

Social Distance and Trust: Experimental Evidence from a Slum in Cairo

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Web Appendix: Background and Experimental Procedures

1 Background

We conducted our study in Manshiet Nasser, one of the largest and oldest informal housing areas in Cairo. Manshiet Nasser is a squatter settlement built on government-owned land. Its location along the limestone cliffs of the Mokattam plateau and its difficult accessibility challenge any upgrading of basic infrastructure such as the water supply or sewage disposal. Living and environmental conditions are poor. Population estimates range from 420,000 to almost 1 million inhabitants. While estimates for Greater Cairo suggest a population density of around 40,069 per square kilometer (UNDP, 2005), this figure is likely to be higher for Manshiet Nasser and other informal housing areas given the continued population growth and geographic limitations in expanding the area.¹ The average household size is six persons and more than 30% of the families live in one single room (UN-HABITAT, 2003). In comparison to many other informal housing areas in developing countries, violent crime is a rare event. There is a low level of social engagement in Manshiet Nasser (UN-HABITAT, 2003). The few active non-governmental organizations (NGOs) typically have some religious – Muslim or Coptic – background.² Other sources of activities are mostly informal savings associations, called *gam'iyyaat* in the Egyptian dialect. They are frequently used to meet financial needs, such as funerals or marriage costs (Singerman, 1995; Hoodfar, 1997).

¹According to the 2006 Census, the population of Greater Cairo amounts to 18 million. Recent estimates suggest that more than 40% of the population of Greater Cairo live in informal housing areas.

²Estimates on the share of the Coptic population in Egypt range between 5% to 15%.

Particularly in the informal housing areas, religion has come to play an important role in people’s everyday lives. On the one hand, this is due to many residents originating from the more traditional, rural areas in Upper Egypt. On the other hand, and more importantly, the lack of formal institutions has opened up room for religious organizations to provide basic services to the community (Singerman, 1995). In recent years, for example, taking the veil has become a must for Muslim women while in the 1970s only very few women did so (Hoodfar, 1997). Gender roles are well-defined and compliance to Muslim norms and values is closely monitored (Bibars, 2001).

2 Procedure

The experiment was conducted with the support of the Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (PDP) of the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), and in particular with their local branch in Manshiet Nasser. Conducting a lab-in-the-field experiment in a highly religious environment poses several challenges. We paid great attention to the choice of the recruiters, the instructor and the assistants (see below), as well as to the language used when announcing the experiment and during the experiment itself (the game protocol is available upon request). In the timing and duration of the experimental sessions (workshops) we took further care that participants would not miss prayer times.³ Another important limitation was the fact that gambling is forbidden in Islam. We therefore refrained from eliciting risk preferences through an experimental task.

We employed three local female assistants for the recruitment of participants. By using female recruiters we wanted to facilitate the recruitment of female participants. Each recruiter was assigned to different districts in Manshiet Nasser and was advised to go to public places and to invite people with different socio-economic background. We advised them to recruit only one person from a particular place and to then move on to the next neighborhood.⁴ The recruiters were not aware of the purpose of the study nor did they know the game protocol or procedure. The only information they had was that (i) we wanted to learn how people interact with each other and make economic decisions, (ii) the participants would receive a show-up fee of 5 L.E. for arriving on time, (iii) the participants would do some exercises with money, (iv) the participants could keep the money they will have at the end of the workshop, (v) the money was provided by a German research institution and that participation is voluntarily.

³There is some flexibility on prayer times as long as a missed prayer is completed before the next one is scheduled.

⁴Note that apart from their friend, participants knew on average the name of 8% of the session participants.

We instructed the recruiters to invite 16 residents for each workshop. The recruited participants (invitees) were asked to bring a friend (not a direct family member or a minor) to the workshop. For logistical reasons we were restricted to a maximum of 32 participants per workshop. The recruiters collected name and cell phone number (about 77% own a cell phone in our sample) of the invitee and also asked about a potential friend.

We conducted five sessions with 24 to 30 participants (12 to 15 pairs) within a week in May 2008. The sessions took place in the late afternoon at a cultural theater located in one of the central districts of Manshiet Nasser. It provided enough rooms and space to run the experiment, which is rare in Manshiet Nasser due to the lack of public infrastructure and space. The sessions were run by a female instructor who was supported by a large group of assistants both male and female. The main reason for having a female instructor was to provide a comfortable setting for female participants. The role of the instructor was essentially to read out the introduction of the experiment and to explain the procedures and the games (see also below). Apart from that, there was no direct interaction between the instructor and the participants. The instructor and the assistants received extensive instructions and training before the experiment.

Upon arrival, participants could only register together with a friend. After the registration, they received a folder that contained three large envelopes with the material for the three games, a socio-economic questionnaire as well as the show-up fee of 5 L.E. The show-up fee was announced in the recruitment process and handing it out at the beginning of a session had the purpose of strengthening our credibility. Participants were only allowed to open the folder when requested. To prevent any communication between participants, they were seated at spaced intervals in a large room. Furthermore, invitees were seated in the front, while their friends were seated in the back of the room. After a short introduction we required participants to give their consent for the experiment and the survey.

Explaining the games to participants with different levels of education poses a challenge and is time consuming. We addressed this challenge in several ways. The three games were explained and carried out sequentially. This made it easier for participants to understand a particular game and to memorize its details. Additionally, it also ensured that participants could not condition their behavior in one game on behavior in a subsequent game. For each game, the instructor read the instructions out loud to ensure that every participant was given the same information and to minimize any educational advantage. As is common in laboratory experiments, a neutral framing was used throughout. Moreover, each game was illustrated on charts and the procedures

were demonstrated in front of the participants. Relevant parts were repeatedly explained by the instructor. After explaining a game, the instructor went through several examples. We did not allow any questions in public, but all participants could ask questions in private before playing a game. For the decision, a participant and a research assistant went to a predetermined place outside the large room. If necessary, the research assistant explained the game once more or answered questions. The participants made their decision in private and handed the envelope with the decision over to the assistant. Afterwards, participants were accompanied to their seat in the large room where they waited for the instructions of the next game. During this time, participants were monitored by two assistants to prevent any interaction among them. Participants did not receive any feedback about outcomes between the different games.

References

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