as though the contact needed to be direct, from preferring interactions with American teachers to playing with English-language forms of entertainment that originated in English-language national contexts. The preference for these transnational artifacts animates the way in which economic capital was deployed to generate cultural and social capital: an acceptable accent and access to American teachers within Egypt.

These outcomes resulted in other forms of capital relevant to this study; notably, Sanaa gained experience reading Western literature and writing literary analysis in her American high school. Of course, this kind of literacy practice has been common in U.S. schools for decades; being familiar with Western literature and having knowledge of the means by which to utilize literacy in writing about this literature may be another form of cultural capital germane to wealthy Egyptians and to Sanaa's family in particular. Additionally, Sanaa noted the availability of Prentice-Hall textbooks in her classes, another transnational artifact that she cited as a way to give credibility to her American educational training. If anything, this kind of capital, originating from an English-speaking national context, would make it less difficult to transition to the transnational AUC context, as Sanaa's experiences with literacy, education and language were engineered to approximate the experiences of a native speaker in these three ways.

Sanaa's literacy experiences in English in high school tended to focus on the conventional: learning to use the five-paragraph essay for literary analysis, and practice in the topics and conventions appropriate for the SAT writing examination and college entrance essays. In all cases, then, Sanaa's literacy profile in English focused on conventional and non-variable genres, which correlated with a similarly limited number of topics. These literacy experiences were almost wholly devoted to gaining entrance to AUC and possessing the genre abilities necessary for competence in the context; as we will see, her acculturation to the social, educational and literacy culture of the transnational space was the least troubled of all the participants.

Sanaa's training in the five-paragraph essay was, to her, "very basic." As we will see, such training would not be considered basic by participants whose language and literacy profiles were either more basic or altogether lacking. According to Sanaa, teachers would instruct in the forms of "how to have a thesis statement, how to have a topic sentence for each paragraph, how to have a conclusion." Then, students would be given prompts and write essays that, if they followed the format, would be given a perfect grade. Thus, a significant form of literacy capital she accrued in her schooling was adherence to a genre format that was given priority over topic and expression of ideas. The kind of knowledge and skill, as forms of cultural capital easily transferable to the transnational site, is also limiting in ways we will see in Chapter Seven.

Sanaa's training in acceptable topics is another form of cultural literacy capital that both transfers easily to AUC but limits what she is able to express in her writing in ways that will become clear in later chapters. Students in SAT preparatory course were provided with sample essays and taught to imitate the structure and the themes, which Sanaa described as "we're hard workers and that education is very important and AUC is the best education in

the world and things like that.” Additionally, students learned the literacy practice of including role models in college application essays. Interestingly, Sanaa recalled only Martin Luther King, Jr. as one of the role models suggested to her. This helps position Sanaa as possessing the most “American” educational background of the participants, as even the examples she would use for a culturally-situated genre such as the college entrance essay were derived from American, and not Arab, culture. For these reasons, it appears as though Sanaa has benefitted from other transnational educational “flows” into Egypt, which, as we will see, eased her path to AUC.

This story reveals several salient details about Sanaa’s training in English at her American high school, and the purpose for such writing. First, there was much focus on formal correctness of the academic genre, as well as practice in the college entrance and/or SAT essay, a related genre. In both cases, genres are described by Sanaa as formulaic. So long as she stayed within acceptable topics, the actual content of the essay was secondary to its genre norms. Her training in writing was limited to literary analysis of British and American authors, and formally and thematically formulaic essays relevant to college admission. For Sanaa, university admission meant admission to AUC, and the themes she learned appear tailored specifically for AUC and no other university in Egypt. Indeed, she confirms that her interest in English literature contributed to her interest in attending AUC, and that her parents did not want her to attend a public university like Ain Shams University or Cairo University. One can observe a clear link between her forms of social and cultural capital throughout her upbringing and the ultimate agenda to attend AUC, itself a form of social and cultural capital, albeit of a uniquely transnational sort.

Like others in this study, Sanaa’s Arabic writing was expected to portray an idealized Egyptian national ethos. That her education coincided with the Egyptian Revolution and the

ouster of long-time president Hosni Mubarak presented challenges in this regard. When Mubarak was still in office, Sanaa reported that her high school held an assembly to inform students not to support the “civil disobedience” in Tahrir Square. However, once Mubarak was ousted, Sanaa would be prompted to write about the “youth” who had instigated the revolution and who were “amazing.” According to Sanaa, this was accompanied by another form of idealism: that the country’s religious sects were in harmony with one another, despite evidence of increasing sectarian tensions in Egypt during this time. As with other participants who reported significant Arabic writing in school, Arabic was the language where it was appropriate to write about issues pertaining to national issues. This form of literacy sponsorship meant that reality was reconfigured within the rules of sponsorship, such that Egypt could always be presented in an ideal light, even of this meant enforcing radically differing account of the revolutionaries.

Sanaa also described the role of school administration in shaping student attitudes about the government through the rules of literacy sponsorship. According to Sanaa, it was school administration who identified the revolutionaries as perpetrators of civil disobedience, even as national curriculum later recast them as national heroes. Likewise, Sanaa stated that it was never appropriate to criticize the government at any point; however, it was also clear to Sanaa that school administrators were not supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood. During the brief interlude of Brotherhood rule, students and administrators at this school had arrived at an impasse: how to avoid praising the Brotherhood while also maintaining an idealized Egyptian nationalist ethos. Indeed, Sanaa claimed that “any kind of behavior that stood against the government, we can’t even talk about it in class, you know? [...] If the principal finds out we’re discussing something against the government, we would get in trouble.” Interestingly, the attitudes of school administrators to the Muslim

Brotherhood, as well as parental objections to the inclusion of non-Islamic texts in school, strongly imply the presence of the sectarian tensions that students are never allowed to acknowledge in their writing. These are the first significant indications of an expectation of nationalist ideologies in student writing in Arabic. These indication will be seen again, more prominently, in the histories of public school students.

Summary

Sanaa has had long experience with English, in the form of English language toys and media, along with a home culture where she and her sister learned to communicate using English instead of Arabic. She also switched schools many times until she enrolled in an American school, where she learned how to write basic genre germane to the academy, and engage in analysis of Western literature. These forms of social and cultural capital, enabled almost certainly through the high socioeconomic class of her family, were parlayed into a higher form of capital, an AUC education. Her Arabic literacy, however, was less about gaining capital and parlaying it into more capital (AUC) as it was about the sponsorship of authorized attitudes about Egyptian ethos, to the extent that developments would be reconfigured within the literacy events to fit the strict rules of sponsorship. This implies that, while English literacy, even in the limited forms with which she engaged it, is a language and literacy of social and cultural capital for Sanaa (and others, as we will see), Arabic literacy was parlayed into the maintenance of enforced, reified nationalist ideologies.

Karim

Educational History

Karim represents an interesting figure in this study, having started in the English-language, private schooling system only to switch to an Arabic-language national curriculum after tenth grade at the behest of his father. As such, he represents a transition from Nour and

Sanaa, who hail from affluent classes, to Aalaa and Farah, who are self-identified public high school graduates from non-affluent areas outside Cairo.

Although Karim was educated privately in English for most of the years of his education, he later switched to Arabic-language, Egyptian curriculum and graduated with the national degree. According to Karim, he wanted to graduate from the American school, but his father “thought [he] would lose my sense of Arabic literature and culture if I went to that sort of high school, so he insisted that I continue with the national certificate program.” Because of this, his private education ended after the 10th grade and he continued with an Egyptian curriculum for the final two years of high school. This association of Egyptian education with regional identity is consistent with other findings in this chapter, primarily that Egyptian-style schooling is seen as a way to reinforce regional identities.

Karim reported that, upon entering the Egyptian system in preparation for the national examination, he experienced a drastic cultural and educational shift. He described classes as a “zoo” where students did not focus on their school work, receive feedback from or enjoy interaction with their instructors. According to Karim, students focused on extra-curricular tutoring centers, which was considered the best method to prepare for the national examination.

This private tutoring was reported by other participants and is a common facet of the educational infrastructure of public schooling and of preparing for the Egyptian national examination. According to Karim, “classes are laid out in about a straight line, their classes are kind of wide so the classes go in rows [...]. The board is in front of you which is taking the whole wall I think 10 meters wide. And the teacher stands with a [microphone] freehand writing on the board explaining everything.” According to this pattern, students passively copied into notebooks the information they would need to memorize for the examination.

This focus on memorization corroborates patterns for public education described by other participants. It is also a form of cultural capital which, as we will see, does not translate into the transnational AUC context. Participants schooled in this form of interaction will find themselves positioned at AUC in ways that will provide significant challenges.

Karim described the English written portion of the national examination as profoundly beneath his abilities. The first part of the examination, matching sentences to one another, “is something from third grade.” The second part involved giving basic directions, and the third part involved writing a short summary of what one had done the previous weekend. The final part involved finding grammatical errors in sentences. For Karim, the ambivalence toward English within the Egyptian schooling system, which reflects a larger, regional ambivalence observed in the literature, is not known to him. Still, this ambivalence appears to inform the ways in which English and associated literacies are taught and learned in the public system: as a basic, decontextualized form of communication. While this presents significant challenges for language and literacy for others in this study, Karim is ultimately able to draw upon his language and literacy capital from his years in private schooling upon entering AUC.

When this examination is considered in the context of Karim’s English education though the 10th grade, one can see the reason for his reaction to the examination. According to Karim, his early education in English involved mostly reading and responding to reading questions that focused on textual comprehension. Karim described a mostly Western English reading curriculum, mentioning the novels of Charles Dickens several times in the interviews. This changed in the eighth grade, when “[they] complimented the literature we were taught with writing throughout the semester.” They wrote three essays in the eighth grade; by grade ten, students were writing five essays per academic year. Karim reported that

writing tasks became increasingly complex and that, in ninth grade, they were given instruction in the formal aspects of academic essay writing, such as writing introductions, conclusions and body paragraphs.

This contrasts starkly with the kinds of experiences with English-literacy in public school. The ambivalence toward English is not readily evident in the way Karim recollects his private schooling experiences. This establishes private schooling as a location where English, and some literacies and genres associated with it, are considered forms of cultural and social capital with value. Karim, like Sanaa, reads Western literature, which implies that reading and writing about such literature was a form of cultural capital that marked one's socioeconomic status in Egypt. Contrast this with his educational experiences in English following his switch to the Egyptian system following 10th grade:

You were supposed to write a composition about ten lines which was about how you spent your weekend or what did you feed your dog yesterday. It was something really simple and you kind of hated it. All the people that were with me kind of hated the transition that we made because we felt that this was something really simple and you felt that the skills you spent so long building up were being torn down because you weren't practicing at all.

In this schooling culture, Karim was expected to provide English for non-ideological utilitarian purposes, such as giving directions or commenting on a general topic. These topics reflected the expectations of the national exam and, as will be seen below, underscores some of the challenges experienced by public school graduates who did not have Karim's English-language training.

Acceptable Topics in English and Arabic

In Karim's education through the 10th grade, much of the writing was based on reading and responding to Western literature. This, coupled with writing instruction, appears similar to a particular Western mode of writing development: reading and responding to

literature as a form of writing and analytical development. This was a common approach to writing courses at universities in the United States for many decades (Crowley 1998). Additionally, he reported feeling that he had more freedom and flexibility regarding written topics, and attitudes about said topics, when writing in English. Karim's writing education after grade ten was far less complex, in terms of writing and topics. Writing topics in English were apolitical and involved general topics such as describing one's weekend activities and giving directions to a stranger (possibly a tourist) who is lost, as described above. The "split" in Karim's experiences with English-literacy correlate exactly with his changes in schooling. In private schooling, his experiences with Western literary analysis appear to serve the purpose of offering cultural capital, as upper-class Egyptians often read and analyze Western literature consistent with Western approaches, in addition to significant experience with English writing and genres. In public schooling, Karim's experiences involved basic and non-ideological forms of communication.

Karim's experiences with Arabic writing topics and attitudes are different than his split experiences with English. Karim claimed that Arabic writing was highly formulaic and that school writing in Arabic tended to focus on national issues, about which he was expected to reproduce a reified nationalist narrative of development and positivity. He reported that Arabic writing topics were often related to the Egypt, specifically its political, economic and social development, but that one was not supposed to appear critical of the country in any way, offering instead a non-critical, reified portrait of an Egyptian "paradise." The consequences for non-compliance of the social rules governing Arabic writing in school could mean that one might be identified as a political activist by one's teacher, a risky proposition given Egypt's current political situation. Essays with inappropriate attitudes toward Egypt would also be marked down—not for content, claimed Karim, but "for

missing a comma that wasn't even supposed to be put in there. You'll find unreasonable reasons why you are bumped down to that grade." This reified portrait of Egypt that did not encourage students to consider the manifold political, economic, infrastructural, sectarian or sociocultural challenges facing the country: "Writing about a political topic itself you knew you had to be pro-government, you had to praise the president, praise the ministers, and you had to be happy. There is no such thing as unemployment, there is no such thing as government deficit. We're living in paradise, that had to be the words said." This form of sponsorship is similar to that of Sanaa, suggesting that this phenomenon of Arabic literacy extended across the public-private schooling contexts. This is very different than English, where private schooling contexts recognized English as a form of status and capital.

Summary

Karim self-identified as a member of the middle class. He reported many advantages in his education, particularly his early training in English. That said, his written topics in English mostly consisted of analysis of Western literature, similar to the accounts of Sanaa. He reported a dramatic change in the quality and culture of education following the tenth grade, when he acceded to his father's wish that he attend an Egyptian national certificate program. Karim stated that his English writing abilities began to atrophy because the demands were much less rigorous. From the tenth grade through the end of high school, he wrote only about general topics—what he called "practicing dialogue," not practicing writing.

Karim also understood the social rules governing his school writing in Arabic. Producing reified portraits of Egyptian history and society appeared to serve an important nationalist and ideological purpose for the nation. Deviations from this expectation, according to Karim, could lead to identification as an activist and to lower examination

grades. He evidenced no inclination to violate these rules, and like Sanaa, he was strongly aware of their presence.

Farah

Educational History

Farah comes from Zagazig, a city in the Nile River Delta region of Egypt. Of the five students who participated in this study, her acculturation to AUC, both educationally and socially, was the most challenging. Her educational background with writing provides insight into the reasons for Farah's difficulty. She described her public schooling background as a passive experience, one where she "sit[s] in a class and you have to memorize [...] you have to fill out the information on the exam." In preparing for the Egyptian national examination, the traditional capstone for public school students, Farah described the culture of memorization in several ways. In one example, "[s]ome of the teachers [...] will just go in the class and just write the definition of something and then repeat it again and again and again, and you have to memorize it even if you don't understand it." Not surprisingly, Farah claimed that this impacted student learning, providing an example where students could memorize mathematical concepts and perform well on the standardized test without understanding the concept well enough to apply it onto problems that did not appear on the test. This also happened with writing, where Farah said teachers could "expect" the topic that would appear on the national examination and could instruct students in how to compose a memorized essay that would pass the examination, even if students did not understand the content of what they were writing.

This approach to examination preparation is mirrored in how Farah describes the overarching pedagogy of English writing instruction, where students would learn memorize sentences they could plug into incomplete paragraphs in their school work. For Farah, this

was not only unhelpful, but it was not writing: “You don’t have to invent [...]. You just have a sentence in mind and you write it.” This is also similar to the work Karim describes as coming from “third grade” and appears to be beneath the ambitions of Farah, who views writing as an act of invention rather than simple fill-in answers or memorization of paragraphs to pass a test. Likewise, Farah reported that much English language instruction was done in Arabic and that English-language quizzes were simply memorized ahead of time, as her teachers did not have the language ability to instruct in English (interestingly, this is the lone area where Nour and Farah claim similar experience). These experiences not only reflect those of Karim and the ambivalence expressed toward English in the regional literature, but they also contribute to Farah’s positionality with English and literacy once she enters the transnational AUC context (see Chapter Six).

Another significant aspect of Farah’s home educational culture were the extra-curricular tutorials to prepare for the national examination. These tutorials are a common part of the public educational sector. According to Farah, the tutorials were such a tacit expectation that it never occurred to students and their families that they should not enroll in these courses: “Everybody did this. Like it’s crazy if you didn’t do this.” She described the main benefit of the tutorial as having instructor access and the opportunity to ask questions that can lead to greater understanding of content—although, as she pointed out, the tutorials are not a cure-all for public secondary education: “The private lessons [...] give you more space because in [regular classes], some of them don’t even explain so the private lesson for you is something that serves you to understand at least fifty percent.” Farah reported the tutorials are taught by some of the public school teachers themselves—either those who teach at the local school or who teach in another area and who augment their low salaries by teaching tutorials.

Acceptable Writing Topics

Farah described her English writing topics as general and non-academic, similar to Karim's experiences with English writing in the national curriculum. She recalled an assignment that required her to write a letter to friends. She also claimed that she wrote on a limited number of English topics. It seems likely that appropriate English writing topics coincided with those that would appear on the national examination, where English topics were also general. These findings are consistent with the experiences reported by Karim. That said, Farah additionally described an educational culture where it seems likely that many students did not develop even alphabetic literacy in English, and those who did wrote in basic ways about general topics that corresponded only to the need of the national examination. While this is in some ways similar to Karim's experience in the national curriculum, the perspective is radically different. While Karim found the national curriculum in English beneath the abilities he had developed in private schooling, Farah had few options when it came to learning English, both in terms of alphabetic literacy and in the ability to "invent" ideas using the language. This underscores the positionality with which Farah entered AUC when compared to participants like Karim and Sanaa. Likewise, Farah reported no practice with critical thinking or analysis; while Nour, Sanaa and Karim report their own challenges, in the context of this study, each had training in writing and critical thinking that could be more easily adapted to an environment like AUC than Farah, whose primary experience with writing in English was not to "invent," but to generate text within acceptable parameters and pass an examination that encouraged memorization of written text without comprehending it. This appears to extend from ambivalence in the region toward English that has impacted educational policy, along with a lack of qualified teachers to instruct in English. This also strongly indicates that Farah lacked the kinds of social and

cultural capital Nour, Sanaa and even Karim reported in the areas of education, English and literacy.

Aalaa

Educational History

Aalaa is from Beni Suef, the largest city in a governorate by the same name. Located in Middle Egypt along the banks of the Nile River, the area is considered one of the most economically depressed parts of Egypt. Aalaa attended high school at Suzanne Mubarak School, named after the country's former first lady, a public high school that offered an Egyptian national degree certificate. Like Farah, Aalaa describes the competence of her teachers in negative terms, claiming that many teachers were not qualified to teach the curriculum and would focus instead on keeping students quiet—even if they were not engaging in school-related activities:

My experience with my high school wasn't that good because teachers were not qualified enough to give us the material we should take and the subjects we should have exams on at the end of the year. [...] [A]lso the teachers [did] not always teach that class, he supposed just to enter the class and keep the class quiet, that's it.

Aalaa was required to declare a major course of study at the beginning of high school, a feature similar to British secondary schooling. She was one of only two students to declare a science major; they were separated from the rest of the school and, when the other science major did not come to school—which was often—her teacher would simply allow Aalaa to work alone, without offering any direction: “Today, I'm not giving you the class. Yeah, just do anything, whatever you want.” Perhaps because of experiences like this, Aalaa reports that students were compelled to take extra tutorials in the evenings, as Farah and others have reported. These tutorials, as forms of supplementary capital, were intended to fill the gap between formal education and the expectations of the Egyptian national examination. These

tutorials also allowed public school teachers to supplement their low wages by charging tuition to families who may feel they have no other option.

Aalaa's educational history was significantly impacted by two developments. The first was the influence of her mother, herself a teacher who took it upon herself to thread English language instruction into daily domestic activities:

We were speaking to each other [in English]. This was weird, by the way, in the Egyptian society as a whole. When she was in the kitchen, it's like, let's have very small conversations, okay? Yeah, this helped me to develop my English a little. [...] She told me, 'Just tell me what you did in your school today but in English.' [...] My mother was trying to help me to pronounce words correctly when I was ten, so I felt that it's very important to do so and I used to listen to conversations and watch movies. I did so but without knowing why.

Interestingly, these activities and their sponsor bears similarity to those enjoyed by Sanaa, who also experienced an English-speaking household and whose mother played an instrumental role in this regard. However, unlike Sanaa, who enjoyed many sponsors to her education and literacy, Aalaa's activities were much more singular and reflect the reality of fewer educational opportunities for Egyptians from lower economic and social classes. Sanaa had the social and cultural capital to enact her family's agenda for English language and literacy. Aalaa and her mother lacked this capital, but were resourceful nonetheless, talking in English during a situated domestic location ("in the kitchen"), implying that this activity was threaded into normal domestic routines associated with this location in the household.

The second major development was Aalaa's involvement with an AUC-sponsored academic program for middle school students that targeted students outside the affluent classes. Aalaa described this two-year program as offering radically different educational opportunities than those found in her public school:

In the first year, we were supposed to take the one textbook and finish it and have exam on it and do a community service project for a problem in Egypt in the Egyptian society and try to solve it, and we had to write a research paper on it and do fieldwork and interviews with people and all this stuff and we have to do a PowerPoint presentation at the end of the year. [...] In the second year we had [...] the advanced textbook and [...] we did the community service projects and we divided into groups to help those people who need help.

Among the notable aspects of this program was the acknowledgement of problems in Egyptian society. As has been established throughout this chapter, much student writing in high school that addressed Egypt was expected to assume a non-critical posture, portraying instead a reified portrait of sectarian and national unity. In this AUC program, participants could not only acknowledge a problem, but postulate a solution through writing, fieldwork, other research and community service. As such, the program offered a radically different educational culture than the culture of rote memorization and teacher incompetence characterizing Aalaa's description of the Egyptian public school system. In the program, students could consider solutions to real-life problems by learning about and utilizing writing and other academic resources. Notably, she was addressing problems in Egyptian society using English. This appears nowhere else in the educational life stories of participants in this chapter. While this is likely a rare opportunity for students from outside affluent classes to meaningfully supplement their formal education, it nevertheless represents a form of capital that allowed Aalaa to formulate an educational agenda to attend AUC—and to face an easier transition into the transnational space once she arrived as a full-time undergraduate.

Acceptable Writing Topics in English and Arabic

Aalaa's writing landscape in public school is similar to those of Farah and Karim, with some notable differences. She reported addressing Egyptian topics using English,

unique among the participants in this study. Additionally, she addressed potentially problematic topics such as traffic, over population, noise, and pollution of the Nile. However, Aalaa described the limitations of one's ability to address such issues: "It's okay to say that the Nile is polluted by its people and please don't do this again, but that's it." Aalaa further reported that her English writing for high school was brief—exactly seven sentences per writing task—and was designed only to satisfy the minimal requirements for the Egyptian examination.

Aalaa also reported doing extra-curricular writing by composing essays of two or three pages on school topics in order "to keep [her] writing standard as it is, not to lose my vocabulary, not to lose my style of writing." She would ask her instructors for the extra work and would write them at home, on her own time. This indicated that Aalaa had established a standard for writing that she believed was not being met by her high school; this standard may have been established by her involvement in the AUC program during her middle school years. Seeking out extra writing and practicing on her own time is not only characteristic of Aalaa's self-motivated profile, but it shows the ways in which she supplemented her public school education beyond the typical tutorials.

Aalaa's Arabic writing follows a similar track to many of the other participants in this study. Acceptable topics involved Egypt: the Nile, the role of science in Egypt, the youth, and tourism. On the topic of tourism, Aalaa states that she was expected to write that "[tourism is] very important to the Egyptian economy. You should welcome tourists, you should respect them, you should be friendly with them." The consequences for straying from this attitude, according to Aalaa, would be "a big zero" for a grade. This is similar to reports from other participants, and underscores the way in which Arabic literacy sponsorship authorized a narrow band of topics and attitudes about said topics. Likewise, it was clear to

Aalaa that, in writing about one's parents, one must reproduce a dominant view: "These are the traditions of Egyptian society—you are not supposed to oppose your parents, you must respect them." This provides strong evidence for the use of Arabic writing to reproduce not only a reified national ethos, but a set of sociocultural norms. Writing well about an unacceptable topic, or assuming an attitude outside strictly assigned norms, are not viable possibilities.

Summary

Aalaa's educational life story is unique from the other participants in several ways, from her participation in an AUC academic program during her middle school years to the influence of her mother, who threaded English language instruction into everyday domestic activities, to her extra-curricular writing activities. These appear to supplement her lack of social and cultural capital. Her writing for school has addressed topics that are problematic for Egypt, but she maintained a non-critical stance on these topics, indicating that she was aware of the limitations placed upon her. This indicates her knowledge of the limitations for writing in this context; and yet, she has actively sought (with the early assistance of her mother) to transcend these boundaries and find herself in more enabling positions. For instance, she describes her writing in the AUC program as very much involved with academic activities and the problems of Egypt, which may have influenced her perspective on the potential for writing that can be seen in her public school and, later, her writing at AUC.

Discussion

The purpose for this study is to establish the ways in which participants from different backgrounds within Egypt interact with the social, educational, linguistic and literacy spheres of a transnational educational context, the American University in Cairo,

and to consider the ways in which their participation in these spheres is impacted by their background. Establishing their positionality within this transnational field requires attention to two priorities. The first priority is to contextualize the nature of the AUC context, a task accomplished in the review of literature and the theorized historical chapter. The second priority is to establish the ways in which participant positionality at AUC is established through their prior experiences with education, literacy and English. This has been the priority for this chapter. As Smith (1998) points out, border crossing is not a lateral move. Inherent in any account of border crossing must be attention to the social hierarchies on both sides of the border, and the ways in which these hierarchies impact specific groups before, during and after any “border crossing.” While these transnational scholars focus on migrant groups traversing national borders, their conceptualization offers a frame that can account for the experiences of participants before their “crossing” into AUC. . In order to account for the different ways in which this “border crossing” organized participants in a nexus of positionality, their relevant prior experiences must be known. This has been the aim of this chapter. The following discussion will consider the ways in which this background the backgrounds of participants, as forms of capital, position these participants in relationship to one another within the transnational AUC context.

Public school graduates faced the greatest number of potential challenges to their future interaction with the transnational AUC context, in these forms of capital: educational style, English language training and literacy sponsorship Karim, Farah, Aalaa described highly formulaic approaches to writing in English in public schools, reflecting several problematic dynamics: ambivalence toward the presence of English in the national curriculum, the relegation of English writing for non-ideological purposes that undermine the national and regional exigencies driving the reasons for Egyptian English literacy, and

the retrofitting of writing instruction for an educational culture based on rote memorization. The result is a curriculum focused on short essays and general themes that, while reflecting regional ambivalence toward English, makes it more difficult for these students to participate in a transnational context that requires English language ability and a context of critical literacy. This treatment of English in public schools also underscores the ways in which English language and literacy sponsorship are closely regulated by the state in ways that may make it more challenging for these participants to gain capital through their public education that will translate into the transnational AUC context. That said, Aalaa benefitted from an extra-curricular, AUC sponsored program, which provided her with capital that she could parlay with success into the AUC context. Likewise, Karim had experienced many years of English language and literary analysis training through private schooling, which provided capital relevant to his position upon entering the AUC context. In these ways, Aalaa and Karim had prior experiences with education, language and literacy that offered supplementary capital relevant to the AUC transnational context, which impacted the ways in which they were positioned academically at AUC. Of the students who attended public school, only Farah reported no additional education aside from the expected tutorials. Her description of English language training revealed that students were encouraged to memorize phrases they did not understand, which would help them perform well on the high-stakes testing at the conclusion of secondary school. Likewise, her experiences with education and literacy reveal a passive culture of rote memorization with rigid forms of literacy sponsorship in English and Arabic. As a result, Farah accrued little of the capital that she would need to deploy within the transnational AUC context, impacting her ability to navigate the linguistic, educational, literacy and social fields of the space.

Those participants who did not attend public schools reported forms of social and cultural capital driven by their family's economic capital. Nour, as a self-identified wealthy Egyptian, had the economic capital to select a French-language private school over a public school she understood would impose rote memorization and strict forms of literacy sponsorship. She did not report significant experience with writing in English, however, as her activities in English rarely exceeded short answers to reading comprehension questions. In other languages, however, Nour reported significant writing experience, and stated a clear preference for writing over conventional test-taking. As we will see, Nour's language shortfall was not the significant barrier one might expect, as other forms of capital made it possible for her to navigate with success the transnational AUC context. Sanaa reported that her Arabic literacy sponsorship was also limited by expectations that she would reproduce non-critical themes about Egypt, to the extent that changing circumstances would be co-opted to fit into the mandate. Still, given what has been established about the transnational AUC context, the educational and literacy experiences of Sanaa and Nour become relevant forms of capital at AUC. Indeed, Sanaa is positioned with the greatest advantage, followed by Nour, Karim, Aalaa and Farah. The access to relevant capital correlates closely with the kind of educational background of each participant, which in turn correlates closely to their socioeconomic background. This strongly indicates that the kind of capital impacting positionality at AUC is distributed along socioeconomic lines: affluent Egyptians enjoy much greater advantages during the course of their education. Others are at a disadvantage and require supplementary forms of capital. Those who lack educational supplements, such as Farah, are positioned at a disadvantage.

Additionally, findings from this chapter challenge some of the claims in composition and ESL scholarship reviewed earlier. In composition scholarship, there is a broad call for

pedagogies and practices honoring the local rhetorical and literacy contexts of students in composition courses at international sites, a call seemingly based in an unstated claim that distant pedagogies and practices are likely to exert hegemonic pressure over local practices, which are somehow better. This claim is consistent with second-wave New Literacy Studies scholars such as Brian Street, but which does not account for more recent scholarship in literacy studies that seeks to account for the many ways in which local-distant literacy practices are configured in relationship to one another. Moreover, as we have observed through this chapter's findings, local rhetorical and literacy practices are not necessarily determined by what is best for student literacy development. For study participants, rhetorical and literacy practices revealed not just a strong division between languages, but in practices based in regional ambivalence about the use and purpose of English in the region and in the devotion of Arabic for purposes of national reification. Composition and ESL studies must account for these kinds of scenarios, where local rhetorical and literacy practices serve local interests that are not necessary those of students with agendas that involve participation with a locally-based transnational space requiring unique forms of capital. This study, as it develops, will argue for the ways in which frames within literacy studies can be expanded, offering new frames within literacy studies that can be expanded to include composition and ESL studies.

CHAPTER 6. INITIAL POSITIONALITY AT AUC

The previous chapter considered the different ways in which participants' backgrounds in education, literacy and language at different kinds of schools within Egypt resulted in an uneven distribution of capital, largely along socioeconomic lines. The purpose for that chapter was to account for the ways in which their backgrounds, as forms of capital, could help frame the nature of their flow into transnational AUC. This chapter will account for the ways in which these forms of capital impacted the ways in which they were initially positioned within the transnational AUC context, with particular focus on what continuities and disruptions participants encountered that correlate to their backgrounds in education, language and literacy. This analysis will be part of a larger framing of intranational "flow" into and participation within the transnational context, a phenomenon which will be developed throughout the analysis and theorized more fully in the conclusion.

Nour

Nour describes the primary nature of her border crossing as mainly a challenge of language, going from French and Arabic-speaking academic and social environments to an English-only academic context at AUC. She states that she specifically experienced difficulty in writing in English and attributes much of this difficulty to the quality of English instruction in her high school. Nour also describes some challenges associated with a more flexible daily schedule at AUC when compared to high school. Despite these difficulties, Nour does not experience language difficult or social alienation in the same way as Farah, whose adjustments are the most difficult among those interviewed for this study. Nour cogently describes her adjustment to social and academic culture, and explains how she adapted to the demands of English-language university writing at AUC. Despite her

language difficulties, Nour is able to make significant adjustments to the academic demands in English.

Language Adjustment

Nour's initial experiences at AUC were dominated by her need to use English for speaking and writing. She describes "the first week" as strange for her the friends who were "with me in my [high] school" who were accustomed to a French-language educational context. One reason for this difficulty appears to come from her enrollment in an intensive academic English course in the ELI, which means that she would have been enrolled in intensive English courses not only with other French-speakers, but with Egyptians from other social classes, such as Aalaa and Farah, who had limited experience in English through their public schooling. This implies that her lack of strong English language background exerted social pressure on Nour, as other participants from higher socioeconomic classes, both in this study and in general, tend to arrive at AUC with sufficient language ability. That said, while Nour describes difficulty in writing university length essays, she often uses collective pronouns such as "us" in describing this experience. This would seem to indicate that Nour had a ready social cohort who were enduring similar language adjustments. This may be due to the fact that Nour comes from a small cluster of Egyptians who speak French in addition to Arabic; indeed, her selection of a French-language school may have satisfied a family agenda for French language literacy, but it complicated her crossing into the transnational AUC context, which has as one of its primary features English-only teaching and learning contexts. Nour was able to identify with a cohort who had similar issues, which indicates both the atypical nature of a wealthy Egyptian requiring English language support at AUC and the presence of a supportive cohort with similar challenges.

Academic and Social Flexibility

Nour also enjoyed the flexibility and increased autonomy of the social and academic facets of life at AUC. She describes the increased social opportunities because the class hours were not as many as in high school, which she repeatedly describes as regimented. Her response to the unstructured social time indicates that Nour had ready social options, unlike others who were interviewed for this study. She also liked being able to select course times and specific professors, unlike in high school where there was little variety. This academic and social flexibility, and the fact that these were seen by Nour as advantages, played a large role to Nour's adjustment to writing at AUC, which will be described next.

Writing at AUC

Nour describes limited experience with English in her French-language high school; her writing in English amounted to little more than short answer reading comprehension questions and grammar work. The teachers at her high school taught English in French and Arabic. According to Nour, teachers relied on the internet to help answer student questions about the English language and writing in English. This limited experience in English from high school helps account for the change in her language status academically at AUC, where she went from possessing two relevant languages (Arabic and French, one for public and one for the family), to lacking strong ability in the only language that mattered for the educational context: English. What is notable, however, is that Nour's challenges with English at AUC did not extend significantly beyond the academic sphere, as she reports a social cohort affiliated with her linguistic background. This strongly suggests that Nour's primary challenge in upon entering the transnational AUC context was the lack of sufficient English to navigate the academic environment.

She describes feeling uncertain about how to approach writing long essays in her first university-level writing class. She was unfamiliar with the process of drafting and of

selecting an independent topic on a course theme, which is consistent with the limited English experience she describes in her high school. She soon discovered, however, that she could ask questions of her instructor and unlike in high school, “if you ask [...] a question, you get an answer.” This powerful insight represented for Nour a significant advantage of her crossing into the transnational AUC context: her interaction with transnational individuals, such as her writing instructor, whose training in English and background in writing instruction, enabled Nour to take significant leaps forward with her English writing and literacy development. Nour soon learned to include instructor consultation in her writing process, as she would “put everything even if it’s not organized [...] and when the professor talks to me about my draft, I will fix everything and organize everything. [...] So that’s how I could manage my drafts and my essays.” Her ability to consult with trained instructors within the transnational AUC context allowed Nour to adapt her approach to writing in English.

She also learned about the process of drafting which is, within U.S.-based writing pedagogies, a common practice and often aligned with instructor consultation and feedback. Nour adapted to this transnational pedagogy quickly by learning to write first drafts that could be shaped through consultation with her instructor, whose ready availability Nour found surprising.

Summary

While Nour makes a relatively untroubled adjustment to life at AUC, she is unique among participants as the only French- and Arabic-speaking Egyptian. Because of this, she has had limited experience with English-language literacy prior to AUC and finds herself taking courses in the ELI, which is not typical for a student from her socioeconomic class. That said, she adapts quickly to the academic and literacy expectations of AUC, and takes

great advantage of transnational pedagogies to develop her writing abilities in English. She evidences social comfort at AUC; she consistently uses plural pronouns when referring to her language challenges, indicating that she had a social cohort who shared some of her language challenges. While language is Nour's primary challenge within the transnational context, she appears to rely on a social cohort for support while taking advantage of transnational pedagogies to develop her abilities in English.

Sanaa

In both the social and academic spheres of life in the transnational AUC context, Sanaa evidences a preoccupation with appropriate behavior, and is keenly aware of social behaviors that deviate from her own experience. However, in both the social and the academic spheres, Sanaa appears to make a relatively untroubled transition to academic and social culture at AUC. In what follows, we will examine Sanaa's adjustment to a culture of increased freedom and autonomy in the social and academic domains, and the ways in which her prior experiences and forms of transnational capital allowed Sanaa to make an untroubled transition to AUC.

Sanaa's Social Adjustment

Sanaa describes social culture at AUC as one where men and women can freely express affection toward one another in public, and where premarital sex and drug and alcohol use are common. She claims that "it was very different from the culture that I'm used to *at school*" (emphasis mine), although she later claims that she had prior exposure to these behaviors because "I was kind of exposed to that stuff outside of school" and her sister had spent two years at a university in the United States and had told Sanaa stories about social culture in a U.S. university. Still, Sanaa claims that she had never been with a person who was smoking a cigarette and that she had never seen a bottle of beer before arriving at

AUC. Her personal experience with these kinds of social activities seem nonexistent prior to AUC, and in her interview, she made several references to these kinds of behaviors. For Sanaa, these were behaviors she had never before associated with school culture. It seems likely that her knowledge of these behaviors came from social culture outside school; within the transnational AUC context, they were mixed together and are evidence of a permissive social field.

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Despite this, Sanaa's adjustment to social culture at AUC was relatively untroubled. She was able to "fit in very quickly," despite her mother's misgivings about the temptations of AUC social culture. This may be because her prior knowledge of these behaviors, as well as her sister's stories of social culture at a U.S. university, had inoculated her against culture shock. She also notes that students from more conservative families might have a more difficult adjustment to the social culture she describes. This may also indicate that, while Sanaa appears to come from a sheltered home and school environment, she does not consider herself conservative and has ready knowledge of the kind of social environment she described throughout her interview.

Sanaa's Academic Adjustment

Sanaa is struck by the freedom she has to select topics so long as they fit within course themes, an aspect of the transnational AUC context that enables Sanaa to write about and research topics that would not have been permissible in her high school. On the other hand, she is preoccupied with formal correctness of the academic genre and with plagiarism and MLA formatting, carryovers from her background in education and literacy. That said, Sanaa evidences growth in her identity as a writer through topic selection and peer review in her writing classes, which was enabled through her interaction with transnational pedagogies and attitudes about what kinds of topics and attitudes can be written.

Sanaa reacts strongly to what she perceives as the seriousness of writing in the transnational AUC context. Sanaa considers her writing classes as being “way more serious” than previous writing classes, with a “concrete” essay style “that [she] cannot violate.” This seems related to what she describes as her ignorance of citing sources, following MLA format for citations and works cited pages, and not knowing the concept of plagiarism. These are indeed significant aspects of formal academic essay writing in a U.S.-styled context, and they preoccupy her attention at first. Indeed, she states that “practically every essay [she] might have written before would have been up for plagiarism, because I really didn’t understand how to cite a source [...] how to rephrase something.” Eventually, her interaction with the context appears to attenuate her focus on formal correctness. In describing her experiences with peer review, another transnational pedagogy much like drafting and instructor consultation, Sanaa comments that students were to write a first draft, exchange it with a peer, and “learn from each other’s mistakes.” This is a notable insight from Sanaa, in that her initial perception of writing courses as “serious” with rules that she cannot “violate” quickly give way to an environment where students wrote drafts in which they made mistakes that aided in the process of learning.

Growth in Topic Selection

In the previous chapter, Sanaa made two contradictory claims regarding writing in her high school. First, she claimed that students could say what they wanted on a topic, within reason, so long as it met rigid formal requirements. Second, she stated that it, in preparation for college entrance essays, she was supposed to write about typical topics such as the role of computers in learning and the impact of an influential public figure (she mentions Martin Luther King, Jr. as an example). It is also clear that the school’s administration was at odds with the Muslim Brotherhood and forbade writing that would

support the Brotherhood during the period when Mohammed Morsi was the president of Egypt. Likewise, students were discouraged from participating in the Arab Spring revolution or from criticizing Hosni Mubarak while he was the president. Writing about the politics of Egypt was off-limits, although it was permissible to portray the state and its citizens in a positive light.

At AUC, Sanaa evidences the beginnings of identity transformation through changes in her topic selection, a change which is directly related to the curriculum and instruction unique to the transnational site. While she remains preoccupied with formal correctness of the academic genre and with proper MLA formatting, Sanaa also acknowledges that she was allowed greater autonomy in topic section. For one assignment, she was free to write about anything so long as it was related to the general topics of tolerance and freedom. She decided to write about a rhetorical move she refers to as the “non-apology” among politicians and public figures. In this context, she argues that “we shouldn’t necessarily forgive anybody [...] unless their apology fits certain criteria.” She also claims to have read an article about the concept of the non-apology, which helped her develop critical awareness of a common practice among public figures in Egypt and elsewhere. Sanaa takes the opportunity with topic selection leeway to address politics and public life, in this case as a kind of rhetorical analysis of political discourse. This marks a significant difference from her prior context, and demonstrates the ways in which her participation in the transnational AUC site, as a context with autonomy to address Egyptian issues within the paradigm of Western-style rhetorical analysis, begins to transform her literacy practices.

Indeed, Sanaa begins to evidence additional transformations in her identity as a student, writer and future professional when she states her interest in AUC’s writing minor and the possibility that she would choose a career writing about politics. She states that had

accessed a website where freelance writers can advertise their services to interested parties, and had published some articles in the AUC campus newspaper. This indicates that her uptake in the transnational AUC context is significant in the area of literacy and writing.

Summary

What the future holds for Sanaa is not clear. She comes from New Cairo, far removed from the tumult and political turmoil of central Cairo. In high school, she was trained to avoid engaging with social, cultural and political topics in writing. At the same time, she appears to have become engaged by the possibilities to address these very topics through writing at AUC, an autonomous transnational space where she is highly unlikely to face reprisals for her literate practices. She also experiences significant development through interaction with transnational pedagogies, such as

Given the current political climate in Egypt, where dissent against the government can result in arrest and detainment, it is unclear if Sanaa's burgeoning interest in writing about current political topics will carry beyond her classes at AUC. That said, she evidences rapid development that underscores many of her advantages as a member of affluent society. Sanaa did not experience extreme linguistic adjustments to the university. While she was surprised by a student culture that included premarital sex, drugs and alcohol, she also claims to have made a relatively untroubled adjustment to environment where these behaviors are present, given her familiarity with many of these behaviors and activities in the social sphere of young, affluent Egyptians. For Sanaa, her untroubled social acculturation and uptake of transnational pedagogies and literacies evidences that the nature of her "crossing" into AUC evidenced the beginnings of an identity transformation as a writer.

Karim

Social and Academic Adjustment

Karim's acculturation to AUC fell along two dominant trajectories: becoming comfortable interacting socially with students he identified as being from higher social classes, and adjusting to the flexibility of schedule and curriculum at the university level. Within the academic adjustment, Karim evidenced significant anxiety toward plagiarism, an aspect of the transnational context that preoccupied him initially. Like Sanaa, he ultimately describes the beginnings of a potentially significant transformation in identity and purpose through his participation in the transnational context, most notably through his writing courses at AUC. And like Sanaa, these potential transformations appear to conflict with his reasons for attending AUC.

Karim often addresses simultaneously the academic and social implications of his acculturation to AUC, implying their close correlation in his mind. Eventually, this distinction becomes less rigid as he begins using academic writing to address wider social issues in Egypt and the issue of his social integration dissipates. When asked what he expected from AUC prior to attending, he said that "it's two things: that it holds the highest academic standard in the region, and the other thing about the people in it, that they're all the 'crème de la crème.' They're the highest people of society." The consistency with which Karim paired these cultural domains implies that he saw them as closely connected. This also characterizes the nature of his border crossing into the space and the way in which he was initially positioned: as being from a lower social class than most students, who come from classes that often attend this "crème de la crème" context. Indeed, Karim was keenly aware of the social standing in relationship to those around him, an aspect of his initial positionality that initially impacted his social integration and academic performance.

Karim's initial reaction to AUC evidenced both academic and social anxiety. On the academic side, he felt like he was being bombarded with the concept of plagiarism "and how

it's the biggest sin you can do," even as he did not completely understand plagiarism. His identification of plagiarism as a significant factor in the transnational context academically also implies a preoccupation with formal correctness, similar to what we witnessed with Sanaa. At the same time, Karim claims that he felt adrift in the more flexible scheduling configuration of the university, where he could study when and for how long he wanted (or not study at all). His perception of AUC as at once rigid (regarding plagiarism) and flexible (in terms of schedule) left Karim feeling like he "didn't know how to act from the academic standpoint." Unlike other Egyptians who come from other social classes and possessed a ready social cohort, such as Nour, Karim does not describe social interaction during his unstructured time. For him, the unstructured time presented a challenge at once academic and social, yet more evidence of the close correlations he drew to these aspects of his position within the transnational context.

This social acculturation also manifested when Karim found himself interacting with Egyptians who were several classes above him economically and socially. In other parts of his interviews, Karim described his world as a middle class one. His experience in the Egyptian curriculum put him into academic contact with Egyptians he associated as belonging to social classes below his own. In his respect, then, coming to AUC represented a significant shift in his positionality. As Karim notes, "From the social stand point, I sort of felt like the people [...] that were above me could've acted like spoiled brats just to sum it up. And I was kind of used to dealing with people on my same level, but I couldn't connect with anybody." Karim had experienced changes in his positionality in high school, when he changed to the Egyptian system and began interacting with students he considered beneath his class, but at AUC, he encountered a new challenge and a new position: he was interacting with those of higher classes. This implies a stratified society where Egyptians

from different socioeconomic classes have limited interaction with one another. It also underscores that, for a middle class student like Karim who had had significant language and some forms of literacy training throughout his education, entering the transnational context still presented significant challenges correlating to his social and academic positionality.

As a result, Karim found himself focusing primarily on his academics early on, with limited social engagement. In his first year at AUC, Karim felt like an outsider who did not want to participate in the extracurricular activities that would have brought with them social interaction. It wasn't until his second year at the university that Karim began to involve himself in extracurricular activities, mostly because older acquaintances at the university told him that such activities would make him more attractive on the job market after college. This indicates that Karim's academic and professional agenda operated as a gateway to increased social involvement, and that he used formal institutions to aid in his social acculturation to the AUC context. Interestingly, one of Karim's current extracurricular activities is the First Year Experience, a program designed to aid in student adjustment to the social and academic aspects of life at AUC.

Writing at AUC

Karim identifies the advantages of the academic "flexibility" that had caused initial difficulty when he describes his experiences in university writing classes, most notably his ability to self-select from a range of suitable topics and that he can use informal writing to develop his arguments and ideas. These are common activities in U.S. writing classrooms, but for Karim and others, interacting with these pedagogies and approaches are liberating and new. As a result of this, Karim develops the ability to understand that informal writing, while private, allows for an opportunity to grow into formal writing assignments, which he says are written exclusively with the teacher in mind. He also describes another

transformation: that words have consequence and can express personally held views. Even in the relatively generous literacy landscape of his past, Karim made no such observation.

Karim learns about what he calls “the power of words” during a writing assignment for a composition class in his freshman year. They were assigned to write about a topic similar to that of Kony 2012, a popular YouTube video addressing a social and political issue. That Karim had the ability to select his topic again represented a significant aspect of the transnational context, inasmuch as the autonomy characterizing AUC was also present in the ways in which students selected and write about topics. Likewise, Karim discovered in this writing class that he could express a persuasive individualistic attitude about this topic, which he considered different from his prior experiences with writing and literacy. This was important because it meant that Karim was expressing his own views and attitudes in writing, and not the sanctioned views of an outside person or body. He stated that teachers complimented him on his journalistic writing style and his willingness to engage in sociopolitical issues happening within Egypt, an important development as it indicates that Karim was developing an identity for himself as a writer and gaining an expanded knowledge of the uses for writing. In this respect, Karim evidenced the beginnings of transformation as he began to identify as a writer. This also represents the development of a new kind of positionality and perspective within the transnational AUC context that would not have been possible in previous contexts.

A corollary to this development was the use of informal writing in the development of a writing process. He describes a weekly blogging assignment, where he was supposed to find and write 500 words about a topic relevant to his overall themes. Even though these blogging assignments were probably seen by the teacher, Karim felt that the context and genre changed his understanding of audience and purpose and helped develop his writing

abilities. Unlike the essays, which he believed were “strictly formal” and done exactly as the teacher wants, the informal writing “helped him come up with ideas” that could be used in the formal essays. The use of several kinds of genres to address rhetorical differences in audience, purpose, tone and style, in addition to the pedagogical function of using less formal genres to develop ideas relevant to formal writing, is another aspect of the transnational AUC context that provided transformative for Karim, and continued to alter his identification within the context.

Summary

Karim evidenced moderate social and academic anxiety upon arriving at AUC. The social and academic environments included interactions with groups with which he had never before interacted and pedagogies and forms of academic autonomy he had not experienced. Karim was keenly aware of his place among a social class hierarchy and tended to correlate the high society of AUC students with the known academic excellence of the institution, which not only established his initial new position within the AUC context, but also underscored the nature of Karim’s challenges within the context. Karim’s social development, then, came once he had gained friendships with older students through this academic life. His interaction with these students led him to join extracurricular activities, which in turn led to an increased feeling of AUC as “home.”

His writing development also evidenced correlations between the academic and the personal, on two levels. First, as Karim became aware that words were more than empty vessels to express culturally sanctioned ideas or offer literary analysis of well-known literature, he became alert to the possibilities of writing as an individual act of expression and persuasion with national and regional significance. Karim found himself writing about social and political topics relevant to Egypt through his school writing. This is not only a

significant departure from the sanctioned topics and attitudes of his high school writing, but it also means that Karim found a way to write critically about sociopolitical issues within an autonomous transnational context where such literacies were encouraged. His developing abilities are also linked to his participation in writing courses that included pedagogies and practices germane to the U.S. higher education context, another aspect of the transnational AUC context which brought about a change in Karim's identification as a writer and his positionality within the AUC context.

Farah

Among study participants, Farah evidences the most significant and ongoing educational, literacy and language adjustments to the transnational AUC context. Like Karim, her positionality in these areas also correlates to a difficult social repositioning in the transnational context. Unlike Karim, however Farah's acculturation across this domain was ongoing during the period of the interview, as was her acculturation to all the significant aspects of positionality considered in this study. This section will consider the ways in which her positionality was affected by her many challenges across these domains.

Language Adjustment

For Farah, language is both barrier and port of access. Her initial experiences at AUC are marked, in large part, by her English language difficulty compared to those around her. This dominates her experiences in the academic and social domains of university life. She describes her first days as "horrible [...] it was like hell. It's like my first time for me to take English. All my friends around me, they were to three or four countries and they know how to speak English and French and more than two languages. So I'm here but I'm not here." Farah doesn't feel that she belongs in part because she is surrounded by other Egyptians who are fluent in English and other European languages while she struggles to follow the First

Year Experience program welcoming the new freshmen to the university. This pressure to “speak a language that was not [hers]” left her feeling alienated across both social and academic domains. It also implies that her association of English with other Egyptians created anxiety not only with her difficulty functioning in a full English environment, but because she did not believe that she belonged to the context. Likewise, it strongly indicates that, despite some limited experience with English in her secondary schooling, English was not something she considered hers or which she associated with her identity in Zagazig (as we will see in Chapter Seven, Farah’s ability to identify is a crucial element in her surprising pathway toward literacy development). Given that English in the transnational context cuts across social and academic domains, it presents a significant barrier for Farah. As a result, she is in a position of significant disadvantage linguistically, academically and socially.

Despite these struggles, Farah goes on to describe experiences that show her actions to develop language while underscoring her ongoing challenges. These activities range from the academic to the social. Farah spent much of her first year taking developmental courses in the ELI, an experience she describes in positive terms. She also took on extra work, such as watching English-language television without Arabic subtitles, practicing her listening and talking to her teachers about extra work. One should note that these forms of cultural capital had been available to Sanaa since childhood, whereas for Farah, it appears as though she encountered these practices and resources only upon entering the transnational AUC context, and used them to supplement to formal language training and accelerate her progress. This illustrates the difficult nature of her border crossing from the perspective of language when compared to an Egyptian like Sanaa, whose class and educational background is much more typical for AUC students. Farah also stated that prolonged exposure to English allowed for increased development in her language abilities, from

everyday talk to her decision to seek non-Arabic speaking roommates, which led to “great friendship[s]” with students from Africa, Europe and the United States. This is another example not only of the marginal position in which Farah found herself upon entering AUC, but the kinds of adaptive practices she developed upon entering the transnational AUC context, as a way to both supplement her formal language training and accelerate her social integration by finding others whose backgrounds were also different from the typical profile for AUC students. Given that her deficits in terms of language correlate strongly to her educational background as a public school student, one can relate the deficits in her positionality at AUC to her educational background, which, as been established earlier, correlates to socioeconomic class.

These gains, while real, reveal the difficult nature of her adjustment to the all-English academic and social culture for Farah. She describes several experiences where she cannot differentiate between words with similar meanings, experiences difficulty with subtextual and/or idiomatic word meanings, and often finds herself unable to translate words in her head from Arabic into an appropriate English analog. These often lead to her “los[ing] the structure of the sentence,” which accounts for some of her academic struggles with reading, writing and classroom participation described below. It also underscores the extent of her language deficits and the likely long-term nature of the challenges. That said, Farah’s adaptability and resourcefulness within the transnational AUC context will play an important role in the way in which she participates in a sustained literacy experience presented in Chapter Seven.

Social and Academic Adjustment

A large part of Farah’s adjustment to AUC involved interacting with Egyptians from higher social classes. She notes that these fellow Egyptians “went to a lot of countries” and

describes them, perhaps jokingly, as being like “movie stars.” These students also had linguistic profiles similar to those of Nour, Sanaa and Karim, who had been educated in two or three languages from a young age. She further notes that it was her first time seeing such people “face to face,” much less interacting with them in social and academic contexts. Being in such close quarters with affluent Egyptians was an experience unique to the transnational AUC context, which has been established as a site that affluent Egyptians flow into almost as a matter of course.

A related aspect to her social adjustment to AUC is her status as a scholarship student. Farah noted that many international students were impressed to learn that she had earned an academic scholarship to attend AUC, as these kinds of scholarships are often associated with academic achievement in high school. However, she points out that several Egyptian students would claim that the scholarship was financial, and that she was a student at AUC because she had received a need-based financial scholarship. This mixed reaction to her scholarship may be due to the fact that her particular kind of scholarship, known as a LEAD scholarship, is set aside specifically for students from the Egyptian public school system. The purpose of the scholarship is to provide an educational opportunity to one boy and one girl from each of Egypt’s governorates who would not otherwise have the financial means to attend AUC. In this respect, the scholarship is both merit- and need-based, placing scholarship recipients like Farah in a difficult social situation, one which underscores her social class, economic background, and geographic home region. Her response to “stop herself” as identifying as a scholarship student underscores the problematic nature of her positionality across the domains represented through the scholarship: socioeconomic class, type of secondary schooling background, home region. Farah arrived at AUC with the belief that there would be “more space for creativity” in her education, and not the rote

memorization that characterized her prior educational experiences. She was dismayed to learn that the introductory courses for her initial major in Construction Engineering involved “just answering the questions” and left no room to work on projects that allowed for novel application of concepts onto simulations of real-world problems. This disappointment caused her to change her major to anthropology, which created its own problems:

I’m spending a lot of time just reading [...]. I began to skip classes, also I really really liked the class and really liked to listen but I feel like I cannot keep up with my friends in the class. They come and they come read and they have even the discussion I cannot even—sometimes, it feels hard to even participate in the discussion because I cannot find the very complex word that can describe the thing that is in my mind.

This underscores other facets of the complex nature of Farah’s border crossing and her positionality within AUC. She arrived with clear hopes for the style of education she would find at AUC, but at the same time, she did not possess the abilities she needed to engage with the readings and discussions that would have made more possible the kind of experience she hoped to have. She also brought with her into the transnational AUC context a stated desire to work on “real world” problems, an agenda complicated by the many challenges accompanying her position within the space. Interestingly, this desire is informed by her work with a non-governmental organization active in her home city and may be informed by the ethic of service in her Islamic value system. Given this, her home city has given her an agenda that is more developed than many students when they first arrive at AUC—which makes her anomalous within the transnational AUC context—while simultaneously providing educational experiences making it difficult for her to enact this locally-generated agenda once she arrives at AUC. The magnitude of her language challenges underscore the deficits of her positionality at AUC and the difficulty in enacting on her agenda.

Writing at AUC

Farah interaction with transnational pedagogies and ideologies in writing classes included flexibility with topic selection, multimodality and low-stakes freewriting. In one class, she was provided with a theme—a “problematic landscape”—and chose to write about the Island of Gold, a small, agricultural island on the Nile River, in the heart of urban Cairo. The freedom to select a topic that is “problematic” is already a marked change from Farah’s high school culture, and her choice to address a social problem in Egypt is another change that is nevertheless consistent with the experiences of the other participants. Farah also alludes to using qualitative research methodologies, such as interviewing. In this case, Farah evidences more of the adaptability that characterizes the way in which she participates in the transnational AUC context—using a writing class to practice a qualitative methodology not only relevant to her major, but to her stated interests to address “real world” problems through her education.

Farah also describes applied activities that combine multimodality with low-stakes writing. In the activity she describes, her instructor provided the class with an image and asked them to use freewriting to generate a preliminary analysis. For Farah, the notable upshot of this activity is that she found that her writing was still “organized” and coherent, even if it did not have all the features of a formal essay. This may be an important experience for Farah in that she was able to express herself cogently in English without the “safety net” of the academic genre, nor the pressure for formal correctness or full command of topic often associated with final drafts of academic essays. Likewise, the opportunity to write analytically about an image rather than another text removed one of Farah’s primary challenges: the speed with which she reads in English. With that cognitive challenge eliminated, Farah was able to focus on her writing and analysis.

Summary

Farah's passage into the transnational AUC context is wrought with social and language adjustments that are, at the time of the interview, ongoing. She came to AUC seeking a better education to address her stated agenda of addressing "real world" problems through education, but finds herself unable to participate fully in this setting, both socially and academically. The reason she provides is her difficulty with the English-language social and academic dimensions. From a social standpoint, this difficulty is also related to Farah's first contact with members of the Egyptian upper classes. From an academic standpoint, she evidences great difficulty with reading, writing, speaking and listening, and there are some negative academic consequences related to this difficulty.

That said, Farah also evidences adaptability within the transnational context, driven by a recognition of her deficits as a result of her complex and correlated socioeconomic, linguistic, academic, social positionality, as well as a personal agenda for service that seems driven by her Islamic value system. Because of this, she takes measures unique among the participants for this study. These measures foreshadow greater adaptations she makes to a demanding literacy experience, as will be seen in Chapter Seven.

Aalaa

Like Farah, Aalaa is the graduate of an Egyptian public high school and comes from outside the Cairo metropolitan area. Like Farah, she earned a scholarship exclusively set aside for public school graduates, also like Farah. Unlike Farah, however, Aalaa experienced a markedly less difficult social, academic and linguistic adjustment to life at AUC. In this section, Aalaa's prior experience with an AUC academic program for pre-university students will be considered as a possible inoculation against some of the more difficult aspects of

crossing from a public school in Beni Suef to the transnational AUC context, populated by the country's elite.

Social Adjustment

Aalaa exhibits an uncanny ability to adapt quickly to new circumstances by finding others with whom she shares common values and socio-economic class backgrounds. She describes her home community in Beni Suef as a “close [...] religious community” where dress is more conservative than what one might observe in the typical AUC student, who may dress in the latest European fashions. Indeed, Aalaa, like Farah, dressed in the religiously conservative *hijab*, which covered not only her hair but a significant portion of her head and neck. She also cited strict social rules governing interactions between men and women who are not married and not from the same family; however, she says it was permissible in her experience to interact with men in work contexts, so long as they did “nothing further than work.” Because of this, she was untroubled by academically-related interactions with men, although her social interactions appear to be largely restricted to other women. This is interesting in that Aalaa was able to locate a ready social cohort of religiously conservative Egyptians within a transnational context which was, for Sanaa, an environment she observed as permissive, and for Farah was difficult to navigate. Unlike Farah, Aalaa's social acculturation to the transnational AUC context was not predicated upon knowledge of English, but her ability to find others who shared her values, those who were already like her.

For Aalaa, her successful social adjustment to AUC appeared to hinge on a stable domestic situation in her dormitory and in finding friends from a similar background with similar religious and social views. She describes as “fine” her experience at AUC after the first week, in part because she was living in the dorms, where it was easy for her to meet

others who had come to AUC from outside Cairo. Indeed, she made several friends from the same social class, which she describes as middle class and more conservative in dress and religious views, who had earned the same scholarship as Aalaa. This social acculturation was significant for Aalaa because as some in her family voiced significant concerns that the culture of AUC would corrupt her religious beliefs and values about social interaction between genders. Aalaa's response is uncannily mature: "I did know that [attending AUC] is a chance for me and I will take it, and I'm responsible for keeping my background." Indeed, throughout the interviews, Aalaa places high value on allowing her religious and social beliefs to guide her conduct at the university. In this respect, she created within the social field of the transnational context friendships and lifestyle dynamics similar to those she associated with life in Beni Suef, which addressed not only family concerns but her own social needs.

Academic Adjustment

Aalaa's most significant academic adjustment appeared to be using and hearing English full time; this was her major preoccupation prior to beginning her AUC studies. Although she sometimes downplayed the significance of this adjustment in interviews, she also acceded that her English language instruction in high school was not sufficient. Her English instruction was sufficient only to complete the limited English-language reading and writing tasks of high school (see Chapter Five). Despite her concerns about her own language readiness in comparison to the other students, Aalaa reported that she was surprised to encounter relatively few English-language difficulties at AUC, aside from discipline-specific terminology and the syntactical and content challenges of readings for a philosophy class.

This experience is highly different from Farah, who hails from a similar background and reported significant and ongoing social, academic and language adjustments to AUC. Given this, it is worth considering differences in their backgrounds and experiences. . What stands out is Aalaa's experience in a pre-university academic program sponsored by AUC in Beni Suef, as well as her experiences practicing English with her mother while she was younger.

In this pre-university academic program in Beni Suef, Aalaa reported learning English along with American culture in addition to doing community service and considering some of the social and economic problems within Egypt. This involved conducting research and doing fieldwork, writing a research essay, creating a PowerPoint presentation, and presenting findings at an academic conference in Egypt. This curriculum is markedly more rigorous than her public schooling curriculum, inviting Aalaa to consider critically the manifold social, cultural and economic problems within Egypt, something strictly forbidden in her public schooling culture (see Chapter Five). According to Aalaa, this background in English and in the transnational academic and literacy practices associated with a U.S.-styled institution of higher learning contributed to her readiness for the academic culture she would later encounter at AUC

Writing at AUC

Aalaa's prior experience with writing and research in an AUC-inspired context (see above) left her with less difficulty adjusting to writing culture at AUC than Farah. She recognized a more complex formal structure than she had practiced in her high school, and increased attention to formatting and MLA style. This focus on the formal aspects of transnational literacy practices is not unusual in this study and has been mentioned several times by other participants. She also evidenced some challenges in independently

researching topics and finding reliable sources, a challenge alleviated through her writing courses and access to online databases through the AUC library, developments which will be taken up in Chapter Seven. Of most interest, however, is Aalaa's observation that the topics she was asked to write about were more challenging than those she had experienced in high school. According to Aalaa, AUC topics were "harder than before, more complex" than high school writing assignments that never asked her to write more than a seven-sentence paragraph. Her high school English writing hewed not only to general topics (see Chapter Five), but were designed only to assess whether or not Aalaa understood how to compose a basic sentence and paragraph. At AUC, topics were "more vital and related to politics, international issues, religion." This, combined with the need to learn the U.S. academic genre and such practices as citation and concepts such as persuasion, made for a more rigorous English-language literacy learning environment than her high school. Despite these challenges, Aalaa seemed well-positioned within the transnational AUC context, most likely due to her prior experience in a transnational academic program in Beni Suef.

Summary

Aalaa's experience is unique among participants in this study. Like Farah, she is the graduate of an Egyptian public school and comes from outside Cairo. She self-identifies as a religiously conservative member of the middle class. She understands that she needs to find a social circle of like-minded people—who share similar religious views and who are also scholarship students who graduated from the public schools—as this social grounding is important to her sense of social integration and belonging at AUC.

Aalaa also evidences less language adjustment than expected. The likely reason is her prior experience in a pre-university AUC program in her hometown of Beni Suef, within which she gained experience forms of cultural capital that would later become relevant to the

transnational AUC context by easing her adjustment academically, socially and in terms of language. She had already practiced U.S.-style critical thinking and engaged in many of the practices associated with the American higher education context. She was also encouraged to address social, cultural and economic problems in Egypt, a marked difference from her experience in public school. This pre-university AUC program may have inoculated Aalaa against the more difficult aspects of academic and language adjustment by helping her prepare in ways public high schooling did not, which could help account for discrepancies in the experiences of Aalaa and Farah.

Discussion

This chapter has considered some of the major adjustments experienced by research participants to the transnational AUC context, with particular attention to academic, writing and social challenges within the context, and the ways in which these adjustments relate to background and establish initial positionality within transnational AUC. This discussion section will consider the participants in context with one another, consider the ways in which participants were initially positioned at AUC, and account for the kinds of changes experienced in participant positionality through their interaction with the transnational AUC context.

Farah faced the most difficult and protracted flow into the transnational AUC context, both academically and socially. At the time she was interviewed for this study, she had not yet acquired the sense that she “belonged” to this community. Her position is marginal across all relevant domains. This integration is important, not only to Farah, who struggled, but to the other participants, who experienced a range of adjustment issues in the social realm. Their ability to adapt to the new environment seems based in prior academic *and* social experiences, and in their ability to locate a social cohort with which they could

relate. In the case of Farah, her language readiness was a significant factor that infused both the social and the academic realms of her life, leaving her feeling as though she did not “belong” at AUC. As a result, her already significant challenges in social and academic integration were made more difficult. Her lack of belonging to the space reflects her marginal position and her academic and social struggles. From the perspective of capital and positionality, Farah was at the greatest disadvantage within the transnational AUC context.

Karim likewise experienced a similar feeling that he did not belong, though for him the major factor was interacting with different social classes, which was unfamiliar to him. Still, Karim faced no significant hurdles academically; if anything, he was able to move easily beyond language-based issues and begin writing critically about political and social problems in Egypt, which led to a preliminary form of identity transformation as he began to perceive himself as a writer with a voice. He also developed successful strategies for social integration. In other words, the capital he had accrued through his years of English language education and literacy allowed him to adapt to the literacy culture at AUC, and provided him with expanded possibilities for what can be done through literate action and resulted in the beginnings of identity transformation: he began to think of himself as a writer.

This kind of transformation was also reported by Sanaa. She took advantage of the literacy culture within the transnational context to write about the kind of social issues she had been forbidden to write about during her prior educational experiences. As with Karim, this activity resulted in new formulations of identity for Sanaa, as she became engaged in her topics and in the potential for meaningful literate action. Nour experienced what she described as a significant language adjustment, although her adjustment seems less difficult than Farah in this area. Nour had a ready social circle and soon adapted, both socially and academically, to the greater flexibility offered by the university culture. As we will see in

Chapter Seven, this allowed her to interact with transnational writing pedagogies to write essays and conduct research appropriate for the context.

Based upon this range of experiences, we can see that participants who arrived with significant forms of capital were able to make successful academic and social adjustment to transnational AUC, which resulted in literacy development and growth in identity as writers. Those who lacked such capital were reliant upon finding supplements, like Aalaa, or faced significant linguistic, academic and social marginality, like Farah. These findings reveal that participants who came from higher socioeconomic classes tended to have access to forms of capital during the normal course of their upbringing and education, which was then parlayed into an advantaged position within transnational AUC resulting in social integration, literacy development, and identity transformation.

This accounts for Farah's difficult adjustment at AUC; even as she evidences development as a writer, Farah continues to experience difficult academic and social integration. This may also help account for Aalaa's much less troubled adjustment, as she located a social circle within which to integrate. She cited her experience with a pre-university AUC program in Beni Suef for helping prepare her for the language, academic and literacy demands. Likewise, we can observe social and language challenges in Karim, Sanaa and Nour and, while these participants experienced these challenges as difficult, they are not as significant as Farah and Aalaa. This may help account for the fact that Karim, Sanaa and Nour experienced less difficult academic and literacy adjustments than Farah. It is also notable that Aalaa's prior experiences with AUC may have given her experiences similar to, and in some cases beyond, those of Karim, Sanaa and Nour. This may account for her less troubled adjustment both socially, academically and in terms of language.

The implications for border crossing in this sort of configuration underscore the need to extend existing frames within transnational literacy studies scholarship. First of all, as has been already established, the context itself is transnational. Materials, peoples and ideologies significant to the operation of AUC have flowed into the Egypt from the United States and elsewhere, a flow enabled through changes within Egypt (see Chapter Three). The purpose of this chapter has been to establish the ways in which their initial positionality reflected the ways in which they were able to parlay the capital accrued through their backgrounds within transnational AUC. The kinds of cultural and social capital each participant possessed prior to entering AUC, particularly in the areas of educational training in English and literacy learning, has been observed as significant factors impacting their initial positionality within the transnational context.

Based upon findings, language is the single most important form of cultural capital in this transnational context impacting participant positionality. Sanaa and Karim reported English language and literacy learning experiences dating back to childhood; perhaps because of this long experience, these participants were able to parlay their participation in the transnational AUC context into potential new forms of identity with relevance to Egypt. Without sufficient language training, it is difficult to participate academically at AUC. Even Nour, who hailed from an affluent family but lacked the kind of English training most in her economic class possess, experienced initial academic difficulty. Her status as the member of an affluent class eased her social transition by providing her with a ready social cohort which supported her as she adjusted to the changed language landscape (not unlike Aalaa, who deliberately sought out a social cohort of her own). Nour was also comfortable engaging with instructors and quickly capitalized on the expertise of her transnational writing teachers, implying that the capital she had accrued through private

schooling, particularly the ability to practice critical literacy and dialogue with her teachers, was a form of capital that offered her an advantage within transnational AUC.

Indeed, the extent of the limitations the lack of English imposed is dependent upon other forms of capital accrued through prior experiences. For Farah, her relative inexperience with English was also accompanied by what she described as a dysfunctional secondary schooling culture, where students memorized material without understanding, and where strict rules governing literacy practices choked off opportunities to develop critical literacy abilities. Farah's lack of capital that would translate readily to AUC is linked to her public schooling background, not being a member of the socioeconomic elite, and her status as a scholarship student; in essence, what she lacks is directly related to who she is and what kind of education she has had. When we compare the background of Farah with that of Nour, who lacked significant English language capital but possessed other forms of academic and social capital, one can see that the lack of English, while singularly significant, imposes greater limitations upon a participant lacking other forms of capital. As a result, Farah's positionality in the transnational context is not only marginal, but highly vulnerable. This recalls literature on the difficult experiences of many first-generation students in the United States, who also lack the kind of cultural and social capital to make untroubled transitions into the academy.

The experiences of Farah and Aalaa also indicate the significance of supplementary capital to address shortfalls in other forms of capital. For Aalaa, her experience in the AUC-sponsored program at Beni Suef introduced her to what an AUC education might look like; this, combined with her ability to seek out a social cohort (not unlike Nour), rendered her acculturation into the transnational space not as difficult as it could have been. While Farah faced profound capital deficits, she did come with an agenda

to address “real world” problems that gave purpose to her difficult adjustment in ways that will become clear in Chapter Seven.

Finally, what renders these findings different from much work transnational literacy studies involves the nature of the border crossings and the agendas inherent in these crossings. The participants in this study flowed into a localized transnational site which they enter and depart from many times. They can cross freely back and forth between the site and the larger nation within which the site is located. Moreover, their stay within the context is limited, and after four or five years, participants will expect to graduate with forms of capital that will be parlayed into a reproduction of social and economic status, social and economic mobility, or careers addressing their interests. These ultimate developments are likely to be *of* Egypt, and in this respect, the permeability of the border and the temporality of participant interaction with transnational AUC indicates that border movement is transitory and transformative. Participants may find themselves with lives in many ways similar to those they had before entering AUC, but with new forms of capital useful across a potentially wide array of domains within Egypt. Given this, the study must move beyond initial positionality and gain insight into the ways in which participation in the transnational context resulted in new forms of capital. As such, the next chapter will consider the ways in which literacy practices, as forms of participation within the site, imply movement away from initial positionality and toward literate practices not only relevant for AUC, but potentially for Egypt and the region, as well.

CHAPTER 7. SITUATED LITERACY

The nature of the border crossing for study participants into transnational AUC has been established in the previous two chapters. These participants crossed into an educational and cultural space infused with U.S.-based priorities that serves a range of Egyptian interests. The initial positionality of participants within this context was impacted by their prior experiences with English, literacy and education, forms of capital that correlated closely with the kind of school they attended (public versus private) and their socioeconomic class. As such, capital and initial positionality correlated closely with educational background and socioeconomic class. The previous chapter established that Farah experienced a deficit positionality, given her limited experience with English, critical literacy and genres germane to the U.S. academy, and her background an educational culture based on acquiescence to authority and rote memorization. On the separate end of the spectrum, Sanaa had had ready access to English language and forms of literacy (such as reading and analyzing Western literature) that transferred more readily to AUC. Her social adjustment was also not as great as Farah, who described her new classmates as “movie stars” whom she had only observed on television prior to entering AUC.

Given that this study is situated within transnational *literacy* studies, the next phase for the study must consider the ways in which initial participant positionality, which is a result of the nature of the border crossing developed through the previous two chapters, impacted the ways in which participants utilized genres and literacy practices of the transnational space as they participated in sustained and situated academic literacy. The nature of their participation will then account for the ways in which they drew not only upon forms of pre-existing capital, but developed adaptive new approaches through their participation, which leads to surprising and significant findings. As we will see, some of

these new approaches were so focused on developing knowledge related to intrinsic interest that the situated literacy demonstrated a willingness to adapt existing genres, practice strategic translingualism, and almost ignore traditional motivators such as grades and completing coursework within a single semester.

By focusing on the ways in which participants deployed existing capital and developed new approaches to literacy within the transnational site, this chapter will position the study for its conclusion: the ways in which literacies developed at AUC may relate outside and beyond AUC. In order to consider these concerns, the study will also theorize a newly configured frame within transnational literacy studies that can account for the flow of intranational individuals with intrinsic needs into a transnational site with the unique qualities of AUC. The study will conclude by considering the implications for current literacy studies scholarship and the ways in which the framings within literacy studies offer composition studies new ways to consider the interaction of U.S.-based composition with non-U.S. people and places.

This chapter will proceed along two analytical trajectories. In the first approach, the writing process for each participant will be described, with particular focus on the ways in which existing capital was deployed, and what new practices were developed through participating in the activities, genres and literacies of the transnational AUC context. Following this approach, an additional section will focus on the topics of essays discussed by the participants, the attitudes expressed about these topics, and other aspects of the completed writing projects. In so doing, this section will consider the ways in which participants adapted to new expectations for literacy practices in the transnational AUC context, and the implications of this adaptation for participants beyond AUC.

Before beginning, I should note that Karim did not participate in a second interview. However, he never formally withdrew from the project. The upshot is that, because Karim never completed the cognitive interview about his writing process, he will be absent from the first part of this chapter. However, Karim did provide a writing sample and thus can be included with the others in a discussion about topic selection and attitudes expressed.

Writing Processes

Sanaa

Assignment

Sanaa wrote a rhetorical analysis of work by the Arab feminist poet Joumana Haddad, with emphasis on tone, audience, the use of rhetorical appeals and authorial credibility, followed by Sanaa's own reaction to the reading. In what follows, her writing process for completing the assignment will be summarized, then the process will be analyzed. This reading was assigned by Sanaa's instructor.

Sanaa's Process and Use of Resources

The first task in the assignment was completing the reading that would serve as the focus for rhetorical analysis. Sanaa reported that her professor sent two book chapters for this purpose. Her first step was to read the chapters and decide "what [she] thought was important." This involved accessing interviews with Haddad on YouTube, where she described positions that were similar to the assigned readings, helping Sanaa make decisions about what Haddad "believes is most important in her writing." Next, the class had a structured discussion, wherein students separated their personal reaction about the reading and its ideology from what they believed were the author's intentions and strategies. This appeared to serve the purpose of allowing students to air their views while also reinforcing the assignment's main focus on rhetorical strategies. From this, students were required to

complete an outline, the structure of which was largely prescribed by the instructor. According to Sanaa, this outline was a graded assignment, and was supposed to include “Roman numerals and the font was in a certain way.” Students were required to include textual examples of tone, intended audience, rhetorical appeals and authorial credibility. Students had a choice of the order in which they would present these ideas. Sanaa elected to begin with audience because she noted that Haddad herself had addressed audience early in her writing. The outline led directly to the composition of the first draft, which for Sanaa was “filling in [...] putting points together” from the outline onto a predetermined essay structure. Sanaa pointed out that she was not permitted to use first-person in this draft, or in any draft of her formal essay, but that she would include the first person while composing a reflection assignment to accompany the final draft of this essay. In this reflection, Sanaa felt like she could “say the points I agree with and the points I didn’t agree with, and I would have to provide some background to why I agree with her and why I don’t.” However, Sanaa understood that her personal views were inappropriate for the rhetorical analysis.

Sanaa met with her instructor to discuss the first draft, an experience she described as an affirming experience wherein the instructor “thought I did really well on the first draft,” leaving Sanaa with superficial revisions, mainly correcting problems with her outline and works cited page, writing shorter paragraphs, and using appropriate diction. That said, Sanaa described exchanges with her instructor wherein she is asked to elaborate upon a point in her essay. After Sanaa provided the elaboration verbally during the conference, the instructor suggested that these elaborations should be included in the essay, indicating that Sanaa was instructed in content-area revisions without fully realizing the approach used by her instructor. Sanaa explained that this instructor was available for a second conference following the second draft of the essay, but that Sanaa did not attend this conference as the

instructor felt as though her essay was ready for submission: “She [Sanaa’s instructor] used to say that I would really usually do well on my first draft, so sometimes a second draft isn’t necessary.” From this, one can surmise that Sanaa was allowed to forego the second instructor conference; it also seems likely that, while Sanaa needed to make some content-based revisions to her essay, these revisions were not extensive and did not require a second instructor conference. That said, there remains a small difference between Sanaa’s perception of her revision—primarily focused on surface features—and her reporting of the instructor conference, where her instructor would elicit verbal responses and suggest that the content of the responses be added to the next draft of the essay. While Sanaa did not appear to be fully aware of it, this dialogical approach by her instructor, which is consistent with U.S.-based pedagogies of writing instruction consistent, was an effective transnational pedagogical tool that helped Sanaa extend beyond the literacy and genre experiences from her secondary school.

Sanaa’s prior experience with literary analysis and formal correctness is taken up in this project through the production of a close analytical reading of Haddad’s writing and a conventionally structured five paragraph, thesis-support essay. Given that the instructor also required students to write an outline prior to completing a formal draft, Sanaa’s literacy capital is more than equal to literary analysis and the conventional essay structure required of the assignment.

Still, the choice by the instructor to assign Haddad provided opportunity for Sanaa to read and comment on the Arab feminist in the public sphere of the transnational context, where such curricular choices and literacy practices are permissible. In the second section of the essay, where Sanaa was authorized to address her personal views on Haddad, she claimed common cause with the feminist, critiquing what she identified as religious dogma

and sexist marital practices. In this respect, Sanaa extended her literate practice to include commentary on religious and social practices in a public domain. While she betrayed Orientalist attitudes and binary thinking in the ways in which she described Western literature as liberating and Quranic dogma as “chains of conformity and blind-folded obedience,” Sanaa nevertheless engaged meaningfully with ideas that would be considered controversial within Egypt

Nour

Assignment

The writing sample Nour contributed was an eight-page research paper on the subject of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Egypt. Her essay was traditionally-structured, thesis-support call to action that included eight sources located primarily through online databases available at AUC.

Nour’s Process and Use of Resources

Nour was initially confused by the process of researching and writing this lengthy research essay, but in her interview she described the ways in which the process worked now that it had run its course. Nour was unfamiliar with a longer writing project that involved various forms of research and writing prior to the composition of a formal draft. In this case, her instructor required students to post several small responses onto a shared course website, to conduct research over a period of weeks, to write an annotated bibliography, a formal draft, an outline, and a second draft. This process developed over several weeks and Nour was not aware at the time how these assignments formed a single process for a longer research essay; however, in her interview, Nour was able to differentiate between her confusion at the time and her description of this process at present. This indicates that she had a successful interaction with a transnational writing pedagogy that featured low-stakes

and shorter assignments that fed into the larger assignment, thereby scaffolding Nour's writing process and resulting in the successful completion of an eight-page research essay.

Research Requirement

The teacher's requirement that students conduct research on the topic was a significant challenge, as Nour claimed that she was unfamiliar with reading academic articles and did not even know what an academic article was. However, in her interview she claimed to have "thirty" academic articles on the subject, although she evidenced some confusion about the difference between general information sources like newspapers and academic publications. For Nour, the main differences were that the academic articles are found using specific online databases devoted to academic research while, presumably, newspaper articles were found on different databases or through a basic Internet source. She acknowledged that academic articles are written by scholars who "work in this field," but she was not able to explain how the status of authors reflected differences in what is written about and in what way(s). That said, Nour reported that she discovered factual information through this research about the increased rate of FGM in Egypt during the brief period of Muslim Brotherhood rule. In her Works Cited page, Nour cited an online newspaper article with a link to a 2013 UNICEF report on FGM in Egypt and other countries, along with other academic and newspaper articles confirming an increase in this practice. This newspaper article summarized the findings of the lengthy UNICEF report; the fact that the newspaper article offers a condensed version of the longer article may indicate the reason why Nour cannot distinguish between them: they offer similar information, with varying degrees of depth and specificity. This may indicate that Nour was very likely unfamiliar with research methodologies and data collection practices, or with the depth and breadth of information available in a longer report. For her, the "headlines" provided by the newspaper article

simply gave the relevant information in shorter form. These findings indicate that Nour had started to develop her ability to locate and distinguish between different kinds of research sources through her participation in scaffolded research assignments and her use of the online research databases present only in the transnational space.

The research for Nour's research essay grew from a related annotated bibliography assignment, which she found confusing. Instead of high-stakes long form writing, Nour found herself "writ[ing] like each week a paragraph [...] so okay this week I searched for this article and this article [...] so what should we do at the end? [...] The purpose was to give a lot of information and to be like supplied with everything we're going to use in the assignment [...] when I began writing I knew that, okay, so that's why we did this." This is an example of Nour talked her way through initial confusion to an understanding of the transnational pedagogy of her instructor, who had broken a complex assignment into various component parts, the purpose of which became clear to Nour as she proceeded through the scaffolds her instructor had erected.

The next step in the process Nour described was writing her first draft, a point where she struggled to synthesize the information she had gathered. She "put any information I have on the topic" in the draft, which she said was "not the right thing to do." She did this, however because of an impending instructor conference. Nour appeared to purposefully write a first draft full of "any information" she had so that the instructor would be able to help her shape the draft: "Then he will tell me, 'Okay, it's better to like put his information with this one and this information with this one,'" thereby helping Nour select the most appropriate evidence for the points she wished to make. Her instructor required her to write an outline for the next draft, based upon the results of their meeting. For this outline, she needed to introduce both her main points and include which sources she intended to use in

support of her points. These points included “FGM: A cultural tradition?”, “Actions taken by the government,” “FGM: A wrong religious belief” and “Solutions for FGM.” Nour found writing the outline difficult, perhaps because its rigid and formulaic structure is not dissimilar from the tests and other assessments Nour has struggled with in the past. This difficulty led her to schedule a conference with her instructor, which helped her develop a thesis statement and place her main points in a particular order. For Nour, this represented the end of the planning phase of her writing, for “the phase of planning it ends when [she] write[s] her last draft.”

Finally, Nour was able to utilize source material in the development an essay that, while traditionally structured, included several components, including a history of the development of FGM in Egypt, a consideration of the extent to which the practice is primarily cultural or religious, and a call to curb the cultural influence of Islamist groups who propagate the practice. Given the complexity of this assignment for a first-year essay, it seems likely that Nour was able to combine her prior experience with writing in French and Arabic with the language capital she gained through her experience with AUC’s English Language Institute to make significant gains in her English-language writing. She also benefitted from her participation in a transnational pedagogy of short assignments, low-stakes writing and active instructor involvement that led to the completion of a research essay, which she had not written previously.

Aalaa

Assignment

Aalaa shared an essay written for a research writing class. In the essay, Aalaa describes the social and political problems faced by the inhabitants of Gezeret El-Dahab, an island on the Nile River located in the district of Giza. Aalaa was drawn to the topic because

she was curious to know if “there is any kind of conflict between people related to religion [...] who have different social classes [and] education.” This led her to study the inhabitants’ ongoing conflict with the government and building developers who would like to relocate the inhabitants, who live a rural, agricultural lifestyle while surrounded by the din and bustle of Cairo.

Aalaa’s Process and Use of Resources

This assignment presented Aalaa with many new writing challenges, due in part to the length and complexity of the assignment. A highly competent student, she was aggressive about seeking academic support available within the transnational context to resolve challenges as she worked on this assignment. Because of her knowledge of these resources and her willingness to engage with them and with her instructor, Aalaa effectively resolved the many challenges she encountered.

The first step in her process was topic selection. According to Aalaa, the class was informed that they “were not assigned a definite thing to write about,” but could select their own topic as long as it involved community service in some way. Aalaa used this broad theme to address her questions about sectarian, class and educational tensions in Egypt by selecting Gezeret El-Dahab as her topic. She traveled to the island with her class in order to conduct community service, after which time she (and all her classmates) decided to write about the island for their essay topics, possibly due to the strong suggestion of their instructor, who had been conducting research on this island, and the convenience of a readily available topic. Thereafter, Aalaa returned to the island to interview inhabitants about their unique living circumstances. Unsurprisingly, Aalaa found it challenging to engage with the residents such that they would trust her and share their experiences and views about the island. For Aalaa, it was a valuable experience to learn “how to make these people engage

with me, how to gain their trust, to let them speak to me because I am a foreigner to them and we are completely different.” This knowledge of the challenges and ethics of anthropological field work and qualitative interviewing most likely drew upon the supplementary capital Aalaa had accrued during her experiences with the AUC-sponsored program in Beni Suef, which made it possible for her to not only have knowledge of challenges, but resolve them through multiple visits to the island that allowed her to build some trust among the residents.

After this initial stage of fieldwork and topic selection, Aalaa shifted to a new challenge: that of conducting library research relevant to her topic. This was one of the most challenging aspects of this assignment for Aalaa. She was not certain how to conduct research that would be relevant for the island she was studying for her essay: “I have to find some scholar[ly] papers that speak of something similar, maybe different places in the world but have something similar—this was challenging for me.” Aalaa took the step of consulting with university librarians and becoming familiar with the online databases that warehouse much of the existing scholarship. As with Nour, who also wrote a research essay, Aalaa had limited experience with online databases and the transnational access to global scholarship they permit. She resolved this challenge differently than Nour, whose research process was scaffolded and otherwise guided by her instructor, through consultation with research librarians, thereby gaining more supplementary capital through a process independent of her instructor.

After doing both fieldwork and library research on her topic, Aalaa began to write an outline prior to her first essay draft. This also presented challenges, as Aalaa reported being confused during prior attempts at outlining in high school and university. For this assignment, the outline was required by the instructor, as it was of other participants for this

study. Once again, Aalaa made use of interpersonal consultation in writing the outline, as she described writing an outline draft and then showing it to her instructor. She describes the outline as “formal [...] each topic had different points that I’m going to exactly [talk] about this in my paragraphs.” Upon consultation with her instructor, Aalaa discovered that she was missing the “commands” that would indicate exactly what she would discuss in which paragraphs.

Although Aalaa had prior experience with outline writing in English and Arabic from both high school and university, the practice did not translate into the transnational context.

In high school, Alaa described her English writing as follows:

It wasn’t formal outline—just to know what points you were going to talk about, small points because in high school I was supposed to write very short essays so it’s not that long, so, I’m just deciding if I’m going to write about education, I’m going to talk about the importance of education—this is the outline; the importance of education, the government rule in education and how viewed their education in their lives—this is the outline, these three points.

Indeed, once she had completed this rudimentary outline, she would simply erase the scaffolding that made it an outline, and the outline would become the essay, despite any issues with formatting or coherence. Given this, Aalaa experienced difficulty with what she considered the formal and technical requirements of the outline. She found recourse through instructor consultation, which helped her address not only the formal and technical features of the assignment, but its purpose in the larger scope of the course. This is another example of Aalaa’s outreach and use of transnational resources when her existing capital—including the supplementary capital of the AUC-sponsored program—had reached its limits.

Following this, Aalaa was able to write a first draft, which resulted feedback from both her instructor and the writing center, the latter of which she had elected to visit for additional support and yet another example of her outreach and use of transnational

resources previously unavailable to her. Her instructor asked for more “details” in the next draft, which Aalaa addressed by “explaining her problem” and describing her fieldwork in the introduction, much like one would see in a social science essay. After this, Aalaa visited the writing center. Among the participants in this study, Aalaa was the only one to report using the writing center. She reported that her experience with the writing center was positive; at the same time, she reported that her visit focused mostly on the surface issues of alphabetic literacy and the academic essay genre, rather than the ideological aspects of her topic and argument: “They’re very helpful related to proof-reading your paper, correcting any kind of grammatical mistakes, [...] and actually they helped me with the vocabulary part, and I think they don’t give you that much help in the ideas.” Although the writing center did not appear to engage with or help in the development of Aalaa’s ideas and arguments, her visit is nonetheless another example of her active approach in developing her writing abilities by using resources unique to the transnational context.

After this, Aalaa submitted her second of three drafts to her instructor, which generated another round of instructor feedback; in Aalaa’s case, the instructor said that the essay was “fine” that it required no further revisions. This allowed Aalaa to skip the third draft and to submit the second draft as her final draft. As with Sanaa, Aalaa not only write an outline, but was able to “skip” the final draft of an essay that her instructor believed was already strong enough. In the case of Sanaa, however, the writing task was not only less complex, but she was able to draw upon the capital she had accrued through her pre-AUC education and experiences with language and literacy. While Aalaa clearly gained much supplementary capital through her experience in the AUC-sponsored program in Beni Suef, such as gaining experience with investigating a social and political problem in Egypt and anticipating the ethical constraints of qualitative research, she still actively sought out

supplementary resources within the transnational context to further supplement with needed forms of knowledge capital. As we will see with Farah, however, Aalaa's experience with the AUC-sponsored program provided significant language and literacy capital which prepared her for the transnational AUC context in ways Farah's educational background did not.

Farah

Assignment

This assignment was a research essay on a non-governmental organization (NGO) operating in Egypt. Farah was expected to apply course concepts onto research into an NGO of her choosing. Farah decided to write about an organization called Lifemakers (Sonaa El-Hayah), as she had prior experience with this organization in her hometown of Zagazig. According to Farah, the professor did not provide many details about the assignment, providing instead general information about expectations. While Farah reported that this gave her "space" as far as developing topics and methods, the lack of specifics created additional challenges for Farah. Her response to these challenges evidenced significant ability to repurpose genres and assignments to meet her intellectual interests in the Lifemakers organization, even as this repurposing worked against her direct academic interests.

Farah's Process and Use of Resources

Farah's process was complex, involved many stages, and was exceptionally time consuming. The assignment required so much attention that Farah was not able to meet the deadline and was not able to complete the assignment during the semester it was assigned. Because she took an incomplete for the course for which the essay was assigned, Farah continued working during the break in semesters. This presented additional challenges,

which will be described below. Based upon her description of her writing process, Farah was largely left to write a complex research essay, which included making independent methodological decisions, on her own. This may have contributed to her difficulty in completing the essay during the semester. Additionally, as this essay was written for a course that was not a composition course, Farah's interactions with her professor are described as limited. This contrasts with the others in this study, who all described consultation with their composition instructors as an important aspect of their process, particularly in identifying and resolving challenges. This appears to be a significant aspect of transnational writing pedagogies at AUC: the expertise of and access to the writing instructor. For the essay Farah wrote, she experienced no such benefit for this assignment, and the consequences were significant.

Farah's first task was to complete the assigned readings, as they contained concepts she was to apply onto the Lifemakers, her chosen NGO. As was established in the previous chapter, Farah evidenced difficulty with reading in English, as it was a time-consuming process for her. One reason for her difficulty was her use of Arabic to grasp complex ideas; Farah reported using Arabic in "studying or reading" to explain to herself the "complex ideas" found in readings. This approach indicates that Farah's English language capital was not yet sufficient for the task of university-level reading, and that she was drawing upon another form of language capital, that of Arabic, to supplement for what she lacked. As was established in the previous chapter, lack of language capital presents Farah with significant challenges—this example of reading assignments prior to writing the assignment is a situated example of the nature of this challenge.

As part of the project, Farah also needed to conduct qualitative research, first by interviewing several individuals affiliated with Lifemakers, and secondly by creating,

distributing and analyzing the findings of a survey given to volunteers across several Egyptian governorates. Farah was working alone and “no one was helping [her]”; as such, she turned to social media and YouTube for information about how to write a survey. She reported making educated guesses about what questions should be asked to the interviewees. While she did not report the amount of time this part of the process took, preparing for interviews and creating a survey is time consuming even for experienced researchers operating in a native language. Given this, Farah’s process during this phase was likely wrought with time-consuming challenges. This underscores the value of the supplementary capital Aalaa gained during the AUC-sponsored program at Beni Suef, as her concerns regarding qualitative research were less fundamental than those of Farah, who claimed no context for such research. Indeed, Farah reported conducting in-person interviews as a major challenge in this assignment. This was due to her need to “self-train” using Internet resources from a position of marginality within the transnational AUC context. This is the first among many examples of Farah using capital that either comes from her educational and linguistic background, which placed her in a marginal position within the transnational AUC context due to their limited applicability within that site, or from extra-curricular capital in the form of Internet usage or knowledge from her significant experience with the Lifemakers. As we will see, some forms of this capital adapt well to the transnational context inasmuch as they allow Farah to gain conceptual and process-oriented footholds she might not otherwise develop.

The Mind Map

Farah resolved some of the challenges of synthesizing interview and survey data with course readings through a multi-modal approach she had learned outside schooling: the mind map. Through the mind map, Farah was able to describe the goals of her writing process and

work toward generating an outline, which eventually was developed into an essay draft. Interestingly, Farah first learned about mind mapping from the Lifemakers, the very organization that is the focus for her essay, and adapted it for academic purposes. This is an example of adapting non-academic capital for the purposes of addressing a complex literacy problem within the transnational AUC context, a crossover of capital unique among participants in this study. The other participants reported using educationally and linguistically-based capital within the transnational context; those who had the greatest amount of such capital were positioned for successful academic and linguistic transitions to the transnational context, where such capital could be readily deployed. Farah, on the other hand, lacked such capital and found herself in a marginal position at AUC; her response was to reconfigure other forms of capital for the context, an approach that was effective when it came to mind mapping. This adaptation was also outside the authority or authorization of a writing instructor or other trusted expert, another unique aspect of this choice.

Farah initially described the process of mind mapping as messy and exploratory, where she tried to link “the theory [from class] with what the NGO already have,” which entailed drawing “circles and branches and [...] trying to link between the dots.” Following this initial brainstorming process, Farah described placing self-help, one theory of community development she read about in her course, in the middle of the page “like a circle and then trying to apply what’s in this theory to link it with the NGO by half-branches from the circle.” From these visualizations, Farah “began to have the main points that I should write about and then I am trying to fill like, yeah I need to prove this point.” She described opening separate Word documents on her computer, entering each point she had generated onto a separate document, and filling in the supporting points and evidence for each point from the mind map. This, she claimed, helped her focus on one idea at a time. From this, she

generated subtitles and began to “fill” in with the points generated in the mind map. To accomplish this, she used material from her professor, “structure or instructions [...] points that we should have in our paper [...] so I began to move the idea from being in a mind map to be [...] paragraphs.” From this, she was able to generate an essay that met the requirements for an essay in the social sciences, with a literature review, a methods section, and findings. See Figure 1 for a polished version of Farah’s mind map.

Farah’s use of the mind map is an example of her adaptive use of non-educational, intellectual capital for a school purpose, which helped her “solve” a complex literacy problem she had not encountered prior to entering AUC: synthesizing course readings (which were inordinately time-consuming) with her analysis of the Lifemakers NGO that was the focus for her essay. This adaptive “self-scaffolding” made it possible for Farah to meet the formal written requirements, namely an outline and the essay itself. However, as we will see, Farah’s adaptability also extends into her use of academic and other necessary genres, as she expands her use of genres to satisfy an intellectual, personal and career-oriented interest, even as this expansion appears to work against her ability to complete work on time.

Farah’s Personal Agenda for Service

Farah has personal experience with the Lifemakers NGO from her hometown of Zagazig, and a career ambition to become involved in such organizations in and around Egypt after her graduation from AUC. This underscores the limited nature of Farah’s participation in the transnational context, in that she will eventually graduate and return, transformed through her participation in this context, to Egypt. She claimed that her primary goal in writing this essay was not to earn a grade for her class, consistent with an earlier

claim that she was not motivated to do school work or write essays that lack real-world

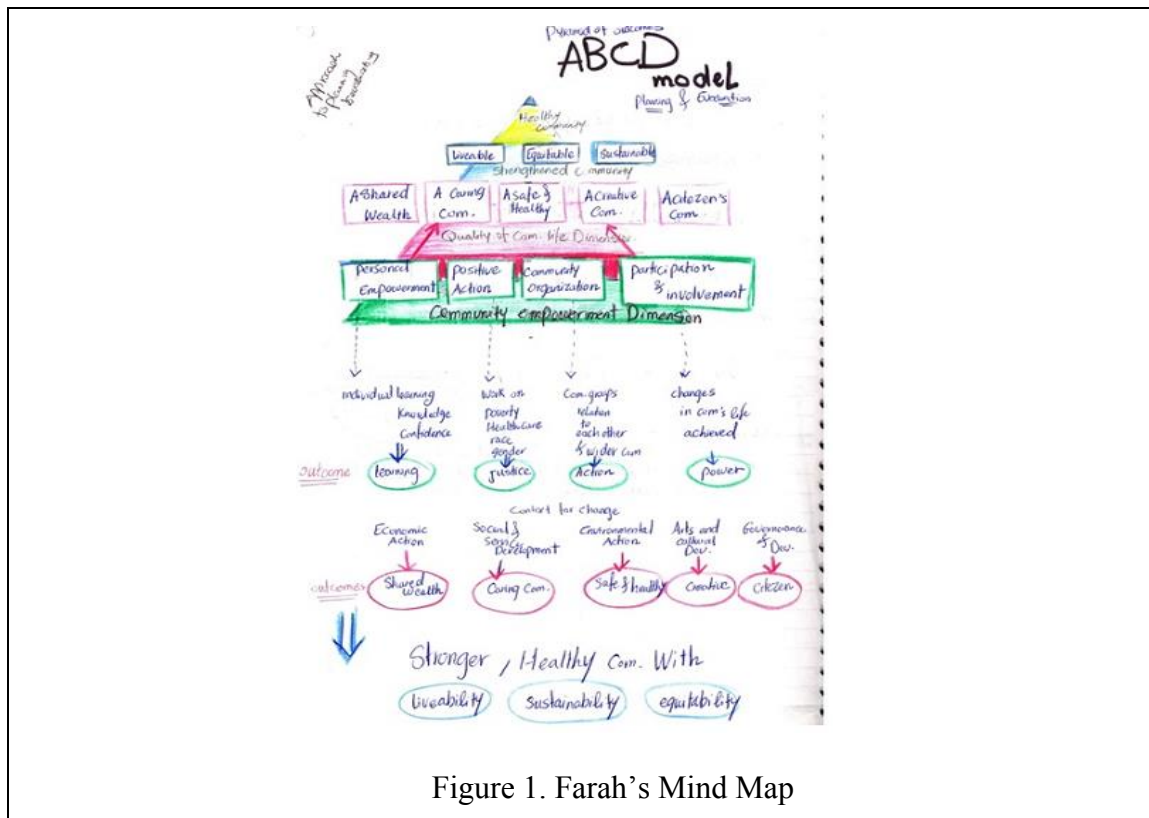


Figure 1. Farah's Mind Map

applications, but to prepare herself for the kind of work she would like to pursue after her participation in the transnational context had ended. This helps to account reason for her selection of the Lifemakers as a topic, even though this choice may have made completion of this essay project more difficult, given the travel necessities this choice dictated. Farah also could have conducted fewer interviews and elected not to write, administer and analyze the findings of a survey, a sub-genre to the primary study she also learned to write largely on her own. It should also be noted that Farah wrote surveys in Arabic for an Arabic-speaking audience and delivered quantitative findings in Arabic in her appendix, but translated these findings into English for the essay itself. These were largely her own choices, a point which is particularly significant given that the limited guidance Farah received from her instructor, as Farah's marginal position academically and

linguistically within the transnational context. On the surface, Farah would seem to be the least likely among study participants to not only take on a significant project, but to make the project more challenging given her choice of topic and methodological choices. However, Farah described learning about Lifemakers through social media while living in Zagazig and taking it upon herself to become involved with the group's local activities. Together with friends, Farah headed a project to deliver food to people in need during Ramadan. Her affiliation with the group left her and her friends feeling "older than our age [...] we began to be more engaged and feel [...] we are belonging to this place." This sense of identity and belonging appears to have driven not just Farah's initial participation with Lifemakers, but influenced the way in which she participated in the literacy challenges for this project. This strongly implies a correlation between Farah's interest in non-governmental service work, the identity and purpose it gave her, and the nature of her participation in this situated literacy event.

Hedging on Findings Regarding Farah

It should be repeated, and elaborated upon, that the writing assignment given by Farah for this study was not from a first year writing class. In reality, Farah offered two writing assignments for this study, one from a first year writing course and one from a social science course. The original solicitation asked potential participants to submit a piece of writing at the same time they were enrolled in a writing class (see Appendix). However, the solicitation did not explicitly state that the writing assignment had to come from the writing course. Additionally, I asked participants during their first interviews if they would share a piece of writing about which they were enthusiastic. Farah indicated that she was most enthusiastic about the essay from her social science course. In this respect, Farah's social

science essay is similar to the essays submitted by the other participants, who selected essays from their first year writing courses about which they were enthusiastic.

Still, the difference in the kind of essay submitted has implications that limit the findings for this study. Because this study draws on student writing from outside first year writing, the findings cannot be applied strictly to first year writing courses and first year students. It is possible that Farah's previous experiences with first year writing informed her approach to the more complex social science essay. If true, this would mitigate the significance of the findings regarding Farah's adaptive approach, as she could have learned or otherwise employed these strategies at an earlier time. She also describes a lack of engagement on the part of her instructor, which contrasts with the other participants, who often worked closely with their instructors. This indicates that the students enrolled in the first year writing courses were experiencing the kinds of transnational pedagogies described throughout Chapter Seven, while Farah was enrolled in a course where writing and literacy development were not the primary content. It is possible that Farah would have had a different experience writing this essay if it had been assigned in a first year or even an upper division writing course. Likewise, there is no way to know for certain how the other participants would have addressed the challenges of an essay like the one Farah submitted. They may have used strategies similar to the ones Farah employed. As such, this study must hedge on the significance of the findings where Farah is concerned, as contextual differences from the other participants may have influenced her choices and impacted the kinds of challenges she encountered.

Despite the limitations described in the previous paragraph, findings pertaining to Farah remain significant for many other reasons. First, the nature of Farah's challenges relate to her position within the transnational AUC context and, as this study has argued,

corresponds to her educational background prior to entering AUC. These challenges are profound, and her marginal position across a range of factors is significant. Her lack of experience with the kind of writing and literacy practices that were expected of her, and which continued to pose serious challenges even after first year writing courses, was a significant factor that drove her use of adaptive strategies. Likewise, her lack of English language experience has been established as another significant factor that results in her marginal position. Indeed, from the perspective of available capital and initial position, Farah faces significant challenges that manifest in her difficulty integrating into AUC and meeting the academic demands of the transnational environment. These factors correlate to the choices she made while resolving the many challenges of the social science essay. As such, her capital shortfall and marginal position are domain factors driving the nature of her challenges and her adaptiveness within the context. These findings that address Farah's challenges in context with AUC and the other participants, seen through the frames of capital and positionality, are both valid and significant.

Likewise, the findings for Farah remain significant because they touch upon two areas that are unique to Farah in this study: her intrinsic interest in her essay topic and her seeming disregard for grades and the academic calendar. As has been established already, Farah brought a different form of cultural capital to AUC: knowledge of the inner workings of the organization about which she wrote, and an interest in service that she hoped would include future involvement with the Lifemakers and other NGOs. This kind of interest is unique among the participants, most of whom were only beginning to experience the kind of identity transformations that participation in transnational AUC made possible. Farah's interest was more fully developed, and based in first-hand experiences. This interest provided her with a specific focus to learn more about the operation of the Lifemakers

throughout Egypt, and this drove the research and writing choices. Farah was so invested in this activity that she appeared to disregard the constraints of the academic calendar and the traditional motivator of earning high grades. Other participants followed a structured schedule established by their instructors and were invested in earning high grades and instructor praise. While these are not typically regarded as positive indicators of development, they help indicate the unique nature of Farah's motive to address this topic in a way that is especially challenging for her. This, in turn, offers significant insights into the way in which Farah adapted her non-school capital and intrinsic interests to meet the unique demands of AUC, while simultaneously demonstrating some of the ways in which Farah remains in a marginal position within AUC. The uniqueness of these areas, and the pervasiveness of her capital shortfall and marginal position, are compelling findings that offer insight into the ways in which she addressed writing and literacy challenges in the social science essay.

Discussion

All participants addressed social, cultural, economic and/or political issues in Egypt with their topics. This is a clear focus and expectation for literacy within the transnational context. Moreover, participants were expected to problematize Egypt from within the ideological context of AUC. Likewise, participants utilized English to address Egyptian social, cultural, political and economic problems, a departure for all participants.

Interestingly, while most participants appeared to provide critical commentary on an Egyptian issue, Farah elected to write about a group that actually addresses these issues, an organization she sought out in Zagazig and with which she hopes to work in the future. This again underscores what makes Farah unique among the participants: while she lacks the traditional forms of capital and begins her career at AUC in a marginal position, she

demonstrates an intrinsic and specific post-AUC agenda that not only drives her selection of topic but her willingness to problematize and make more complex the literacy task before her.

The question remains, however, about the ways in which the capital each participant brought into the transnational context interacted with these transnational ideologies and pedagogies, what this reveals about the differing ways in which participants deployed existing capital and adapted new practices to meet existing needs, and the ways in which this combination of application and adaptation impacted positionality as participants interacted with the context. This study examined three dependent forms of capital: language, literacy and educational background, with additional consideration for the socioeconomic backgrounds of participants, as socioeconomic background correlated with the other forms of capital.

Those participants with the greatest initial amount of capital were able to configure capital to address the ideologies, pedagogies and literacies of transnational AUC. For example, Sanaa's background in English, literary analysis and American-style schooling transitioned readily to the transnational context, where she was able to adapt her practices in analyzing work from a feminist poet and evidence the beginnings of a transformation in identity through her literacy experience. Nour, on the other and, lacked significant English but possessed other forms of capital, including familiarity with taking critical stances on Egyptian issues. Once she gained the language ability, Nour was able to benefit from the transnational writing pedagogies and make significant literacy gains. In the case of Karim, he lacked the social capital and spent much of his first year feeling isolated from the affluent class of students comprising most AUC students, but he was able to draw upon his significant language and literacy capital from his schooling background in adapting to the

expectations for critical literacy at AUC. Like the others, he also benefitted from transnational writing pedagogies and evidenced the beginnings of identity transformation. Aalaa had gained supplementary capital in the form of an AUC-sponsored program in Beni Suef, which she used to meet the expectations for the transnational context, most notably through examining a complex Egyptian social problem and practicing social science research. She also made significant use of available resources, by making use of instruction librarians and the writing center, to further acclimate to the transnational AUC context.

Farah had profound language, literacy, educational and social deficits upon entering the transnational AUC context. Almost nothing in her background prepared her for the kinds of experiences she would have at AUC. What she did bring, however, was an ethic of service and an involvement with the Lifemakers in her hometown. These combined to provide her with another form of supplementary capital: a specific and intrinsic career interest in helping other Egyptians once her AUC career had ended. In essence, she was already looking past the end of her participation in the transnational space to the kinds of things she planned to do through the gains in her transnational education. Unlike the others, Farah did not benefit from transnational writing pedagogies. While this made her literacy experience more difficult, it provided hidden advantages: she was able to expand and utilize several genres, practice strategic translanguaging, and learn the practices of social sciences research without any mediation. These benefits had some unfortunate byproducts, as Farah appeared to have difficulty completing work on time and evidenced some disregard for her grades, two developments that could jeopardize her standing within the transnational context (which also indicates that tight scheduling and regular grading are characteristic of the context). Because Farah was driven by intrinsic motivators that appealed her core qualities

and ambitions that looked beyond the immediate context, she was most interested in using and expanding her foundation of capital in service of her longer-term goal.

Based upon these findings, participation with transnational writing pedagogies is the most significant experience these students reported within situated literacy at AUC. Writing in many kinds of genres, using low-stakes and shorter assignments, consulting with the instructor and taking a critical stance were part of the experience for all participants except for Farah. These dialogic and scaffolding approaches allowed those with relevant capital to consolidate their advantages for the literacy expectations of transnational AUC. This is most clear in the cases of Nour, Sanaa and Karim, as described above. For Aalaa and Farah, their marginal status was helped through forms of supplementary capital. Aalaa's supplemental educational experience transitioned readily to the transnational context and provided her with relevant experience she applied to the literacy task, as well as a strategy of outreach that led her to seek resources that could further acclimate her with the transnational context for literacy. Farah's experiences with Lifemakers provided her with adaptive strategies for literacy and an intrinsic, career-focused interest, but the fact that these supplements came from *outside* her schooling background indicates the limitations of her educational, linguistic and literacy background. This further indicates her unique adaptability and willingness to persevere through significant difficulty, and may account for Farah's disregard for the academic calendar or grades in favor of working within the problem space of a complex literacy task that would satisfy intellectual and career ambitions.

At the conclusion of this study, Farah continues to evidence marginal positionality within the site when compared with others, even as she benefitted from the literacy experience by adapting genres to meet needs, practicing social science methodologies, and expanding the assignment to address interests and concerns. The experiences of Aalaa and

Farah underscore the crucial nature of supplementary forms of capital for those who come from outside socioeconomic classes that are likely to enjoy linguistic, literacy, educational and social that ease transitions to this transnational context. This supplementary capital can also be applied to the transnational context in ways that impact participation within the site. While both benefitted from their supplementary capital, Farah remains in a marginal position within the site, even as her literacy experience appears to satisfy her intellectual interests and benefit her long-term, post-AUC agenda. Farah's experience also underscores the temporal nature of the transnational context for participants, as their interaction within the space will eventually come to an end and they will likely return to their home communities with new forms of capital to be deployed within Egypt. The "flow" into and out from the transnational site, which emanates from and returns to intranational locales, implies the temporality of the space for individuals and the nature of their purpose: adapting transnational ideologies, pedagogies and literacies to address the manifold needs within Egypt.

CHAPTER 8. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation, at its core, poses a fundamental question: what is the nature of student transitions into the university? What new academic, literacy and social demands are placed upon students upon entering the university, and in what ways are students “prepared” for these demands through their backgrounds in language, literacy and education, as well as through their socioeconomic status? For this study, these questions have been asked with the specific context in mind: the unique nature of the educational site of the American University in Cairo, and the socioeconomic, educational, language and literacy backgrounds of the Egyptian undergraduate students who participated in this study. In what ways do the backgrounds of Egyptian students impact their transition to and participation within AUC?

In considering these aspects of context, this dissertation has examined several areas of scholarship, most notably in the area of transnational literacy studies, in order to account for the specific configuration of this context to these students. This sub-area within New Literacy Studies draws upon Bourdieusian concepts used in anthropology, sociology and migrant studies to offer new frames for the interaction of local-distant literacies involving the “flow” of people, materials and ideologies across national borders for reasons of economic exigency. These frames have been used in this dissertation to account for the history, development and current transnational orientation of AUC as a context infused with U.S.-based ideologies that serve a range of Egyptian needs. Likewise, these frames have helped account for some experiences of participants who have “flowed” into the transnational site from various stations within Egypt. The study has been able to account for the ways in which students’ prior experiences became transformed into capital in the unique transnational context of AUC, and has discovered that students with relevant capital are in positions of initial advantage in comparison to those who come from other backgrounds.

Through this frame, the study has discovered that students from higher socioeconomic classes and private schooling backgrounds enjoy many initial advantages within the AUC context, while those from lower socioeconomic classes and public schooling backgrounds are dependent upon supplementary capital, gained from outside their public schooling background, to adapt for use within the transnational AUC context. Students from lower socioeconomic classes and public schooling backgrounds demonstrate adaptive qualities, as they attempt to both deploy their existing capital and acquire supplementary capital. These acts of adaptation and supplementarity underscore their otherwise marginal initial positions.

Through examining participant practices within a period of situated literacy within the transnational site, the study has argued that Nour, Sanaa and Karim possessed capital that benefitted their participation in transnational literacy practices, specifically their involvement with transnational pedagogies and literacy ideologies. This finding was consistent with their social and academic positions, as well. While these students encountered challenges, they were not as profound as those experienced by Aalaa and Farah. These two students adapted supplementary capital for the context in ways that underscored their marginal initial positionality. Farah was able to circumvent her marginal position, in some ways, by adapting non-schooling forms of literacy and practice for the AUC context. This adaptation was crucial to her survival, as there was little from her formal schooling background that could serve as capital at AUC. Her adaptation, when combined with her intrinsic interest in the topic of her essay and her long-term interest in a career of service, indicated the ways in which non-schooling capital drove her decisions with literacy within the transnational space, and further underscores an important dynamic in this configuration of transnational education with intranational individuals: that the interaction of individuals

within the site is temporal and that, as they pass through the site, they acquire forms of capital that ultimately will be utilized within Egypt.

While the current frames within transnational literacy studies have helped account for both the unique nature of the AUC context and offered ways in which Bourdieusian concepts such as capital and positionality are adaptable to student transitions into the university, existing frames nevertheless must be extended to account for the unique aspects of the circumstances described through this study. This concluding chapter will extend frames within transnational literacy studies by accounting for the dimensions of transnationalism and literacy in this study which are not fully reflected in the literature. Additionally, this chapter will consider ways in which these dimensions offer new frames for the consideration of different kinds of transnational spaces and different kinds of activity by individuals involved with these sites. In doing so, this chapter will apply some concepts from transcultural literacy studies when discussing the unique challenges of Farah and others who come from backgrounds that are not typical for AUC students.

While it has been purposeful for this study to characterize university transitions as “border crossings” into a transnational space with unique ideologies and pedagogies, a frame must be developed that can account for the intersection of embedded transnational spaces with intranational individuals who flow into the site for a range of individual and collective national reasons. As we have seen, AUC has adapted to many changes within Egypt throughout its history; it “came about” as a truly U.S.-influenced educational and ideological site in response to policy and ideology shifts by an Egyptian president. This site not only serves a range of Egyptian purposes—which, given its status as English-language and U.S.-styled institution, makes it unique—but it is embedded *within* and *surrounded* by Egypt. These dynamics fundamentally alter the nature of “border crossing.” Transnational literacy

studies scholarship often follows the experiences of migrants as they cross from a home nation/community into a foreign one. In the case of AUC, individuals enter into an embedded transnational context, one which is infused with U.S.-based pedagogies and ideologies but which is still very much “of” Egypt—it is located in Egypt and ultimately exists to serve Egyptian purposes. In this respect, the embedded space is hybrid. While its physical locality is in Egypt, and it has discrete borders and operations that physically distinguish it from the rest of Egypt, the space is infused with U.S.-based ideologies and pedagogies. Passing through the gates of AUC—its physical borders—indicates entrance into an ideological space where U.S.-based languages, literacies and pedagogies interact with Egyptians and Egyptian needs. In this respect, the transnational AUC context is more ideological than physical, as students not only depart from the context at will, but carry with them the materials and ideologies of the transnational space in backpacks, or on their laptops and smartphones, and work on assignments at home or in public cafes. Entrance into the AUC context initiates students into a world of ideology and pedagogy that seeps beyond physical borders, through critical dispositions toward Egypt developed through participation in ideological and literacy activities of the transnational space.

This kind of transnational context, characterized by embeddedness, hybridity and permeability, impacts the ways in which individuals flow into and participate within the site. While transnational literacy studies scholarship focuses on national border crossings, the “flow” described through this study allows Egyptians to flow into this unique transnational space from *within* their country, for reasons of relevance to individual and nation: cultural reproduction, professionalization and social and economic mobility. This new dynamic, that of intranational flow into a transnational space, leads us to consider the ways in which Egyptian capital is mobilized to prepare select Egyptians for participation within the

transnational AUC context; given the distribution of capital along socioeconomic lines, individuals “flow” into the space along differing trajectories to arrive at different initial positions within the space. Stated directly, Egyptians from high socioeconomic classes have access to the rare forms of capital that will translate more readily to AUC, indicating that, even though the site is permeable, access to it remains highly regulated.

Another significant dimension that differentiates the context of this study from other work in transnational literacy studies is the *temporality* of the context. Not only is AUC a unique kind of ideological border, it is also *temporary* for individuals, in that there is a time limit on participation within the context. Eventually, students graduate. This temporality is related to the other dimensions of embeddedness, hybridity and permeability in that these indicate the relationship of the context, and those who flow into it, to Egypt. Participation with the transnational languages, ideologies and literacies of the site gain significance because of their relevance *within* Egypt; it is expected that individuals gain these forms of capital to be deployed within Egypt, whether for the purposes of cultural reproduction, various forms of professionalization, and/or social and economic mobility.

These dimensions are distinct from the discrete border crossings characteristic of much transnational literacy studies scholarship, in that they reframe bordering from a national, physical crossing into a multi-dimensional, time-intensive series of movements, involving interaction with U.S.-infused, transnational ideologies and pedagogies resulting in the acquisition of capital serving individual and Egyptian national interests. This activity is highly regulated through access to forms of capital that correlate to socioeconomic class. By taking into account the dimensions characterizing the space and the ways in which individuals interact with the space, these expanded frames within transnational literacy studies can account for the unique nature of the AUC context. Likewise, this

reconceptualization of bordering enables the conceptualization of regulated *intranational* flow.

As we can see, transnational literacy studies offers expansive frames that can account for the complex interactions of global-local ideologies, peoples, materials and literacies in increasingly globalized and internationalized educational settings such as the American University in Cairo. Additionally, these frames can be extended to account for new dimensions of transnationality and new kinds of flow within nations into transnational sites. For students such as Farah, the ways they are initially positioned and participate within AUC is similar to the concept of “in-betweenness” developed within transcultural literacy studies. Even as students like Farah move across national space into AUC, the nature of that movement is that of crossing cultures. Farah’s lack of access to relevant capital indicates that, while she is Egyptian, her educational and socioeconomic background renders her culturally distinct from most AUC students. She lacks the capital that others have accrued. As a result, Farah does not feel that she fully belongs at AUC, even as her matriculation to the university distinguishes her from others in Zagazig, her home town. This dilemma is taken up through her literacy practices, in the way in which she deploys approaches from her work with the Lifemakers in Zagazig to solve the challenges of a literacy task at AUC. Likewise, her choice of topic is related to her career goals and interest in community service; in effect, she uses the literacy task to mediate her own eventual return to this organization and the culture of her home town and other places like it. For the moment, however, she is in between—not fully a part of either space.

This conceptual and paradigmatic expansiveness would serve well the fields of international composition and ESL studies, both of which presume, as did Brian Street (2003), the inherent hegemonic and/or malignant nature of global pedagogies, literacies and

languages as they are taken up within local sites. For these areas of scholarship, a global force exerts ideological pressure against a weaker, local people or place. This pressure can take the form of non-reflective U.S.-based pedagogies and rhetorical models (Donahue 2009), monolingual assumptions in writing classrooms that marginalize multilingual learners (Horner and Trimbur 2002), or the ideological force of standard English and Western modes of discourse in global academia (Canagarajah 2006). While each scholar makes valid points that are given consideration in the literature review for this dissertation, the post-colonial ideology driving the assumption of powerful global ideologies reorganizing local sites does not offer the same array of expansive possibilities as does literacy studies. This study, for example, has situated the experiences of writing students within transnational literacy studies and has extended frames within this field to account for a unique kind of transnational space that creates a particular dynamic of intranational flow from national (Egyptian) sites into transnational space. In so doing, this dissertation has placed a study of interest to composition and ESL scholars primarily within the frames for transnational literacy studies. I would further argue that composition and ESL scholarship would benefit greatly from the expansive frames of literacy studies, inasmuch as these frames would allow composition and ESL studies to account for many kinds of global-local interactions that involve the internationalization of composition and language studies, and not simply those interactions that fit within a narrowing band of dynamics.

Final Significance

This dissertation also offers findings relevant to university administrations at transnational educational sites. This study has considered the linguistic, educational, literacy and sociocultural backgrounds of participants as closely correlated variables generating forms of capital that, when deployed at AUC, determined the initial positionality of the

participants within the site, and impacted the ways in which they participated in and adapted capital to meet the demands of complex literacy tasks. The findings strongly indicate that a student who lacks relevant capital is highly likely to experience linguistic, academic, literacy and sociocultural challenges. Since these areas are interrelated, “fixing” one area does not fully address the larger problem of successful transition to the transnational site. Farah, for example, spent a year in the English Language Institute at AUC prior to beginning the formal academic program, focusing primarily on gaining the linguistic capital she lacked. Despite this experience, Farah reported significant and ongoing difficulties adapting to the linguistic and academic demands of AUC, as reported in Chapter Six. She also appeared to lack a ready social cohort and did not relate to her peers. Even though she had a year of intensive language training, Farah’s shortfall of capital was so profound that she continued to experience difficulty with the educational, literacy and social aspects of AUC. Nour, on the other hand, also came to AUC with a shortfall of linguistic capital and entered the same yearlong language institute as Farah. Once she entered the formal academic program of the university, Nour adapted well to the transnational pedagogies and ideologies for literacy, and reported a ready social cohort of other students with shared challenges.

Through comparing the experiences of Farah with those of Nour, we can see that simply “fixing” the problem of a shortfall linguistic capital does not address the larger issues of academic preparation and social integration that can result in meaningful integration. This finding strongly indicates that universities should provide academic and literacy support for students with significant shortfalls in relevant capital, in order to scaffold what is very likely to be a lengthy process of linguistic, academic and social acculturation. There is already an office on the AUC campus for students who come from public schools and have earned a scholarship to attend AUC; this office considers such challenges as academics, student life

and language in addition to the various practical matters of enrolling in a U.S.-styled university, navigating Cairo, living in dormitories and other challenges. However, the findings from this study indicate that a student from this kind of background is still likely to feel overwhelmed by the educational, literacy, social and other demands of the transnational site. Existing programs may need to consider new ways to address the integrated challenges students are likely to encounter. The findings of this study may offer a road map, as we will see below.

One such approach may include the adaptation of non-school forms of capital to address shortfalls of traditional capital. While Farah's profound capital shortfalls resulted in significant challenges within the transnational site, she nevertheless attempted to convert knowledge learned outside school settings to meet the demands of the literacy task developed in Chapter Seven. In using the mind map to organize her thinking and self-scaffold her drafting of an essay, Farah was able to successfully adapt an approach learned through working with the Lifemakers to meet the demands of a complex literacy task at AUC. Notably, the other participants reported only using knowledge gained from schooling settings to address challenges within the transnational context, which may indicate that the others had gained enough capital through their prior schooling experiences to succeed at AUC, a further indication that capital is distributed along class lines. Still, Farah's case offers the possibility that even students who enter with profound shortfalls may have knowledge and strategies that can be adapted to meet the demands of the transnational context. Taking an inventory of such knowledge and strategies could help students like Farah, who lack readily applicable capital, adapt their available abilities for the transnational context. This approach would capitalize on the cultural "in betweenness" of their status by

finding ways to transfer practices from one area of life to meet the demands of the educational context.

Still, the greatest challenges that need to be addressed come prior to the “crossing” into AUC. This study has shown that there are significant differences in the distribution of capital across different kinds of backgrounds. This study shows that some forms of transnational literacy, ideology and pedagogy exist at the primary and secondary level, but that these are almost exclusively the province of wealthy Egyptians who are able to bypass public education and purchase access to private education and forms of capital relevant to AUC. Reforming entrenched practices in the Egyptian public schooling system could address the distribution of capital, particularly in the area of English language and literacy. Significant and prolonged experience in these areas could help students meet the academic demands of AUC, and could help provide public school graduates with a ready social cohort of students experiencing similar challenges at AUC. Such an approach would be significant, given that this study indicates that both educational and social integration are important factors for successful positioning and participation at AUC.

Such reforms do not seem likely. Regional ambivalence toward English language and literacy is reflected in Egyptian public schooling policies. Additionally, the authoritarian culture of rote memorization and adherence to strict rules for literacy seem unlikely to change anytime soon, given that the current Egyptian government is unfriendly to criticism. Attempts at reform seen in *Cultures of Arab Schooling* (2006) underscore the pervasiveness of the challenges in the public schooling sector. Given the nature of the challenges facing Egyptian public schooling, and the unlikely possibility that the new Egyptian government will change its position, the best possibilities to meet the challenges of public school students may come in the form of supplementary forms of capital.

Some of the findings in this study offer pathways forward in this regard. One possibility for supplementary capital would be an expansion of the AUC-sponsored program experienced by Aalaa in Beni Suef. This program's curriculum and orientation was a significant departure from the public schooling culture reported by Aalaa, Farah and Karim. Aalaa gained experience with English in a way that was integrated with a critical literacy ideology that allowed her to learn about and practice qualitative research methodologies while investing a range of Egyptian challenges. This supplementary capital significantly eased Aalaa's transition into the transnational context. By offering a greater number of such programs, AUC could successfully supplement the public schooling education and expose a greater number of public school students to pedagogies and literacies that would become relevant within the transnational context. This measured expansion of the transnational site in the form of targeted outreach would help make it possible for more students to develop the kinds of capital necessary to make successful adaptations to transnational sites, including not just AUC but new private universities such as Future University, Canadian International College, and German University in Cairo, among others.

Finally, it should be noted that, despite her difficulties, Farah appeared to gain much from her literacy learning experience at AUC. The reason appears to be her involvement with the Lifemakers in her home town, which drove not only her academic interest, but provided her with knowledge she adapted for the demands of the literacy task at AUC. Farah was able to work beyond the constraints of available genres and even the academic calendar in pursuing a project of intrinsic interest to her. While this did not allow her to entirely overcome her academic, literacy and social challenges, it nevertheless provided her with an intrinsic and localized interest that drove her academic and literacy pursuits, and transformed her "in between" status into an asset. This transformation seems very likely to have resulted

in her decision to make the literacy task more challenging by expanding the scope of the project, working with a greater number of genres with which she had little or no prior experience, and engaging in translanguaging and translation—time-consuming choices made by a student already experiencing significant challenges.

These findings reverberate throughout the entire study. Indeed, while students at the American University in Cairo are able to write about Egypt's manifold challenges and criticize its leaders and practices, the magnitude of these literacy practices is unclear. Will these practices extend past the conclusion of students' participation within the site? Or does the very uniqueness of the site, and the ongoing hostility toward critique and dissent within the Egyptian government and its other institutions, mitigate the ways in which these practices can extend past the physical and ideological borders of AUC? Despite Farah's struggles, she alone figured out a way to bridge the different worlds of which she is a part, as her work in Zagazig helped her develop an interest in addressing challenges within Egypt that led her to AUC, drove her selection of major, and impacted the way in which she approached the literacy task analyzed in this study.

This raises a final question regarding the purpose of accruing the kind of capital most relevant to AUC. If the magnitude of literacy practices developed at AUC that are critical of Egypt does not, at present, extend beyond the physical and ideological borders of the university, then what are the underlying reasons for accruing capital relevant to AUC? Which practices seep into the larger nation? Study participants cited having a good job as a significant reason for attending AUC; as such, the literacy practices with the greatest magnitude are more likely to be those serving these ends. Students position themselves not as developing public intellectuals, but as future members of a professional class, either reproducing status or generating mobility for themselves.

Literacy studies often focuses on the economic exigencies driving migration, flow and the acquisition, use and development of literacy practices in transnational and transcultural configurations. While these factors are significant, they are not total. This study has revealed an anomaly: the practice of critical literacy about Egypt at AUC, which does not appear to extend beyond the parameters of the space. This regulation of literacy practices, even within a space that enjoys relative autonomy, risks domesticating these practices at a time when Egypt should reinvest itself in the kind of critical reflection that these practices can help develop. While we would be wise to heed scholars who warn against imposing a Western-critical model onto yet another non-Western site, the strong possibility remains that these literacy practices, when developed by Egyptians through participation in a site with the unique qualities of AUC, can be taken up in dynamic ways to address meaningfully the manifold and urgent challenges facing Egypt and the Middle East. The question of how to achieve this looms over the conclusion of this study. We can look again to Farah, who, despite significant difficulties adapting to AUC, not only used literacy to bridge the two worlds of which she is a part, but located a culturally acceptable platform for acknowledging and addressing challenges within Egypt. This approach could inform the ways in which AUC-sponsored programs work with non-governmental organizations and communities whose students do not fit the typical profile for AUC students.

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APPENDIX A

Solicitation E-mails

E-mail written to faculty members

Dear Writing Faculty:

My name is James Austin. I am a doctoral candidate at the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I am also a former writing instructor at the American University in Cairo.

I am conducting dissertation research on the literacy learning experiences of students at your university who have graduated from public high schools in the Middle East. I am hoping that you would be willing to assist me in this research by distributing an e-mail from me to your current writing students. This e-mail (which I will attach to this e-mail) invites students interested in being interviewed to contact me directly. Your involvement in this research would end once you send the e-mail to your students.

I very much appreciate your willingness to help me with my research. Please contact me at jaustin@education.ucsb.edu if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

James Austin

E-mail written to students, distributed by faculty members

Dear Writing Students:

My name is James Austin. I am a doctoral candidate at the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I am also a former writing instructor at the American University in Cairo.

I am conducting dissertation research on the literacy learning experiences of students at your university who have graduated from public high schools in the Middle East. I am

seeking to interview public high school graduates currently enrolled in writing classes who are willing to be interviewed for two hours and who would be willing to share one piece of current writing. Interviews will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used throughout the duration of my study, including any publications that may result.

Those who are interviewed will receive a gift card equivalent to \$20 at your university's bookstore.

Students who are interested in being interviewed should contact me directly (do not contact your instructor) at jaustin@education.ucsb.edu. In the e-mail, please include your name, your year in school, the writing course in which you are presently enrolled, your home town and governerate, and the name of your high school.

I very much appreciate your interest.

Sincerely,

James Austin

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocols

Interview # 1

I. High school/ college differences

Opening question: Do you remember your first week at AUC/AUB? What was it like? What were your experiences right at the beginning? How are these different from your experiences today?

___ Social aspects to university (i.e., did you feel at home or like an outsider? Explain. When did you begin to feel comfortable?)

___ Did you know what to expect? (i.e., anyone else in family go to university/AUC?)

___ Where did you go to HS? How large a school was it? Describe it. Describe the classroom. Describe the neighborhood. Typical day at your school.

Difference from uni?

___ How did you feel about AUC/B when you began? Excited? Nervous?

How do you feel now?

___ Was the actual workload much different?

___ Was it hard? Were you overwhelmed or was it okay?

___ Why not attend Cairo U or another public university? What was/is the difference to you?

_____ Idea to apply to AUC/B?

II. Language Issues

Segue question: Most classes in your high school were taught in Arabic, right?

Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like to move to studying everything in English? Was that easy? Hard?

___ Which aspects of studying in English were the most challenging: the readings? Understanding lectures/classes? The written assignments?

___ For how long did you study English in high school? Can you describe how you were taught/a typical day?

___ Why was it important to you to learn English?

III. Writing

Segue question: As you know, my main research interest is about writing, so if you don't mind, I'd like to talk to you specifically about your writing at AUC/AUB and in high school.

___ What were the biggest differences from your writing classes in HS to those at university?

___ In what ways did you adjust to these differences?

___ In high school, what kinds of things/topics did you write about in English? How did this differ from your Arabic writing?

___ How much English writing did you do? What kind of writing was it (academic, creative, etc.)?

___ How did writing topics at AUC/B differ from those in high school? Were there any topics or attitudes you knew to avoid in high school? How about university? How did you know this?

___ Do you have a favorite or best piece of writing from university? Can you explain why it was favorite or best? Willing to share?

___ What kinds of writing classes did you take? Why did you take them?

__Why was it important to you to learn to write in English?

__Any non-school/non-sanctioned writing in English? Purpose?

Interview #2 (Cognitive Interview)

I. Assignment

__Before arriving, how much writing did/do you think you will be expected to do at university? What did/do you think was the purpose of all this writing?

__What do you think you were expected to learn from the assignment (you have given me)? Did you feel prepared to meet these expectations at the start? (why/not)

__Tell me about the process. (length, assignment sheets, conferences, number of drafts, feedback, writing center, time spent, etc.)

__What seemed particularly challenging or difficult about this assignment? How did you figure out what to do? (pay attention to resources from HS vs. uni)

__Was it different than writing assignments you had been given before, or similar?

II. Paragraph Selection (HS v. college resources)

__Tell me about the paragraph you have selected as your favorite. What makes it your favorite? (organization, clarity, sentences, attitude expressed, topic, writing type)

__Can you talk me through your process in composing this paragraph? (resources drawn upon—teacher, student feedback, readings)

III. Connection to HS

__Did your education in writing in HS (English or Arabic) help you work on this assignment? What did help you?

__ [Any non-sanctioned/non-HS writing, if previously mentioned: Did this help you figure out the assignment?]

__Would this assignment be suitable for your high school? (type of writing, topic, attitude)

__Could you change it to make it suitable? What would you have to do?

IV. HS Reflection

__Do you think you would have been capable of writing this assignment with only your HS training? Probe. (What changed/ how)

__If you were able to make one change to the way writing is taught at your HS, what would it be?

__Looking ahead, what do you think will be the role of writing at uni and in your career?

__How did these experiences at AUC/B change your attitude about writing at uni and beyond? Did this assignment play a role in that?