CHAPTER 20

NEOLIBERALISM
Embodying and Affecting Neoliberalism

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PRELUDE: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL STORY

Colleen is one of three sisters, raised in a simple chattel house by her mother, a domestic worker who struggled to instill in her children Barbadian values of hard work, education, and faith in God. Petite, attractive, and with an open, confident smile, Colleen embodies many of the signature markers of a new, neoliberal cultural economy in her island home, Barbados. A keen and energetic student, Colleen graduated from one of the island's top secondary schools and landed a bank job in which she wore a smart double-breasted uniform, and established herself as a reliable and hardworking member of staff. But after traveling to the U.S. in her late teens for an Outward Bound experience, Colleen quit her job at the bank, trading her stable, secure, and in her eyes limiting prospects of the bank for the risky waters of entrepreneurship. Swapping “skirt suits” for climbing gear and head wrap, she was quick to point out the radical challenge this posed for “conservative minded Barbados,” a country whose history of plantation slavery has cast physical exertion and the hot sun as realms to avoid, especially for respectable Afro-Barbadian women. Ten years ago, with $12,000 in savings, $5,000 from a government “youth entrepreneurship” loan, and some help from her then-fiancé, she turned her energies to converting 26 acres of “rab” (uncultivated) land into the island’s first team-building and wellness retreat on the rugged East Coast.

Geared towards a diverse array of business people (banks, insurance companies, established Barbadian firms, church groups, new government funded summer camps, individual families, and tourist groups) her goal is to offer an introduction to the great outdoors, an opportunity to trust and connect with other people, to enhance physical
fitness, and most recently, by connecting with nature and stretching the body’s "comfort-zone," to cope with the stresses and strains of everyday life. Her business signals a new consciousness about the body reflected in a rapidly expanding array of services being imagined in a time of neoliberal development. Likewise, her own trajectory marks a new path of middle-class mobility that blends traditional values and practices with ones that are signaling an emerging neoliberal esprit. Like women and men of all classes throughout Barbadian history, she maintains an elaborate “kitchen garden” albeit on her large home’s rooftop and terrace from which she operates a side business selling herbs and vegetables to local supermarkets and grocery stores. Recently married, but childless and “not sure motherhood is her calling,” Colleen eschews some of the key markers of Barbadian respectability: motherhood, her secure job, and the Anglican church of her husband’s middle-class family. Having abandoned her large charismatic church, she has joined a small Pentecostal congregation with a preacher who counsels her individually.

If Colleen’s own entrepreneurial trajectory departs from the conventions of her mother’s generation, so too do her expectations and enactment of relationships, especially marriage. Like many other entrepreneurial women I encountered (Freeman 2007, n.d.) she expresses a new vision for marriage as an intimate “partnership” melding entrepreneurial and emotional desires, material and affective support and care that stands in contrast to the patriarchal middle-class norms of “days gone by.”

When her own health began to fail two years ago, she scaled back on her business and “started really looking at what was happening ... I was in a lot of pain, I was exhausted, I couldn’t figure out quite what was wrong except the doctor kept saying, “well take some pain killers...” Colleen became increasingly conscious of women she knew or encountered in her business, working mothers and other entrepreneurs whose anxieties and longings manifest themselves in a variety of forms – escalating consumer desires for flat-screen TVs and new cars, along with the stresses of new credit card debt, the anxious and time consuming pursuit of daycare facilities and ways to insure their children’s placement into the island’s best schools, the pressure to pay for extra-curricular activities, lessons and special camps, and the associated exhaustion of shuttling kids amid a growing tangle of traffic. All this has been placed on top of what Colleen and others described as “the usual, concerns”: husbands’ or partners’ infidelity, the frustrations of answering to a boss, and looking after the home. An array of vague illnesses, exhaustion, “stress” and “depression” led Colleen to rethink her business idea and her own path in life. Returning to school and combining courses in sports management and psychology, she began to reformulate her entrepreneurial trajectory toward a “wellness-based program and retreat” and at the same time, to develop a deeper self-understanding.

Colleen’s experience and that of the clients she describes can be read as an instantiation of a subtle yet powerful and new affective milieu in which the old divisions of work and life melt away and in which new subjectivities are being forged. As a new middle-class entrepreneur, she signifies the hopes of her nation’s new approach to development, and embodies this set of dreams not only in terms of her role as an economic actor but in ways that permeate all dimensions of life. Here, the story of globalization and neoliberalism turns not only on the structural economic underpinnings of free markets, a shrinking role for the state, and retrenchment of public welfare systems, but also on a more general cultural framework within which these economic imperatives are increasingly articulated and intertwined, one in which affective labor is central in both the workplace and in the constitution of the self.
Emily Martin’s work (1994) provided an early glimpse into this two-sided process, describing how neoliberalism’s mandate of flexibility links the workplace to the self as sites of production. The demand for flexibility extends across domains of life from the laboring/managing body within corporate enterprise to the body’s immune system, in which the individual not only must retrain herself for an ever-changing job market in the new economy, but is compelled to embrace a heightened sense of individualism more generally.

The critical role of the affective in neoliberal subjectivity is illustrated boldly in a figure such as Colleen, an entrepreneur, that heroic agent who for many signifies the quintessential symbol of neoliberalism itself (Bourdieu 1998; Harvey 2005). Although the neoliberal esprit is most evocatively encapsulated in the creed that we all become “entrepreneurs of the self” (Giddens 1991), this imperative is especially pronounced among new entrepreneurs like Colleen, seeking middle-class status and lifestyles: they must simultaneously hustle to provide new services and goods for the rapidly changing global marketplace and to consume new goods and services in an effort to fashion themselves as flexible, self-aware, and innovative actors in a new era. An analysis of this Janus-faced, neoliberal imperative, I suggest, can provide a window into a number of broad questions: How are the forces of neoliberalism embodied in the contemporary moment, and what are the cultural and class particularities of these transformations? What are the implications of affective labor as increasingly central to the global economy and how are these transformations gendered and imbued with culturally specific meanings? It is to these puzzles that I turn in this chapter.

**Neoliberal Production, Consumption, and the Self**

Global capitalism is inscribed upon the body through the disciplinary fields of labor and production as well as a dramatically expanding array of consumption practices. Much has been written about the effects of global capitalism upon the bodies of its laborers, whether sex-workers, factory workers, migrant agricultural laborers, or domestic workers who travel across borders in pursuit of a living and of industries whose labor processes crisscross the globe tapping into, and cheapening, workforces wherever they ultimately land. Whether in sweatshops in New York, or maquiladoras on the Mexican border, brothels in Thailand or Los Angeles, or private homes in Taiwan or Rome, laboring bodies are shaped and disciplined in both dramatic and subtle ways. Bodies under globalization are sites of new modes of consumption as well. These range from changing habits of diet, expressed in expanding cuisines, changing nutritional profiles, eating disorders, and nutritional diseases, to transforming notions and forms of leisure, travel, sport, and entertainment. Globalization has also changed practices of adornment and expectations of service: Western consumers have come to expect inexpensive clothing and athletic wear to be fashioned by Chinese or Sri Lankan workers and polite and patient technological or other forms of assistance to be offered remotely by Indian or Irish customer service representatives thousands of miles away (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Mirchandani 2004; Parreñas 2001). As a recent body of ethnographic works make clear, the importance of mass consumption and global media for growing populations the world over, including those who labor to produce these very consumer goods and services, now
marks new landscapes of desire, longing, and middle-class imaginings (Lan 2006; Liechty 2003; Schielke n.d.).

The embodiment of neoliberalism unfolds in other realms of life as increasing numbers of people seek medical and therapeutic interventions as part of a transnational circuit of healthcare and other body practices, whether as heart patients or candidates for reproductive technologies or plastic surgery (see McDonald, this volume). As ayurvedic and other remedies, treatments, and philosophies of the body are increasingly commodified and imported, they are becoming part and parcel of "local" models of health, healing, and personhood all over the world. Not only is the circulation of yoga and meditation, herbal medicine, reflexology, iridology, and a host of other treatments a striking marker of globalization, so too are the stresses and strains of neoliberalism being traced through newly embodied phenomena and diagnoses such as anorexia, depression and anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders (Watters 2010). In short, neoliberal flexibility is not reducible to the restructuring of labor processes or the free-floating circulation of capital to rationalize and expand the parameters of the global assembly line, but has reached into the recesses of kinship (Stacey 1990), citizenship (Ong 1999), mind and body (Martin 1994; Walkerdine 2003) such that feeling and subjectivity itself is being constituted, managed, and experienced in new ways.

As noted above, the directive that one become an "entrepreneur of the self" – in which the individual is defined as a self-propelled, autonomous economic actor ever-responsive to a dynamic marketplace – has become central to the esprit of neoliberalism. The new entrepreneur of self is encouraged to seek introspection, self-mastery, and personal fulfillment in leisure and life as well as personal responsibility in the marketplace. The latter entails retraining and the procurement of new skills and networks as well as the imagination and courage to break outside of established channels of upward mobility. It also requires an interior dimension of selfhood and flexible self-making through enterprise in which capital accumulation is not an end in itself, but a means of reinvention. The reinvention takes hold of the person as producer, consumer, and citizen, as a social being as well as individual who cares for herself, her health, body, mind, and soul. Critiques of the flexibility-imperative and the "enterprise culture" of neoliberalism have emphasized the onus placed on the individual for economic viability as the state and private industries are exempt from providing the kinds of social support and welfare they once, in many contexts, were expected to offer. And in conjunction with these disciplinary techniques, a growing therapeutic culture has come to play a significant role in the affective refashioning of the neoliberal subject (Rose 1992). How these structural, economic and cultural transformations converge in conceiving the neoliberal subject is of critical ethnographic interest today (Richland 2009).

A striking dimension of the shifting expectations and contours of production, consumption, and self-making under neoliberalism is captured by the concept of immateriality – the growing fabrication and exchange not of tangible goods like sneakers or computer parts, but of information, ideas, and services (Harit 1999; Lazzarato 1996, 2004). Indeed, an expanding terrain of immaterial, and in particular, affective, labor – labor in which affects are crucial to the provision of services, the substance of interactions rendered in the marketplace – lies at the heart of not only such visible circuits of contemporary global production but of the contemporary neoliberal esprit. This is
not to say that affective labor is a new phenomenon. One might say that prostitution and domestic service are expressions of its timeless (and highly gendered) forms. Analytically, however, it is in the era of post-Fordism that greater attention is now being turned to the particular nature of such immaterial labor. I want to examine such affective labor in the context of neoliberal entrepreneurialism by way of a return to two contributions of early feminist scholarship that have a direct bearing on these contemporary transformations – the relationship between reproductive and productive spheres of capitalism, and the gendering of labor itself.

Arlie Hochschild’s groundbreaking *The Managed Heart* (1983) expanded C. Wright Mills’s (1951) investigation of the “personality market” of white-collar occupations by examining not just the growing significance of emotion, demeanor, and personality in the white-collar marketplace, but also the labor entailed in the production of affects: as she said, labor that demands “one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild 1983: 7). Today, the prominence of affective labor – the production of “a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion” (Hardt 1999) across systems of exchange – occupies an ever-expanding dimension of labor and life more generally under neoliberalism. Affect, a form and practice of emotional reflexivity and intersubjectivity, transcends divisions of mind and body, reason and emotion (Weeks 2007).

How might we begin to grasp the convergences entailed in the new imperative of self-mastery/entrepreneurship and the expanding field of “affective labor” in which work and life are increasingly carried out? I take up the concept of affect in its broad reflexive sense, as signaled by Colleen and others like her in terms that are at once utilitarian and emotional, across realms of entrepreneurial, kin-based, intimate, and spiritual/therapeutic labor that have come to constitute their lives. The work of affect has historically been a sphere associated with women and subordinated classes and ethnic groups, a set of practices and sensibilities imbued with femininity and naturalized as such (Hochschild 1983: 164). Women the world over have also been concentrated in occupational fields in which affect-laden services are central – domestic service, nursing, teaching, sales, waitressing, sex-work, etc. But it is not just that women predominate in services that makes the gendering of these fields significant. It is the historic devaluation of such work ascribed a feminine value, whoever should carry it out, that bears examination as we enter an age in which immaterial work expands. Just as socialist-feminists several decades ago demonstrated the inextricable connections between feminine, reproductive labor (the unremunerated work typically consigned to the domestic arena, performed largely by women, and characterized as feminine) in relation to the masculinized productive sphere of remunerated work in the formal sector (e.g. Hartmann 1979; Rubin 1975), here I want to suggest that amid the growing affective economy, we re-examine the ways in which “feminized” affective labor of the private is increasingly critical to the waged economy, and how this reframes its “value.” Such a re-examination challenges the recent suggestion that the rise of immateriality is marked by the “eclipse” of gender under late capitalism.

To consider the production of affect as an active form of labor (vs. a temperament or natural quality associated with femininity, for example) it is helpful to be reminded, then, of the skills and techniques this kind of work requires. Hochschild noted that these skills entail such techniques as “surface acting” (the mask actors and others put
on in order to feign an expected emotional demeanor) and "deep acting" (in which the individual so relates to the real or imagined state of another, that she conjures up deep emotional empathy or feeling with which to respond). These became critical tools with which flight attendants managed their emotions and their employer's demands that they retain an ever-pleasant, helpful, and friendly demeanor in their work. What is the difference between the requirement of affective labor demanded by one's corporate employer, as in Hochschild's flight attendants, and the demands as set by the clients of one's service occupation, as in Colleen's case? As Lazzarato noted, "the prescription and definition of tasks transforms into a prescription of subjectivities" (Lazzarato 1996: 135). And how (if at all) are these demands different from those labors enacted in the intimate/private spheres of children, extended kin, friends, domestic workers, fellow congregants, etc.? In essence, what are the relationships between public and private in which social actors such as Colleen increasingly enact their work and selves? In essence, a feminist interrogation of affect as a form of precarious, immaterial labor, is critical not only to highlight the ways in which gender can be central to such work, but also for its reminder of the inextricable relationship between reproductive and productive labor. And as Weeks makes clear, this entails thinking beyond a spatial separation between social reproduction and production. As we see with entrepreneurs such as Colleen, in realms of affective labor, not only must one examine the subsidies provided by non-remunerated reproductive work for the formal production of immaterial labor, but here the entanglements are even more complex. Indeed, the very affective substance of work (the exchanges of sentiments and care) and the subjectivities produced through this work, whether in "public" or "private," are increasingly similar.

Colleen's case reveals both the affective demands of emotional warmth and support that are integral to her wellness and team-building business, and the centrality of new modes of affect, new emotional contours she actively tries to foster in her life more generally, within her "partnership" marriage and her search for a spiritual/religious home. As the owner and producer of wellness-services, she coaches her customer/clients in self-esteem and physical fitness; she conveys to them warmth, encouragement, and individualized care. To produce these affects, she works to identify with their fears, their unease and inexperience using their bodies in challenging physical contexts. As the owner/creator of this enterprise, she is not accountable to a corporate manager or boss, but to her own expectations of the proper management of emotion and comportment entailed in good customer service. At the same time, her own emotional desires for support, comfort, intimacy shape her efforts to craft her new marriage in ways that depart from the relationship models that surrounded her in growing up. The demand for and capacity to produce these subjectivities and affects, therefore, emanate from both within herself, and as a requirement of the entrepreneurial enterprise she has created within the neoliberal milieu in which empathic, affective service is key. In striking contrast with the traditional hierarchies of bureaucratic occupational structures and the conventional patriarchal contours of middle-class marriage in Barbados, the crafting of these personalized and highly affective relationships constitute radical departures. Such transformations raise a number of intriguing questions about how a young woman such as Colleen comes to learn these forms of affective labor, if, as she herself suggests, they mark both a new and different generation/era and a new set of subjectivities. How would her...
mother’s life as a single mother raising three daughters, and her work as a domestic servant, have contained similar or different affects, and intertwining forms of affective labor? Are the American films and TV serials Colleen watches, the dub and calypso music she listens to providing cues for her new affective inclinations and middle-class, gendered subjectivities? Of course, just as Colleen modulates and manages her affect in her business, her marriage, and life more generally, so too did she frame her desires and interpretations of these changes in her ethnographic interviews with me in ways that reflect a savvy of the research enterprise, and many of the analytical themes I take up here in this chapter.

As scholars today are increasingly interested in domains of immaterial labor, one dimension that is too easily sidelined is Hochschild’s central observation of the gendering of such labors as those hinging upon the exchange of affects. However, the shift in hiring men vs. women in formerly female-centered industries is not in itself evidence of receding tides of gender, not an ungendering as Salzinger notes (2003), but rather an implicit masculinization. Indeed, gendered qualities of workers, of bodies and temperaments, are invoked in locally specific ways. Poster notes that workers in the U.S. rely upon “nimble fingers” discourses emphasizing naturally embodied gender differences, whereas in India workers more often draw upon discourses about “dangerous spaces” and the threats posed by night work and the public sphere for respectable women (Poster 2001). Mirchandani documents that Indian call center workers (men and women) are “taught to emulate two roles during training programs to successfully provide customer service — mothering and servitude. “Mothering” involves listening carefully to customer needs and providing information in ways that boost customer self-confidence” (Mirchandani 2005: 111). Here, gender can be supple and slippery, as Mirchandani suggests, capable of hiding behind other social markers and segregating strategies such as race and nation, where feminization, “mothering,” and the gender of subservience are simultaneously framed and reinforced under the rubric of neocolonialism. If affective labor has long been invisible to capitalist calculations of value by virtue of its apparently “natural” feminine qualities and close connections to the reproductive, unwaged arena, surely we ought to ask how today’s heightened value associated with these forms of labor by capital, in turn, might challenge this invisibility and simultaneously produce new gendered performances and subjectivities. For the case of Colleen and many other new middle-class entrepreneurs like her shows us that it is not only the increasing entanglement between these spheres that is notable, but also the novel formulations of gender that are being called for. The gender of affective labor is becoming more flexible and adaptable. Women’s efforts to cultivate both their own independent modes of femininity as well as new forms of emotional, intimate masculinity in their partners marks not only a shifting field of gendered subjectivities but also a significant component of their own affective labor. Just as recent works have amply demonstrated that the meanings and implications of current global restructuring and neoliberal reach across different cultural and political geographies are resonant but far from generic (Dunn 2004; Ong 2006; Richland 2009), likewise, the significance of affective labor in everyday life and work is equally particular, and in flux. I want to suggest that in their particularities, as explored in a place like Barbados, we might find new clues for how neoliberalism works and feels and, in so doing, imagine new possibilities for ways of being and becoming.
Eva Illouz offers the evocative concept of “emotional capitalism” to describe the conditions of late capitalism in the United States, where “the cultural persuasions of therapy, economic productivity, and feminism intertwined and enmeshed with one another, providing the rationale, the methods and the moral impetus to extract emotions from the realm of inner life and put them at the center of selfhood and sociability in the form of a cultural model that has become widely pervasive…” (Illouz 2007: 36). However, by looking closely at a place like Barbados, we can see just how historically and culturally bound such a model is. For Barbados shares no such melding of traditions of therapy and liberal feminism, no parallel figure of the “normally neurotic middle-class” and no equivalent language of affect in local discourse. In this context emotions and understandings of personhood and “the self” have historically been read as manifestations of the structural building blocks of Caribbean society: kinship, race, and class. Within popular discourse, apart from the local newspaper’s “Dear Christine” help column, emotions and affective relations have been the preserve, as one entrepreneur told me, of “the priest or the bottle.” Colleen said she was taught, “women should be in church every Sunday and we shouldn’t party, nor should we drink, nor should we either consider smoking. Those were not things that were considered ladylike. It didn’t matter that you were hurting, you were told to grin and bear... you grin and you bear, and that’s it.”

While it is true today that neoliberal Barbados might be read as a veritable field of affect and affective labor, reminiscent of patterns witnessed elsewhere in the world, these current forms emerge out of different pasts, and are taken up in a different key. Whereas de Tocqueville and Schumpeter equated economic adventurism and entrepreneurship with the essence of American Protestant culture, scholars and government leaders of Barbados have bemoaned the historical absence of precisely this entrepreneurial ethic, due to the weight of plantation slavery and the dominance of colonial bureaucratic culture. Likewise, the manifestations of what we will call a new spirit of neoliberalism, though easily subject to the “déjà vu” experience of world travel today, must be interpreted through the prism of historical particularity. As we will see, entrepreneurialism and the rise in therapeutic culture, for instance, is often filtered through religion, either institutionally (through a range of new churches and alternative congregations) or through practices that infuse subtle Christian messages and teachings. Indeed, religion itself is an important vehicle for propagating the entrepreneurial spirit, and marriage becomes a critical medium through which to experiment with a melding of new affective labors and desires.

In Barbados, the pursuit of entrepreneurship and the figure of the entrepreneur hold contradictory meanings. On one hand, entrepreneurship has signified the grit and economic survival for the Afro-Barbadian majority, especially symbolized by the rural higgler who embodies the strength and fortitude of women whose active trade and fierce determination has anchored the region’s internal marketing system. On the other hand, entrepreneurship has been associated with white nepotistic privilege and the belief that despite black control over the island’s independent political system, a small handful of families retain control of the economy. Today’s entrepreneurs challenge many of these associations, both demographically and in terms of symbolic
meanings. Women and men, white as well as black, from lower- and middle-class backgrounds, now eagerly embrace the entrepreneurial mission as innovators in the new economy. Their trajectories challenge traditional trajectories of education, class, and occupation. As many of my informants over the age of 50 told me, business in their youth "was for the dummies who couldn’t make it at school," however, today, business is what status and mobility are all about. The recent decline of the island’s sugar industry, the economic backbone of the Island for some 300 years; a precarious global marketplace of tourism and off-shore services; and the retrenchment of the Civil Service, the country’s largest employer, have together propelled entrepreneurship to the forefront of the state’s hopeful vision for economic growth. Today countless government-sponsored and NGO-supported programs exist for the encouragement of entrepreneurship: in schools, summer camps, youth groups and for existing business people as well as people who are contemplating self-employment and business enterprise. In short, entrepreneurship has become not just a new profile for the nation’s economic future, but also, I want to suggest, a framework for a new Barbadian selfhood.

Hailed as the Caribbean region’s “success story,” Barbados is known for being the most “middle-class” and “developed” of all the Caribbean islands, occupying the Human Development Index’s 37th position just below the Czech Republic and preceding Malta. The Government of Barbados has recently produced a ten-year National Development Plan in which entrepreneurship and the embodiment of a culture of neoliberalism resound. The plan states repeatedly that amid today’s challenging economic times Barbadians must cultivate an explicitly “entrepreneurial culture,” a “more open-minded, innovative, creative, entrepreneurial outlook” (Government of Barbados 2007: 36). Confronting the precariousness of the current global economy entails a vigilant protection of “certain core cultural values” and necessitates certain innovations and changes, prime among them, as the document indicates, the creation of “an entrepreneurial society.” The strategic goals outlined in the plan are saturated in a language of neoliberalism – flexibility, innovation, and the self-conscious articulation of a Barbadian “brand.” While the Plan’s proposed advances are always contextualized amid the unpredictable tides of the global economy, it also cautions against the penetration of outside (i.e. American) values, especially those of materialism and consumerism (2007: 17).

The shifting capitalist emphasis from large centralized industries and bureaucratic hierarchy to a market-driven model of enterprise and individual responsibility is echoed not only in the realm of labor and capital but also in emerging therapeutic and spiritual domains, and the two are increasingly intermingled. In Barbados, as in many other countries, the traditional hierarchy of the mainline churches and a relationship with the divine as mediated through priests and bishops is shifting to one in which individuals express highly reflexive relationships to God, having been spoken to directly by the Almighty, and “allowing him to guide” their actions in everyday life. In both organizational structure and in the content of “prosperity” sermons – the encouragement to “grab what is yours” and a spirit of neoliberalism resounds. As one leading preacher told me, “The entrepreneurial spirit is... in my personal belief, a god-inspired wonderful thing... I feel there is a great link between faith and business. True faith translates into tangible change around you... God wants successful business people to be a light – people admire successful business people so they have a platform
to speak the message of Christ. [In days gone by] professional people were looked at as the gurus; today it’s the business people and the athletes — and these are speaking out their faith.”

Early in my fieldwork, religion and/or “faith in God” emerged prominently in discussions with diverse entrepreneurs as they traced their entrepreneurial journeys and the various challenges faced along the way. I began hearing about unfamiliar churches, some with charismatic pastors, others more loosely organized in people’s homes. Certainly anyone familiar with Caribbean culture and societies would not be surprised to find the prominence of religion in Barbadian life, and the recent census makes clear that the Anglican church, though appealing less to many of these middle-class entrepreneurs, still represents the largest single religious group (70,705 of 250,000 or 28 percent) of the nation, divided relatively evenly between women and men. However, Pentecostals now constitute the next largest group, 19 percent of the population (7 percent of all men and 11 percent of all women), and from all accounts those numbers are on the rise here, as they are in North America, Latin America, and Africa (Government of Barbados 2007: 180–183; Harrison 2005; New York Times 2005). A striking number of entrepreneurs, both black and white, men and women describe for me their recent migrations from the “stiff,” hierarchical, and formal qualities of the churches of their upbringing (Catholic, Anglican, etc.) and their newfound pleasure and comfort in these newer churches with charismatic pastors, popular music, and “modern” style of participation in living room “cells” or other intimate venues. Over the past decade, I have come to see that this appeal has many facets — from the practical and strategic to the spiritual — in which entrepreneurship itself plays a key role. One entrepreneur observed this new trend of “born-again” businesswomen among educated middle classes, saying, in Barbados “God is now cool.”

Like the mega-churches in North America, these new institutions offer a wide array of services, workshops, and groups geared to everything from marriage counseling and nurturing a safe (celibate) teenage culture, to business-oriented seminars aimed at marketing and “team-building” with an explicitly Christian theme. Further, the very shape of these new churches and the way in which they are tailored to individual needs reflect the enterprise culture of these neoliberal times. For many entrepreneurs, religion frames a more hidden but no less significant aspect of their business orientation, whether offering psychotherapy or reflexology with Christian references or in understanding faith as a private reservoir of support, motivation, and healing that might be enacted through vigorous physical exercises, yoga, or meditation. Whatever its form, the desire for personalized care and individualized meaning is unmistakable. As Colleen describes her decision to leave her former church and seek out a smaller, more intimate one, “I wanted that when a preacher was saying something and I didn’t agree I could put my hand up and say, ‘excuse me.’ I need to be in an environment where… I’m really in-tuned with what’s happening and where I do have a say and I’m counted as a member, not just my pocket.”

The entrepreneurial enterprise, and, for Colleen, the simultaneous entrepreneurial project of the self, hinge in large part upon both the production and consumption of affects. Such affects are “social experiences in solution” (New York Times 2005), circulating within an economy that envelopes and gives new shape to social relationships and the very inclination to examine, think, and feel oneself. This swirl of affects is especially visible and pronounced for middle-class women like Colleen who are concentrated as
both producers and consumers across an expanding landscape of service-enterprises as they simultaneously retain responsibility for the management of domestic life and kin-work. Whether in the growing arena of body work (massage, acupuncture, and various “aesthetic treatments” for hair, skin, nails, diet, nutrition, etc.) and other therapeutic services geared toward psychological and physical dimensions of health (from personal trainers to “life-coaches”), to those enterprises aimed at less explicitly personal but equally individualized services such as business consulting, design, and event planning, their work increasingly entails the performance and exchange of affects.

Until recently, the treatment of psychological or psychiatric ailments was consigned largely to severe cases of psychosis and/or substance abuse, and contained within the ominous walls of “the mad house” (Stewart 2007: 2). Today a new and burgeoning arena of therapies and treatments related to holistic well-being and personal individual growth, and to building healthy relationships among couples and families has emerged almost from thin air. The individuals, relationships, and families conjured in these new arenas are themselves novel in the Barbadian context. For example, classes on parenting geared toward a nuclear family, and couples therapy emphasizing intimate and caring communication for the conjugal couple as a social entity, have no precursors. Indeed, these emphases contrast with a long West Indian tradition in which the “family” referred to an extended kin network and the enduring center of both affective and material support, where social life was predominantly gender segregated, and where “the couple” has been a fluid bond.

Today, the Barbados phone directory lists an array of new psychological services, ranging from developmental assessments, treatment for autistic spectrum disorders, behaviour management, family therapy, marriage counselling and training, and even corporate counselling. Not unsurprisingly, today one finds more common reference than in the past to “depression,” “anxiety,” “panic attacks,” as well as to “counseling” and “therapy,” in the everyday lexicon of middle-class Barbadian parlance. In many instances a blending of religion and therapy is explicit; for instance, practitioners highlight “spiritual counseling” or “faith-based treatment” in their ads, and churches offer activities melding aesthetic, therapeutic and spiritual experiences, pastoral hypnotherapies, and metaphysical services. It is hard to overemphasize just what a radical departure from tradition these new services and realms of affective experience are, when they sound so familiar, so ordinary in the American vernacular. Where the dual practice of obeah (witchcraft) and biomedicine has long been noted in the Afro-Caribbean, the practice of talk-therapy and open acknowledgement of psychological illness have been largely invisible. For the most part, the old Barbadian adage, “all skin teeth ain’t a smile” has signaled the power of hiding one’s true feelings under the veneer of social propriety, and, as Colleen said, the ethic of “grin and bear” summed up where one’s emotions belonged. In a formerly slave-based plantation society, whose current economy depends upon tourism, the capacity for veiling one’s feelings, acting hospitable, friendly, welcoming signifies a culture long experienced in the management of affects. As the forms of these affective labors shift into new domains of market-based services and are simultaneously heightened within the intimate recesses of the non-market economy, we are challenged to employ new analytical tools, including some longstanding feminist ones, to make sense of these articulations, and to interpret them within their historical and cultural particularity. The meanings of selfhood and
kinship, and the affective field in which these relationships and subjectivities are enacted are shifting in the current neoliberal milieu. Just as Hochschild notes among foreign domestic workers that new modes of sentiment and love can be produced in the context of their paid care work of American children that are then transformative of their own kinship relations back home, so too might we read the dialectics of affect between entrepreneurial and domestic spheres (Hochschild 2003).

The entrepreneur as innovator, broker, and consumer of neoliberal practices illustrates not only the inextricable relationship between production and consumption within advanced capitalism, but also highlights the particular nature of the neoliberal economy, a field of affect in which the performance of affective labor and the pursuit of affective experience— the feeling of comfort, nurturance, love, intimacy, for example— makes plain the impossibility of separating out “reproductive” from “productive” labor, imagining one or the other outside the grasp of capital’s logics, or endorsing Jameson’s (1991) early claims of postmodernity’s inevitable “waning of the affect” at large.

As we see in the case of Colleen, these transformations take hold across all fields making up her life. Her determination to break with old fashioned patriarchal marriage traditions and her efforts to foster a new intimate partnership instead, her shifting the focus of her business to address the physical and emotional stresses and strains of people’s everyday lives, and her own spiritual journey all mark these new trajectories and their inextricable connections. Her own “personal path toward wellness” and the re-orientation of her business reveal an intricate affective intermingling of neoliberal restructuring and self-management. For Colleen, entrepreneurial success in the form of wealth alone makes her unhealthy, exhausted, and feeling at sea. To restore her mind and body to health, she has to reinvent herself as an economic agent. Her participation in the marketplace is reoriented and imbued with affective, spiritual rebirth; bodily and psychological wellness brings her peace achieved in part through the redesign of her economic enterprise. Here, the Weberian paradigm linking economic orientation and religious conditioning is helpful but the relationship has proceeded onto another stage.

The deepening of a neoliberal cultural economy, and, in particular, the rising tide of the entrepreneurial imperative we are witnessing in Barbados is not only rewriting the landscape of occupation and class, but also signifies a shifting cultural field in which the social order (kinship, marriage, parenting, religion, class status) is in flux. At the heart of Barbadian neoliberal culture today is the rising importance of self-examination and the production of a more flexible, fit, happier, and better self whose emotional center is fulfilled not merely through success in conventional terms of economy and material security. For women entrepreneurs in particular, the importance of affective labor in their businesses resonates closely with the emotional labors they perform in their private, domestic lives.

**Affective Labors in “Public” and “Private”**

As with other entrepreneurial women in Barbados, for Colleen, fashioning a new kind of marriage has been an integral part of her entrepreneurial venture, her project of self-making, and the affective orbit in which both unfold. She describes her husband through a new vision of Barbadian masculinity and intimate “partnership”:
...on that very first night I told (him) about my goals and what I really wanted for my life and I was really passionate about it and even before... we got married I shared with him the whole process of wanting to own my own business, and even to make the decision to go away to study, I mean he supported me a hundred percent on that. He said, “you know, you need to go for it...” unlike my previous boyfriend who would be like, “well you... you just can’t go and leave me” a... a... a... a... like, get over it honey... With the previous boyfriend I also wanted to make sure that I kept on to the relationship and that became a bit of a tug-a-war... so going into this relationship I knew more of what I wanted and being able to share that upfront with him and say, “look, you know I want to do these things, I need to know I'm gonna have your support” and he’s just been that continuously. I mean, even with the project, when we got the land, we were there working together umm... I mean we planted those bananas together, ...it was just uso But yet he knew when he needed to give me my space, and just support that effort... He's been really supportive... our relationship has been fantastic and I'm not just saying that...

Colleen describes the “emotional effort” and the “production” of emotional satisfaction that lie at the core of what she desires her marriage to be, just as she and other women entrepreneurs describe the nuances of affective labor central to the success of their businesses: the attentiveness to individual desires; the depth of knowledge of and appreciation for a client's history, family, and taste; and the responsiveness to mood and emotional state, especially for those involved in delivering services. In their marriages, and intimate relationships women’s affective labor – the “keeping house” and cooking and shopping with an eye to their loved ones’ tastes and needs, their soothing and listening, planning and caring – does more than simply subsidize the realm of material production and reproduce the labor force. Their performance of the labor of affect, like most other forms of labor, is multi-dimensional, experienced as both labor and love, duty and desire, burden and pleasure. As a form of labor and a production of value that crosses over between business and home, public and private spheres, this work of affect is increasingly critical to the growing expectations for “intensive motherhood,” “companionate” or “partnership” marriages, the cultivation of entrepreneurial selves, and of course to the fueling of an agile, flexible neoliberal economy more generally in which affect-laden service plays an ever-increasing role. The importance of affective labor in the home is especially pronounced among middle-class women, who, as Jones has observed in the Indonesian context, often rely heavily upon paid domestic workers for a great deal of physical household labor, and thus imbue “emotional labor” with the “currency of middle class familial relationships” (Jones 2004: 510).

For new entrepreneurs like Colleen, husbands/partners often offer invaluable help and encouragement and are indispensible to their entrepreneurial successes. When Colleen describes her husband as her “partner,” it is not just the back-office and accounting support he provides her in her business to which she refers, but to his ability to read her mood, anticipate her emotional needs, and “really be there,” traits she most values and depends upon.

As such, the gender of affective labor is becoming more flexible as women entrepreneurs rework understandings of middle-class femininity to fit their entrepreneurial pursuits, and as a new Bajan masculinity is increasingly called for that prioritizes intimate and shared leisure, and that embraces an egalitarian partnership in which emotional and material support are intertwined. These newly fashioned gendered possibilities are reflected in a remapping of public space that were traditionally male
dominated; in this context rum shops and sports bars make room for family friendly “cafes” and intimate wine bars that dot the new coastal “board-walk.” Such spaces are inhabitable not only by new companionate couples, but by others, including women alone or with children and friends.

A close reading of interview narratives with over 100 entrepreneurs reveals a resounding concern with “support,” “comfort,” “security,” and “care” as integral to Barbadian women’s highly charged project of middle-class self-making. Affects are signalled, often in utilitarian terms, through statements about the degree to which a spouse’s, friend, or relation is helpful, “steps in with the children,” “makes sacrifices” economically or through volunteering time and skills to the business or on the homefront. These expressions of affect tie the domestic and the public, the unwaged and remunerated together. These forms of care have become critical to women’s search for new kinds of relationships they wish to build with their spouses, and new ways to express nurturance of their children, kin, friends, community, and self. It is these expressions of care and consideration that Colleen and many other women identify as the crux of their intimate relationships, their manner of managing staff, and their business success.

The concept of affective labor is critical in simultaneously capturing not just the inextricable linkages between ostensibly separate productive (masculine) and reproductive (feminine) spheres of work, but the reflexive emotional dimensions of productive, income-generating work and other dimensions of middle-class life, social relations, and selfhood, and the labor of what has been taken for granted and naturalized as (feminine) affect, love, thoughtfulness, and care in the realms of kinship, conjugality, etc. As such, affective labor not only bridges old divisions of reproductive/productive labor but highlights the ways in which so-called “private” and public spheres are simultaneously and mutually saturated in affective exchanges that can at one and the same time be imbued with caring and intimacy, and also be subject to alienation. While actively shaping the tastes and desires of one’s children, spouse and customers may not at first glance seem akin to the labor and skill of manufacturing of an engine or performing other conventionally productive work, the degree to which these affect-laden labors are shared or become one’s sole responsibility is one critical tension that permeates the narratives of the women entrepreneurs. When we see private life, and the work of social reproduction as sites of labor—whether by paid domestic workers, unpaid kin, or both—the dialectic of productive/reproductive labor crystallizes. By training our eye solely on the observable mechanisms of capitalist production and accumulation we have missed such practices and preoccupations in the past. And if in the rush to capture the new articulations of immaterial, affective labor, we resist this very dialectic, our analyses will be equally partial.

I am not alone in urging a more integrated analysis or a more rigorously gendered reading of affective labor (Schultz 2006; Weeks 2007). An ethnographic window into new middle-class entrepreneurs in Barbados suggests not merely that affective labor performed in the domestic domain offers a critical subsidy to the formal, “productive” sphere of capitalism, as socialist feminists have long noted. Indeed, the entrepreneurial realm for women is not merely a realm of productive work in the conventional sense that it is tied to the extractive, remunerative sphere of economy. For this sphere leaks into and grasps hold of all other dimensions of life including the domestic and private spheres, both spatially and otherwise. Entrepreneurs frequently have home offices, operate in kin and kin for help and the affects of reconfiguring the and making possible affective relation such that kin, friends become inextricable labor in many new but is supported private, non-marriage.

How far these public and private labor. “The work outside himself, not at home... A freely active in an in dwelling and himself to be any many others bear they are “at home families, partners. These very productive skills and skills the conduct of individualized care a by and in context through relation.

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offices, operate portions of their work from home, and rely upon intimate partners and kin for help (paid and otherwise) in their businesses. These relationships, in turn, and the affects through which they are forged and maintained, are simultaneously reconfiguring the contours of gender (urging new modes of emotional masculinity, and making possible alternative femininities, for example). Meanwhile, domestic and affective relationships also root themselves within their entrepreneurial endeavors such that kin, friends, lovers, children, and others within personal social networks become inextricably bound up with their businesses. And, as the very essence of the labor in many new spheres of the economy takes an affective form, it not only mirrors, but is supported, sustained, and subsidized by affects formerly contained within private, non-market relations.

How far these intertwining labors seem from Marx’s premise of the separation of public and private spheres that was central to his notion of estranged or alienated labor. “The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home... As a result, therefore, man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal.” The entrepreneurial “selves” of Colleen and many others bear no such separations; seldom do they leave their work behind when they are “at home,” and equally typically are they juggling the affective labor of their families, partners, and social networks in the course of conducting their businesses. These very preoccupations and affective labors become inextricable from their affective skills and subjectivities at work. Such affective exchanges are not only integral to the conduct of many of their service enterprises in the marketplace – in offering individualized care and concern, insight, personal rapport, memory – they are also fueled by and in competition with those affects exchanged outside the market, in life and through relationships more broadly.

To emphasize the many dimensions of affective labor enacted simultaneously in new realms of religious and therapeutic practice, in new middle-class entrepreneurial ventures, and in intimate relationships such as new middle-class partnership marriages is to illustrate precisely Kathi Weeks’ claim that “what could once perhaps have been imagined as an ‘outside’ is now more fully ‘inside’; social reproduction can no longer be usefully identified with a particular site, let alone imagined as a sphere insulated from capital’s logics” (Weeks 2007: 238). And further, capital’s logics bear increasingly “private” expressions. It is in this seepage between what have long been conceptualized as distinguishable, often subsidizing but seemingly separable reproductive/productive, private/public spheres that we find gender being flexibly and affectively re-worked, new subjectivities in formation, and along with new stresses and strains, new forces of alienation. And here amid the particulars of culture we find new sets of questions for a feminist critical analysis and the ethnographic pursuit of the neoliberal.

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