Whose Rights? Understanding Women's Engagement in the 2011 Egyptian Uprising

by

Nermin Allam

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Department of Political Science
University of Alberta

Abstract

Popular and scholarly accounts emphasize the absence of gender issues in women's framing of their participation during the 2011 Egyptian uprising. In this dissertation, I interrogate the collective action frame adopted by women at the time of the uprising to elucidate how gender featured in the framing of their participation and the impact of this framing on women's activism and engagement. The data for this project draws upon 103 interviews with female protestors and activists, leaders of women′s rights organizations, and Tawakkol Karman, the Nobel Laureate and Yemeni activist. Data is also gathered from public transcripts as well as secondary literature published in English and Arabic on the topic. Espousing a political process approach, I highlight how female protestors oriented their messages in relation to the existent opportunities and constraints during the uprising. That is, they distanced themselves from the discourse of women's rights in the framing of their participation as the former has been the pet project of the ruling regimes in Egypt and associated with Western reform agendas. This framing, I argued, temporally concealed differences and inequalities that had traditionally obscured women′s participation in politics. By offering a gender analysis of these early interactions, the dissertation contributes to explaining the nature and implications of their gender dynamics. It recovers women′s voices in the writing of history and opens up new ways of understanding the Egyptian uprising.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Nermin Allam. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “WOMEN’S ENGAGEMENT IN THE EGYPTIAN UPRISING (DECEMBER 2010 - FEBRUARY 2011)”, No. MS1_Pro00032027, 2012.

Dedication

My mom, all I am I owe to you.

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My eternal thanks go to my mother for her guidance, unconditional support and the confidence she instilled in me. You have always listened, and you were always there for me. I owe you an irreparable debt; a few words would never do. Many thanks mom, you are my muse. My beloved father, your pride in my accomplishments and work has been a source of great joy and drive for me. Thank you for your unconditional care and support.

To Sanna and Janna, my precious daughters, you are now nine and eight, but someday you will be old enough to start —and hopefully then want— to read my dissertation. You can then take it down from some upper shelf, dust it, and tell me what you think of it. For now and then, remember that this dissertation would not have been possible without you, this was *our* journey. At times, when my life seemed like a complete swift of nothingness, I was reminded by looking at you that "this too shall pass," it indeed did. Thank you for grounding me.

And, all praise is due to Allah, the Merciful.

Contents

Introduction

A Dramaturgy of Women, Egypt and the 2011 Uprising

Introduction

> Women are no longer victims; they are now leaders at the forefront of demonstrations. They participated in the Arab Spring to retrieve their nation and be citizens in a new society. Women's rights can be guaranteed only in a democratic society. In such society the energy of both men and women is set free.[1]
>
> Tawakkol Karman, Nobel laureate and Yemeni Activist

Powerfully eloquent, Tawakol Karman described in great pride and of an almost baroque sensuality the sense of empowerment, equality and agency that characterized women's engagement in the episodes of protests that have swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2010-2011. These episodes of contentions have led to the toppling of long despotic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. In Yemen, as well across the Arab and Middle Eastern region, Karman became known as the "mother of the revolution"(Khamis 2011). In a node to her influential and inspirational role in the political upheavals across the region, she was awarded Nobel peace prize in 2011.

Beyond national and international commemoration, Karman also became a symbol for thousands of women who participated in the mass protests for dignity, freedom, liberty, and democracy in a number of Arab countries. In Egypt, women's engagement in this new moment of unity, solidarity, and cohesion, mirrored the egalitarian movements that come out to support liberating their nations. Little was said about women's specific rights in the early days of the uprising. It was believed that women will enjoy their full rights only when every citizen, regardless of gender, is guaranteed these rights.

In the years separating the statement that heads this chapter from the current political reality, a lot happened that fundamentally challenged this aura of equality, the aura that had been

[1] Author's Interview, Tawakkol Karman—the Yemni activist and 2011 Noble laureate, Canada: Edmonton, November, 2012. Original in Arabic, translation provided by the researcher.

the defining ideational infrastructure of these uprisings. For all intents and purposes, the unity and solidarity that prevailed among protestors were similar to the critical anthropologist Victor Turner's "luminal moments" (1969, 1974). They, too, were difficult to sustain and soon came to end following the fall of the former Mubarak's regime in Egypt.

Since the fall of the former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, female activists—among other political activists—in the country have faced the hurdle confronting all contentious politics. That is how to transform the egalitarian spirit of a brief uprising into a long-lasting reform on the political and social landscape (Amanat 2012; Anderson 2011; Brown 2013; Hampson and Momani 2015; Lynch and Dodge 2015; Masoud 2015). In light of the emerging backlash against the uprising[2], it is easy to look back on women's engagement in this episode of contention with disappointment. Rather than that, I argue that when studying women's engagement in the 2011 Egyptian uprising, we need to take into account the overall picture in this rapidly changing region. This requires analysing women's engagement with an eye to the political, economic, and social challenges and uncertainties that mark Middle Eastern and North African societies (Charrad and Zarrugh 2014; Johansson-Nogues 2013; Mogahdam 2011, 2014; Morsy 2014) .

This dissertation thus focuses specifically and primarily on women's engagement in this luminal phase in the 2011 Egyptian uprising that had led to the ousting of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. The overarching objective igniting my study is to understand how women framed their participation and the impact of this framing on their experience in the uprising.

[2] Political scientists and Middle Eastern experts Marc Lynch and Toby Dodge (2015) eloquently describe the current backlash against the uprisings across the Arab world as the rise of an "Arab Thermidor", in refernce to the end of the revoultion.

The dissertation's dynamic framework is situated within the interdisciplinary field of contentious politics, specifically, under the rubric of political process approach. Scholars working within the tradition of political process examine the structural, organizational and behavioral facets of movements (Crozat, Meyer, and Tarrow 1997; Snow et. al. 1986; Snow and Benford 2005; Snow and Trom 2002; Soule 1997; McAdam 1985; Porta and Tarrow 2012; Tilly 1995; Tarrow 1998). They, unlike earlier generations of social movement theorists, consider the mechanisms and processes that link the movements' different elements and actors (Crozat, Meyer, and Tarrow 1997; Snow et. al. 1986; Snow and Benford 2005; Snow and Trom 2002; Soule 1997; McAdam 1985; Porta and Tarrow 2012; Tilly 1995; Tarrow 1998). In the last decade, the political process model has gained ground in the field of contentious politics and in the social sciences generally. This move, scholars note, is part of a broader shift in the field of comparative politics towards the systemic study of processes and mechanisms (Tarrow 2012; See also: Della Porta 2014; Della Porta and Mosca 2005; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1995). My dissertation builds upon and contributes to this dynamic opening in the field.

Cognitive that across the history of Egypt, as well as in many developing and developed countries, genuine advances in women′s rights were achieved only after pressures from organized groups of women (Fraser & Gordon 1994; Joseph 2000; Seidman 1999), I place women at the centre of my analysis. Specifically, I examine the significance and limitations of women's collective action frame in the 2011 uprising.

Studies on women′s collective action frame examine the strategic interpretations of issues offered by frames that are intended to mobilize women to act. Neil J. Smelser (1971) argues that while grievances are significant elements in originating collective action, they will not lead to

participation until they are perceived (Smelser 1971). No society is perfect and meets all of its members′ needs; however, there are differences in the degree to which society′s different groups are aware of negative societal conditions, perceive them as problematic, and seek to change them.

Smelser′s perspective corresponds to David A. Snow and Robert Benford′s viewpoint that participants in collective actions are not "structurally guaranteed," rather they cluster around master collective action frames (Benford 1993, 1997; Snow el al. 1986, 2004; Snow & Benford 1988, 1992). At the most basic, a frame identifies a problem—that is social or political in nature, the parties responsible for causing it, and the possible solutions they offer (Johnston and John Noakes 2005:2; See also: Snow & Benford 1988, 1992; Gamson 1975). Frames of collective action, in this sense, redefine a status quo that was perceived as "unfortunate but perhaps tolerable" to "unjust and immoral" and thus mobilize participants to join in repertoires of contention (Tarrow 1998: 91).

To illuminate women′s experience and their collective action frame, the research adopted an emergent approach to theorizing. That is, theorizing about women's engagement took the form of a conversation between theory and women′s lived experiences. Data was gathered from personnel interviews with five set of actors. The five set of actors are: Female protestors who participated in the 18-day uprising, female activists, NGO leaders, state officials, and public figures who are actively engaged in the area of women's rights in Egypt. Data was also gathered from public transcripts as well as secondary literature published in English and Arabic on the topic. I analyzed data using critical discourse analysis (Richardson 2007; See also Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000). This entailed a close and multi-layered reading of particular words of participants, (i.e. choice of words or diction) and a view to not only what is being said, but what

is occluded from discussion in the attempt to examine the place of gender in women's collective action frames.

In so doing, the research tackled one of the empirical paradoxes of democratization identified by scholars in relation to gender equalities and regime transitions. It also provided an oral history of women′s experience in the uprising, the focus, was not only documenting their accounts; but also situating their experience within the contentious and conventional politics of Egypt. The research thus offers an emergent knowledge that actively comes out from the standpoint of female protestors and that is situated within the particular social and historical context of Egypt.

The Study: *Caveat Emptor*

The **main question** that drives this study is: How can we understand the absence of gender from women's collective action frame in the 2011 Egyptian uprising? Besides this overarching question, the following questions are also investigated:

- What was the collective action frame adopted by women during the Egyptian uprising, in 2011?
- How did women's experience in the uprising influence their engagement and participation in the uprising?
- How did the political process, particularly the politics of state sponsored feminism, shape women's framing strategies?

The overarching objective of my study is to contribute to understanding how women framed their participation and engagement in the uprising. Towards this end, I undertook an in-depth study of women′s collective action frame in the period of January 25 – February 11, 2011

and elucidated its significance and limitations. The start date of the research signals the eruption of the uprising in Egypt following the success of the Tunisian revolution. The end date marks the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, the former Egyptian President.

While the research′s main focus is the period of the 18-day uprising, I will occasionally build on historical events, reflect on current ones and suggest possible future trends. I choose to focus primarily on this initial episode of contention to capture and anatomize this key moment in the history of Egypt, and evaluate its gender dynamics. These dynamics, a number of Middle Eastern experts note, did not receive enough attention and documentation in the literature discussing the recent uprisings in the region (Albercht 2012; Korany & El- Mahdi 2012; Sholkamy 2012a, 2012b). A detailed analysis of these early interactions, I suggest, is important to partially explain the decline in the status of women′s rights during periods of democratic transition.

To capture these dynamics, I document women′s engagement from the standpoint of female protestors. Women′s participation is studied and analyzed using insights from contentious politics literature. In particular, I utilize the concept of framing to elucidate the significance of women′s collective action frame and its limitations.

Theoretical Frame Work: The January 25th Episode of Contention

Unlike popular accounts that dub the 2011 episode of mass protests as a revolution, I adopt a different stance and provide a nuanced conceptualization of the uprising. I view the January 25th uprising as an episode of contention within Egypt's contentious politics. The notion "episodes of contention" is conceived by Sidney Tarrow (1993) to explain the phases of

heightened conflict across the social system. These phases, social movement theorists explain, are characterized by: rapid diffusion of collective action frames; innovations in collective action; and cumulative effect regardless of the cycle's immediate outcome (Tarrow 1998: 142-144, see also McAdam et al 2007: 10; McAdam et al. 2001)

In the 2011 episode of contention, protestors were the first to engage in innovative collective actions, salient among which is virtual dissidence, as they sensed an opportunity to advance their position through novel means.[3] Like many other protest cycles, however, the uprising did not ostensibly bring major transformation in the traditional power structures of the Egyptian society or its social schisms—including these that are gender-based. Nonetheless, the uprising, I argue, left its mark on the protestors' agency and activism. Episodes of contention, "even defeated or suppressed", Sidney Tarrow observes in line with earlier social movement literature, leave "some kind of residue" behind them and their effect, "successful or failed", is cumulative in the long term (Tarrow 1998: 146, see also Tilly 2008; McAdam et al. 2001). This is because, actions, Pam Oliver writes, "can affect the like hood of other actions by creating occasions for actions, by altering material conditions, by changing a group's social organization, by altering beliefs, or by adding knowledge"(1989: 2).

Social movement approach to contention is thus premised on a view of political change as a relational and dynamic process. This process can be often constrained by ideational and structural residuals from the former regime, by the structure of contention and the elites' response

[3] In *Blesses and Curses: Virtual Dissidence as a Contentious Performance* (Allam 2014), I introduce the term virtual dissidence to accounts for the constraints imposed by the macro structure and the array of innovative responses ignited by activists' determination in the uprising. I conceptualize virtual dissidence as a political performance in the repertoire of contention between authoritative regimes and the latter's contenders. The significance of understanding virtual dissidence as emerging from repertoire is that it frames a meso level explanation of collective action and political change. Repertoires of contention tell a story about how contentious claim-making is situated in prior societal experience and interaction with the regime. At the same time, however, repertoires are closely linked with innovation in political action, when understood like Charles Tilly does in the musical and theatrical sense of the word, resembling that of commedia dell'arte or jazz.

to it (McAdam 1995, 1999, Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1995, 1997). In the words of Antonio Gramsci, they operate within "the trenches and fortification" of existing society (Gramsci 1971 cited in Tarrow 2012: 2). Episodes of contention, however, have "indirect and long-term effects" that emerge when the cycle and "its initial excitement" is over (Tarrow 1998: 164; see also Tilly 2008; McAdam et al 2001). Conceptualizing the 2011 uprising as an episode of contention, thus, entails viewing it as a process instead of an event. It denotes that the period of the 18 day leading to the ousting of Hosni Mubarak —which is the locus of this study— is part of a cycle of resistance, not the end point of it. This approach is significant for my research; utilizing it, I offer a dynamic explanation of women's engagement in the uprising. In articulating this explanation, I move beyond the time of the uprising or the "moments of madness" —borrowing Aristide Zolberg's term (1972) — and consider how the landscape of gender during and before contention had an influence on women's experience.

Viewing the uprising as a part of a cycle resistance and not the end point of it encourages a more optimistic approach to studying the recent uprisings and their mixed outcomes. [4] Like Tawakol Karman, I believe, that the Arab uprisings "are the starting point for change", not the "destination"[5]. Political economist and social scientist, Bassma Momani takes a similar optimistic stance in her recent book, *Arab Dawn: Arab Youth and the Demographic Dividend*

[4] Several writers and revolutionary figures express the same concern. Hal Akhtaat Al- Sawra Al- Masrya? [Did the Revolution go wrong?] by activist writer Alaa El- Aswany(2012), Thawrat Masr [Egypt's Revolution] by the Egyptian prominent Marxist Samir Amin (2012) and Paradox of Arab Refo-lutions by the social movement and Middle Eastern scholar, Asef Bayat (2011), exemplifies this observation. In Hal Akhtaat Al- Sawra Al- Masrya? [Did the Revolution go wrong?] (2012), Alla El- Aswany refers to January 25th uprising as the unfinished revolution. Samir Amin also commences his analysis by theorizing "the movement" that took place in January 2011 as something "less than a revolution but more than a protest" (2012:15)21. In the same vein, the term "Refo-lutions", Asef Bayat suggests, describes the recent uprisings in the Arab world. Bayat (2011) describes the Arab Spring as a combination of revolutions and reforms, but not a full revolution. According to him, since the uprisings did not result in a completely new system, they cannot be called revolutions; they should be called "Refo-lutions".
[5] Author's Interview with Tawakkol Karman—the Yemni activist and 2011 Noble laureate, Canada: Edmonton, November 2012. Original in Arabic, translation provided by the researcher.

They Will Bring, holding that change is on its way in the Middle East. Building upon extensive grounded research on the region, Momani emphasises the transformative power of youth in the Arab region[6]. She highlights the demographic shift in the Arab countries, where today one in five Arabs is between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. This demographic shift is significant, Momani explains, given that young people are key agents for development and democratic change. The shift is particularly significant for the Arab region, given the cosmopolitan character of its young generation, she emphasises. Momani's approach is significant to understanding the limits and challenges facing Arab youth in their quest for democratic change. In contrast to a detached and analytically oriented approach to Middle East studies, Momani's research places youth diverse experience and the different institutions that frame their experiences at the centre of our analysis. By focusing on participants' perspectives and providing them with opportunities to articulate their thoughts, researchers are able to gain understanding and acquire new insights about the prospect for democratic change in the Middle East and North Africa.

While this optimistic perspective animates my research, I also admit the incisiveness of Astride Zolberg's description of the salient institutional outcomes of cycles—or more often the resulting institutional setbacks. These outcomes are evident in historical and modern episodes of contentions including that of the 2011 uprising. Moments of "madness" or "political enthusiasm", Zolberg writes, "are followed by bourgeois repression or by charismatic authoritarianism, sometimes by horror but always by the restoration of boredom" (1972: 205).

Unlike repression and authoritarianism, boredom, I hold in line with earlier literature, is a less common outcome in social movements (Tarrow 1998; see also Tilly 2008; McAdam et al. 2001). Scholars within the tradition of resource mobilization, for instance, describe the birth of

[6] While I use the term 'Arab' youth, I acknowledge that the region and its youth are ethnically diverse in ways that are not captured by the term 'Arab'.

“cognitive liberation” among the old members of the civil rights and anti-war movements (Piven and Cloward 1972; 1979; McAdam 1999). In fact, Zolberg (1972) concludes his articles by acknowledging the effects of protest cycles in inducing subtle social changes and disturbing the status quo. He notes that movements sometimes "drastically shorten the distance" between the present and the future, they are thus, he adds, ″successful miracles" (1972: 206).

This is because, Sidney Tarrow explains in his writing on the outcomes in episodes of contention:

> Through skills learned in struggles, the extension of their beliefs to new sectors of activity, and the survival of friendship networks formed in the movement, activism begets future activism, more polarized attitudes toward politics, and greater readiness to join other movement (1998:165).

The focus in this dissertation is however not on elucidating the outcomes of the 2011 uprising. The discussion of the cycles' mediated and indirect effects gives way to my primary objective, that is: understanding the experience of women in the uprising with a view to reclaiming their agency. My occasional reference to the participants' current activism is not to be understood as an attempt to trivialize the scope and severity of gender inequalities in the post-uprising period. My objective is to encourage the reader to approach women' experience with an eye to locating their agency, not their plight. I, thus, position my interviewees as active subjects, not victims, and espousing Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 's contention, assign them a position of "enunciation" (Spivak 1988: 129). This positioning, Spivak holds, offers a detailed picture, rather than a simplified rhetoric of women's activism and political participation.

Situating the Egyptian uprising within contentious politics literature and viewing it as an episode of contention yield several advantages for my study. The literature's broad and relational definition of politics is apt to interrogate women's engagement in the uprising and to accommodate the diversity of their experiences. In line with social movement scholarship, I

analyze women's experience with an eye to revealing the limits and potentials of their participation. I follow Tilly's connotation and thus avoid interpreting "gains" and "losses", "narrowly" or "materially" (Tilly 1978). Furthermore, by situating the study within the contentious politics literature, I utilized the rich theoretical tools provided by this literature and extend its analytical approach to new cases.[7]

In my research, I examine the absence of gender in women's collective action frame, since in the absence of a detailed analysis the omission of gender from women's frame can be misunderstood as a sign of their passivity, and/or false consciousness. My understanding of gender and agency is informed by insights from post-colonial feminism. The theory of post-colonial feminism considers the influence of race, ethnicity, and class in its gender analysis. Feminists within this tradition take a critical stance towards meta-narratives, specifically, the notion of "the women" as a universal subject of feminism, which they hold is essentialist. The image, according to them, demarcates the cultural differences between the West and the other and thus serves Orientalist discourses (Abu-Lughod 2001; Ahmed 2012; Jiwani 2005a, 2005b; Mohanty, Riley, and Minnie Bruce 2008; Saliba et. al. 2002: 52).

To avoid the risk of "Orientalising Egyptian women all over again", borrowing Saba Mahmood's word of warning (2005:119), my theoretical framework is a synthesis between collective action frame theory and political opportunities. This "synthetic model", Tarrow (2012) describes, has been commonly utilized in the study of contentious politics and social movements, due to its dynamic framework.

[7] In fact, the features of the Egyptian uprising challenge the wisdom of the earlier generations of revolutionary studies. Earlier theories define revolutions as mostly European violent state versus people (See Foran 1993; Gustave Le Bon 1895) or class conflicts (See Jeffery Paige1975; Theda Skocpol 1979).

The premises of this model are that the members of social movements are not independent from the polity they are challenging and they operate on the boundaries of existing culture, politics, and institutions (Tarrow 2012). They are "strangers at the gates", writes Tarrow (2012), they demand changes but also accommodate inherited understandings and ways of doing things (Tarrow 2012: 13). Activists, as such, choose their repertoires and frame their participation in light of their relations to a broader map of routine and contentious polices (Tarrow 2012:13).

This synthetic model is apt to understand the experiences of women in its entirety. As I shall demonstrate in the upcoming chapters, the political process paradigm contributes to elucidating the opportunities and constrains surrounding female activism in Egypt. Framing analysis explicates how opportunities and constrains were perceived by female participants, and how they influenced the women's framing. Together, the two theories highlight female protestors' experience while being sensitive to the contexts surrounding the women' s activism in Egypt.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this research adopts an “emergent” approach to theorizing, common in feminist and critical scholarship (Collins 1990, 1999; Letherby 2003; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2007). In line with this approach, theorizing about female protestors' experiences in the uprising takes the form of a conversation between theory and women's lived experiences and interpretations. The data for this project was gathered from personal interviews and public transcripts and analyzed using critical discourse analysis.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews use open ended questions to encourage participants to elaborate on their answers (Morse et al. 2002; Mayan 2009:71). This method of data collection is important for this study as it allows the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses. It also gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) sum up the importance of semi-structured interviews, describing them as meaningful and culturally salient to the participant, unanticipated by the researcher and having a rich and explanatory nature. The organic nature of the data contributes to the emergent approach characterizing this research.

Towards this end, I conducted 103 in-depth interviews in English and Arabic with five sets of actors between June 2012 and December 2014 in Egypt. The five sets of actors that I have interviewed are: First, female protestors, 18 years and above, whom participated in the 18-day protests. It is worth noting that while I strived to choose participants from different social and economic backgrounds to avoid biases and attain rich data, the nature of the research is qualitative and therefore uncovering potential different experiences of women by socioeconomic status while often highlighted, is not the main aim of the study.

Second, I carried out interviews with female political activists. This population was approached through the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, a Cairo based NGO. Participants were snowballed from this stage. In addition to snowball sampling, call for participation and recruiting material was also posted in community organization and on listservs. I have carried out interviews with activists from: Kefaya [Enough] and April 6th movements as well as members from Gamat Al-Ahwan Al-Muslimeen [the Muslim Brotherhood Organization] given their active role and presence in the 2011 uprising.

Third, I carried out interviews with representatives of the following NGOs:

- Al-Mrʾa Al-Gadyda [New Women Foundation] ;
- Al- Mrʾa wa Al-Zakra [Women and History Forum];
- Al-Mrkz Al-Masrī -l-Mrʾa [the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights];
- El-Bakyat El- Salhat [Good Deeds Organization];
- Moʾssasat Qadaya Al- Mrʾa [Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance]
- Nazra -l-Drasat Al-Nsawya [Nazra for Feminist Studies];
- Rabtat Al- Mrʾa Al-Arabia [The Alliance for Arab Women]; and
- Twasol [Engagment].

Interviews were also carried out with members and leaders from numerous initiatives, salient among which is:

- Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment; and
- Harass Map.

The choice of these NGOs and initiatives is purposive, given their grass root approach to women's rights as well as their participation in the uprising. Furthermore, to increase the richness of my data and avoid biases, the NGOs included do not share the same ideological bedrock; they considerably differ in their aims and focus.

Interviews were also carried out with the:

- Regional director of the United Nation Development Program in the Middle East (UNDP) and the former regional director of the United Nations for Women in the Middle East (UN Women),
- Regional director of the Population Council in the Middle East;

- Director of Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies;
- Director of the Arab and African Research Centre at the American University in Cairo.

Fourth, I interviewed state official who are engaged in the agenda of women's rights in Egypt. Specifically, I interviewed former consultants and current directors at the National Council for Women's Rights and the National Center for Social and Criminological Research. It is very unfortunate that I could not interview Ambassador Mervat Tellawī, president of the National Council for Women. The National Council for Women is the national machinery for the empowerment of women in Egypt. It is worth noting that I have contacted Ms. Tellawī's office over 14 times and personally spoke with the ambassador over the phone to schedule an interview with her, but with no luck.

Finally, I interviewed public female figures, namely: Abla El-Kahlawī; Tawakkol Karman; and Amina Shafiq. El- Kahlawī is among the most famous female ulamā (Islamic scholars) in the Arab World. She held the position of Islamic and Arabic Studies' Dean at al-Azhar University, Women's College in Egypt (Allam 2013). Tawakkol Karman is the co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, for her leading role in the struggle for democracy and human's rights in Yemen. Amina Shafiq is the first and only female secretary-general of the Egyptian Press Syndicate (1989-1993), as well as a symbol of 1960s leftism in Egypt. These figures are chosen because of their historical involvement in women's right issues and their diverse backgrounds.

I followed the normal ethical protocol requiring the use of pseudonyms in place of real names of interviewees, unless participants indicated that they wanted their real name to be mentioned. In several cases however, even when participants were well-known public figures

and indicated that they wanted their real name to be mentioned I continued to use pseudonyms to protect their identity considering the ongoing crackdown on political activists in Egypt. . I was able to cross-check data and appreciate the complexity of women's engagement in political struggle given the richness of data and the diversity of participants.

In order to elucidate women's experience in the uprising from their own perspective, the interview guide included questions on the following themes/domains: women's grievances; mobilization strategies; and roles during the uprising. I also examined the role of women's organizations during the uprising, the implication of state feminist on women's right agenda and how discussions over gender inequalities and women's rights were perceived at the time of the uprising.

My textbook knowledge of research methods and design had to be adapted to fit the reality on the ground. Following the interviews, I would go through my notes and read the interview transcripts. This timely review of data was important in order to locate gaps in knowledge and identify new themes that are worth further investigation. Following this review, I often included new questions, reframed existing ones and added new contacts to my list of interviewees.

Beside interviews, I regularly attended panels, discussions, workshops and conferences held at universities, libraries and cultural centres in Egypt. Also, my conversations and discussions with scholars and researchers at the Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women's Studies and the AUC forum at the American University in Cairo—where I served as a Research Fellow in Fall 2014— were very insightful. The purpose of this endeavour was to verify if the picture/explanation that emerged from the previously collected data was accurate.

Public Transcripts

In addition to interview data, data from public documents was compiled to further understand women's engagement in the uprising. By analysing these documents, I gained further insights into how women's participation was framed and perceived in the national and international media as well as in Egypt's popular culture[8]. To this end, I examined the following documents:

a) Key Egyptian and North American newspapers: namely: *Al-Ahram, Al-Wafd*, and *The New York Times*. I analysed their coverage of the uprising using MAXQDA; a software for qualitative analysis.

b) Scholarly work in English and Arabic examining the uprising in the form of books, journal articles, dissertations and the like. Some of this scholarly work was accessed through the University of Alberta Library website. Other scholarship was only accessible through the library at the American University in Cairo, the Social Sciences Library, Faculty of Economics and Political Science library and Media Studies library at Cairo University, in Egypt.

c) Revolutionary pamphlets distributed at the time of the uprising. These materials were accessed through the *Women and Memory Forum (WMF)* library. The *WMF* is a national nongovernmental organization in Egypt; their focus is on researching and documenting the role of women in Arab and Middle Eastern societies.

d) Three key Facebook groups dubbed as influential in mobilizing protestors, namely: “We are all Khaled Saīd”, “The Day of Rage” and “January 25th” groups.

[8] A survey of the revolutionary pamphlets and songs sheds the light on how women's participation was framed in Egypt's popular culture.

Public transcripts and interview data were treated within the prism of critical discourse analysis (Richardson 2007; see also Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000). This entailed a close and multi-layered reading of particular words of participants, (i.e. choice of words or diction) and a view to not only what is being said, but what is occluded from discussion in the attempt to empirically investigate how female political engagement is shaped by the surrounding political and social environment in Egypt.

Specifically, I organized data along three frameworks/ themes. The three frameworks/ themes are: Women's collective action frame; political opportunities; and women's experience at the time of the uprising. The first theme, that is women's collective action frame helped in answering how gender issues featured in their collective action frame. The second theme ascertained the key political opportunities and constrains that have shaped women's engagement in the uprising. The final theme emphasised the context within which women carried out their activism at the time of the uprising.

Combining in-depth semi-structured interviews with media and public transcripts yields qualitatively rich data. The data offered a nuanced analysis of the political opportunities and framing strategies that influenced women's engagement in the uprising.

Raison d'être of the Study

The study offers an oral history of women's engagement in the 2011 Egyptian uprising. By closely analysing women's engagement in the uprising, women are brought to the centre of analysis and their agency is reclaimed. Writing *herstory,* feminist scholars contend, is important as women tend to be neglected and undervalued in history (Agah, Mehr, and Parsi 2007; Åhäll

and Linda 2012; Amrouche 1988; Elsadda 1998, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006). A detailed analysis of women's framing strategies will also result in offering a "thick description" (Geertz 1970) of women's engagement. It will contribute to restoring women's voices and portraying them as active agents. This, in turn, promises to complicate and expand debates on women's participation in national struggles beyond reductionist accounts that view them as misguided or passive. This nuanced narrative will benefit researchers and/or readers interested in studying the Middle East, social and/or women's movements.

Beyond the gender politics of the Middle East and North Africa, the dissertation also offers significant contribution to the field of political science broadly. By offering an analysis of the motivations and blockages to women's political activism and engagement in contentious episodes, I reveal the ways in which female activists come to their understandings of politics and political participation. Specifically, I uncover the factors that make political action conceivable at all, or that make some forms of activism thinkable while others are, or become, wholly unimaginable (Gould 2009: 3-9). This analysis is significant as it contributes to explaining how political imaginaries—or what Gould (2009: 3) eloquently terms "political horizons"— get established, consolidated, stabilized, and reproduced over time, and with what sorts of effects on political action. Answering these questions is important for the field of political science as it promises to uncover the processes through which power is exercised and reproduced in our forms and frames of activism and the ways in which a prevailing or hegemonic political discourse might be challenged and transformed.

The proposed framework also explains— in part— how the absence of gender from women's frame at the time of the uprising limited their rights in the period of democratic transition. The research thus adds to our stock of knowledge on the gendered processes of regime

change and the divergent outcomes of women's mobilization in national struggles. The proposed framework, however, does not cover all relevant factors. It only highlights how the revolutionary moment might have contributed to the current gender order in Egypt. Despite its limitation, the model can be explored across additional cases and in combination with other factors.

The dissertation also advances social movement theory by applying the political process model to non-Western cases and expanding the contours of its political opportunities and framing thesis to integrate gender structures and frames (See Beinin, Giacaman and Johnson 1989; Beinin and Vairel 2011). While the literature on social movements offers many valuable insights and interesting lines of inquiry, studying women's engagement in the 2011 Egyptian uprising brought to light the present omissions and shortcomings of the literature. The analysis uncovers the ways in which collective action frames are not merely a deliberate formulation in response to the legitimacy of the dominant framing of political struggles. While accounting for these factors provides collective action frames with the necessary credibility and resonance, activists continue to take cues from the surrounding environment during political struggles. This study thus complements social movement scholarship by foregrounding the important role of gender structures in movement processes and the ways in which issues of interpretation and meaning-making are central to the story of all social movements.

Finally, the concluding recommendations may as well prove useful to women's movement in Egypt and the Middle East and North Africa region. In the concluding chapter, I highlight the importance of building networks and spreading gender awareness at the grass root level to influence policies and advance women's rights. While I do acknowledge that this approach will not necessarily lead to immediate increase in women's political representation, it will have a positive cumulative effect on gender relations and political participation in the longer

term. The results can thus be used to better inform projects and programs designed to address gender inequality. These lessons are of great importance to international and national policy makers who are interested in a grass root, bottom up approach to women's empowerment. Understanding the complexities of women's experience is central to designing and implementing effective policies.

Scope and Limitations

This study focuses specifically on women's engagement in the Egyptian uprising and not women's participation in the Arab Spring broadly. While I am aware that women has participated and often faced similar challenges, this study does not address such participation in greater details. The subject of women's participation in the Arab Spring, however, certainly warrant further research and study.

Specifically, I find two questions to be of great significance for expanding the application of my argument beyond this dissertation, for future research. The first question is related to obtaining more observations "across space" (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 219. The second—and to some extent interrelated—question is related to "conceptual traveling" (Sartori 1970). That is: to what extent can my model *travel* beyond the case of Egypt—the case study in my dissertation— and across different cases of mobilization such as the January Jasmine revolution in Tunisia and the Libyan Arab Spring of 2011?

In addition to being a country associated with the changes of the Arab Spring, the history and evolution of women's movement in Tunisia is ostensibly similar to that in Egypt. In both countries, the agenda of women's rights was hijacked by the ruling regimes, and women's organizations have often formed alliances with the government in power (Charrad 2001;

Doumato and Posusney 2003; Grami 2008; Hatem 1992; Johansson-Nogués 2013; Megahed and Lack 2011; Sutherlin 2012). Tunisia is thus an excellent case to compare with Egypt given the resemblance in the conventional politics that have traditionally surrounded women's movement in both countries and the relative success of Tunisia in implementing gender equality measures following the uprising. This relative success, however, should not be overstated.

Tunisian women have only secured modest female political representation in elections and in the political process[9]. Similar to their Egyptian counterpart too, the spirit of loyalty and unity experienced between men and women during the Jasmine Revolution appears to have dissipated as well (Johansson-Nogués 2013). In the period post the uprising, women in Tunisia, Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués (2013) describes in her comparative study on the experience of women during the anti-regime uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, have been harassed for their dress codes, for smoking, for drinking, for walking unaccompanied by male relatives or for participating in different types of protest marches.

Similarly, violence against women has also marked the mixed political scene in Libya. Sexual harassment is often used to intimidate and threaten female political activists in the country. Women, a number of newspapers report, are being beaten and arrested, harassed, and subjected to virginity tests and body searches (Tripoli Post 2013). The English-speaking Libyan newspaper, Tripoli Post, reported how women were being chased out of public squares and polling stations in the period post the uprising, on the basis that women should not mingle with men in public (Tripoli Post 2013). The meaning and significance of these similarities and

[9] After the electoral victory of the Islamist Ennadha party in Tunisia in the autumn of 2011, women had secured 61 of the Tunisian Constituent Assembly's 217 seats (27%). However, it is worth noting that there are only three women ministers of a total 41 (Johansson-Nogués 2013). Recently and although article 46 of the 2014 Tunisian Constitution calls for equal representation for women and men, however the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections resulted in only 31.3% women in the Assembly of People's Representatives and 19% in the new government in February 2015 (See La marginalisation politique des femmes entrave la démocratie tunisienne--http://www.awid.org/fr/nouvelles-et-analyse/la-marginalisation-politique-des-femmes-entrave-la-democratie-tunisienne#sthash.dVUUuq8R.dpuf)

differences in women's engagement and gender outcomes of these upheavals are worth further investigation. While it is beyond the scope of my dissertation, my analysis offers a plausible frame work to understand women's engagment and the status of their rights during and after the Arab Spring

Second, It is diffcult to evaluate the effect of my identity as an Egyptian female studying in North America— thus an outsider often perceived as among those benefiting from the emerging "academic tourism"[10] in the region— on my interviewees and their responses.

For example, in one of the interviews with a director at a national institution for women's rights, the director denied that sexual harassment was a problem in Egypt. She insisted that the number of incidents were insignificant and blamed women who dressed liberally, or who were, like me, "young and present in the public space". I am not sure how to situate her answer but I could not but feel during the interview that notwithstanding my Egyptian origin, my status as a researcher who is studying in Canada placed me as an outsider. Thus, she, the director, might have felt that it is her duty to conceal and deny the phenomena in the presence of a 'perceived outsider' like myself.

Finally, while the political situation in Egypt has been continuously evolving and changing over the past four years— following the 2011 uprising, the latest political developments in the country were even more dramatic. Following the election of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in June 2014, the former defence minister who toppled the former Egyptian

[10] Academic tourism is a concept that has emerged during a discussion in "The Ethics of Political Science Research and Teaching in MENA" workshop, held in 9-11 June 2015 at King Mohammed V University in Rabat. The workshop was funded by the American Political Science Association MENA Program and Carnegie Corporation of New York and the London School of Economics Middle East Centre. Along with a number of scholars, I organized the workshop to hold a discussion between researchers and scholars facing shared challenges, in terms of human subject protection, identity of the researcher, increased state surveillance, and working in conflict areas and with vulnerable people. Among the key themes that came out during the discussion is the ways in which many researchers from outside the region, that is academic tourists, have better access and funding opportunities than locally based scholars. This result in a problematic power relation where researchers based in the MENA region often must settle for support roles in research projects that come in from abroad.

President Mohamed Morsi amid popular protests against the Muslim Brotherhood, the ruling regime has been repeatedly warning citizens against a "conspiracy" to bring down Egypt. I observed while at my fieldwork the narrowing of the political landscape and the rise of hyper-nationalism among citizens. Civil society organizations and political oppositions were working amidst a hostile environment in which state security forces were cracking down on the NGOs' activities and the public opinion was desperately supporting a police state in the hope of avoiding the destiny of the country's turbulent neighbours.

Eid Mohamed and Bessma Momani (2014) eloquently capture this febrile momentum in Egypt in their article *The Muslim Brotherhood: Between Democracy, Ideology and Distrust*. While the article's main focus is exposing the myth of political Islam in Egypt, the article's conclusion captures the complex and contradictory political sentiments in Egyptian society, following the ousting of former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi. The authors describe how critics of the current state are often labelled "buzz-killer", or even worse "terrorist-sympathizers" (Mohamed and Momani 2014: 210-211). They rightly point out to the difficulty of carrying out rational conversation about the current state of affairs in Egypt, indeed during my field work I observed how emotions were high and cynicism and distrust in revolutionaries and youth were at all-time high.

I observed with disappointment the sense of despair growing among intellectuals and activists in Egypt. By the time I was leaving Egypt, many political activists have already fled the country and others were planning to move. This stood in stark contrast with the spirit that characterized my earlier round of fieldwork, back in 2012. In 2012, I carried out a preliminary round of fieldwork in Egypt; this was following the ousting of the Egyptian former president Hosni Mubarak. During that time, hopes for change and progress were high among my

interviewees. In this last round of fieldwork in 2014, the court has dropped all charges against the overthrown president—Hosni Mubarak— in connection with the killing of protesters during the 2011 uprising. His former interior minister, Habib el-Adly, and six aides were also cleared of charges related to the killing of protesters.

The disappointment and disillusionment that ensued me after watching devastated protesters shouting and screaming in anger at the verdict as riot police lined the streets in preparation for disruption has pushed me into a soul-searching process, to which there is no apparent end in sight. The experience have left me asking fundamental questions about the nature of uprisings, the role of civil resistance and coercion in social change—questions that may tell us more about the past than the future. These questions are at the heart of my dissertation.[11]

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into: Introduction; five Chapters, and Conclusion.

In the Introduction, I provide a general overview of the study and an exposition of its objectives and rational. Chapter One, *Women in Egypt's National Imaginary*, highlights the centrality of women to historical and modern projects of nationalism in Egypt. I briefly survey nationalist and feminist contributions to studying women's experience in political struggles before examining the framing of women's participation in the 1919 revolution and the 1952 coupe d'état, in Egypt.

Chapter Two, *Media Framing of Women's Participation in the Uprising*[12], interrogates the visibility and representation of women in the national and international media coverage of the 2011 Egyptian uprising. Two central questions animate this chapter. First, in comparison to men,

[11] My experience in the course of this research has resulted in a paper *Embodied Scholars: The Insider-Outsider Status of Researchers in Field Work*, (Allam, Nermin) currently under peer review.
[12] A version of Chapter Two was published at the Sociology of Islam Journal under the title: *Activism and Exception in Covering Egypt's Uprising: A Critical Reading of the New York Times Representation of Female Protestors.(*Allam, Nermin 2014)

how did the media in Egypt frame women's engagement in the uprising of 2011? Second, did the image of female participants challenge or perpetuate traditional gender and —specifically in the case of the New York Times' coverage—orientalist stereotypes? I draw upon 174 news-stories published on the websites of two widely circulated national newspapers: *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Wafd* and 224 international stories published by the *New York Times.* The stories offer a detailed coverage of the popular uprising between January 25 and February 12, 2011. I carried out a textual analysis of news, editorials and commentaries, and read the text through the lens of post-colonial feminist critique and utilizing discourse analysis. My analysis suggests that traditional motifs of passiveness coexisted along new ones of feminine agency in the coverage (Allam 2014). By evoking the myth of female passiveness and framing women's activism within a feminine framework, the coverage, I suggest, assuaged the effect of their activism in deconstructing gender stereotypes (Allam 2014). The analysis also explicates the variation and multiplicity involved in the practice of othering and avoids erasing the participation of women as subject of patriarchy or Orientalism in shaping the discourse.

Chapters Three to Five are the epicentre of my analysis, together they contribute to understanding how women framed their participation in light of their relation to a broader map of contentious and routine politics.

Chapter Three, *Trenching Dissent: Women's Collective Action Frame in the Uprising,* highlights the significance and meaning of the collective action frame adopted by women during the 18-day uprising. I interrogate women's collective action frame and examine how the omission of gender influenced their participation in the uprising. The most misunderstood aspect of women′s experience in the uprising is the absence of gender from their collective action frame. In the absence of detailed analysis, the omission of gender can be misunderstood as a sign

of the women's passivity, and/or false consciousness. To avoid the risk of "Orientalising Egyptian women all over again", borrowing Saba Mahmood′s word of warning (2005:119), I utilize frame analysis to understand their engagement in the uprising. Building upon frame analysis, I argue that the omission of gender from women′s collective action frame is not a sign of passivity, but part of the process of frame alignment.

In Chapter Four, I expand the contours of framing theory to consider the influence of women's experience during contention on their collective action frame. Participants, I hold, are involved in ongoing framing alignment and articulation. They not only tap on the wider cultural predisposition in framing their participation but also continue to take cues from the surrounding environment during times of political struggles. Building upon my participants accounts, I argue that women's subjective experience of solidarity and equality during the 2011 protests contributed to the absence of gender from their collective action framing. During this phase the unity and solidarity among participants were ostensibly real and felt by female protestors. I use the case of the absence of sexual harassment to demonstrate the prevalence of the sense of "communitas" and to highlight the conjunctural limitation of this "liminal" phase (Turner 1974). I argue that given the wide spread of equality and solidarity during the 18-day uprising, women actively framed their participation utilizing the citizen frame. This frame was viewed by women as sufficient to incorporate gender equality rights and to sit comfortably in the post-uprising agenda. The analysis presented in this chapter aims to capture the experience of female protestors in its entirety. It presents "an archeology of women's recollections", in which I highlight overt indetermanties, ambiguities, ruptures and shifts in women's experience.

Chapter Five, *'Ento Beto' Sūzān ' [You are Suzanne's Clique]: Gender and Political Opportunities in the 2011 Uprising* extends and further elaborates the arguments presented in

Chapter Three and Four. In this chapter, I examine how the character of opportunities influence women's framing strategies. Espousing a political process approach, I argue that groups differ in how they experience and perceive political opportunities in collective action. This is because, I suggest, opportunities mainly reflect the values of their initiators and the groups' prior relations with the regime. They, however, can evolve and support new challengers depending on the structure of contention and the group's prior interaction with the regime. I thus argue that the uprising did not necessarily open up an opportunity for women to demand gender equalities. This is, in part, due to the policies of state-sponsored feminism; these policies, feminist critics observe, damaged the discourse of gender equality and shifted the location of women's struggles in Egypt (Abu-Lughod 1998; Badran 1988; Baron 2005; Hatem 1994; Sholkamy 2002, 2012a).

In the concluding Chapter, *Summary, Contribution and Future Research Areas: The Politics of Disappointment*[13], I review the findings of the dissertation and its contributions to the discipline. I conclude by offering suggestions for future research in a region, a region that is increasingly marked by politics of disappointment. In mapping the field in which politics unfolded in the Middle East and North Africa region post the Arab Spring, researchers, I contend, should analyse the conditions under which the politics of disappointment prevail (Allam 2015). Most importantly, this analysis should be carried out with an eye to how actions and activism continue nonetheless to take place.

[13] An abridged version of the concluding Chapter was published at the London School of Economics Middle East Centre blog under the title "What Holds Next? The Politics of Disappointment". The full article can be found at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2015/08/11/what-holds-next-the-politics-of-disappointment/

Chapter 1

Women and Egypt's National Struggles

Roses and basil were on that day
the only weapons on which they relied.
The hours of struggle seemed so long
that embryos might have become grey-haired.
But then the women became feeble,
for the fair sex has no physical strength.
They were defeated and fled,
dispersed, to their palaces.
What a glorious army indeed!
What a victory, to have defeated women!

"Mozaharat Al-Nisa" [The Ladies' Demonstration]
Hafiz Ibrahim (1929, quoted in Baron 2005: 115)

Introduction

Hafiz Ibrahim's poem, "Mozaharat Al-Nisa'" [The Ladies' Demonstration], is one of the most important written memorials to the 1919 Egyptian uprising. It, indeed, has been central to constructing the nation's collective memory of it. Collective memory is site of identification and conflict for a nation. It not only constructs the past, it also organizes the experience of the present and the future. Jacques Derrida (1973) describes this simultaneity with his famous strategic concept of deconstruction. Deconstruction and construction, Derrida argues, are mutually exclusive. Something new in thinking can only be evoked by supplementing something already given, the supplement does not erase the established meaning, it writes over it, thus is always bound to it. The representation of women in Ibrahim's poem, as such, in part describes and inscribes broader views and debates on women's political participation in Egypt. The poem is an example of the different ways in which nationalist regimes have constructed the image of nationalist women and manipulated the discourse of women's rights in Egypt.

In this chapter, I focus on the framing of women's engagement in Egypt's national struggles. I argue that the experience of Egyptian women in the 1919 nationalist uprising and the

1952 coup d'état crystallizes the tension between nationalist and women's right discourses in Egypt. Women's experience, I contend, is remembered only selectively at key moments and when it serves some symbolic purpose. Notwithstanding the resisted path of change following political struggles, I explore how women's mobilization contributed to democratizing and gendering the public and political sphere in Egypt.

In the attempt to develop this particular argument, I, first, critically survey the literature on women's participation in nationalist movements to situate the experience of women in Egypt's uprising of 1919, and the 1952 military coup. Second, I examine how women's engagement in these key political junctures was commemorated and remembered in a number of relevant literary and artistic productions. I analyse women's experiences in the past, with my eyes on the present. My objective is to identify continuities and ruptures in the framing of women's national activism in Egypt.

This chapter, thus, presents a nuanced view of women's engagement in political struggles at the time of revolutions and their status in the new regimes. It builds upon and contributes to the literature on women and the process of nation-building. This is done while problematizing the tendency in mainstream literature to theorize a single, common relationship between nationalist movement and women's rights (Vickers . Despite the rich debate and the theoretical insights that have been provoked by the literature), for the most part, nationalist motivated political movements are still more often "objects of fear and scorn than of systematic study" (Vickers 2006). This obscures the complexity of the issue and overlooks the positive influence of revolutions on women's post-revolution movements. As such, the literature review presented in this chapter functions in de-essentializing the category of women, while suggesting areas for continuities or junctures in the assumed relationship between women and political struggles. I so

doing, I bridge the experience of Egyptian women to the experience of women in other parts of the world and situate it within the broader body of feminist research.

Women's Engagement in Political Struggles

Women's engagement in national revolutions has been the subject of study in nationalist and feminist literatures. Their contributions range from an examination of theoretical dilemmas to case studies in a variety of contemporary and historical settings. The case studies document women's meaningful, though often hidden, experiences during the revolutions and analyse their experiences through 'maternalist' and/or 'warrior women' frameworks (Noonan 1995; Hatem 2000; Tètreault 1994; Edmonds-Cady 2009).

The maternalist framework exemplifies the theoretical and practical practice of posing motherhood as a basis for political action and political action as a motherly obligation for women (Edmonds-Cady 2009; Noonan 1995). That is to say, women's participation in political struggles is framed as a mothering response to the danger imposed by the regime on her children. The maternalist framing focuses on women's feminine roles in political struggles, but also acknowledges women's non-traditional roles that bend gender expectations. It, however places women's activism squarely in the context of the nationalist struggle and does not ascribe feminist meanings to them.

In contrast, the term women warrior or women fighter is used to describe women's militant participation in armed political struggles. Warrior women are female participants who fought side by side with men at the fore front of several armed struggles (Tétreault 1994). For instance in the Vietnam war and Eritrean liberation struggle during the 1960s and 1970s, the

image of a khaki-clad woman warrior —indistinguishable from men in some cases— brandishing a rifle became symbolic of the nationalist movement (Bernal 2001:131).

These frames are rarely adamant, women have often moved across them in past struggles. For instance, case studies of Palestinian women's resistance to Israeli colonialism highlight the different functions carried out by women during the first and second Intifadas. As a 'mother of all boys', militants, politicians, and grass root organizers, Palestinian women took up diverse roles throughout the history of the conflict (Allen 2003:655-657; Jad 1990). The same holds true for women in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America who provided domestic services to combatants and/ or were the combatant themselves (for a collection of case studies see Joseph 2000; Joseph and Najmabadi 2003; see also; Tètreault 1994; Stephen 1997; Zaatari 2006; Volo 2004; West and Blumberg 1988).

It is worth noting that women's mode of participation is not only the product of their personal choice and/ or the nature of the struggle; it is often dictated by the ideational environment within which they carry out their activism. To gain participation in protests, the 'hiers of Zaynab' in Iran and Palestinian women in the 'Intifada Hijab'[14] had to adhere to a certain role. Their role was to prop their veils as a sign of opposition to imperialism (Farhi 1998; Afshar 1985). Women participating outside this role — that is demonstrating without covering their heads — were considered anti-revolutionary and insufficiently nationalist (Azari 1984:268; Farhi 1998; Hammami 1990:26; Allen 2003:657).

Women's participation as such was encouraged by nationalist and Islamist alike in the Middle East and North Africa. Yet with the return of "normalcy" and the end of political struggles, scholars have noted that the new regimes often ignored the women question.

[14] The same was true in the first Palestinian Intifada, when a campaign was waged in Gaza to impose hijab. In what analysts interpreted as "Intifada Hijab" (Hammami 1990:26; Allen 2003: 657) to manifest their nationalist sentiment.

According to them, in many nations, the new states brought a reassertion of traditional gender expectations (Jaquette 1973) and waned women's mobilizations and representation in formal political power (Waylen 2011).

The Gender 'Pitfalls of National Consciousness'[15]

The failure of new regimes to improve gender equality after revolutions has been the foci of several feminist and nationalist studies. The studies question whether women's post-revolutionary experiences lived up to their expectations or imaginings during the nationalist struggle. In this regard, scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which the process of nation-building after the revolutions is premised on particular gender identities and meanings (Abu-Laban 2008; Boehmer 1991; Joseph 2000; Dhruvarajan and Vicker 2002; Vicker 2008, 2006; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Similar to Franz Fanon's efforts to reveal the ethnic "pitfalls of national consciousness" (Fanon 1963:148-205), several feminist contributions unveil the *gender pitfalls of national consciousness*. Within this tradition, scholars have analysed the ways in which nationalist projects essentially "gendered nations" (Yuval Davis 1997) and "masculinized citizenship" (Zubaida 1988) following national liberation struggles. They have, thus, questioned the influence of a number of factors in shaping the political openings and ideologies available to women's movements in transitional period (Waylen 2011; Viterna and Fallon 2008). Among the key factors highlighted in the literature are: the nature of political struggles (Terman 2010; Jayawardena 1986; Yeganeh 1993), and the legacy of women's previous mobilizations (Kumba 2001; Noonan 1995; Viterna 2006; Viterna & Fallon 2008).

[15] A' la Fannon (1963)'s expression of the ethnic "pitfalls of national consciousness."

Broadly speaking, this body of work acts as a *caveat emptor* for women who wish to participate in revolutions. Examining the process of nation-building and the construction of citizenship following major revolutions, they conclude by criticizing national struggles and typically argue that women were used during them only to be relegated to home and hearth after (Hatem 2000; Joseph 2000; Vickis 2008; Tètreault 1994; Yuval Davis 1997).

Scholars stress this sentiment to a different degree. While, the majority of early feminists displayed an absolute cynicism (Wolf 1938; Petteman 1996[16]), their non-Western counterparts have often contextualized their scepticism towards women's participation in liberation movements (Berkovitch and Moghadam 1999; Jayawardena 1986; Terman 2010). Valentine Moghadam and Kumari Jayawardena's have argued in the past, that in Asia and the Middle East "feminism and nationalism were complementary, compatible and solidaristic", but they conclude, "(t)his has changed" (1995:3). This is because, anti-modern nationalism[17] in contrast to modern nationalism is on the rise (1995: 6-7). They believe that the former expands women's rights, while the latter constrains them.

Contrary to Moghadam and Jayawardena's view, a number of studies argue that religious movements have the potential of liberating women as well (Parashar 2010; Terman 2010). Writing on the Iranian revolution, Rochelle Terman (2010) argues that the Islamic revolution has liberated women by mobilising them in the public sphere. Terman (2010: 290) claims that the revolution aimed at creating a female subject that is "who was simultaneously pious and politically active." This particular form of subjectivity, however, "exceeds and defies the categories and dichotomies" of earlier social norms (Terman 2010:290). The unique

[16] Australian Jan Jindy Pettman (1996) is skeptic of the possibility of positive relation between women's rights and nationalism. She recognizes that the relationship can be negotiated in different ways over time and place, but accuses nationalist movements of mobilising women's support and labour, while simultaneously seeking to reinforce women's female roles and femininity (1996: 61).

[17] Scholars associate anti-modern nationalism with the rise of religious fundamentalists.

subjectivity, scholars have argued, gives rise to a productive tension in that women are using this new identity to act in ways that are both beyond and contrary to what the Islamist regime initially anticipated (Terman 2010:290; see also Zahedi 2007; Al-Qasimi 2010).

In addition to the nature of the movement, several scholars have suggested that women's post-transition movements benefit from women's pre-transition activism and influence their gains under the new regime. Women whose pre-transition activism was political or distant from thetraditional understandings of the feminine were likely better able to organize and pressure the regime for more rights (Kampwirth 2002; Shayne 2004). Frames used prior to transitions can also constrain the materialization of gender equity. In Latin America, female protestors appropriated the authoritrian regime's discource of the piouis women and selfless mother in framing their political participation and struggle for democratic reform. This framing, however, constrained women's activism in the period post the uprising. The new political actors used women's feminine framing to justify women's exclusion from the public space and to encourage female activists to return to the private sphere (Chinchilla 1994; Fisher 1993).

Scholars therefore conclude —with varying certainty— that women's movement did secure their full rights post transition because the movement failed in converting the pre-transition frames into strong feminist discources following regime change and democratic transition. This view does not go uncontested. Some argue that feminine movements often evolve into "feminist" ideologies (Molyneux 1985; Stephen 1997; Viterna & Fallon 2008). While subscribing to the rational underpinning this argument, Jocelyn Viterna and Kathleen M. Fallon (2008: 672) critique the paucity of studies written about which "movements evolve, which languish, and whether this broadening of movement goals results in gendered changes within the

state apparatus." Egyptian women involvement in the 1919 revolution can be seen as an example of these *feminine turning feminist* movements.

Women and the 1919 Revolution

In contrast to the Urabi Revolt of 1881/82[18], which has been characterized as a "manly event", the Egyptian 1919 revolution, against British colonialism, was led by female participants. Women's national activism prior to 1919, ranged from signing petitions to launching boycott campaigns; yet it was the "ladies' demonstration" of March 1919 that came to be one of the most prominent symbols of women's national activism (Baron 2005, Bier 2011; Botman 1991; Sʿdawi 1997; Hatem 1995, 2000; Mariscotti 2008; Rizk 2000). Following the exile of male nationalist leaders in March 1919 by the colonial forces, women led protests and rallied for the release of male nationalist leaders and for Egypt's independence.

Much of the literature documenting women's engagement in this revolution utilizes a class lens in analysing the different and often contradictory experiences of female participants. Class, many argue, assigned different roles, dictated different counter-colonial responses and brought different gains for women who participated in the revolution (Baron 2005, Bier 2011; Botman 1991; Sʿdawi 1997; Hatem 1995, 2000; Mariscotti 2008; Rizk 2000).

Elite women including Safia Zaghlul and Huda Shʿrawii led the masses, lower class women participated in street protest with men and rural class women in the countryside provided food and assistance to male activists. The feminist Nawal al-Sa'dawi, a physician by training, observes that "little has been said about the masses of poor women who rushed into the national struggle without counting the cost, and who lost their lives, whereas the lesser contributions of

[18] The Urabi revolt was carried out by Egyptian army officers, who were dissatisfied with the deferential treatment and the promotion of native Egyptians versus the Turkish- speaking Ottoman elite.

aristocratic women leaders have been noisily acclaimed and brought to the forefront "(al-Sa'dawi 1997: 258).

Class also played a role in the colonist chosen method of discipline. Many observers argue that it is not coincidental that female national martyrs came from lower classes. Meanwhile, elite protestors were only punished by keeping them under the glow of the blazing sun for several hours (Badran 1988; al-Sa'dawi 1997). Beside al-Sa'dawi's oeuvre, Ijlal Khalifa's work was central in articulating this argument, particularly in her book: "Al-Haraka al-Nisa'iyya al-Haditha: Qissat al-Mar'a al-'Arabiyya 'ala Ard Misr" [The Modern Women's Movement: The Story of the Arab Woman in the Land of Egypt] (1973). In it, Khalifa notes how class had an impact on women's experiences in the 1919 uprising. "The daughter of the wealthy or aristocratic class", she writes "is the one who participated in the revolution and the adept political work after it". The daughter of the middle and lower classes, however, "is the one who died as a martyr by the hand of colonialism, who felt its humiliation and oppression."

The Framing of Women's Engagement in the 1919 Revolution

The literature on the 1919 uprising highlights two important facets with regards to the framing of women's participation. First, women's activism was placed within a maternalist frame in historical texts and national symbols (Ahmed 1992; Badran 1995; Baron 1997, 2005; Russell 2004). Second, women themselves constructed their activism in the revolution through a maternal discourse (Shafiq 1956; Sha'rawi 1987; Rizk 2000, Golley 2003).[19]

[19] Reading the memoires and interpreting the actions of Egyptian protestors demonstrates their adherence to the socially accepted maternalist framework (Sha'rawi 1981; Ahmed 2010). In signing the 1919 petition, prominent women activists chose to sign and identify themselves in relation to their husbands, fathers or brothers (Ahmed 2010). Even when the post revolutionary regime betrayed women's right, many studies highlight women's active compliance with the maternalist construction of women's rights (See Hatem 1995, 2000; Bier 2011; Rizk 2000; Osman 2010). For instance, the program of the Feminist Union emphasized the need for women's access to

The women-led demonstrations of March 1919 quickly became part of the national memory, but as Baron (2005: 113) observes "the collective memory of this 'iconic moment' fractured along gender lines". For instance, as noted Hafiz Ibrahim —the famous Poet of the Nile— in his poem: "The Ladies' Demonstration", discussed earlier, praises women's participation in the revolution; however his poem concludes by reminding us of women's physical weakness and thereby mocking the British victory because it was a victory over women and not men. Other major work narrating the uprising emphasized women's secondary role in it; they detail how women supported and mobilized their men. The work of the prominent historian Abdel Rahman al-Raf'i is exemplary in this regard. He praised women for their participation in the national uprising, but then, in a footnote, limited the role of women to easing the pain of the poor and the sick.

Motifs of family and motherhood were invoked as well in commemorating women's leadership in the uprising. For instance, as a nod to Safia Zaghlol's heroine role in leading protests, she was designated as 'Um El-masrayeen' [the mother of Egyptians] and her home, the headquarter of protest mobilization, was christened 'Byt Al-Umma' [the house of the nation].

The term domestication of female public bravery, I propose, describes the ways in which women's participation has been framed and celebrated using domestic vocabulary in Egypt. These gendered representations of symbols within nationalist movements have been an important area of study in feminist scholarship (Cusack 2000; Hatem, 2000; McClintock 1993; Yuval Davis 1997). Feminist scholars reveal similarities in the ways in which women served as idealized symbols in revolutionary struggles and how this representation of women shaped their treatment in the new order. The domestication of female public activism serves to contain the

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education and social services and as Hatem (1995:33) points out, focused on enabling middle class women to be better mothers and wives rather than citizens in their own right.

effects of women's public activism and maintain gender hierarchies. Recent work, however, critiques this depiction of women's experiences as an extension of their domestic task in the home to the outside, in the service of the nation (For critique, see: Ahmed 2010; Bier 2011; Elsadda 2006; Hatem 2000:38-39; Osman 2012; Pollard 2005).

This maternal nationalist framing reached its fullest in Egypt in the interwar years with the creation of the image of Egypt as a national mother (Baron 2005:135). The fiction, Baron (2005:135) explains, generated a sense of solidarity and relatedness among people who were otherwise strangers or divided along class, race, ethnic, and religious lines. The "mothers" and "fathers" provided comfort, creating a sense of collective belonging and suggesting that the welfare of the people was in the right hands. Yet assertions that the nation was a family, Pollard (2005) explains, were also meant to insure obedience to the male nationalist leaders and to silence dissent.

These gendered representations of symbols within nationalist movements have been an important area of study in feminist scholarship (Cusack 2000; Hatem 1992; 2000; McClintock 1993; Yuval Davis 1997). Feminist scholars reveal similarities in the ways in which women served as idealized symbols in revolutionary struggles and how this representation of women shaped their outcome in the new order.

In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases,* Cynthia Enloe explicates how masculinity and nationalism have always been parallel discourses. Whether through media projections or literary texts, women were often consigned to representational roles, and men were presented as the real performers in popular portraitures of national struggles (Enloe, 1990: 44). This, I suggest, holds true in the case of Egypt. Several scholars argue that the history of women's representation in

Egypt's nationalist movements indicates a tension between representations of the nation as a woman and representations of women defending the nation with the first prevailing in the national imagery (Baron 2005; Botman 1991; Hatem 2000).

This tension is often projected in the visual representation of national symbols in Egypt. For example, in the statue of the Egyptian nationalist leader Mustafā Kāmil, in Cairo, Egypt, Kāmil is depicted in modern western clothes standing erect, delivering a speech. At the pedestal of the statue is a bronze relief that shows a seated young peasant woman, with head covered but face unveiled, of smaller dimensions than Kāmil. This differential representation confirms Tricia Cusack's critique of the process of nation-building. The nation, Cusack (2000) argues, has been traditionally conceptualized as "Janus-faced"; that is: looking both ways, to the past and to the future.

According to Cusack (2000: 67), women are often the object of the "backward look" that is associated with tradition; meanwhile men are seen to embody the forward-thrusting agency of national progress especially in religious societies. The young veiled peasant woman in Kāmil's statue represents Egypt under British occupation. By this time, the motif of the nation as a woman was popular in Egypt's nationalist memory (Baron and Pursley, 2005: 523). In Anne McClintock's view such practice, while construing women as the symbolic bearers of the nation, denies women any direct relation to national agency (McClintock 1993).

Feminism and Women's Rights Post the Revolution

The traditional depiction of women's experiences within the maternalist and familial frame leaves out feminist meanings and/ or implications that might have arisen as a result of

women's activism in nationalist struggle. Several scholars view the rise of feminist consciousness and activism in Egypt following the 1919 uprising as exemplary of these long term outcomes (Badran 1988; Baron 1997, 2005; Russell 2004). This important body of work seeks to reclaim women's history and experience in Egypt's national struggles. Scholars within this tradition highlight some of the ways in which women fought concurrently as feminists and nationalists (Badran 1988; Baron 1997, 2005; Russell 2004).

Following the 1919 revolution, middle- and upper- class women formed their first formal political organization, the Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC), electing Huda Sha'rawi its president (Badran 1988). Notwithstanding the WWCC's ties to the "patriarchal Wafd," commentators are quick to point out that the WWCC functioned as a space to challenge patriarchal politics and men's domination over policies (Badran 1988; Baron 2005; Russel 2004). For instance, women publicly criticized the male Wafdist leaders for neglecting the WWCC views on the Wafd independence proposal, at the end of the 1920.. It is in this sense that the Egyptian feminist movement has feminized and democratized Egypt's political and public sphere. Beyond Egypt, the democratic effect of women's movement in Middle Eastern societies have been elucidated in a number of important studies (see for example Hatem 2005; Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006; Libal 2008).

Huda Sha'rawi—the first Egyptian feminist and leader of the 1919 revolution— bitterly critiqued the mediocrity of male nationalist leadership. She wrote "[I]n moments of danger when women emerge by their side, men utter no protest. Yet women's great acts and endless sacrifices do not change men's views of women" (Sha`rawi 1987: 131). In an attempt to nudge women away from the public and political sphere, key national figures began to openly critique women's

independent behavior and insistence on their citizenship rights(Badran 1988; Baron 2005; Sha'rawi 1987).

These attempts proved to be counterproductive as they created deeper resentment among nationalist women who again openly criticized their male counterpart in 1922 over the terms of independence., They terms of independence did not address Egypt's relation to Sudan and failed to oust the British troops from Egypt. Badran (1988: 28) narrates how Huda Sha'rawi telegraphed her disapproval to Sa'd Zaghlul and in an open letter to the newspaper Al-Akhbar, and demanded that he step down. She, herself, resigned as president of the WWCC, and with a number of other feminist nationalists established the Egyptian Feminist Union, on the fourth anniversary of the first women's public demonstration, in 16 March 1923 (Badran 1988: 28-29).

Women's expectations were crushed and their demands were further ignored with the denial of women's suffrage. This was a big affront to female nationalists who prided themselves on their contributions to the national cause and their access to power. In fact, many commentators view this development as a turning point for feminist nationalists, who felt betrayed after their participation in the nationalist struggle (Ahmed 1992; Badran 1988; Baron 2005; El Sa'dawi 1997, Sha'rawi 1987). As such, they took their case to the international arena. The Egyptian Feminist Union sent a delegation comprised of Huda Sha'rawi, Nabawiyya Musa, and Saiza Nabarawi to a meeting of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in Rome, in May 1923 (Badran 1988). The nationalist feminists' move to the international arena mimicked that of the male Wafdist leaders' independence strategy. Like the male leaders of the Wafd in 1919, the feminists reached for the Western audience and solidarity (Badran 1988; Baron 2005).

On their return from the IWSA meeting, Huda Sha'rawi and Saiza Nabarawi removed their veils and stepped to a large crowd of cheering women (Badran 1988). Several studies place great emphasis on the significance of this move considering it as "demarking the end of the hareem system—the end of the seclusion of women and the segregation of the sexes—and the beginning of a public, open, organized feminist movement in Egypt" (Badran 1988: 29; See also Bullock 2004; Hijab 1988: 51; Lanfranchi et al. 2012; Sha'rawi 1987; Zuhur 1992:41). Badran (1988) and Baron (2005) extend this argument asserting that the significance of this move lay in giving a real face to female leadership, after their voices were first heard in press half century ago.

Following the victory of the Wafd and Sa'd Zaghlul, feminist activists were further excluded from the political landscape. They were not welcomed to attend the opening ceremony of the new parliament in 1924 and only the wives of ministers and high officials were permitted to attend the opening ceremony (Badran 1988). In Badran's words, it was "a truncated celebration—a celebration of patriarchal reassertion rather than national triumph" (1988:29). As a response, the WWCC and the EFU joined forces and struck against the opening of parliament, proclaiming thirty-two nationalist and feminist demands, including, among other demands, the right to vote (Badran 1988).

Women's experience in the uprising as such contributed to establishing a strong women's movement and a well-developed discourse of women's rights. Their activism, as they confronted the new regime attempted to restate the traditional gender status quo, had a number of important implications. It contributed to politicizing women, connecting them to transnational feminist networks and expanding their activism. For example, Saba Mahmood (2005:153) explains that Zeinab al-Ghazali was able to acclaim a position of leadership in the Muslim Brotherhood during

the 1950s and the 1960s due to her considerable exposure to a well- developed discourse of women's rights, that dates back to the turn of the twentieth century. A discourse, Mahmood stresses: "was crucial to her formation as an activist"(2005:153). Women's participation, notwithstanding the gendered outcomes of the 1919 uprising, had thus carved out new political and public roles for women.

Women and the 1952 Coupe d'état

Unlike the literature on the 1919 national movement, studies on the 1952 coup d'état dedicate scant space to women's experiences at the time of the coup. This is because the coup had been a male-business; it was planned and carried out by the free officers in Egypt's army (Sedra 2011). Women's experiences after the revolution, specifically, the centrality of women in the regime's nationalist discourse has been discussed in great details. The literature draws attention to how the new regime co-opted women′s rights into its nationalist programme and suppressed independent feminist movements (See Abdel Halem 2012; Beir 2003, 2011; Hatem 1995, 2000, 2005; Muhamed 1979; Nelson 1996). Most importantly, recent expansions in the literature examine the ways in which state feminism has constructed the "working women" figure as an expression of the regime′s modernization project (Bier 2003, 2011; Hatem 1992, 1994; Keddie & Baron 1991; Meriwether & Tucker 1999; Russel 2004). This in my view is crucial for understanding the status of women in modern Egypt, since the politics of state sponsored feminism envisaged by the former Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s remained the dominate discourse for women's rights under his predecessors. These policies had weakened women′s movement in Egypt and distanced it from its grass root bases.

The Premises of State Sponsored Feminism

In the early years of Nasser's rule, scholars have noted that the discourse of women's rights was absent from the nationalist agenda. The early nationalist literature such as Nasser's book "The Philosophy of the Revolution" (1954) does not include a mention of women and their rights. Indeed, Laura Bier (2011) notes the absence of the wives of prominent Free Officers from public occasions and views this as mirroring the absence of women from the regime's early agenda. For instance, it was not until the 1956, that Nasser's wife, Tahia Kazim, made an official public appearance welcoming Tito, the former leader of Yugoslavia and his wife. This, several observers note, stands in stark contrast with the visibility of female members of the royal family, who were well known public figures in their own right (Baron 1997; Bier 2011; Russel 2004).

The regime's unconcerned attitude towards gender issues, however, soon shifted, as Gamal Abdel Nasser moved to co-opting women's rights in his nationalist discourse (Abdel Haleem 2012). This co-optation took the form of state sponsored feminism. Women, in Egypt like many Middle Eastern and African societies have historically functioned as the contours of nationalist thoughts and modernization project (Badran 1988; Baron 2005; Sonbol 2005; Sayigh 2007; Terman 2010). Under the Nassarist modernization project, the state adopted a top down approach and implemented legal reforms to advance gender equality. The state, in this sense, adopted a centralist and disciplinary approach to governance in a discursive process that reminds us distinctly of Foucault (1990)'s notions of bio-power (Terman 2010). The most iconographic expressions of the regime's gender politics are the 1956 Constitution, the 1961 Charter for National Action, and the legislative and administrative decisions enacted by the regime to mobilize women to join the workforce.

While the regime had portrayed these legislatures as a leap for women's rights, these legal steps were scrutinized in a number of feminist studies (Abu-Lughod 1998; Al Maaitah, Hadeel Al Maaitah, Hmoud Olaimat, and Muntaha Gharaeibeh 2011; Bier 2011; Hatem 1995, 2000; Russell 2004). Laura Bier in her recent book *Revolutionary Womanhood* (2011) eloquently captures the essence of these discussions and explains the contradictory nature of state sponsored feminism. She rightly explains that "the concept of rights granted to the universal (purportedly un-gendered) citizens coexisted with gender- specific obligations that women (and men) were expected to meet" (Bier 2011:34). That is to say that the gender-neutral rights held by women as citizens coexisted with new, gender specific responsibilities. For instance, Article 19 in the constitution states that the state will facilitate the reconciliation of women′s contribution to the workforce and her obligation within the family (Jumhuriyat Misr 1956:11). Motherhood was thus privileged as the dominant and inclusive basis for women's right within the new nationalist regime.

Furthermore, although the constitution recognized universal suffrage, the procedural law established gender-specific procedures for the registration of voters. Men were automatically registered as voters; in contrast, women had to petition the state to include them in the list of registered voters (Muhammad 1979:73). As such, while the revolution represented a push for women's rights generally, the revolutionary regime prioritized women's social rights as mothers while trivializing and hindering their political rights as citizens (Hatem 1995, 2000; Muhamed 1979). In this sense, women's rights ostensiably incorporated the rights to education and public participation, and excluded the rights to meanginful political and economic particpation.[20]

[20] This is not unique to Egypt, several scholars observed the same policies and inconsistencies in the context of Iran (See Terman 2010; Yeganeh 2010)

Consistent with the state's feminist discourse is the regime's successful move to suppress independent feminist initiatives. The Free Officers, Mervat Hatem explains, associated women's rights with the aristocratic activities of the Feminist Union and the social agendas of the ancient regime which in turn legitimated and necessitated the former's suppression (2000:46). A common strategy was the incarceration of prominent women's right advocates, such as Duriyya Shafiq—the head of Ittihad Bint Al-Nil [the Daughters of the Nile Union] and Inji Aflatun in the 1950's. The conflict was not merely over the agenda of women′s rights or to curb potential challengers and immanent threats. In 1957, Doria Shafiq was put under house arrest after she carried out a hunger strike against Abdel Nasser. Her name was barred from all Egyptian texts and most of her original documents were destroyed. The issue thus is one of control and consolidation; the aim is to consolidate the regime by establishing full control over social groups and weakening their ability to organize.

While most scholars claim that the 1952 revolution marked the end of independent feminism in Egypt, others like Mervat Hatem (2000) and Laura Bier (2011) stress that the politics of gender did not disappear. They have noted the emergence of a younger generation of professionals and intellectuals who gained access to the newly established institutions. Amina Al-Sayed, Bier (2011) highlights, despite being part of the system and working within it, she did not endorse state polices passively. In fact she played an active role in contesting the gendered parameters of Nasser's nationalist project.

Women as the Contour of the Nationalist Project

The developments introduced by the regime were significant, as they changed the landscape of women′s right in Egypt. Given their significance, feminist scholars have turned to interrogate the model of state sponsored feminism with special focus to its discursive and

ideological functions (Abu-Lughod 1998; Ahmed 1992; Bier 2011; Hatem 1994; Hijab 1988; Keddie and Baron 1991; Nelson 1991; Podeh & Winckler 2004). The figure of al-mara' al-'amela [the working women] was central in the regime′s agenda and official discourse. Through a series of legislations and administrative decision the state redefined the category of the working women to encourage their participation in the workforce. The regime constructed the figure as a signifier of gender equality and an evidence of modernity; such claims were refuted by several feminists. In their studies, scholars have interrogated the figure of the working women by examining its official discourse and policy outcomes. Their analysis emphasized the inconsistency and inadequacy of the approach for altering gender inequalities (Abu-Lughod 1998; Bier 2011; Hatem 1995; Keddie & Baron 1991; Russell 2004).

Despite the state rhetoric and legal commitment to facilitate women′s economic participation, the overall number of women in labor force, studies confirm, remained relatively low (Bier 2011; Hatem 1992, 1994; Muhammad 1979). In explaining the discrepancy between the policies and their gender outcome, scholars have examined the ideological function underpinning the policies. According to them, the figure of the working-women was not a genuine effort by the regime to alter gender inequalities; it was rather critical in mapping out the contours of a socialist, post-colonial public sphere (Abu-Lughod 1998; Ahmed 1992; Bier 2011; Hatem 1992, 1994; Russel 2004). The outcomes of the socialist development, specially the participation of unveiled and active women in the public sector, were presented as symbols of the regime's success in transforming Egypt into modern socialist nation. The mythical representation of women as the nation, Bier (2011:16) writes, was replaced by representation of women as symbols of the state and the success of state-driven modernization.

Indeed, some scholars go as far as arguing that model of state sponsored feminism was a way to effectively govern women and reproduce gender hierarchies. Timothy Mitchell (2000:136) argues that the formation of an educated Egyptian motherhood was part of the process whereby the "inaccessible" and "invisible" world of women and family would be rendered visible and thus governable by the institutions of modern power and the state. The backdrop of this critique is the modest outcomes of gender policies. They did not deliver real cultural changes and/or substantial gender equalities. Mervat F. Hatem (1994) explains that the inadequacy of these developments was due to the persistence of gender inequalities in the private realm of the family. The private realm of the family was not the focus, as the promotion of women′s rights was secondary to the consolidation of the regime.

Campaigns encouraging women′s economic participation were accompanied with extensive discussions over how to balance women's duties at work and at home (Hoodfar 1997; Bier 2011; Abu-Lughod 1998; 2005). Exempted from these discussions, I notice, is men's role. These discussions were directed to women only, rarely including men, in fact there were no parallel discussions over men's responsibility to perform domestic labor, or balance work and family commitments. Hoodfar (1997: 106-7) views Nasser's encouragement of women's entry into the labour market as the first "official devaluation" of women's domestic labour. The emphasis on women's responsibility to carry out domestic labor and the exemption of men from these duties contributed to maintaining gender hierarchies and safe guarding men's privileged position in Egyptian society.

Concerns over losing men's privileged position were mirrored in several cultural productions of this era. The complicated and multiple tensions between women's duty to

participate outside of the home and their continued centrality were reflected in the 1960s movies and literature. This is important given the significance of the Egyptian Movie Industry which has a long tradition and a dominant position within the Arab World. Once the Egyptian cinema became nationalized by the Nasser regime, it was perceived as threat by colonial powers in the neighbouring Arab countries. For example, the French colonial power in the Maghreb formed a "special department" on African problems that was "responsible for setting up a production centre in Morocco whose official mission was to oppose the influence of Egyptian cinema" (Salmane, Hartog and Wilson 1976 quoted in Schochat 1983: 22). The Egyptian movie industry, Ella Schochat (1983), the media scholar explains, was influential in propagating culture and national ideas in the society. Given its significance for nation-building in Egypt, the Nasserist regime thus nationalized the industry and "the state had nearly complete control over the different branches of the film industry, which previously had been in private hands" (Schochat 1983: 26).

Common anxieties about women's work were captured in popular movies such as *For Men Only [Lel Regal Fahkat]* (1964)[21] and *My Wife is a General Director [Miraty Modeer 'am]* (1966)[22], to name a few. The producers highlighted some of the common concerns in the society such as: the concern that men will lose their authority as husband as well as concerns over the potential displays of female sexuality in the workplace. The movies, however, played only on these anxieties without providing a diagnosis to these tensions. [23]

[21] The movie tells the story of two young female graduates who disguise as men in order to work as oil engineers at an oil refinery-- strictly a male domain-- in the desert.
[22] The movie shows the troubles associated by women in senior management positions surpassing their husbands.
[23] It is sad to see the same theme produced in recent movies like Taymor and Shafiiqa [Taymor we Shafika]. In the 2007 movie, Shafiqaa, a young ambitious Egyptian woman had to quit her job as minster of environmental affairs to marry Taymoor, a domineering male figure, who manipulates the relationship with no discussion or compromises. I think the movie reflects continuities in cultural and social devaluation of women's work in Egyptian society. It is, arguably, a case in point that the policies of state feminism did not completley alter societial views towards women's right and gender equality.

In fact, such concerns were voiced by male writers and feminist advocates of women's work alike. Latifa al- Zayyat (1966), an active writer and commentator on gender issues, in her occasional column for Hawwa' advised women to leave their femininity at home before descending into the street. Salama Musa —the secular women's right advocate—adopts a stance similar to that of al-Zayat's. In his book "Al Mara Lyst Lu'bat al Rajul" [Woman is Not the Plaything of Man] (1956), Musa lists numerous objects that he felt had no place in the office, such as: cologne, chic dresses, high heels, laughing and raised voices (1956:72-78). Introducing a class perspective, he accuses women who can afford these goods as part of the decadent Egyptian bourgeoisie, whose excesses ran counter to the ethic of socialist economic planning and austerity.

In sum, the complicated and multiple tensions between women's duty to participate outside of the home and their continued centrality were the subject of several nationalist and feminist studies. Analysing the popular discourse that ran parallel to the policies of state sponsored feminism, scholars have concluded that the regime did not work towards eradicating gender equalities, the apprach aimed to modernize gender relations in the public releam to cinstruct the image of a modern societyThis aim was rather critical in mapping out the contours of a socialist, post-colonial public sphere (Bier 2011; Podeh & Winckler 2004; Russel 2004). Women were key to constructing the image of a moden and nationalist society for their important role as the bearer of identity and cultural norms. Across history, women in the Middle East and beyond were used to demarcate cultural differences and their public participation was often linked and viewed as a manifestation of modernity.

Following the Nasserist regime, subsequent regimes adopted the same strategy as a way to polish their international image and strengthen their control over civil society and independent

women's movements. The implication of this full control in conjunction to the cosmetic changes in women's rights distanced the discourse of women's right from its grass root bases and moved it towards the regime in power. These Foucauldian bio-politics of control remained the case in the successive regimes; under Sadat's regime as well as his predecessor Mubarak. The 1980s, the historian Lucia Sorbera (2013) writes, were years when a new generation of women, highly educated and with international networks, appeared on the scene. This generation of feminists, scholars hold, has been crushed between two powers: the secular forces represented by the regime and the religious forces represented by Islamist movement (Fraise 2011; Sholkamy 2012a; Sorbera 2013) On one side, the regime stopped every independent initiative and appropriated "gender issues" under its name (Fraise 2011; Sholkamy 2012a; Sorbera 2013). On the other side, the Islamist opposition has mobilized the lower classes, to which feminism and gender issues are alien in terms of class and culture (Nelson 1991; Zuhur 1992; Meriwether and Tucker 1999; Fraise 2011; Sholkamy 2012a; Sorbera 2013). In this context, Sorbera (2013) argues, in line with earlier research, feminism was perceived by the majority of the population as an elitist movement, and accused of being incapable of producing grassroots activities.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals the tensions involved in documenting, remembering and commemorating women's engagement in political struggles. Scholars have highlighted the ways in which, men, early in revolutions, tend to encourage, to a varying degree, women's nationalist activism and to vocally support women's rights and their struggle for liberations and equal citizenship rights. However, with a return to "normalcy" the figure of the strong, politically

active woman is resented. The case-study based scholarship highlights that male nationalists accept female nationalists' activism where it suites them and under duress. However, as male nationalists came to power, they ignored women's views, deprived women from their citizenship rights, and pushed female activists from the public sphere.

The tension over women's engagement in political struggles is evident as well in the ways in which her heroism is praised and constructed in the collective memory and national commemoration. In this regard, women's political culture has often been excluded from the collective memory or remembered only selectively at key moments when it served some symbolic purpose. Woman as a symbol, Baron (2005:117) critiques, is thought more important than women as historical actors. Memory of women's activism tends to pale in comparison to men and is often constructed using familial and domestic concepts. For instance, the motherist framing has dominated the scholarly and public accounts of women's participation. The relevance is due to its feminine character that does not disturb traditional gender hierarchies (Badran 1988; Baron 1997; 2005; Hatem 1994; Pollard 2005).

Underpinning this argument is the assumption that political and gendered national forces contribute to constructing our collective memory of women's engagement in political struggles. This construction is deliberate as it services certain overt and covert interests.

Carol Marvin and David W. Ingle, in their book "*Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag" (*1999:2-5) explain that the dynamic that embeds heroes and legends in a population's collective memory sheds at least as much light on the commemorators' intentions and needs as on the essence of those commemorated. As national heroines come to represent and reflect the traits of the model female citizen, female nationalists and heroines were

constructed in a way that exhibits not only heroic traits and actions but traditional gender roles as well.

In the same way, women's experience following the 1952 Free Officers' revolution crystallizes the tension between nationalist and women's right discourses in the First Egyptian Republic. The regime's claims to liberate women brought novel forms of equal rights, which were contingent upon gender specific obligations that women were expected to meet as proper national subjects and citizens (Beir 2011:6; Hatem 2000; Nelson 1996). In her study of the role of women in the nation-state, Nira Yuval-David (1990) reminds us that state constructs the citizenship of men and women in terms of their national tasks. The major national task for women in almost all national states is closely related to their biological role in reproduction rather than their ideological role.

In line with this framing, the nationalist discourse in Egypt granted women maternalist citizenship rights[24] while curtailing their political rights. Emancipation of women included rights to education and public participation, but not meaningful political and economic particpation. In many ways this reflected the continued belief that the primary role of women was in the family as mothers. So while the revolutions claimed the status of a new women's rights order, the revolutions in Egypt brought old wine in new bottles.

Despite this seemingly ineluctably disappointing relation between women and political struggles, scholars are quick to point out the liberating consequences of these struggles on women's activism. For instance, scholars cite the growth of feminist movements in Egypt post the 1919 revolution. Notwithstanding the nationalist regime's hostile attitude towards women's

[24] The reference here is for the rights extended to women on the basis of their role as wives and mothers. For instance, the Egyptian state granted women maternity leaves to guarantee their economic equality with men. However, the same effort is not exerted to facilitate their political participation and hence promote gender equality in the political realm.

rights, women's participation in the nationalist struggle provided a strong base of experienced activists, as well as established network ties to internal and international collaborators. Faced with the nationalist regime's resentment to women's rights demands, women worked outside the state structure challenging its policies. Meanwhile, the 1952 Free Officers' revolution brought state feminism which resulted in co-opting women's movement and suppressing independent feminist organizations. Similarly, women's agency was located within the state feminist arrangements that were enacted by the nationalist regime following the 1952 Free Officers' revolution (Bier 2011; Mahmood 2005; Musa 1956; Podeh & Winckler 2004). The the prominent feminist scholar, Judith Butler, attests the possibility of agency can be located within the structures of power (1990:15). In the case of Egypt, the expansion of female professionals brought progressive changes in its own way.

Chapter 2

Activism and Exception:
Media and the Framing of Women's Engagement in the 2011 Egyptian Uprising[25]

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Introduction

In her seminal work *The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media,* Gaye Tuchman (1978) attributes the absence and misrepresentation of women in media to a form of "symbolic annihilation". Media content, Tuchman and several scholars contend, reflects and reinforces power hierarchies including gender-based and/or racial-based schisms (Armstrong and Nelson 2005; Busby 1975; Friedan 1965; Friedman 1977; Janus 1977; Ross 2012; Tuchman, Daniels and Benét 1978). In this chapter I survey the representation of women in media coverage of the 2011 uprising as an exemplar of what Gramsci called "the trenches and fortification" of existing order (Gramsci 1971 cited in Tarrow 2012: 2). This is particularly important given the role of media in constructing the national memory. This survey reveals the continuity in the framing of women's activism in Egypt's political struggles. In Chapter One, I focused on the historical framing of women's engagement in Egypt's political struggles, specifically in the 1919 nationalist revolution and the 1952 coup. In this chapter, I analyse women's experiences in the present, with an eye on the past. My objective is to identify continuities and ruptures in the framing of women's activism in Egypt.

Two central questions animate this chapter. First, in comparison to men, how did the media frame women's engagement in the uprising of 2011? And second, did the image of female participants challenge or perpetuate traditional stereotypes? The data for this chapter draws upon 174 news stories published on the websites of two widely circulated national newspapers: *Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd*, and 224 news stories published on the website of the *NYT* during the 2011 Egyptian uprising.

The Middle East Institute described *Al-Ahram* as being to the Arabic-reading public within its area of distribution, "What The Times [*sic*] is to Englishmen and the New York Times

[*sic*] to Americans"(Middle East Institute). However it has often been accused of being heavy influenced and censored by the Egyptian government. According to the Oxford Business report (2011), *Al-Ahram* had a daily circulation of 1,000,000 daily although a substantial part is sold abroad, mainly in Arab states (Oxford Business 2011). *Al-Ahram* has also subscribers in most of the world's countries, and is often available in the newspaper selections in non-Arabic libraries. The newspaper has a wide coverage of world affairs; its coverage of Egyptian affairs is closely aligned to the official discourse and the government's views. *Al-Wafd,* meanwhile, is the oldest opposition journal in Egypt and is one of the highest circulated papers among those dailies owned by a political party in the country (Allam 2014). During the Egyptian revolution in 2011, Osama Heikal was the editor-in-chief of *Al-Wafd*; Heikal was appointed Egypt's information minister in July 2011.

The stories offer a detailed coverage of the popular uprising between January 25 and February 12, 2011. I carried out a textual analysis of news and commentaries, and read the text through a feminist lens and utilizing discourse analysis. Texts, I maintain, are social actions; their shapes and forms are not random or arbitrary, but are rather determined by social structures and prevalent discourses (Foucault 1980; Van Dijk 1991, 1993, 1997). Media coverage as such disseminates dominant ways of seeing and understanding while simultaneously foreclosing other accounts (Foucault 1972, 1980; Van Dijk 1991, 1997).

This analytical venture is significant as it offers a glimpse into the context and the environment within which women carried out their activism. The survey also draws attention to how women's activism is predominately portrayed in the broader society and presented to the international audience. While for the purpose of this dissertation, the representation of women by the national media is more important to ascertain the general trends and dominant views in Egypt

regarding women's activism, I surveyed the image of women in the *NYT*, an internationally renowned newspaper as well. This is due, in part, to the significance of the international dimension in the 2011 uprising. The uprising did not only garner extensive international coverage and interest, protestors as well were keen on directing their messages to the national and the international audience (See Hamdy and Gomaa 2012; Matar 2012). I do acknowledge that the assumptions and the functions underpinning the image of women are different in the two media spheres, and in this chapter I treat them as such. I utilize the national and Western coverage to delineate the broader local context and international nexus of women's activism.

My objective is not teasing out convergence and divergence between the national and Western coverage. This in my view would run the risk of reducing the many complexities surrounding the representation of women in these different spheres. I also do not treat the coverage as a source for identifying women's collective action frame. Instead, media coverage is utilized in this chapter to shed some light on the dominant context within which women carried out their activism and framed their experience. As such, the national coverage will be treated separately from the Western one. I will also highlight their underpinning assumptions and the dominant motifs that marked the image of women in them.

My point is to provoke critical attention to some of the dominant frames that women negated in framing their experience, and reveal some of the ways in which overt gender stereotypes are embedded in the media representation of women's activism in political struggles. A focus on the image of women in the coverage of the uprising serves these objectives and extends the feminist insight to new cases, namely the Egyptian uprising. This analytical exercise is also significant given the implications of media on the social schisms in society and its centrality in demarcating cultural difference as well. In this regard, the image of women, I

elaborate, corresponds to Egypt's social context and the representational history of women in Western media. This is not to be understood as an attempt to evaluate the papers' coverage, or to gauge their objectivity. Such analysis would require a comparative and/ or longitudinal study, which I do not claim to undertake in this study.

What this chapter does offer, though, is a close examination of the media projection of women's contribution at a key political juncture in Egypt's modern history. Media content, Annabelle Sreberny and Karen Ross (1996) in line with much early research on media effects hold, "frame our understanding of public life, set the agenda of policy issues and influence the political process" (103). This framing, Robert Entman (1993) notes, essentially involves selection and salience. Communicators, Entman (1993) explains, make conscious or unconscious framing judgements by selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicated text. An analysis of media framing of women's activism, as such, illuminates the ways in which gender stereotypes are embedded within and make themselves manifest in text.

Women's Visibility and Representation in National Newspapers

Women in Middle Easter societies, as studies in the subfield of gender and political communication document, are often portrayed in passive roles and secondary to men (Abd al-Majīd 2007; Allam 2010; Sakr 2004, 2007; Sreberny-Mohammadi 1993). The gendered representation of women, however, appears less prevalent in the media coverage of national struggles. It is under times of political struggles, scholars have observed, that women tend to become more active in the public sphere, traditionally occupied by men (Al-Malki, Kaufer and Ishizaki 2012; Giacaman and Johnson 1989; Kaufer and Al-Malki 2009; Skalli 2006, 2011).

Women's engagement in the uprising, as such, was highlighted and acknowledged to a varying degree in the news stories; women were mentioned in 59 percent of *Al-Wafd* coverage compared to 29 percent of *Al-Ahram* coverage. On the whole though, *Al-Wafd* covered the uprising more extensively than did *Al-Ahram*, making up 131 stories of the sample. This is not surprising, given *Al-Ahram*'s close affiliation to the regime, in fact, the newspaper was among the tools used by the former regime to belittle the intensity of demonstrations.

Women, however, were less visible as sources of information compared to men and in 78 percent of the cases where women were quoted; the articles were written or co-written by a female author.[26] Given the history of women's under and misrepresentation in the Egyptian media, these findings suggest the growth of media interest in including women in their coverage at the time of the uprising. In its 2010 media report, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) found that only 27 percent of media content in Egypt centered on women, and 61 percent of these content reinforced gender stereotypes.[27] The GMMP report also noted that women had rarely functioned as experts in news stories in contrast to men who dominated the "expert" categories.

Deploying a critical cultural approach, several scholars have elaborated how these tendencies contribute to framing women as passive in overt and subtle ways (Al-Malaki et. al. 2012: 243). Analysing gender and racial stereotypes in media, Evelyn Alsultany (2012) asserts the importance of examining the ideologies which underlie images and story lines. According to

[26] According to the 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) report, this trend has persisted in Egypt over the past 10 years. In fact, the same tendency, scholars observed, can be ascertained in Western media as well. Studies have showed that female editors use women as their sources more frequently than their male colleagues (Tuchman et al. 1978; Zoch and Turk 1998). Naomi Sakr (2004: 8), a expert in media studies of the Middle East, observes that women's visibility and audibility improves in media content that is produced by women even when female producers are not primarily advocating a feminist agenda.

[27] The underrepresentation of poor rural women, compared to upper-class urban women, has been emphasized in several studies as well (Abu-Lughod 1998a, 1998b, 2005; Allam 2010; Qāsim & Dasūqī 2000; Rizk 1988; Sakr 2004, 2007). While these observations are intriguing, their significance and interpretation are not examined in this study. A detailed coverage of these nuances requires a separate study in fact.

Alsultany (2012: 14) interrogating an image in relation to its narrative context "reveals how it participates in a larger field of meaning." In the next section, I analyze the image of women not merely the visibility of women in the coverage. I am not interested in measuring shifts or changes, I rather find the presence of gender stereotypes intriguing given the active participation of women in the uprising and considering the significance of this key historical juncture in Egypt's modern history.

Visibility and Representation: Coloring the Coverage

Notwithstanding the visibility of women in news stories, this, I hold, is not a sufficient indicator for their overall presence and audibility. What really matters is the image and representation of women in the coverage. In this regard, I critique the occasional reference of Egyptian women among the disadvantaged and powerless in the uprising coverage (Al-Bady, Salah, & Sharaby 2011; Ibrahim 2011 b; Metawea 2011). Rosemarry Ridd, in *Powers of the Powerless* (1986), explains the grounds for locating women among the weak and powerless groups by the media at time of conflicts. Ridd (1986) observes that the Western media tends to interpret women's actions as reproductions of men's struggles or as temporarily meeting a serious crisis situation where even women —and often children— are needed. She suggests that such differential framing may be interpreted as carrying a message that, although conflicts are men's domain, women are allowed to actively support the struggle, and even join in, if the situation is deemed desperate enough.

Under such circumstances deviations from traditional framing may take place, though some basic traditional portrayals are maintained. In the Egyptian uprising, female participants, for instance, were occasionally introduced by their relation to a male family member, as the "daughter of…"; "wife of…" and so forth (Al-Mansi 2011; Al-Bady, Salah and Sharaby 2011;

Ibrahim 2011a, 2011b; Saiid 2011). Although such representations may reflect cultural norms in Egyptian society, they arguably contribute to reinforcing women's image as dependent, particularly if the coverage places great and/or sole emphasis on them. For instance, female participants in one of *Al-Wafd*'s headlines were referenced as ″The Judges and their Wives at the Day of Rage″ (Al-Mansi 2011). This is significant given the role of headlines in shaping the readers' view. Headlines, media scholars observe, are often the only item read by the readers (Russel 2004; Fallah 2005; Van Dijik 1991). They, headlines, can bias the readers' opinion, Van Dijik explicates, because they represent— what in the editor's view— the most important information.

Emphasising the woman's status as a judge's wife and overlooking her motivations, aspirations and even profession shift the central focus away from her. Research in social psychology suggests that such information plays an important function in impression formation and influences judgments of traits (See Wyer and Carlston 1979; Wyer and Strull 1994). The literal and figurative presence of a male figure accompanying women in the uprising, I argue, contributes to undermining the image of an independent active woman expressing political agency (Al-Mansi 2011; Al-Bady et al. 2011; Ibrahim 2011a, b; Saiid 2011). This is further evinced given the absence of women from the expert category in the uprising coverage and the framing of their activism using motifs of femininity and nurturing.

Two common frames, I hold, were utilized by the media in portraying women's engagement in the uprising. These two frames are: the feminine frame and the maternal one. The feminine frame is characterized by a focus on the activists appearance and status, meanwhile the maternal frame portrays women's engagement in the uprising as an extension of the traditional domestic duties associated with motherhood and the practice of caring. In the following section,

the two frames will be discussed in greater details. Despite the different connotations embedded in each frame, they often served the same function. Both framed women's participation as personal stories that appeal to the heart and eye..

The Feminine Frame

The uprising coverage occasionally emphasized the participation of women in demonstrations despite what is perceived as an added difficulty: the fact that they are women and often *beautiful* (Arafa 2011; Ibrahim 2011; Saiid 2011). Among the possible gender-specific risks that threatens females in Egypt's public space —let alone a crowded demonstration— is sexual harassment. Many news stories, in this regard, were fixated on reporting the absence of sexual harassment against female protestors during the 18-day uprising (Al-Shamy 2011a; Al-Mahdy 2011; Shabān 2011).

In one of the stories entitled: *"The Day of Rage unleashes the True Ethics of Egyptians"* published by *Al-Wafd*, the male reporter estimated the number of protestors to be forty-five thousand, five thousand of which, according to the reporter, were females and "despite being mostly *beautiful*, were not harassed" [emphasis added] (Shabāna 2011). The media's excessive attention to females' physical appearance is commonly critiqued in the subfield of gender and political communication. Maria Braden (1996) notes the way in which a woman's political activism is often trivialized by the media by focusing on her physical appearance. By insisting on such details, the reporter deliberately or subconsciously belittled the female protestors' engagement in the uprising. Furthermore, stressing that they "were not harassed", although they were "beautiful" frames the act of sexual harassment as an inevitable result of being female, beautiful, and present in a public space. It also implicitly, I hold, presents female protestors as possible victims.

Appropriating Einat Lachover's analysis, stories about female protestors were thus used "to add color" to the news (2009: 120). They occasionally served as a distraction and a break from reportings of clashes, government statements, and other pieces of hard news. For instance, in one of *Al-Wafd* news stories, the article concluded with a discussion over a women's Facebook group entitled: "I want to marry a Tunisian protestor" (Arafa 2011). The Facebook group, according to the news-story, was designed as a nod to the bravery of Tunisian protestors who toppled the Tunisian regime. The group aimed at mobilizing Egyptian females and males to follow the footsteps of their Tunisian counterparts. The article cited the Egyptian men's critiques of this page and their advice to Egyptian women "to participate in the uprising for the sake of the nation and to focus on the larger national cause instead of merely seeking to get married" (Arafa 2011). The reporter made a passing note to men's version of the Facebook group; he described it, however, as a counter response to the women's group (Arafa 2011).

So while the article briefly highlighted women's engagement, the reporter's choice to extensively cover the women's group, and to detail men's critiques of it is notable and problematic. Echoing Evring Goffman's (1974) original definition of framing, Robert Entman (1993) argues that communicators in media make conscious or unconscious framing judgements. Through the presence or absence of keywords, phrases, stereotypes, sources and sentences, they provide thematically reinforcing clusters of interpretations and judgements (Entman 1993:52). In this sense, while I do acknowledge the significance of including female protestors in the coverage, the approach is inadequate for capturing women's experience in full and deconstructing the legacy of traditional gender stereotypes.

The aforementioned framing, intentionally or unintentionally, contributed in assuaging the effect of their activism in challenging these traditional misrepresentations. It implicitly

framed some women's motivations as self-centred and shallow in comparison to men's claimed selfless and nationalistic sentiment. The coverage of the women's engagement in this particular article reinforces my earlier observation. That is, in several cases, the coverage of female activists and protestors in Egypt functioned in breaking the dry coverage of the uprising and in this particular incident provided a comic relief at the expenses of women's less acknowledged heroism.

Wedding stories at Tahrir square were as well an eye catching and popular topic in media coverage of the uprising; however, they were reported from the perspective of the nationalist-groom (Al-Shamy 2011b; Eman and Nasef 2011; "New wedding ceremonies at Al-Tahrir" 2011). The depiction of the groom in the media coverage of the Egyptian uprising carried great resemblance to Lachover's critique of the "solider- bridegroom" frame (2009:124); a frame evoked by the mass media in Israel to portray the wedding ceremonies amidst the 1967 war. The uprising coverage, similarly, emphasized the husband's determination to carry on with the wedding plans despite the unrest (Al-Shamy 2011b; Eman and Nasef 2011; "New wedding ceremonies at Al-Tahrir" 2011). The new-stories, without an exception, stressed as well on the husband's plan to continue protesting soon after the ceremony (Al-Shamy 2011b; Eman and Nasef 2011; "New wedding ceremonies at Al-Tahrir" 2011). On the contrary, the bride occupied the margins of the news stories; and was rarely framed in an active role.

The Maternal Frame

An equally salient frame in the news stories is the maternal frame. The stories occasionally lauded the mother/wife contribution to the nation by raising sons, encouraging and mobilizing her male relatives and carrying out traditional domestic duties associated with motherhood and the practice of caring (Al-Bady et al. 2011; Abdel Maksood 2011; Koraa Farouk and Ibrahim

2011; “My son is in the square” 2011; “With prudence: Egyptian women can manage the family budget” 2011). I do not view the above mentioned roles of women as passive ones. Women's exercise of agency is not conditioned on the location of her activism. This practice, which I term: the *spatial conditionality of agency*, occasionally reproduce the arbitrary public/private divide. In my view, mothers who chose to stay in their homes during the uprising looking after their young ones, as well as those who prepared food for the protestors, are not less agentic or nationalist than those who protested at the front rows.

What I am critical of, though, is the wailing-mother/wife frame that was occasionally invoked by media (Al-Bady et al. 2011; Abdel-Maksood 2011; Koraa et al. 2011). This frame was used to elaborate and characterize the motivation of some female protestors. In this regard, women's statements and personal experience were included more often than their opinion or expert commentary. They were occasionally quoted as victims and non-experts, meanwhile, men were commonly portrayed as politicians and experts (Al-Bady et al. 2011; Abdel-Maksood 2011; Koraa et al. 2011). In so doing, the media depicted women's participation as personal, particular, and for a self centered cause. Meanwhile, men's engagement was presented as universal and motivated by political, nationalist rather than personal sentiments. The image of women, as such, arguably functioned in attracting the attention of the audience, and did not completely move beyond traditional stereotypes.

To conclude, my analysis of media contents in the two widely circulated national newspapers suggests that traditional motifs of passiveness coexisted along new ones of feminine agency in their coverage of women's participation. By evoking the myth of female passiveness and framing their activism in relation to tropes associated with femininity, the coverage, I suggest, assuaged the effect of women's activism in deconstructing traditional gender

stereotypes. In the following section I turn to highlighting the dominant frames that marked the representation of women in the uprising coverage by a key Western newspaper, that is: the *New York Times.*

Female Protestors in the *New York Times*: New Images and Old Stereotypes

Attention to the place of harem in the colonial portrayal of Arab and Muslim societies has provoked prominent feminist and postcolonial studies; the studies have revealed the patriarchal gaze and the Orientalist premise of colonialism[28] (Said 1978 see also Alloula 1987; Esposito 1998; Esposito and Mogahed 2007; Graham-Brown 1988; Vivian 1999). In *Algeria Unveiled*, Franz Fanon, describes the French colonial project to unveil Algerian women as a project to control the colonialist horizons and destroy its culture (Fanon 1965: 42). Meyda Yegenoglu extends this critique in her foundational book, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998). She argues that images of sexuality in Orientalist discourses are not simply tropes in the representation of non-Western women, they are rather crucial in demarcating cultural differences between Western and Middle Eastern societies (1998).

After all, Orientalism is not just about representations or stereotypes, as post-colonial feminist Lila Abu-Lughod (2001: 105) reminds. Rather, it is about how these representations are linked to the project of on-going Western domination. According to this line of thinking, the fetishisation over the *burqa*, in media, foreign policy and some feminist texts, contributed in projecting the Afghani women as an "object of imperialist rescue". It, thus, further justified the

[28]Several scholars have critiqued Edward Said's analysis of orientalism for not thoroughly probing the relationship between imperialism and gender (see e.g. Abu-Lughod 2002; Miller 1990; Yegenoglu 1998). Notwithstanding such critique, Said's Foucauldian theorization of Orientalism has inspired considerable studies in the subfield of postcolonial feminism, (see e.g Abu-Lughod 2002; Ahmed 1992; Amos and Parmar 1984; Lewis1996; Mabro 1991; Saliba, Allen and Howard 2002; Hoodfar 1997; Mohanty 1984; Spivak 1988; Smeeta 2007; Tucker 1998).

U.S. war on terror in the aftermath of September 11 and beyond (e.g., Ahmed 2012; Jiwani 2005a, 2005b; Mohanty, Riley, and Minnie Bruce 2008; Saliba et. al. 2002: 52; Shirazi 2003).

This critical line of feminist inquiry cannot be attributed solely to the influence of Said's Orientalism (Burke & Prochaska 2008). In explicating the genealogy of Orientalism, Gyan Paraksh (1995: 205) situates Said's work within a larger discursive shift in literary studies, history, and anthropology. The shift, he explains, was animated by post structuralism, feminism, and neo-Marxism. An influential poststructuralist text in this regard has been Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). Analysing the colonialist "othering" of Indian women, Spivak has exposed the ways in which Western feminism, even as it takes an interest in women in the Third World, can reproduce the axioms of imperialism through reinforcing stereotypical imperialist assumptions (Spivak 1985; see also Morris 2010; Young 2004).

A recent manifestation of this relation is evident in the ways in which the war on terror discourse was articulated and circulated. In securing moral justification for the military intervention in Afghanistan, Western governments have relied on the services of several liberal feminists and native informants/Orientalist spokespersons (Abu-Lughod 2002; Ahmed 2012; Dabashi 2006; Mohanty et. al. 2008; Posetti 2007). However in the post-September 11 geopolitical context, these cultural politics have evolved displaying more complexity and ambiguity, especially when compared to the traditional dichotomy of 'us versus them'.

Western governments, critics maintain, have been able to sustain support for the politics of the war on terror beyond 9/11 through distancing themselves from the clash of civilization rhetoric and seemingly embracing a language of diversity and anti-essentialism (Alsultany 2012, 2013; Allison 2013; Bayoumi 2010; Fallah and Nagel 2005). While these representations often

challenge stereotypes, several experts have exposed the ways in which they contribute to a form of "multicultural or post-race illusion" (Alsultany 2012: 21; Allison 2013). A close analysis of these ostensibly positive representations reveals their Orientalist undertone. It explicates their function in solidifying a liberal and cosmopolitan image of the U.S. In essence, they are thus by-products of latent Orientalism expressed in its manifest form.[29]

Threading these perspectives into my textual analysis of the coverage provides a useful tool to understand the discursive construction of Egyptian women in the *NYT* reporting. To reiterate, I am not interested in measuring shifts or changes, I rather utilize media stories to highlight some of the ways in which the broader society framed their participation. These frameworks, I argue, could not totally advance beyond the weight of a profoundly complex representational history of the 'other' in the West, a representation that often results in dehumanizing the 'other'.

In the context of the Middle Eastern 'other', Bessma Momani (2015) emphasises the ways in which Western media coverage of the Middle East contributes to dehumanizing Middle Eastern. She rightly points out to the dominance of the image of the balaclava-clad radical Arab teen in Western media coverage of the region. Less emphasised in the coverage is the positive change among the Arab youth; indeed, images of educated young Arabs, and/or young female Arab entrepreneurs are often relegated in the coverage. Western audience exposed to this unbalanced coverage, Momani argues, lose sight of the actual human beings affected by conflict and focus on numbers, ideologies, and governments instead (Momani 2015).

[29] Said has distinguished latent Orientalism that remains unchanging and unified, from its manifest expression in words, actions, and policy decisions. Manifest Orientalism, Said explains, changes across time and among writers, it is thus able to reflect variation and historical change (Allison 2013; Said 1978; Young 2004). Homi Bhabha, however, is critical of this typology.

This representation, critical Middle Eastern scholars emphasize, is purposeful (Said 1978, see also Alloula 1987; Esposito 1998; Esposito and Mogahed 2007; Graham-Brown 1988; Vivian 1999). Across history and in recent times, non-western women were represented in ways that serve the U.S. foreign policy and interest in the region. My understanding of foreign policy reflects the critiques of Orientalism/Occidentalism and recognises that elite foreign and domestic policy practices are explicable in relation to the creation of state identity (Allison 2013: 667; Hennebry and Momani 2013; Falah 2005; Van Djik 1991).

Locating the Subaltern

The image of the anguished, despairing woman in the coverage of conflicts in the Middle East, Ghazi Falah the cultural theorist notes, has become almost a "stylization" in mainstream Western media (Falah 2005: 307; Wilkins 1995). Likewise, it was frequently present in the *NYT* coverage of the Egyptian uprising, particularly in news stories reporting the spread of crimes and looting. Women were frequently quoted to reveal the distress caused by this state of lawlessness (e.g., NYT, January 31, 2011: A.1, A.6, A.7, and A.19). Men, on the contrary, were depicted protecting their neighbourhoods and taking the matter in their own hands (e.g., NYT, January 29, 2011: A.1; January 30, 2011: A.1; January 31, 2011: A.6, A.7, A.8; February 1, 2011: A.27, February 3, 2011: A.27; February 4, 2011: A.1). This differential representation of women derives from and re-inscribes the myth of female powerlessness. The myth, according to feminist critics, has traditionally shaped Western media representation of women in conflict, and especially its coverage of contentious politics in the Middle East.

Building upon Rana Kabbani's postcolonial critique, I argue that the myth of female powerlessness, or inertness, transposes from the gender codes of Western societies to their international outlook in foreign policy. In her classical text, *Imperial Fictions,* Kabbani (1986:

85) claims that gender stereotypes in Orientalism describe more accurately the West and its oppressive social codes. Kabbani's argument is relevant in understanding the representation of Western nationals who were visiting or residing in Egypt at the time of the uprising. Like their Egyptian counterpart, the women were frequently quoted as anguished, distressed, and "anxious to get out", as they found themselves in a "freaky" and "frightening" situation (NYT, January 31, 2011: A.7). The men accompanying them, however, were portrayed as calm, often taking up the responsibility of securing flight for their families.

By maintaining a certain prescribed notion of femininity—read passivity—in describing Western and non-Western female characters, the *NYT*, I suggest, remained faithful to its role as a "circuit of culture" utilizing Stuart Hall's (1997) terminology. Articulating his view on the role of media, the late cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) contends that: in every society, the media function as circuit of culture. Its representations, Hall explicates, reflect societal and cultural norms as well as instruct us on how to act with respect to our identities.

In a similar manner, Gay Tuchman's research on gender stereotypes in media echoes Hall's theorization of its role. Tuchman (1978) has frequently critiqued the media representation of women, and exposed its role in producing social guidelines for gender and enforcing gender hierarchies in societies. In light of these and other similar critiques, the representation of Western and Arab women as inert can be viewed, in part, as reflecting Western norms of femininity; it is important in regulating the gendered and racial boundaries of acceptability and deviance (Al-Saji 2009; Ortega & Alcoff 2009). It thus conforms to Abu-Lughod's observation of the centrality of women in the long standing cultural polices that link and span the Middle East and the West (2001).

It is also important to note that the coverage has often featured positive portrayals, by highlighting the actions of Egyptian female protestors, Fayeqa Hussein, "who filled a Styrofoam container with rocks" (NYT, February 3, 2011: A.1); or Um Ibrahim Abdel-Mohsin, "who had ferried rocks to the barricades for two days" (NYT, February 5, 2011: A.7).What remains missing, though, is the women's personnel narrative and/or account. Spivak's connotation is useful in postulating the negative implications resulting from overlooking women's account—particularly ordinary, poor ones such as the aforementioned protestors. According to Spivak, the existence of records of the "subject-consciousness of women" is insufficient. It is rather important, she explains, that subaltern women are assigned a position of "enunciation" (1988: 129).

Analysing examples of colonialist othering of Indian women, Spivak identifies the absence of women's account with the planned "epistemic violence" of the imperialist project (1988: 204) [30]. The result, Spivak explains (1988: 289), is an aporia in knowledge— a blind-spot where understanding and knowledge is blocked (Spivak 1985, 1988; see also Morris 2010). Underlying my attention to women's account is a concern over who controls the production of knowledge. This is significant, as in line with Spivak's argument, the narratives of subaltern women, who are often marginalized, offer a detailed picture rather than simplified rhetoric.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) reads intentionality in this symbolic absence of Third World women in the Western academic cycles and its feminist research; the studies, while making reference to women from developing societies, have often overlooked their voice. A similar pattern could be discerned in the uprising coverage. In a number of news stories, the

[30] The violence involves, Spivak explains, the establishing of the native as the self consolidating other, and persists when in postcolonial discourses the subaltern is silenced by both the colonial and indigenous patriarchal power (Spivak 1988: 204).

image of the silent apolitical wife was juxtaposed with her politically active husband (e.g., NYT, February 1, 2011: A.1; February 8, 2011: A.27; February 11, 2011: A.27). Furthermore, the activists' wives were only referenced upon the imprisonment of their husbands and their accounts have been communicated to the media through a male family friend, or a fellow male activist (e.g., NYT, January 30, 2011: A.1; February 8, 2011: A.10). For instance, following the disappearance of Wael Ghoniem—a key figure in the uprising, his friend, Habib Hadad, communicated the message of Ghoniem's wife to the media. This is not, I doubt, due to the difficult situation that the wife was going through or to guarantee her security. Since following Ghoniem's release, Hadad was quoted again describing how the wife was "happy and emotional" (NYT, February 8, 2011: A.10). This pattern, assessed in accordance to Mohanty's insight, contributes to constructing the "Third World difference" (Mohanty 1984: 334). According to the postcolonial theories, the difference between "us" and "them" is what constructs the very essence of the West. The binary construct of the "Western subject" and the "Oriental other" are at the core, Young argues, mutually implicated (1998: 58).

Consequently, through reconstructing "the other" there is possibility of reconstructing the "self" as well. That is, a complete refashioning of the image of the Arab and Muslim women in Western media will inevitably result in revising the image of the West. Appropriating this view to the coverage suggests that the myth of female victimhood and/or passiveness was in part sustained in order to preserve the historical self-image of the West as the savior of inert women in the Middle East. This is particularly relevant considering how the media and governments in Western societies, and beyond were taken back by the unforeseen onset of the uprising and the expeditious unfolding of events. The media struggled in assessing the uprising and its prospects

in bringing about change, as such the need to revise its discourse and old frames remained indefinite.

The Construction of Exception and the Assuagement of Female Activism

While the *NYT* coverage had often evoked traditional stereotypes in framing women's participation in the uprising, it frequently portrayed them as imbued with agency as well. On the face of it, such depiction might seem indicative of a disruption to Orientalist representations of gender in the Middle East. However, it often failed in moving completely beyond the hegemonic modes of essentialism such as the passive female in Middle Eastern societies.

Among the mechanisms frequently used in covering women's participation was framing their activism within what I term the *exceptional activist* figure. The figure denotes the *NYT* framing of female activists as exceptional in some way and thus do not conform to traditional depictions or follow classical representations. Female activists were frequently constructed in the coverage as exceptional by highlighting their privileged socioeconomic status (e.g., NYT, January 30, 2011: A.1; February 9, 2011: A.14), Western roots (e.g., NYT, February 6, 2011: A.12; February 10, 2011: A.1), and/or Western life style (e.g., NYT, February 3, 2011: A.27). The significance of the exceptional activist figure, I suggest, lies in its ability to assuage the effect of women's activism in challenging Orientalist tropes of female victimhood and passiveness in the Middle East.

For instance, by highlighting the dual Western-Egyptian citizenship of some activists, the reporters, intentionally or unintentionally, contributed in promoting a limited representation of women's activism. It suggests that they are more emancipated by their dual citizenship. While I do acknowledge that the inclusion of these activists in the coverage reflects a positive

development, the approach is inadequate for capturing women's experience in full and deconstructing the legacy of old misrepresentations.

A possible source of its limitations is the emphasis on the Western element in introducing a more complex representation of Egyptian women. At the extreme end of critique, it can be denounced as an attempt to rearrange rather than reject the vocabulary of Western supremacy. Especially that the reference to the Western background of an activist was constantly accompanied with a mention of her views, experiences, and direct quotations (e.g., NYT, February 6, 2011: A.12; February 10, 2011: A.1). Several women who did not display such affinity were also quoted; however, the reporters did not observe similar consistency in presenting their views.

My point is not critiquing the reference to some activists' dual citizenship; I rather critique the media consistent attention to grant them a place of elocution in contrast to their Egyptian counterpart. This does not necessarily mean that imperialist impulses underpinned the reporters' approach. In fact, their Western background was often emphasised to validate the women's critique of U.S. foreign policies.

My concern regarding this tendency is over its unintended consequence, such as: indirectly reinforcing the centrality of the West. Justifying the glossing of complexities in the name of gaining quick support for a just cause is, in my view, insufficient in eliminating old misconceptions. The approach may in fact be at risk of privileging and celebrating Western elements over non-Western ones. These risks can be ascertained in the language and structure of argument in the following example.

In a news story discussing the prospects of democracy in Egypt, the reporter described one of his two female interviewees as “Sherine a university professor”. The other woman was

introduced as a friend of the reporter who enjoys "Western tastes that include an occasional glass of whiskey" (NYT, February 3, 2011: A.27). Highlighting her Western taste for alcohol and not her occupation or name, is an unsettling manifestation of Western universalism. While the two women had expressed their guarded optimism towards the future of democracy in Egypt under a possible Muslim Brotherhood rule, their views were introduced differently in the coverage. The reporter, sympathetic to Sherine's view, supplemented her opinion with historical evidence and supporting arguments. In validating Sherine's view, he quoted his Westernized friend expressing a similar view to that of Sherine's. To reiterate, I do not necessarily read intentionality in the reporter's approach, I rather advocate for a more nuanced and complicated approach in representing and supporting non-orthodox views when expressed by non-Western women.

The denouncement of the Western anxiety over Islamists gaining power and the US foreign policies in the Middle East, discussed in the aforementioned example, were often the subject of scrutiny in several news stories as well (e.g.; NYT, February 3, 2011: A.27; February 5, 2011: A.1; February 6, 2011: WK.8, A.10; February 7, 2011: A.23). The ostensibly progressive representation of Islam and women was also evident in the positive depiction of veiled activists (e.g., NYT, January 30, 2011: A.1; February 1, 2011: A.1; February 3, 2011: A.1; February 6, 2011: WK.8; February 8, 2011: A.27). This reconciliation of the veil and agency in media and governmental discourses, Rosa Vasilaki (2011) argues, is located within a complex refashioning of the concept of agency. Subsequently, the representation of Muslim women has moved from the discursive framework of victimisation to one of empowerment. The shift, Katherine Allison (2013) suggests, is not neutral. The emergence of what Allison terms "agential Muslim women" in the U.S. discourse on terrorism have functioned in solidifying the US self-image. The image domestically "confirms liberal pluralism" and internationally "projects

American/universal cosmopolitanism" (2013: 669). Similar dynamics, I demonstrate, can be ascertained in the uprising coverage. The coverage recognized and celebrated the agency of veiled protestors.

In one of the news stories, the reporter saluted the courage of two veiled protestors as they stood "surrounded by thugs" looking "timid and frail" as the thugs "jostled and shouted at them" (NYT, February 3, 2011: A.27). The women explained that they participated in the demonstrations because they "just want what you have" (NYT, February 3, 2011: A.27). The "you" here is in reference to the American reporter. The inclusion of this quotation corresponds to Allison's argument that the successful recognition of the agential Muslim women is often constructed in contrast to the hostility of her society. This serves to confirm "the certainty of the U.S. self" and "its claims to universality" (2013: 668-669).

The contradicting impulses in the representation of women can be understood in light of Evelyn Alsultany's (2012, 2013) argument on the "complex simple mode of representation". By highlighting the exceptionalism of Egyptian female activists and the Western recognition of the agential Muslim women, the *NYT* coverage balanced negative images with positive ones. According to Alsultany, this mode of representation postulates as a "new standard alternative to (and seem a great improvement on) the stock ethnic villains of the past" (2013: 162). Sayres Rudy (2007: 33) expands this even further arguing that the U.S-led war on terror depended upon the denunciation of racism and the adoption of a "progressive view of Islamism". This is because, Alsultany (2013) explains, the production and circulation of positive representations of the other have become more effective than an overt propaganda that demonizes the other, especially in the declaration of war and the passage of racist policies.

By attempting to distance itself from the clash of civilization rhetoric and essentialist views of Muslim and Arab women, the representations produced by the uprising coverage appeared, seemingly, complex. However, as postcolonial theory would confirm, it represents one form of how Orientalism in its manifest form is able to accomodate historical changes and incoporate variations. Furthermore, the coexistence of traditional motifs of passiveness and new ones of agency, from a postcolonial lens, corresponded to the U.S. attempt to juggle its traditional interests and longstanding relations with a regional dictator and the apparent outbreak of democracy that, in rhetoric if not in practice, they had long claimed to cherish (Byman 2012: 289; see also Dalacoura 2012; Williams and Popken 2012).

Conclusion

My analysis of two popular newspapers in Egypt suggests that traditional motifs of passiveness coexisted along new ones of feminine agency in their coverage of the uprising. By evoking the myth of female passiveness and framing women's activism within a feminine framework, the coverage, I suggest, assuaged the effect of women's activism in challenging traditional gender stereotypes. While women's participation was acknowledged to varying degrees in the coverage, the picture became more complex as I analysed the ways in which the media depicted the participants. For instances, female protestors in the coverage were occasionally accompanied by male relatives. This, I hold, portrayed women as dependent on men and in need of protection. The coverage paid excessive attention to the female activists' physical appearance as well, and in several cases belittled their motivations in subtle ways. Men on the contrary, functioned as information sources and/or experts in the news stories and their participation was framed as nationalist, political and selfless.

In the same manner, the modest visibility and audibility of Egyptian women in the *NYT* coverage cannot be read as a sign that diversity was achieved. I do not rule out the potential long term effect of these images in challenging the hegemonic discourse; however I remain sceptical to its immediate influence in deconstructing it. It is, however, important to note that the critiques I present here are not intended to be evaluative; my aim is to open new analytical ventures that are worth further investigation.

My objective was not teasing out convergence and divergence between the national and Western coverage as well. To reiterate, this in my view would run the risk of reducing many complexities surrounding the representations of women in both spheres. I, rather view the myriad of women's representations in both spheres as useful in charting out the local, national and international context of their activism. They also represent some of the dominant frames that women had to negate in framing their experience.

The coverage is utilized in this chapter to shed some light on the many dominant contexts within which women carried out their activism and framed their experience. Notwithstanding the temporal and spatial limitations of my study, it also offers an original analysis of some of the implications of the uprising on media representation of the Middle East. Furthermore, a focus on the Egyptian uprising provides original examples of heterogeneity and regularity in Orientalist and gendered discourses and extends feminist postcolonial insights to new cases.

The significance of this analytical exercise is to expose some of the tensions that women carried out their activism within as well as revealing some of the ways in which power is exercised through media discourses. The chapter as such contributes to situating the experience of women within the boundary of polity. The analysis also explicates the variation and multiplicity involved in the practice of othering and avoids erasing the participation of women as

subject of patriarchy or Orientalism in shaping the discourse. By scrutinizing the power of media discourses in shaping gendered and geopolitical schisms, those made subject to these schisms can find ways to challenge these claims, representations, and stereotypes.

Chapter 3

Trenching Dissent:
Women's Collective Action Frame in the Uprising[31]

[31] An abridged version of this chapter was presented under the title "Trenching Dissent: Women's Collective Action Frame in the Uprising" at the American Political Science Association (APSA) MENA Workshop, Tunisia, June 7-14, 2014.

Introduction

> **Respondent:**....the fact that many Egyptians do not know that the nationalist leader Makram Ebied is Coptic is not a sign of our national unity, it is primarily because our history textbooks did not mention his religion, that is why young generations did not know he is Coptic!
> **Interviewer:** Well, why do you think his religion is not mentioned in history text-books?
> **Respondent:** I do not know. I have just always felt that the national unity discourse is part real but also and for sure is part orchestrated, particularly at times of conflict and political struggles.
> **Interviewer:** Hmmm.
> **Respondent:** We think that for the social fabric to be strong, it needs to be colorless, this myth is deeply ingrained in our collective memory of national struggles, and thus at times of political struggles we all feel a duty to perform within its contours.[32]

The mainstream framing of modern and historical political struggles in Egypt is often constructed around the discourse of national unity. Political struggles are documented as a story of unity and solidarity where religious, class, and gender differences melt with few if any signs of distinction among participants. The example of the Coptic nationalist leader Makram Ebied, a key figure in the country's anti-colonial struggles in 1920s, is often cited as one example of this national unity. This is because, as the story goes, many Egyptians are not aware of his religion.

However, as the above quote suggests, his religion is deliberately eroded from history and collective memory in Egypt, this omission contributes to constructing a 'colorless social fabric'. The success of political struggles is believed to be contingent on staging national unity based on a colorless[33] social fabric, in which differences are not endorsed but rather omitted. This myth is especially influential during political struggles in which participants feel a duty to stage this performance of unity and solidarity and thus communicate power to their opponents.

[32] Interviewee 31. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[33] At times of political struggles, the social fabric, it can be argued, appears colorful in mien yet colorless in content. That is, participants show case that they come from different walks of life and thus the social fabric appears colorful, however the discourse among particpants is often colorless in the sense that the unity of demands is highly emphasized.

My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that women's framing of their participation in the 2011 uprising must be read against this broader public discourse, a discourse that champions 'colorless' framing of collective action.

Evring Goffman, in his classical book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), examined this performative aspect of social interactions in great details. In his book, Goffman described the world as a "stage" on which all social interactions are "staged people prepare backstage". They use the main stage to play roles, perform routines, and confront others while wearing masks.For critical anthropologist Victor Turner, the dramaturgical phase begins when people "exert their wills and unleash their emotions to achieve goals which until that time have remained hidden or may even have been unconscious"(Turner 1977: 120-123). These crises are inherently dramatic as particpants deliberalty perform and show their actions to others; actions thus assume a "performed-for-an-audience" aspect (Turner 1977: 120-123).

Appropriating this perspective, Robert D. Benford and Scott A. Hunt depict social movements as "dramas in which protagonists and antagonists compete to affect audiences' interpretations of power relations in a variety of domains" (Benford and Hunt 1992: 38). In these dramas, participants attempt to replace "a dominant belief system that legitimizes the status quo with an alternative mobilizing belief system that supports collective action for change" (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina 1982: 15). Participants in social movements are thus not "structurally guaranteed" rather they cluster around "collective action frames" (Snow, Worden and Benford 1986; Snow & Benford 1988, 1992; Benford 1993, 1997; Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2004).

At the most basic level, a frame identifies a problem that is social or political in nature, the parties responsible for causing the problem, and a solution for it (Johnston and John Noakes 2005:2; See also Gamson 1975; Snow & Benford 1988, 1992). Frames in the "theatre of

contention," redefine a status quo that was perceived as “unfortunate but perhaps tolerable” to “unjust and immoral” (Tarrow 1998: 132) and thus mobilize participants to join repertoires of contention. This symbolic politics of social movements is, however, paradoxical (Tarrow 2012; Snow & Benford 1992).

The major dilemma of constructing collective action frames is to mediate between inherited symbols that are "familiar", but lead to "passivity" and new ones that are "electrifying," but may be too "unfamiliar" to lead to action (Tarrow 1993: 118). In mitigating this tension, collective action frames in social movements are woven from a blend of "inherited and invented fibres" to garner support and legitimacy for collective action (Tarrow 1993: 118; see also Snow & Benford 1988). Frames are thus culturally and politically embedded, they are the outcome of social interactions broadly as well as the shifting opportunities and constrains at the time of contention.

In this chapter I study women's collective action frame in the social drama of the 2011 episode of contention in Egypt. I approach women's collective action frame as not simply impermeable to external influence, but a response to the inherited cultural materials and historical framings of political struggles. The analysis offered in this chapter highlights some of the factors intrinsic to women's framing that have contributed to ensure that women's collective action frames resonates with bystanders, allies, members of the public, and the media. The resonance of women's collective action frame, I demonstrate, was necessary to facilitate and legitimate their participation in collective action; however, it arguably contributed in part to limiting their rights in the post uprising period.

In carrying out this analysis, I adopt a threefold approach. In the first section, I interrogate women's collective action frame to elucidate its intrinsic features. These features, I

demonstrate, have offered women's collective action frames with the necessassry credibility and resonance. Building upon frame analysis, in the second section I highlight the mainstream framing of women's political participation in Egypt. Frame analysis considers the effect of history, politics and culture on the framing of participation in collective action. I build upon frame analysis to situate women's collective action frame during the uprising within the mainstream historical framing of political struggles and women's activism in Egypt. This framing, I demonstrate, temporally concealed differences and inequalities that had traditionally obscured women′s participation in politics yet limited their rights in the period after the uprising. From a gender perspective, the absence of women-centered demands implies the absence of *conceptual* spaces for women. In these spaces, feminist organizations, unions, and political parties articulate gender concerns, build consciousness-raising networks that could eventually turn into women′s movement.

By offering a gender analysis of these early interactions, the chapter contributes to explaining the nature and implications of their gender dynamics. It recovers women′s voices in the writing of history and opens up new ways of understanding the Egyptian uprising.

Women's Collective Action Frame: The Citizen Frame

Collective action frames emphasise subjective and symbolic aspects of social movements. In an important series of papers, sociologist David Snow and his collaborators build upon Evring Goffman′s (1974) concept of framing, arguing that collective action frames construct meaning for action. In Snow and Benford′s words, a frame is an “interpretive schemata” that simplifies and condenses “the world out there by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one′s present

or past environment" (1992:137). At times of collective action, the frame defines the motivations, grievances and demands of the movement′s members as well as their identity (Gamson 1975; Snow & Benford 1988, 1992; Givan et al. 2010).

They demanded the fall of the regime, and the prosecution of former president Hosni Mubarak and his family. Another demand called for *huriyya* (freedom): freedom participate fully in the political life, freedom to vote in free and fair elections, freedom to express their views and opinions without censorship of the fear of persecution. A third demand was *karama* (dignity) and the end of police abuse, torture, and humiliation..

By adopting the citizen frame, several female protestors stress, the movement at large was able to "garner wider support"[34] and "encourage further mobilization"[35]. This is because, they explained, the frame tapped deep-rooted and widely shared grievances in its *diagnostic* framing of the problems. The diagnostic nature of some frames, James Scott (1992: 224) has argued, explain how a "revolt spreads like 'wildfire' looking like a very organized, coordinated uprising, when in fact, it was not." As thousands came out to protest against the dominant communist party in Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel emphasized the significance of their form of sporadic organization, its energy, and spark . In a question underscoring the significance of their organization, he asked:

> Where did young people who had never known another system get their longing for truth, their love of freedom, their political imagination, their civic courage and civic responsibility? How did their parents, precisely the generation thought to have been lost, join them? How is it possible that so many people immediately understood what to do and that none of them needed any advice or instructions?" (1990)

[34] Interviewee 1. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
[35] Interviewee 12. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.

In the case of Egypt, this is explained in part due to adopting the citizen frame by the different groups who participated in the 2011 collective action. The frame created what Tilly (1997:133) calls "lineaments of durable connection". That is, the citizen frame became the major means through which different and diverse protestors, both men and women, religouis and secular, , built solidarity, expressed unity, demonstrated their challenges and sought external support (Al-Aswany 2012; Al-Nagar and Abu-Dawood 2012; Amin 2012; Hamid 2011; Khalil 2011; Korany & El-Mahdai 2012; Louër 2011). Protestor often pointed out to how different groups adopted the citizen frame regardless of their affiliation and their religouis, political and social leanings. During the 18-day uprising, members of the Muslim Brotherhood, a protestor rightly emphasised, did not demand any "organization-specific demands"[36]. They did not, for example, demand lifting the ban on their political representation—a ban that has been in place for most of the group's 85-year history. Members of the organization joined protestors demanding bread, freedom and social justice like everyone else, my participant added. Writing on the Muslim Brotherhood participation in the 2011 Egyptian uprising in Egypt and their political missteps after the uprising, Eid Mohamed and Bessma Momani (2014) also stress that protestors were not protesting in favor of an Islamic government; they were protesting in favor of the people's right to choose (198).

The frame also created what scholars of social movements term "a movement of movements", as I shall demonstrate in Chapter Five. This is significant, Tilly (1997) holds for communicating power to opponents. It staged, I suggest, a *lineament of diversity*. This diversity was significant, my interviewees confirmed, to showcase the importance of the voiced demands, and their popularity across different sects of society, including women[37].

[36] Interviewee 18.
[37] Interviewee 4. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.

The frame also legitimated and energized women's participation in the uprising. This is because to legitimate collective actions, frames, stress Snow and Benford (1992), need to resonate with the population's cultural predisposition. Snow and Benford define the symbolic resonance of frames as the degree to which a particular frame resonates with cultural norms and familiar concepts (Snow and Benford 1988). Social movement scholars have analysed the concept of frame alignment in order to understand the dynamics that contribute to the survival and resonance of contentious language and frames.

Snow and his associates have devoted great attention to examining the process of "frame alignment". Frame analysis describes the ways by which frames are oriented toward action in particular contexts and fashioned at the intersection between a target population's culture and the movement's own values and goals (Snow & Benford 1992; Tarrow 1998:110-111; Snow et. al. 2004). They emphasize the influence of frame alignment on the movement's success. According to them, an unfamiliar frame can alienate people and thus the movement will fail in gaining popular support. But also a frame that is nothing more than a reflection of the values in its society will not bring major changes to it (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 110; see also Zemlinskaya 2009).

Viewed from this perspective, the absence of gender from women's collective action frame is not a sign of passivity, but part of the process of "frame alignment". By framing their participation around their "Egyptianess", several participants argue, they were able to negotiate their differences with those opposing their participation from a position of power.[38] "We are all

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Interviewee 44. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
Interviewee 46. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 2014.
Interviewee 68. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, November 2014.

[38] Interviewee 4.
Interviewee 5. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
Interviewee 2. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.

citizens of the same polity", a young female protestor, explains: "we share the responsibility of defending it and the right to be there in the square"[39].

Some even argued that introducing a gender explicit frame of participation would have limited women's participation. The absence of gender issues, an activist from Al-Fayoum, a conservative rural town in Egypt, explained was a "blessing in disguise"[40]. That is, it implicitly extended women's rights—that is her right to participate in politics and to occupy the public space[41]. Introducing "gender issues even as a demand would risk opening up debates about the proper gender roles and gender risks, don't you think?"[42] a young female protestor asked me stressing that this is not necessarily what went through her mind then. Indeed, the process of frame alignment is not always easy, clear, or uncontested. Scholars note how different groups in a social movement compete among each other, with media agents, and with state for "cultural supremacy" (Tarrow and Imig 2000:110).

Frames thus need to be built around strong ties, that, Tilly asserts (1997: 133), does much of the work that would normally fall to organization. Constructing a resonant and modular collective action frame was thus particularly significant for the success of the 2011 uprising given the absence of leadership in the uprising (Bamyeh 2012; Clarke 2014; Goldstone 2011). The lack of leadership, Momani and Mohamed (2014) explain, was a natural by-product of the nature and direction of the movement. Movement's participants, they rightly observe, were more focused on participating in democracy than ideology (Momani and Mohamed 2014: 198). In the absence of ideology, leadership and organization, a framing grounded in their rights as citizens and nationals of Egypt, I argue, offered different participants, including women, a source of

[39] Interviewee 5.
[40] Interviewee 81. Author's interview, Al-Fayoum, Egypt, November 2014.
[41] Interviewee 81.
[42] Interviewee 4.

framing that easily aligned and resonated with the population's cultural predisposition and communicated a uniform message to the regime in power.

During the interviews, participants often utilized the same language used in describing nationalist and liberation struggles against colonialism, and they similarly described how the uprising was an attempt to “liberate"[43] Egypt.[44] Unlike colonialism, their enemy was not Western and/ or foreign forces; the enemy they were fighting against was a "local colonist"[45], that is the former corrupt regime of Mubarak. Indeed prior to the uprising, the April 6th movement often mockingly referred to Egypt as the Egyptian Occupied Territories (“Corruption Award [Fassad Award]” 2011). Several protestors described in great detail how the struggle was one aimed at "reclaiming Egypt"[46]. They proudly shared how their experience in the uprising revived their sense of ownership, belonging and loyalty. They contrasted this revived sense of attachment they felt during the uprising to the sense of political apathy that prevailed in the period that preceded it. "I stopped following the news"[47] was a very common confession made by a number of my female participants, describing their political apathy before the uprising.

In emphasising this sense of detachment, a couple of my participants cited the popular song "To Hell with It”[48], in reference to Egypt. The song, they described, exemplifies the general spirit of political despair among the youth at this time before the uprising. The phrase "To Hell with It" was also commonly posted on Facebook profile pictures, and printed on shirts. The song,

[43] Interviewee 56. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
[44] This national sentiment exists at a level deeper than any particular government and that is part of the foundational sentiment in the country.
[45] Interviewee 70. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, November 2014.
[46] Interviewee 9
[47] Interviewee 9. And many others who would explain how they stopped following events on the political landscape, and /or refrained from particpating in elections.
[48] The song is composed and performed by Yasser El-Manhalawi. It can be found at: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=kNwerw_kfNw

one participant explains, "[o]ffered a logo "[49], that is, it captured the anger and resentment that many youth were already feeling. This state was fueled by the sense that the country was lost to the corrupt regime and was held captive by these corrupt forces in power[50]. Protestors in the 2011 uprising thus attempted to liberate their country, but in this context, the liberation struggle was fought against the internal security forces and the government in power.

The emphasise on national unity[51] in framing political struggles in Egypt is also part of the broader negative view towards identity politics and the lack of support for identity based demands in Egypt. Civil society organizations, whether secular, liberal or leftist, have been excessively cautious on issues of personal liberties and gender rights in Egypt. For example the liberals' timidity in avoiding offending Islamists and socially conservative segments of the Egyptian society is not a new stance, an activist explained citing their position in the 2001 Queen Boat controversy in Egypt.[52] Egyptian human rights activists did not condemn the crackdown and arrest of fifty-two gay men on the charge of debauchery, and their subjection to anal probes following the police raid on the Queen Boat in Cairo (Murad 2013) . According to Amr Shalakany (2007:9): "the Egyptian human rights community faced a stark choice: Either defending the Queen 52 and risking being painted supporters of 'sexual deviance' by the viciously homophobic press, or, alternatively, staying clear of the case and risking alienating colleagues from the international human rights community".

[49] Interviewee 49. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 2014.
[50] For a general discussion on political alignation, see: Nachmias, David. 1974. "Modes and Types of Political Alienation." *British Journal of Sociology* 25 (4): 478. Finifter, Ada W. n.d. *Dimensions of Political Alienation; a Multi-Variate Analysis*, 1967. For a discussion on political alienation as a source for political activism see Thompson, Wayne E., and John E. Horton. 1960. "Political Alienation as a Force in Social Action." *Social Forces* 38 (3): 190–95.
[51] Egypt is not exceptional in this regard, national metaphors and discourses have been central in historical and modern struggles around the world.
[52] Interviewee 42. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.

The political apathy of Egyptian human rights groups can be attributed to their fear of being labelled agents of the West and/or anti-Islamic (Awwad 2010; Murad 2013; Shalakany 2007). The liberals' stance could also be the result of the continued relegation of gender, race, and identity politics from the realm of political struggles. Their stance also magnifies, Sara Murad (2013) argues, the undertheorized nature of liberal politics in the Arab world. It points to a need for a more nuanced understanding of the positions of liberals and seculars—not just Islamists—on issues related to gender rights and sexuality.

The unease with which women's rights are viewed and treated at times of struggle is part of the broader skepticism surrounding the "murky terrain of identity politics"[53], as several of my participants reminded me, and how "the business of identity politics is unpopular in Egypt"[54]—as well as in many Arab societies I would add. One of my interviewees claimed that the majority of the population view identity politics as an "American/ Western thing, really"[55] and as other participants added a "colonial strategy"[56] and/ or "a foreign conspiracy"[57] aiming to "divide and conquer"[58]. Indeed, the conventional framing of historical and modern successful political struggles in Egypt was constructed, as already mentioned, around the discourse of national unity, where differences are omitted and the unity of demands and voices is celebrated. In the national imaginary and popular discourse, attaining this national unity has been ingrained as a necessary pre-step for staging a successful political struggle (Baron & Pursley 2005; Badran 1988; Hatem 2000, Pollard 2005).

[53] Interviewee 4.
[54] Interviewee 33. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[55] Interviewee 5.
[56] Interviewee 55. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
[57] Interviewee 62. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
[58] Interviewee 30. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.

For example one of the celebrated symbols of Egypt's struggle against colonialism during the 1920's is the unity between the mosque and the church, described in popular culture and artistic production as the unity between the crescent and the cross, with the crescent symbolising Muslims and the cross symbolizing Copts in Egypt. Attaining this national unity was viewed as one of the success factors in Egypt's nationalist struggle and as significant in ending colonialism (Ebeid 1964; Al-Faqi 1985; Sedra 2011). Introducing group-based demands, whether by women, religious and/or sexual minorities, would ostensibly put this unified image and consequently the movement at large at risk[59]. [60]

The emphasis over solidarity and the concern to present a unified face to the opposition, I argue, is among the trenches and fortification of Egyptian society. Women participating in the political struggles in Egypt would more likely reflect them and root themselves within them. In framing their participation, women framed their activism building upon this cultural reservoir to achieve resonance and modularity. This framing proved useful in facilitating their activism as it concealed gender differences and inequalities that traditional obscured their activism. This is particularly significant in the case of Egypt, where a gender explicit approach to equality and women's rights is weak in public debates and often a subject of mockery in media productions.

The Framing of Women's Political Participation in Egypt

[59] Interviewees 1, 4, 5, 12, 28.

[60] The debate over identity politics in social movements and whether such a focus may often produce movements that are divisive, insular, sectarian is common in social movement research (Gitlin 1995). This is the trenchant critique that Todd Gitlin makes of contemporary American "identity politics" in his book *Twilight of Common Dreams* (1995), a weakness that in this case he does not find in class politics of the past. In contrast though, Benedict Anderson ironically asks, contrasting the many monuments to nationalism with the lack of memorials to social class, can one even imagine "a Tomb of the Unknown Marxist "(1991: 10). That is, while along the course of history individuals and groups have been prepared to sacrifice their lives for their visions of good society which they represented, nationalism, John Schwarzmantel (2008) explains--elaborating Anderson's contention-- has a monopoly on images and constructions of self scarifies and heroism in collective memories.

A gender explicit approach to women's activism —in contentious and /or routine politics— has been less popular in Egyptian society. It, as I shall demonstrate has been often misrepresented by the media and overlooked in popular accounts. This misrepresentation, I argue, has contributed to further situating the discourse of women's activism within the framework of national unity. Among its implication as well, is that female political activists distanced themselves from feminist discourse and from from feminist discourse and from gender-explicit frameworks. By framing their participation around their citizenship, women mitigated tensions surrounding gender, citizenship, and identity that have long shaped and animated the public discourse arround women's political activism.

In several interviews, female activists would start by what I term *a non-feminist disclaimer*. That is they would stress that their activism was "nationalist"[61] and/ or "socialist"[62] inspired in contrast to being "feminist" inspired. Although my letter of initial contact described my project as "examining women's engagement in the uprising with the objective of offering an oral history of women's participation in the 2011 uprising" a number of my interviewees started the interview with a *non-feminist disclaimer*[63]. One participant found it important to convey that she is "not feminist"[64] and that she found the term alienating and limiting to the array of activism that she carries out. Key among the activities she took part in was a campaign against sexual harassment at Tahrir square. Another female interviewee was skeptical about "whether she could be of any help to my research", as she "was not involved in any women's rights organization"[65]. She, in fact, has been involved in a poverty reduction initiative *with special focus on women and*

[61] Interviewee 23. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[62] Interviewee 28. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[63] Interviewee 3. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
Interviewees 4, 6, 23, 28.
Interviewee 18. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[64] Interviewee 28.
[65] Interviewee 23.

young girls and working on a book in which she documents the music and songs performed by housewives in upper Egypt.

The recurrence of this *anti-feminist disclaimer* made me quiet baffled for two reasons. First, many of my interviewees were involved in initiatives and campaigns that were clearly focused on women, yet they distanced themselves from framing these initiatives as women centered. They rather framed it as social, for the bettering of the whole society and not just women. In social movement literature, scholars have examined this framing strategy in great detail. According to them, movements' participants frame their activism within a broader "master frame" to gain wider support and further legitimacy for their actions (Snow & Benford 1988; see also Tarrow 1995; Tilly 2008).

Second, I was confused about why would they perceive my research as fit for strictly the feminist canon given the absence of the "F word"[66], that is the feminist label, from my research description. Later in the interview, I would ask my participants how they felt the label feminist activist was perceived in the Egyptian society. Of my 103 participants, 84 felt that feminist activists were broadly stereotyped and feminist ideologies carried a negative connotation among Egyptians. Some offered a more nuanced response, suggesting that it depended on the recipients' level of education and socioeconomic class[67]. All my participants however felt that the media played a central role in producing stereotypes and misrepresentations of the women's movement in Egypt.

Media in Egypt is among the most influential shaper of the Egyptian “self/selves”, scholars of media and communication in the Middle East have noted (Ibrahim 1982, see also Abu- Lughod 1998; Al-Mahadin 2011; Sakr 2004, 2007; Qasim & Dasuqi 2000). The media and

[66] Interviewee 10. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
[67] Interviewees 14, 15, 20, 21, 39, 46.

its productions, Sonallah Ibrahim (1981) an Egyptian novelist stresses, are central to the citizen's everyday life, both shaping the individual's private identity, and the collective national imagination[68]. Sara Murad (2013) in her study of media representation of Alia El-Mahdi, an Egyptian female activist known for her controversial nude protest actions— argues that the media representation of women's activism transcends contentious media representations of women to reach into the heart of Egyptian and Arab revolutionary citizenship.

Women's rights organizations are often represented by Egyptian media as "elitist organizations"[69], and/or "aristocratic clubs"[70]; its members are often misrepresented as," cappuccino ladies"[71], "vicious females"[72] or "masculine women"[73]. While there is a myriad of media productions that narrate the bravery of male activists and historical political figures, the story of female activists and feminists in Egypt have never made it to the mainstream movie and/or television industry[74].

Several media productions have focused on the life stories of a number of Egyptian female celebrities. In these productions the character's nationalist acts are sometimes highlighted— for example in the media production of the life story of the singer Um Kalthom; and the actress and belly dancer Tahia Karyoka to cite a few. The life stories of Egyptian female

[68] In his 1981 novel, "*Al-Lajna*" (The Committee), he writes that due to the state's preoccupation with diversification, it also diversified its methods of "persuasion." In that book, he wrote, "these [Arab] regimes used to have a sole method of persuasion, which was through imprisonment and torture. Diversification, however, put new methods at their disposal that range from assassination to television and parliaments."
[69] Interviewee 20. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[70] Interviewee 33.
[71] Author's Interview, Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader at the United Nation Development Program/ Middle East Office (UNDP) and the former Country Program Manager at United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
[72] Interviewee 38. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[73] Interviewee 4.
[74] I am unaware of any literature examining the media representation of the women's movement in Egypt, thus I relied on my participants' insights and my knowledge and exposure to Egyptian media.

political activists and women's rights advocates, however, have rarely "made it to the screen"[75]. Their activism, one of my interviewees noted, can be the subject of "a book not a movie"[76].

The absence of female heroines with an explicit gender agenda in media production is situated within the broader misrepresentation of women in Egypt's media (Abu- Lughod 1998; Al-Mahadin 2011; Allam 2010; Sakr 2004, 2007; Qasim & Dasuqi 2000). It is also a manifestation of the "failure and the emptiness"[77] of the top down approach that the ruling regimes in Egypt have adopted in advancing women's rights. While the policies of state feminism in Egypt have produced a number of women-friendly policies and legislations, they however did not alter how society viewed and treated women as reflected in the media portrayal of them (Hatem 2005; Sholkamy 2012a). In an interview with Nahla Abdel-Tawab, regional director of the Population Council[78] in Egypt, Abdel-Tawab explained how achieving gender equality and women's rights requires not only a formal and technical shift in our polices and processes but also a social and normative shift in the Egyptian society. To challenge and change gendered power relations, there need to be change and development in gender relationships and social structures in the family, at work, and at the state level.

Female heroines in political struggles are, however, positively depicted by the media when their activism is framed across nationalist lines. The discourse of women's right to political participation, one protestor stressed, is often celebrated and supported when it is introduced

[75] Interviewee 16.
[76] Interviewee 23.
[77] Interviewee 40. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[78] The Population Council is an international, nonprofit, non-governmental organization. The council conducts biomedical, social science, and public health research in developing countries. Headquartered in New York, the Population Council has 18 offices in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and carries out research in more than 60 countries. The council's office in Egypt has conducted extensive research on youth and women issues. It has published extensive national surveys of young people in Egypt in 1997, 2003 and in the wake of the 2011 uprising. The Egypt office also manages the International Network to Analyze, Communicate, and Transform the Campaign Against FGM/C (INTACT) to advance research on female genital mutilation and facilitate the dissemination and use of research findings.

"subtly ....within the larger discourse of social equality."[79] Women's activism, another protestor confirmed, is most "gracefully" portrayed when it is a "subheading" under nationalism[80]. The significance of this alignment between gender and social equality frames as well as women's political activism and nationalism is further explicated in the following conversation with a media analyst at the Cairo office of an international broadcasting corporation[81]:

> **Respondent:** The image of the *muscled feminist* is not particularly appealing in Egyptian society.
> **Interviewer:** Hmmm…
> **Respondent:** You look quiet skeptical.
> **Interviewer:** Not really, just thinking it through.
> **Respondent:** Consider how the television series *Zaat* is quite a success in Egypt these days. While gender equality and women's activism is one of its underlying themes and objectives, the author intelligently weaved it under the broader frame of social equality and national struggle. They sugar coated it, you can say.
> **Interviewer:** Well *Zaat* was written in 1992, is this...
> **Respondent:** But it was only produced as a television series in 2013, after the uprising.
> **Interviewer:** Yes, but is this still case, that women's rights and activism need to be concealed under the master frame of social equality and nationalism to gain support, even after the uprising.
> **Respondent:** Yes, I believe this was the case at the time of the uprising and remains the case after the uprising.

At the time of the interview in 2013, the television series *a Girl Named Zaat* was being aired in Egypt during the month of Ramadan. The Ramadan series is based on the novel *Zaat*, published in Cairo in 1992. *Zaat* was nominated in 1993 as the most important novel of the year, state institutions, however, did not endorse the decision. A decade later, the novel was awarded Egypt's most prestigious literary award, yet Sonallah Ibrahim, the author, declined the "honor" (Haist 2010). Notwithstanding the high number of Ramadan series, *Zaat* scored the highest rating during that month (BBC Media Action 2013).

[79] Interviewee 43. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[80] Interviewee 45. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[81] Interviewee 29. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.

Zaat is the name of the novel heroine, an allusion to the medieval Arab folk epic of the warrior princess Zaat al- Himma ("the lady of noble intentions"), who performed heroic acts in the Arab-Byzantine wars of the eighth and ninth centuries. The word Zaat also means self in Arabic. The novel is a modern epic in which Zaat, a typical member of the urban middle class, struggles against the adversities of everyday life. The plot starts in 1960s, as Zaat, is forced by her husband to discontinue her studies, and becomes a housewife and the mother of two daughters. By the 1970s and as the cost of living increases, she starts working at a newspaper, in the department of proof-reading and copy-editing — an euphemism for censorship in Egypt's print media. Through her job, Zaat is exposed to the malaise of political life and become politicized. Moreover she is confronted with apolitical women colleagues, who are predominantly disposed to Islamic ideas and dress codes, and who talk about nothing but the banalities of everyday life as mothers and wives while critiquing Zaat's leftist leanings. Her leftist leaning results in her being transferred to the archive, a punishment for being a sympathizer of the former leftist president Gamal Abdel Nasser and displaying antipathy towards Egypt's then liberal president Anwar Al Sadat.

Throughout the novel Zaat performs acts of resistance whenever and wherever possible. She vainly tries to animate the neighbours into undertaking a joint initiative to clean the neighbourhood. Following the birth of the much longed for son, Zaat's husband becomes pious and Zaat dons the veil—all because her husband wishes her to. The care and education of Zaat's son confronts her with the grave social conditions in Egypt. When she finds a can of olives tagged with a false use-before date, she decides to practice her rights and responsibility as a citizen and report the case to the police and health authorities. Supported by her friend Himma, meaning the will in Arabic, she enters the jungle of Egyptian bureaucracy. For all her efforts,

Zaat makes hardly any impression on the worsening living conditions, the decay of public morals, the collapse of state institutions and agencies, and society's drift towards religious fanaticism and political conservatism (Haist 2010).

Mainstream interpretations of *Zaat* do not assign a gender fault line to the novel. Critiques have interpreted *Zaat* as a social commentary that provides keen insights into how Egypt has come to be the way it is today (Johnson-Davies 2010; Haist 2010). Zaat's daily struggles, life experiences and social relationships are juxtaposed against economic crises and social changes in Egyptian society. It highlights ubiquitous corruption in society and state institutions, financial scandals, foreign debt, and gender inequality and human rights violations. Her story is illustrated with extracts from newspapers – headlines, articles, captions, death notices, advertisements – reflecting events and incidents contemporary with her life (Haist 2010).

It is impossible to confirm with certainty that the theme of women's rights is the fault line underlining Sonallah Ibrahim's novel. The central figure in the novel, Zaat, I think, represents Egypt, the nation. The representation of Egypt as a woman is a common cultural image, as noted in Chapter One. It emerged following women's participation in the 1919 uprising and flowered during the Nasserist regime. *Zaat*'s author, Sonallah Ibrahim, is indeed known as a deep sympathizer of Nasser's nationalist regime.

Notwithstanding the absence of gender from a mainstream reading of the novel, my interviewee's gender reading of *Zaat* is however insightful, especially considering the popularity of the series. The popularity of *Zaat* suggests that the figure of the active female citizen is celebrated and "gracefully represented" when her activism and struggle are framed within the nationalist discourse. It is hard to imagine *Zaat*'s series gaining the same popularity if the

"gender equality and sexuality dosage was higher"[82], another participant stressed. The televised reproduction of the novel, she explained, toned down many of Zaat's questions regarding her sexuality and religiosity, although these themes are covered in great details in the original novel.

Women's bodies and sexuality in the Middle East, and elsewhere, are a much contested and debated discursive space (Al-Mahadin 2011; Hafez 2014; Mourad 2013). Salam Al-Mahadin (2011:8) argues that it is the "'ultimate signifier' with a multitude of meanings that spill into various aspects of social, political, religious and economic life". In this sense, women and especially their bodies in the Arab World construct and reflect the social order. The status of her body is a reflection of the moral status of the society. Other female characters in a number of television series aired at the same month with *Zaat* were, unlike Zaat, dressed liberally, had multiple love partners, and viciously ran businesses. I asked my participants why Zaat's agency was carefully displayed, meanwhile in other series aired at the same time, female characters were increasingly portrayed as powerful, even if in a misguided way. One of my participants explained that Zaat resembles the average Egyptian women, "you can relate to her in clothes, home, and profession".[83] Her actions and views, thus, "cannot be too liberal or too deviant" she argued, because Zaat is a role model, and role models need to be carefully constructed and represented.

Meanwhile, the liberal female characters in other series are clearly not a representation of the average Egyptian women; their exceptionality is underscored and stressed in every single detail in the story. "You can thus play with this character," another participant attests, she is not "a potential role model, thus you can assign her extreme actions, extreme views, an extreme liberal dress code and exceptionally powerful personality even if in a twisted way". Furthermore

[82] Interviewee 32. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, August 2013.
[83] Interviewee 28.

the story line of these seemingly powerful women evolves in such way that the audience end up "pitying some, despising others, but never adopting them as role model"[84].

Seen as such women's false expression of liberation and agency —in their liberal way of dressing and their multiple sexual relations all of which clashes with the predominant customs and traditions in Egypt— is a reflection of the malaise in Egyptian society, rather than a manifestation of the powerful female citizen in Egyptian society. Writing on the ideal forms of citizenship Lisa Rofel (2007) explains, "Citizenship, or belonging, is not merely a political attribute but also a process in which culture becomes a relevant category of affinity," adding "Sex is a critical site where normalizations of cultural citizenship are being reformulated" (94-95). Appropriating Rofel's argument, the careful construction of Zaat's female agency and the framing of her activism along nationalist line can thus be read as an attempt to articulate a certain image for the ideal female citizen. This image is integral to the process of constructing a genderedcollective.

Given the important role of media in framing public discourse in Egypt, the media misrepresentation of women's movement in Egypt, I suggest, contributed in part to the framing of women's political activism. Gender explicit approaches to women's rights and political participation have been often belittled in media production and public discourse. The life story of feminist activists, as well, "hasnot made to the podium of media commemoration"[85].

In mitigating these tensions involved in women's activism and political participation, women have tapped on the legacy of the nationalist discourse in Egypt in framing their participation. This nationalist discourse does not explicitly include gender issues and women's rights in its framing of collective action. The supremacy of this nationalist discourse in Egypt

[84] Interviewee 30.
[85] Interviewee 45.

should also be situated within the unpopularity of identity politics in Egypt and the association of women's rights agenda with the agenda of the regime as well as Western/ foreign pressures. It, thus, comes as no surprise that a gender-explicit frame to women's participation did not resonate with female protestors let alone the wider movement. The absence of gender from the framing of women's participation is thus the function of the political and cultural landscape in Egypt. Notwithstanding the impact of this framing on the success of the uprising, this framing, I argue in the following section, had its own implication on limiting women's rights in the post-uprising period.

Women's Only Spaces: Friends of the Square

As noted, scholars within the tradition of collective action framing argue that an unfamiliar frame can alienate people and thus the movement will fail in gaining popular support (Snow & Benford 1992; Tarrow 1998:100; Snow et. al. 2004). A frame that is nothing more than reflection of the values in its society cannot also bring major changes to it (Tarrow 2007: 110; see also Zemlinskaya 2009).

Several social movements′ scholars have extended this argument to consider how women had fared in the socialist regimes of Latin America in the aftermath of revolutions (Chinchilla 1994; Fisher 1993; Kuumba 2001; Noonan 1995). The influence of women′s pre-transition frames in constraining and/or facilitating their demands for equality in the new nationalist states became soon the foci of numerous feminist studies in 1980s and 1990s. Within this tradition, scholars have observed that women whose pre-transition frame incorporated gender equality achieve more gains under new democratic regimes (Jaquette 1973; Kampwirth 2002; Noonan 1995; Reif 1986).

Pre-transition frames, scholars noted, can also constrain the success of later movements and limit women′s rights. In Latin America, female protestors appropriated the authoritarian regime's discourse of the pious women and selfless mother in framing their political participation and struggle for democratic reform (Alvarez 1999; Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet 2002; Ray & Korteweg 1999). This framing, however, constrained women's activism in the period post the uprising. The new political actors used women's feminine framing to justify women's exclusion from the public space and to encourage female activists to return to the private sphere (Chinchilla 1994; Fisher 1993).

Within these studies, feminists have also observed that women achieve more gains if their collective action frames are broadly accepted by the public but also aligned with feminist demands (Alvarez 1999; Chinchilla 1994; Fisher 1993; Noonan 1995). The incorporation of gender in women′s collective action frame benefited their organizations and in some cases produced strong women′s movement in post transition periods (Adams 2002; Baldez 2002; Molyneux 1985; Noonan 1995). This is because, women′s only spaces—also dubbed women′s free spaces (Evans 1986), and prefigurative groups (Polletta 1997)—are tolerated in movements that incorporate gender in their frames more than the ones that gloss it under nationalist or liberation discourses.

The presence of 'conceptual' and 'social' women′s only spaces in ongoing movements, Sara Evans (1986) stressed explaining her then nascent term, is important to challenge gender inequalities. Other scholars also note the importance of these spaces in prefiguring “the society the movement is seeking to build” (Evans and Boyte 1986; Polletta 1997:11; Taylor 1989). Evans and Boyte (1986:102) attest that the presence of “women′s only spaces” in the Southern civil rights movement gave rise to the 1970s radical feminism in the U.S. They explain how:

"within the broader social space of the movement, women found a specifically female social space in which to discuss their experiences, share insights, and group strength as they worked in the office or met on the margins of big meetings" (Evans & Boyte 1986:102; see also Allen 1970).

It is important to note that women′s spaces in ongoing movements are not necessarily feminist spaces— in the Western liberal sense, that is, women do not necessarily join them to achieve gender equality. The narrative of individual and collective liberty, post-colonial feminists hold, does not exhaust the desires of women in these spaces (Abu- Lughod 1990; Ahmed 2012; Mahmood 2005; Nouraie-Simone 2005). Free spaces do not ascribe certain agenda on women; they are what their members make of them.

For instance, women′s spaces within a revolutionary movement could differ between urban and rural sites. This is in part because women's oppression, several feminists note, is multicausal and mediated through a variety of different structures, mechanisms, and levels which may vary considerably across space and time (Molyneux 1985; Mahmood 2005; Nouraie-Simone 2005). I do not intend to tease out these differences in my study; I rather argue that the absence of conceptual women′s only spaces at the time of the Egyptian uprising contributed, in part, to limiting their rights.

This is because, in social movements, women's spaces, several analysts have observed, offer women a safe haven to articulate greater consciousness of what makes and keeps them marginal and garner greater confidence in their ability (Evans 1980, 1997; Gamson 1975; Polletta 1997). In her study of women′s only spaces in the Southern civil rights movement, Francisca Polletta (1997) describes how in these free spaces, women, feminist organizations, NGOs, unions, and political parties articulate gender concerns, and build the networks and

consciousness-raising groups that eventually turned into a women′s movement. In the context of the 2011 Egyptian uprising, participants argue that while there have been 'physical' women's only spaces for female participants, gender issues were not discussed in these spaces. As such, there was no real 'conceptual space' to garner gender-based coalitions and awareness.

In the case of Egypt, the young female participants, Ghada Lotfy—director at the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights — attests "did not want to disrupt the unity"[86] that characterised the uprising. In fact, for quite some time following the uprising there has been a "juncture between the old waves of women's right groups in Egypt and young female activists"[87], Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader at the United Nation Development Program/ Middle East Office (UNDP) and the former Country Program Manager at United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), described. It is worth noting though that this juncture did not last long, Azza Soliman— founder of the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA)—reminded me[88]. This is evident as well in the number of women's rights groups and initiatives carried out by young activists and the collaborative projects put forward by older and newer waves of women's rights advocates in Egypt.

This is significant as Charles Tilly (1975) concludes from his study of a century long conflict in Europe that it was not mobilization that produced reform. Reform was rather the result of realignments among the new political actors and the governing coalition. In the context of Blacks and Hispanics struggle for equality in the United States urban politics, Browning and his collaborators argue, as well, that participation in protest was not sufficient to introduce reforms

[86] Author's Interview, Ghada Lotfy, director at the Egyptian Centre of Women's Rights (ECW), Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[87] Author's Interview, Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader at the United Nation Development Program/ Middle East Office (UNDP) and the former Country Program Manager at United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
[88] Author's Interview, Azza Soliman, founder of the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA), Cairo, Egypt, November 2014.

and advancement in the status of minority groups (Browning, Marshal and Tabb 1984). Reforms were the result of a widening in the political opportunity structure, mobilization, elections, and political realignments (Browning et al. 1984).

Sidney Tarrow and his collaborators, in a similar vein, argue that political change occurred, not through protests, or clashes between old and new paradigms in Western Europe and North America during the 1960s and 1970s (Tarrow 2012, See also Tarrow 1995, 1996; McAdam et al 2001). It occurred through the competition between parties, unions, interest groups and movements, through reform coalitions and through the absorption of at least part of the protestors within the party system after mobilization ended.

My point is not that since the absence of gender from women's collective action frame limit the effectiveness of women's only spaces then gender inequality will inevitably follow contention. As I have already argued, the non-immediate and mediated outcome of participation in contention is significant regardless of the success or failure of the cycle of protest. Through their participation in these episodes, new female activists are trained, develop a repertoire of actions. These activists could then form new movements and might engage with parties and interest groups after the episode of contention is over.

My analysis of women's only spaces is intended to highlight how the revolutionary moment might have contributed to the current gender order in Egypt. Thus, I do not claim to offer an exhaustive explanation to account for gender inequality in Egypt, following the uprising. I argue that the absence of conceptual women's only spaces, notwithstanding the physical presence of women's only spaces, limited women's rights but did not erode their activism in the post-uprising period. This analysis is significant as it does not only complement but also better completes the discussion of women's collective action frame in Egypt's uprising. Any discussion

on women's framing of their participation would be incomplete without thinking— or at least imagining— the implications of this framing on their rights and activism in the period post the uprising. Despite the limitation of my analysis, this analytical model can be explored across additional cases and in combination with other factors. The analysis is also meant to encourage future research on the meaning and significance of the growth in women's activism following the uprising.

Conclusion

> "...I have just always felt that *the national unity talk is part real but also and for sure is part orchestrated, particularly at times of conflict and political struggles* (italics mine)."[89]

The chapter opens up with the aforementioned statement as it captures the dynamics that shaped women's collective action frame in the 2011 uprising. While the comment was made in the context of Copts' engagement in political struggles in Egypt, it can be appropriated to the different groups in Egyptian society. In the case of women, adopting the citizen frame was, I suggest, in part a strategic response by women to the supremacy of the historical national discourse in Egypt. A discourse that has traditionally emphasised the importance of national unity in staging political struggles and in communicating power to opponents. This framing has facilitated their participation at the times of the uprising, but it also, arguably, limited their rights in the period post the uprising.

The nationalist discourse, I demonstrate, has framed Egypt's historical political struggles and women's political activism in the national imaginary and in popular accounts—as documented by the media and popular representations of these struggles. In contrast, a gender

[89] Interviewee 31.

explicit approach to women's activism and rights has often been the subject of critique and belittling in Egyptian society. Several female activists and women's rights organizations, I observe, have thus distanced themselves from a feminist explicit label. In the absence of an alternative strong discourse for women's activism, the nationalist discourse represented one of the important cultural reservoirs that activists reflected on in the framing of their participation. This framing was modular and it resonated with the cultural pre-disposition of the Egyptian society. It thus dignified and energized collective action and mobilization among women and broadly participants in the 2011 uprising.

My analysis suggests that the absence of gender secured women′s participation in the uprising yet contributed to limiting their rights post-uprising. Espousing a political process approach, I argue that female protestors oriented their messages in relation to the existent opportunities and constrains. This framing temporally concealed differences and inequalities that had traditionally obscured women′s participation in politics. However from a feminist perspective, the absence of women-centered demands implies the absence of conceptual spaces for women. In these spaces, feminist organizations, unions, and political parties articulate gender concerns, and also build gender awarness groups and networks that could eventually turn into a broader women′s movement.

By offering a gender analysis of these early interactions, the chapter contributes to explaining the nature and implications of their gender dynamics. The resulting analysis is temporally and spatially bounded. However, my focus on identifying the frame′s limits and opportunities when analysing it can be extended to other cases.

The significance of my approach to women's collective frame is that it reclaims women's agency and situates women's participation within the contentious and conventional politics in

Egypt. Female protestors, I demonstrate, operated on the boundaries of constituted politics, embedded power relations, and established institutions. They are in this sense “strangers at the gates" (Tarrow 2012:13), demanding changes and reforms but also accommodating inherited understandings and ways of doing things. Their repertoires and collective action frames are best read in light of their relation to conventional and contentious political discourses in Egypt.

Chapter 4

An Epicentre of Solidarity:
Women's Recollections of the 18-day Uprising

Introduction

"It was Utopian"[90]

"It was perfect"[91]

"The place was sacred in certain ways"[92]

"The best of Egyptian came out in those 18 days"[93]

"Tahrir[94] seemed fenced off the rest of the society"[95]

"The square embodied its own norms and values"[96]

"The air in the square felt different. Outside the Tahrir square, people were fighting over an ailing country. Inside the square, protestors were celebrating the birth of a new Egypt"[97]

Powerfully eloquent and evocative and of an almost baroque sensuality, protestors described in great pride the aura of equality that characterized the 2011 uprising. Tahrir square, the epic centre of protests was remembered as a place of solidarity and equality. The solidarity and equality that marked the 18-day uprising was still for all of my female interviewees a source of pride, notwithstanding their "agony"[98] over the current status of women's right after the uprising. Women's subjective experience of solidarity and equality during these protests, I argue, contributed to the absence of gender from their collective action framing.

Frame analysts describe framing as an emergent and context-specific social process (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1977: 6; Gamson 1995:90; Snow and Benford 1988:199). It is

[90] Interviewee 23.
[91] Interviewee 53. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 2014.
[92] Interviewee 9. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
[93] Author's Interview, Mokhtar Amin --grandson of the late Qasim Amin the renowned Egyptian reformer and women's rights advocate, Cairo, Egypt, November, 2014.
[94] The reference here is to Tahrir Square, the epic center of the January 25th demonstrations in Egypt that led to the ousting of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in 2011.
[95] Interviewee 18.
[96] Interviewee 35. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[97] Interviewee 18.
[98] Interviewee 45.

guided by the existing public discourse and social culture (Gamson 1988*:* 221– 22; Gamson 1992*:*135–36; McAdam et al. 2001). In this chapter, I expand the contours of framing theory to consider the influence of women's lived experience and their relations and interactions with other participants during contention on their collective action frame. In framing their participation, women embraced the nationalist cultural reservoir to negotiate tensions surrounding female political activism and to garner support for the wider movement in 2011. This reflexivity in framing their participation, I argue, is not static. Participants, I hold, are involved in ongoing framing articulation. They not only engage with the wider cultural predisposition in framing their participation but also continue to take cues from the surrounding environment during times of political struggles.

The solidarity and equality that marked the 18-day uprising were however short lived, they were "liminal" borrowing Victor Turner's —the critical anthropologist— concept. Inequalities soon surfaced on the political and social landscape. In his book, *Drama*, *Fields*, *and Metaphors,* Turner (1974: 37-41) describes times of changes as "liminal phases" in which social differences are temporally and spatially suspended and during which participants experience "communitas", that is fellowship and group's unexpected joy in sharing common experiences. Viewing the 2011 episode of contention as liminal allows us to reconcile women's accounts regarding the solidarity they felt during the Egyptian uprising with the resurgence of inequalities and harassment following the uprising.

In carrying out this analysis, I adopt a threefold approach. In the first section, I build upon my interviewees' accounts to elucidate the aura of solidarity that characterized demonstrations. Building upon framing literature, I demonstrate the influence of women's subjective experience during protests on their framing of collective action. I analyse this phase

au courant —aware— that the nature of interactions during this episode was conjunctural. Notwithstanding that this experience was a conjuncture, I emphasise its significance on how women understood and presented their activism and engagement. I reconcile the true yet conjunctural features of this episode by appropriating Victor Turner's contribution to the study of contention dramas and by surveying the absence of sexual harassment during the 18 days. I conclude by presenting the absence of sexual harassment as a case study to emphasize the widespread of gender equality in the initial episode of contention.

The analysis presented in this chapter is significant as it acknowledges that women's collective action frame was not merely a deliberate formulation in response to the legitimacy of the dominant framing of political struggles and women's political participation in Egypt. While accounting for these factors has provided women's collective action frames with credibility and resonance, women, I argue, also continued to take cues from the surrounding environment during the uprising.

Tahrir Square: An Epicentre of Solidarity

Frame analysts describe framing as an emergent and context-specific social process (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1977: 6; W. Gamson 1995:90; Snow and Benford 1988:199). It is guided —and arguably bounded— by the larger political culture or public discourse within which contention develops (Gamson 1988*:* 221– 22; Gamson 1992*:*135–36). Framing theorists argue that frames in collective action is "situationally sensitive" (Hunt, Benford and Snow 192; Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002; Tarrow 1992: 190-191; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1997: 6; W. Gamson 1995: 90; Snow and Benford 1988). That is, it occurs in relations to interactive processes, and the dynamics of collective action and the broader cycles of protest

(Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994: 191–92; Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002; Staggenborg 2001; Steinberg 1999).

In his study of the Berkeley free speech movement, Max Heirich (1965) convincingly demonstrates how a true reconstruction of reality took place during the "spiral of conflict" that developed at the time. The process of framing participation, thus, does not come to an end once individuals, for whatever reason, decide to join in collective action. The existent culture at the time of the uprising in this regard also has a dialectical character, both empowering and constraining the production and resonance of frames among participants.

Snow and other framing theorists "suggest that successful framing depends upon the extent to which frames resonate with the potential understandings of adherents and sympathizers. This, in turn, is a function of their narrative fidelity, experiential commensurability, and empirical credibility" (Steinberg 1999; see also: Snow and Benford 1988: 208; see also Gamson 1988*:*167–68; Gamson 1992*:*135). Frame resonance, I thus argue, is a function of the participants' perceived reality as well as their lived experiences at the time of collective action.

Framing is thus a dynamic process tied to not only a particular socio-historical context but also, I argue, to the immediate context of collective action and to the participants' subjective experience in it. Hegemonic ideological packages and dominant public discourses have an influence on how participants frame their engagement, but this impact, Bert Klanderman (1992: 85) argues, is always filtered through social interaction. Writing on the social construction of framing, Klandermans (1992: 78) attests that "a crucial characteristic of this processes of signifying, interpreting and constructing meaning: that is, they are *social,* they take place in interaction among individuals." These interactions are "the vehicle" of this process of framing

collective action; they are, thus, integral to the formation of consensus and solidarity in social movements (Klandermans 1992: 78).

In the case of the Egyptian uprising, the widespread solidarity and equality that have characterized the interactions among participants, I argue, explains in part why women actively framed their participation utilizing the citizen frame. Women's subjective experience of solidarity and equality contributed to framing their participation around their identity as "Egyptian", they participated and organized as the citizens rather the women of Egypt.

This frame was viewed by women as "sufficient to incorporate gender equality rights"[99] and to "sit comfortably in the post-uprising agenda"[100]. The absence of gender from the framing of women's participation is not to be viewed as a sign of coercion that is women were coerced and silenced by their fellow men, discouraged from voicing their rights and demands. This claim was refuted by all of my participants during the interviews. Female protestors instead stressed that they were treated equally—in roles, leadership positions and interactions— during the 2011 demonstrations.

Furthermore, the coercion argument holds no ground, I maintain, especially in the absence of clear leadership during the 18-day uprising (Abaza 2014; Al Aswany 2012; Al Nagar and Abu Dawood 2012; Amin 2012; Bameyah 2012; Bayat 2013; Korany & El-Mahdai 2012; Said 2014). During the uprising, there was no leadership to channel people's demands and/ or to sway women away from voicing their demands. Indeed, social movement scholars observe how organizers and grass root organizations can use times of contention to deliberately create consensus and solidarity among groups in social movements. However, even when organizers did not "exploit" collective actions to form consensus, scholars highlight, such actions had a

[99] Interviewee 19. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[100] Interviewee 32.

tremendous influence on participants' political actions and participation (Klandermans 1992; see also Tarrow 1998; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

Writing on the Independent Self-governing Labour Union "Solidarity" movement in Poland, Tarrow (1998: 121) describes how the very symbol of the movement, that is: Solidarity or *Solidarność* was a product of their struggle. Indeed, the designer of the *Solidarność* symbol later wrote:

> I saw how Solidarity appeared among the people, how a social movement was being born. I chose the word [Solidarnosc] because it best described what was happening to people. The concept came out of the similarity to people in the dense crowds leaning on one another—that was characteristic of the crowds in front of the gate [of the Lenin Shipyard] (Quoted in Laba 1990: 133).

Incorporating participants' subjective experience during contention is thus integral to understanding what actors meant by their actions and how their experience might figure in framing their resistance. After all, "it is in struggle that people discover which values they share, as well as what divides them, and learn to frame their appeals around the former and paper over the latter" (Tarrow 1998: 122).

A less emphasised and much under theorised aspect of this episode in the uprising is the participants' focus on the present and the implication of this focus on their framing of collective action. This focus on the present, I hold, does have an influence on participants' framing. Unlike political parties, for instance, participants in social movements experience a sense of immediacy, urgency in action, where their actions are largely a response to the events. Writing on this immediacy and urgency experienced in social movements, Laõdi argues that the temporal experience of networks in social movements is one where the future is not allowed to determine the present. This refusal to allow the future to determine the present is central to activists'

rejection of the idea of a programme and to their refusal to construct social models of future society—much to the frustration of many commentators.

The refusal of representation, the temporality of the present and the culture of immediacy are all features that were much present in the 18-day uprising. This produced a sense of urgency where actions were constructed in terms of street spectacles rather than a carful process of interest's articulation. In her unpublished dissertation: *The Concept of Body in Political Theory: A Case Study in the Conceptualization of the Self during the Egyptian Uprising*[101], Marriam Mekheimar (2013:129) captures this sentiment describing how, "participants gathered around a common dream, they did not gather around common interests "[102]. That is participants united over the dream to oust the former president Hosni Mubarak. They did not necessary articulate a vision of the future of the society and how the political system would be organized post-Mubarak. Indeed, many of the women and the youth I interviewed described how the hope among protestors was to institute democracy, a word that they however used interchangeably with justice, equality and even economic welfare.

A constant theme in my interviews with activists was how "there was little discussion of a long term plan"[103]; "there was little talk about how the future will look like,"[104] or "how the political system in Egypt will be organized and arranged"[105]. The absence of these discussions has contributed to maintaining the harmony among protestors as it concealed their different interests and different visions. A debate over these different interests and visions in the court of

[101] Unpublished dissertation. Original in Arabic, translation provided by the researcher.
[102] Original in Arabic, translation provided by the researcher.
[103] Interviewee 58. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
[104] Interviewee 47. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 2014.
[105] Interviewee 43.

public opinion would have disrupted "the aura of consensus" that marked discussions in the square.

Another common theme in my interviews was the equality that marked the 18-day uprising (See also Nunns and Idle 2011; Rizzo, Anne Price and Meyer 2012). This was still for all of my female participants a source of pride, notwithstanding their "agony"[106] over the current status of women's right after the uprising. They described with great enthusiasm how the people seemed to have transgressed their social, class and religious differences during protests. The powerful and potentially equalizing power found in crowds has been the subject of sociological and psychological research. It has been captured elegantly and dimensionally by sociologist and Nobel laurite Elias Canetti in his 1960 book *Crowds and Power*.

Canetti departs from early representations of crowd by theorists Gustave Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde and others who—had a fearful backward glance at the French Revolution. In this case a crowd is inherently irrational and dangerous. In contrast to this early representation of crowds, Canetti conceptualizes crowds in far more positive light. In unpacking the dynamics of crowd, Canetti emphasises that in a crowd, "all are equal; no distinctions count, not even that of sex." (1960: 15). He adds that equality within crowd is:

> ...absolute and indisputable and never questioned by the crowd itself. It is of fundamental importance and one might even define a crowd as a state of absolute equality. A head is a head, an arm is an arm, and differences between individual heads and arms are irrelevant. It is for the sake of this equality that people become a crowd and they need to overlook anything which might detract from it. All demands for justice and all theories of equality ultimately derive their energy from the actual experience of equality familiar to anyone who has been part of a crowd (Canetti 1960: 29).

This strong emphasis on equality in crowds was a familiar theme in my interviews with female protestors who participated in the Egyptian uprising. For instance, in describing the crowd during

[106] Interviewee 45.

protests one participant attested that "Women dressing in Louis Vuitton sat beside the vegetable vendors; both shared the same rationales, logic, and interpreted the events in similar fashion"[107].

Others were particularly impressed by the religious tolerance, where conservative men "donning their beard" were chatting and sitting beside non-veiled female protestors[108]. One of my participants recounted a conversation between her and a conservative Salafi young man at Tahrir square, "He told me: 'Sorry if this will sound offensive but your morals are high I would have never thought so'"[109]. Women who do not don the veil are commonly stereotyped by some conservative Salafi Muslims as lacking piety and morals. She remembered jokingly responding "and your sense of humor is great, I would have never thought so"[110]. Religiously conservative men are commonly stereotyped as strict lacking any sense of humor.

In addition to my participants' accounts, national and international media, studies as well as scholars and analysts have hailed the equality and solidarity among participants (Al Aswany 2012; Al Nagar and Abu Dawood 2012; Amin 2012; Frederiksen 2011; Korany & El-Mahdai 2012). Esraa Abdel Fattah, an Egyptian human rights activist, blogger, co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, described how: "During the protests at Tahrir Square, women were organising, demonstrating, and calling for [the president Hosni] Mubarak's ousting (sic). Many revealed their deep appreciation and respect for women as partners" (The National 2012). Esraa, however, contrasted this to the post uprising strong backlash on women's rights and its implication on fading hopes for gender equality.

A similar sentiment was echoed in my interview with Dana, project coordinator at Women and Memory Forum (WMF). A women's based organization, the forum is composed of a

[107] Interviewee 12.
[108] Interviewee 38.
[109] Interviewee 29.
[110] Interviewee 29.

group of women academics, researchers and activists concerned with the negative representations and perceptions of Arab women in the cultural sphere. Through researching and documenting the role of women in history and contemporary Arab societies, the forum aims to promote gender-sensitive approaches to historical and cultural analyses of the Arab world. Among the projects carried out at the forum are developing an archive of Egyptian women's stories and accounts in the January 2011 uprising. Female protestors interviewed as part of the archival project, Dana, the project coordinator emphasized, described the early anti-government demonstrations at Tahrir Square "with great emotion and amazement"[111]. Some of them, she adds "even described it as their first taste of what gender equality and women's rights felt like"[112].

Sharing her collection of uprising photos and images, one of my participants, a photographer and director, recounts with great pride the feeling of solidarity and equality among male and female protestors. She, however, drew my attention to the media and the public preoccupation with using Western symbols of solidarity such as the shoulder to shoulder metaphor. She notes that for some women "shoulder to shoulder was not always the norm", she laughingly adds, "in fact the guy would apologize if his shoulder mistakenly touched yours"[113]. For instance, she recounts how male protestors would shout "'make room for women' to avoid physically protesting shoulder to shoulder"[114]. Her note made me go through her pictures again this time with an eye to locating the absence or presence of the shoulder to shoulder images.

[111] Author's Interview, Dana, Project coordinator at Women and Memory Forum (WMF), Cairo, Egypt, November 2014.
[112] Author's Interview, Dana, Project coordinator at Women and Memory Forum (WMF), Cairo, Egypt, November 2014.
[113] Interviewee 22. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[114] Interviewee 22.

What stood out of her notes and my survey of her collection is that notwithstanding the dominance of "shoulder to shoulder" as a metaphor as well as in the images of the uprising, a careful unpacking of this frame reveals its limitations. That is, the frame potentially excludes the experience of some women, specifically religiously conservative ones, who strictly observe gender segregation. I am aware that this reading could be viewed as a strict and /or a narrow literal interpretation of a seemingly innocent symbolic metaphor. My objective of sharing my participants' critique is to highlight how capturing the experience of some groups of women requires reorienting the language used to describe solidarity and our understanding of its manifestations. This is one of the examples of the complexity and diversity of the experience of women in the uprising. It goes to show how uncontested and seemingly innocent symbols and frames can be alienating as well as contested in different context. In this case the presence of solidarity and equality among participants is not the subject of contestation, the subject of contestation is how they experienced it and how they described it.

For instance, some protestors took pride in how they participated at the front lines battling and fighting security forces— that is taking a direct combatant role. Others limited their participation to caring roles—as in taking care of the wounded and preparing food and shelters for protestors. Both group talked with great pride about their contribution and most importantly both stressed that they have chosen their role. That is, they insisted that the division of labour between men and women while largely present was largely "sporadic"[115] (See also Snow & Moss 2014).

Indeed, participants would often emphasize how the opinions and views of women were respected and followed. For example, one participant recounted, "The idea of breaking

[115] Interviewee 5.

pavements and using their stones to deter the security forces was proposed by a woman. An older lady"[116]. Equality thus was in part a function and a reflection of the freedom of choice that participants experienced and enjoyed during demonstrations. Women were equal to men because they were not boxed and limited to certain roles, women felt equal because "they chose how to participate"[117]. By shedding the light on these specifities in women's experience and—what could be considered by a Western observer— contradictions and/or inconsistencies, a more nuanced understanding of their experience and its influence is put forward.

To conclude, using symbols and discourses familiar to the target population contributed to constructing frames that resonate with potential constituents and adherents (Steinberg 1999 ; See also: Gamson 1988: 222, 242; Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 3). Frames, however, are not free floaters once constructed; their resonance can either be shifted or enhanced by developments on the ground. For instance, three weeks after the uprising, women went back the street, this time, vocally demanding women's rights as the seeds of gender inequalities began to surface at the political and public landscape.

On March 8, 2011, the day commencing the International Women's Day in Egypt, women marched back to the streets explicitly demanding gender equality and better representation in the transitional period. By then, it was evident that women's rights were being pushed to the side. For instance, the transitional government did not include any female representation and women's rights did not figure squarely in the political debates. Activists however were beaten and harassed by mobs of angry men who chased them out of the Tahrir Square, the square that three weeks ago was considered the epic centre of solidarity (Hatem 2011). In order to understand and

[116] Interviewee 7. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
[117] Interviewee 40.

explain this dramatic shift, in the following section I build upon Victor Turner's work on symbolic and interpretive anthropology.

Liminal Solidarity

Turner's concepts of liminality and communitas are significant to account for the solidarity and unity that marked the 18-day uprising and how this state influenced in part women's collective action frame. Turner's work on liminality draws from the French anthropologist Arnold Van-Gennep (1873-1957), specifically his triadic model of the Rite of Passage (1960). Van-Gennep described the process of shifting from one social status to another in three stages: disengagement stage, liminal stage and post-liminal or reunion stage (Van-Gennep 1960). Inspired by the 1960's social movements, Turner took an interest is the phase of liminality, the second phase of Van Gennep's model. The word liminality originated from the Latin word limen (Westerveld 2010). It means threshold, and closely associated with the word limes, meaning limit (Westerveld 2010). In anthropology, a liminal phase refers to the transitional state of being "betwext" and "in between", in this phase particpants step out of their identity and social differences (Turner 1969; 1984; Cultural studies 2012). In this phase they are on the verge of personal or social transformation (Turner 1969; 1984; Cultural Studies 2012). In his book, *Drama*, *Fields*, *and Metaphors,* Turner (1974: 37-41) describes these times as "liminal phases" in which social differences are temporally and spatially suspended. They emerge during times of political transformation and come to an end as reintegration or schism takes places among the different sides in conflict (Turner 1969).

Beside factors such as the shifting opportunities and constrains, the popular slogans of the uprising, that is: "*Al-Shaab Yoreed Isqat Al-Nezam*"[The people want to overthrow the regime],"*Id Wahda*" [One hand] and "*Ntgama'*"[Gather] I argue, reflect this liminal phase (Al

Aswany 2012; Al Nagar and Abu Dawood 2012; Amin 2012; Korany & El-Mahdai 2012). The slogan captures the absence of categorical identities; it symbolically assigned participants a "prima materia" status (Turner 1974: 49) and appropriating Plato's notion, a status of "androgyny"(Plato 1971). That is, there was no further distinction or stratification based on class, gender or religion for who the people were under these slogans.

Sharing the details of her participation, one of my interviewees— a member of the now banned Muslim Brotherhood Organization— described how she had already joined protests before the organization mobilized its members[118]. "My friend" she explained, "called me in the morning of January 26th and encouraged me to join protests, not because I am a sister, but because I am an Egyptian, from the people not the Brotherhood ". A similar sentiment was expressed in my interview with a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood[119] group. She described her response to a "comrade"[120] from the brotherhood when he "commanded" her not to join the January 25th protest, "I told him: Look brother", she describes:

> I am not joining because of police brutality towards the organization or to personally avenge for the humiliation I suffered at their hands when they arrested me in the Brotherhood 2001 protest. I am joining because I want to reclaim my country and my rights and my family rights as citizens of this country...because the ministry of Social Solidarity has been brutal to my family, denying us my father's full pension and thus forcing my mother to clean homes in her 70's". [121]

In fact, "Join because you are an Egyptian" became a significant mobilizing slogan over the internet and on social media pages few days into the uprising (We Are Khaled Saiid), it "put iron in the soul of protestors"[122], according to one female protestor. Most importantly, it served in

[118] Interviewee 8. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
[119] Female members of the Muslim Brotherhood group often referred to themselves as the Sisterhood.
[120] Interviewee 11. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
[121] Interviewee 11.
[122] Interviewee 12.

glossing over social, political and religious differences among participants. That is, it—in part— contributed to raising among protestors a sense of "communitas"— borrowing Turner's concept.

According to Turner (1969, 1974), liminality brings about a state of "communitas". In the literary sense, communitas—a Latin noun— commonly refers either to an unstructured community in which people are equal, or to the very spirit of community. Edith Turner recenlty build upon and expanded the concept defining communitas as "inspired fellowship, a group's unexpected joy in sharing common experiences", the "sense felt by a group when their life together takes on full meaning" (Turner 2012). Turner shows how communitas is a driving force in history as it operates personally, in religion, in revolution, and in all domains of human life (Turner 2012). It is grounded in lived events, and may occur as the climax to a process that takes people to new structures.

In *The Forest of Symbols*, Victor Turner (1967) defines communitas as a relatively structure-less society that is based on relations of equality and solidarity. In media and participants' accounts, Tahrir square was described using quasi-communtas features. The square, several female protestors described, seemed "fenced off the rest of the society"[123], it embodied "its own norms and values"[124], it was "utopian-like"[125] , "perfect"[126] and a "sacred place in certain ways"[127]. In her unpublished dissertation, Mariam Mekheimar, describes Tahrir Square during the 18 days as evolving into a "self-sufficient republic" (2013: 129). Protestors, she illustrates, "organized spaces for eating, others for sleeping, the square even had its own hospital and its own prison"[128](Mekheimer 2013: 129). A salient feature that is often cited in media and

[123] Interviewee 18.
[124] Interviewee 35.
[125] Interviewee 23.
[126] Interviewee 53.
[127] Interviewee 9.
[128] Original in Arabic, translation provided by researcher.

by protestors as a significant feature of this sacred and communitas like character of the square is the absence of sexual harassment during the 18 days.

The Absence of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is an epidemic, a constant social problem that many women experience in public spaces on daily bases in the Egyptian society. A 2013 survey conducted by the United Nation for Women reported that 99.3% of women in Egypt have experienced sexual harassment in their life at least once (UN Women 2013). In fact, women in Egyptian society adopt a more 'tolerant' definition of sexual harassment compared to their Arab and Middle Eastern counterparts. In recent study conducted by Dignity without Borders initiative, Egyptian women defined sexual harassment as physical and overlooked the verbal aspect of it; meanwhile their Tunisian counterpart included any form of "cat call" in their definition (Dignity Without Borders 2013). This is in my opinion, a signifier of how epidemic the problem of sexual harassment is in Egypt and how women became accustomed to verbal harassment.

In fact the Arabic word "*taharush*", which means "harassment", was only adopted in the context of sexual assault in the last decade (Al Jazeera 2013)[129]. It was commonly called 'flirtation' [*'mo'aksa'*], one of my participants reminded me, a volunteer with Operation Anti Sexual Harassment.[130] Operation Anti Sexual Harassment (OpAntiSH), [*Quwwa Ded Al-Taharosh*], is an activist group based in Cairo, Egypt. The group is known for intervening in sexual assaults by mobs in Cairo's Tahrir Square during protests; they also run hotlines and document cases of harassment. Answering back to the harrsser is widely considered inappropriate, it can, in some instances, provoke a violent reaction. For instance, when in 2012,

[129] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/08/201381494941573782.html
[130] Interviewee 28.

16-year-old Eman Mostafa spat at the man who groped her breasts, her attacker shot her dead (Al-Jazeera 2013)[131].

During the 2011 uprising, however, no incident of sexual harassment was reported. In fact the absence of sexual harassment from the uprising came to dignify the uprising in the media coverage of it. Female protestors confirmed that they were "respected"[132] and "dignified"[133]. In an interview with one of the organizers of the first *human chain* against sexual harassment in Egypt, the activist confirmed that "the street was ours for few days"[134]. The spirit of communtas however is liminal, spatially and temporally limited as Turner highlights. Sexual harassment, for instance, did not disappear during the time of the uprising; it disappeared from the Tahrir square, the epic center of protests only. Outside the square, women were still being harassed.

One of the protestors described how "you need not step so far from the square before all the ridiculousness starts"[135]. By ridiculousness, she was referring to the verbal harassing comments made by some men. Another protestor described how she "would be cat-called while waiting for a cab at Talat Harb"[136]. She explained, "so not far away from the square as you can tell"[137]. This spatial divide between inside the square and outside the square is further ensued by the following conversation with one of the protestors[138]:

> **Respondent:** We joined protests as a group, me and a group of my friends. We wanted to be more vocal and louder so I went and I bought a big drum, similar to the Ultras drum. I would use the drum at the Tahrir square to create a rhythm and make our slogans more vocal.
> **Interviewer:** Interesting, were you mocked though? It is quiet uncommon to see a female drumming at a public space in Egypt!

[131] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/08/201381494941573782.html
[132] Interviewee 24. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[133] Interviewee 29.
[134] Interviewee 23.
[135] Interviewee 3.
[136] Interviewee 10.
[137] Interviewee 10.
[138] Interviewee 26. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.

> **Respondent:** I would say that I was being mocked and ridiculed outside of the square while I am on my way to the protests just for carrying a drum! But once I entered the square, people were so friendly and encouraging and I felt... I didn't feel strange; it didn't feel awkward drumming there.

The social and gender norms in Egypt were not altered in the whole society as such, gender inequality remained intact outside the square, but seemingly not within the communtas in the square. Furthermore, the communtas-like features of the square were as well conjunctural. Following the 18-day uprising, the Tahrir square that represented the epicentre of solidarity and equality became the epicentre of sexual harassment.

Understanding women's experience through the lens of Turner's concepts of communitas and liminality is significant as it offers an explanation that does not omit the obvious and the most recurrent assertion made by my female participants. The most recurrent assertion made by my interviewees is that: They felt equal to men and were treated equally at demonstrations during the 2011 uprising. The concept of liminality, furthermore, captures the limitation and temporality of this state of communitas as liminal phases are temporally and spatially limited (Turner 1969; 1974). They emerge during times of political transformation and come to an end as reintegration or schism takes places among the different sides in conflict (Turner 1969). Viewing this episode of contention as liminal allows us to reconcile women's accounts regarding the solidarity they felt during the uprising with the resurgence of inequalities and harassment following the uprising, right after Mubarak's resignation.

Among the popular explanations for the "vicious return of sexual harassment"[139] is that the participants in demonstrations were not the same. Protestors during the 18-day uprising came from a different social class, namely middle and upper middle social classes, meanwhile

[139] Interviewee 42.

following the uprising it was the "poor"[140] and "illiterate"[141] who stayed at the square. This explanation notwithstanding its popularity in scholarly and popular accounts did not resonate with many of my participants. A number of participants explained how patriarchal social norms are quiet prevalent among the middle and upper social classes in Egypt. One cited the documentary *Virginties* as an example of how patriarchy is deeply rooted in our society notwithstanding your level of education and/or wealth. [142] In the documentary *Virginties* the director examines young men's view regarding monogamy; he reveals how men are not likely to marry their girlfriends whom they have slept with before marriage. My interviewee described the director's shock and how he ended his friendship with many of his male friends, whom he has interviewed as part of his project, for their "patriarchal double standard views".

Other participants believed that protestors "were carrying their coffin"[143]— an expression in Egypt denoting being close to death— in such moments, one protestor explained "you fear God and remember after-life punishment"[144]. A number of my participants, however, did not agree with this religious reading as there were "relaxed moments"[145] during the uprising in which "we sat there and just chatted"[146], and "women's opinions were not belittled then"[147].

What I term the *equal partner argument*, however, was the most salient among my participants. Some protestors believed that sexual harassment was absent, because at times of

[140] Interviewee 21. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
Interviewee 34. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[141] Interviewee 19.
Interviewee 48. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 2014.
[142] Interviewee 23.
[143] Interviewee 18.
Interviewee 20.
[144] Interviewee 30.
[145] Interviewee 28.
[146] Interviewee 28.
[147] Interviewee 28.

danger, women fought "shoulder to shoulder with men"[148], at the "front line of fire"[149] and were thus respected and dignified by their male counterparts and treated by them as equals "not minors in need of protection"[150].

Those who advocated the "equal partner" explanation were very critical of "male anti-harassment chains"[151]. Following the spread of sexual harassment in demonstrations after the 18-day uprising, several male protestors would form male-chains surrounding female protestors to protect them during demonstrations. Some female protestors described this practice as "counterproductive"[152], as well as reproducing "gender hierarchies"[153] and "the patriarchal norms of the alpha male"[154]. It conditions women's political participation on the presence of a man to protect her and introduces a limited private space for women within a supposedly open public space. One of my participants stressed that[155]:

> I should freely protest, like I did during the 18 days, without being harassed. If I am harassed, you should join me in punishing the harasser and kicking them out of our protests. Limiting my participation within a circle is still a form of constraint, instead of opening up public spaces we are creating closed off spaces for women's participation. With all due respect to the efforts of these men, this practice creates limits on women's participation and defeats its purpose. It communicates a message that notwithstanding women's presence in a supposedly open public space, her participation will remain limited and fenced off by a circle.

Another protestor mocked the practice asking: "Do we need to move surrounded by a bubble in every public space?"[156]

In-depth research on the phenomena of sexual harassment in Egypt, such as the studies done by Nazra for Feminist Studies see the resurgence of sexual harassment as an attempt to

[148] Interviewee 32.
[149] Interviewee 17. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.
[150] Interviewee 6. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2012.
[151] Interviewee 41. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[152] Interviewee 37. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[153] Interviewee 39. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
[154] Interviewee 35.
[155] Interviewee 9.
[156] Interviewee 12.

exclude women from the political and public space and to break the movement as a whole (See also Rizo et al. 2012) . The name of the group "Nazra", means the gaze, in line with its name, the group aims to direct the society's gaze to women's rights and gender issues. Through knowledge production, and documentation, strategic litigation, networking and advocacy for gender issues, the organization works towards building an Egyptian feminist movement, believing that feminism and gender are political and social issues. Building upon their extensive interviews with survivors of sexual assaults, they concluded that the process is a "deliberate"[157] and "organized effort"[158] carried out on behalf of some political sects in the society to exclude women from participating in the public sphere and to break the will of their male counterparts (NAZRA 2012[159], NAZRA 2013[160]).

In an unpublished report on sexual harassment, researchers at Nazra, El-Nadeem Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and the New Women Organization compiled the testimonies of 28 survivors of collective sexual assault and harassment that took place on the vicinity of Tahrir Square between 2011- 2013. The testimonies describe how women were being groped by tens of men, and how the sexual assaults included raping women using knives[161]. The pattern is all the same in the 28 testimonies; 2 circules form, one surrounding the victim and assulting her and the other fence the groups and push off anyone who might try to help the victim. The victim is unable to tell who is helping and who is assaulting, one survivor describes: "I didn't know who was trying to help and who wasn't. Others said they were helping but really just trying to get in the first row, getting a piece of the cake. Others were actually helping but it

[157] Original in Arabic. Translation provided by the researcher.
[158] Original in Arabic. Translation provided by the researcher.
[159] See study by Cairo-based NAZRA feminist group: http://nazra.org/node/115
[160] Nazra, (2013), "Testimonies of Sexual Harassment Survivors", unpublished study by Cairo-based Nazra feminist group.
[161] Ghada Lotfy, director at the Egyptian Centre of Women's Rights (ECW) also described in our interview cases where victims had to be hospitalized for a bleeding womb because of being raped by knives.

was impossible to know who."[162] In the same report, another survivor illustrates: "they were not using sexual phrases as you would expect, some kept repeating you are like my sister do not worry but these were the same people pulling my pants!"[163]

Indeed, a volunteer at the OpAntiSH explained how the operation had to change their rescue plans by assigning female rather than male volunteers to rescue and intervene in operations[164]. As part of the intervention and rescue force, female volunteers stepped in mob assaults and tried to rescue the victim. This is because, another volunteer at the OpAntiSH explained "at this point the victim is very suspicious of any man"[165].The level of violence involved as well, Salma El-Nakash, director of Women's Political Participation program at Nazra describes, is often extreme[166]. Ghada Lotfy, director at the Egyptian Centre of Women's Rights (ECW) attested adding that some survivors "were raped with knives"[167]. She added that by analysing the way the crimes of sexual assaults were committed it became clear that they were orchestrated.

This view that the post-uprising assaults on women were orchestrated has been echoed by NGOs leaders and even state officials, and it was a constant theme in my interviews. The rationale is that those who carry out this crime know that they are not only breaking the women's will and sending them home away from protests; they are breaking the will of the revolutionaries. The organization and the size of the attacks implies, many believed, that they are used by some groups and political actors to deter women from protesting and break the will and legitmacy of demonstrators. Sameeha Dwidar, director of the Penal Policy and Crime Research

[162] Original in Arabic. Translation provided by the researcher.
[163] Original in Arabic. Translation provided by the researcher.
[164] Interviewee 26.
[165] Interviewee 28.
[166] Author's Interview, Salma El-Nakash, director of Women's Political Participation program at Nazra, Cairo, Egypt, December 2014.
[167] Ghada Lotfy, director at the Egyptian Centre of Women's Rights (ECW), Cairo, Egypt, July 27, 2013.

division at the National Center for Social and Criminological Research, also saw the episode of mass sexual harassment as part the "political drama"[168] directed and staged by the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters to scare women, push female protestors from the political and the public sphere and to demonize the protests against the former Muslim Brotherhood president, Mohamed Morsi. She cites how the human rights committee of the Shura Council addressed sexual assault in February 2013. Members of the council blamed women for the attacks in Tahrir, suggesting that they should not attend protests (Al-Jazeera 2013). Indeed, one committee member from a Salafi Islamic party, Adel Afifi, even declared: "The woman has 100 percent responsibility" (Al-Jazeera 2013).

Like rape and sexual violence in wars, the use of sexual harassment and assaults to deter political participation is not exclusively carried out by religious and/or extreme conservative groups in a society. Studying the use of rape in wars, Charlotte Watts and Cathy Zimmerman describe how sexual violence against women is “a deliberate strategy to undermine community bonds and weaken resistance to aggression” (2002: 123). When staged at times of conflict, violence against women is thus a political tool grounded in political calculation and justification and used towards political goals; it is a form of "sexual terrorism" an activist explained, "of no religion"[169]. The assaults, a member of the now-banned April 6th movement (April 6th movement was later banned in 28 April, 2014) recollects, occurred under Mubarak's regime as well, by the police-hired thugs in the 2005 protests against the regime[170].

A similar tactic was carried out by the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt following the removal of President Hosni Mubarak, a number of my participants

[168] Author's Interview, Sameeha Dwidar, director of the Penal Policy and Crime Research division at the National Center for Social and Criminological Research, Cairo, Egypt, November 2014.
[169] Interviewee 51. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 2014.
[170] Interviewee 18.

pointed out[171]. As the demonstrations in Tahrir Square continued to call the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to account, the army-backed security forces found ways to humiliate and intimidate female activists and protestors. These included the notorious virginity tests in March 2011, and the public stripping and beating of a female demonstrator in December 2011(Tripp 2014: 150).

It is however worth noting that while attacks are most prevalent and brutal in protests and demonstration, they also occur outside of the political context in Egypt. In fact, a study by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women released in April 2013 reported that 99.3 percent of Egyptian women have experienced some form of sexual harassment. The assaults took place in concerts, public transportations, workplaces and at home to cite a few. The problem as such has far deeper roots in the political, legal and social dynamics in Egypt. Engy Gozlan the cofounder of Harassmap, a societal awareness campaign that tracks sexual harassment across Egypt using an online interactive map, attests. She adds that the culture of impunity where assailants rarely face any consequence for their actions is found everywhere, at home, in the street as well as at policy and legal levels. [172]

The depth of sexual harassment and political violence in Egypt is an important question which I do not intend to fully cover in this dissertation. My point is to underscore the temporal and spatial suspension of sexual harassment during the 18-day uprising at the Tahrir square. I use the example of sexual harassment to highlight the liminal and communitas like features of this phase of contention in which female protestors experienced solidarity and equality. This I argue

[171] Interviewee 36. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, February 2014.
Interviewee 50. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 2014.
Interviewee 57. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
Interviewee 63. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.
Interviewee 68.

[172] Author's Interview, Engy Gozlan, cofounder of Harassmap, Cairo, Egypt, December 2014.

is an important aspect of women's experience in the uprising and is among the influential factors that shaped women's framing of their participation. This explanation is situated within women's lived experience during the 2011 uprising; it does not omit their testimonies regarding the equality and solidarity they felt. These testimonies are made by women who are deeply immersed in the debate surrounding sexual harassment in Egypt and some of them are among the vanguards in carrying anti-sexual harassment campaigns. Viewing this episode of contention as liminal allows us to reconcile women's accounts regarding the solidarity they felt during the uprising with the resurgence of inequalities and harassment following the uprising.

Conclusion

Framing, to borrow on the language of Mikhail Bakhtin —the Russian philosopher, is "dialogical" process; its strength and spirit is "not within us, but between us" (Medvedev and Bakhtin 1978: 8; Todorov 1984). Interactions among movement's participants are thus important elements in framing and shaping their participation. These interactions are contextual and emergent in the process of mobilization and action (Steinberg 1999). They shape participants subjective experience during collective action. The experience of women during the uprising is, I argue, an important element in how participants frame their participation in collective actions.

In this chapter, I expanded framing theory to consider the ways in which collective action frames are shaped by the subjective experience of participants at the time of contention. During this phase the unity and solidarity among participants were ostensibly real and felt by female protestors. I use the case of the absence of sexual harassment to demonstrate the prevalence of the sense of communitas and to highlight the temporal limitation of this liminal phase. I argue that given the widespread of equality and solidarity during the 18 day uprising, women actively

framed their participation utilizing the citizen frame. This frame was viewed by women as sufficient to incorporate gender equality rights and to sit comfortably in the post-uprising agenda.

In line with post-colonial feminist scholarship, the analysis presented in this chapter aims to capture the experience of female protestors in its entirety. It aims to present a *tertium datur* (third alternative) to the respective views of Western observers and Arab narrators. It seeks to emphasise the true yet conjunctural experience of equality and solidarity during the uprising while explaining the ways in which it influenced women's collective action frame. In so doing, I present "an archeology of women's recollections", in which I highlight overt indetermanties, ambiguities, ruptures and shifts in women's experience.

The openness emerging from this analysis is not to be mistaken with culture relativism; it is rather driven by a burning need for what I call 'sincerity to my interviewees'. After all, recollection, as Haruki Murakami the eloquent Japanese novelist, describes in his novel *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) is "the only proof that I have lived." Indeed, recollection is the "trace"— appropriating Jacques Derrida's concept— that people leave behind in time. In keeping and preserving their trace and out of the need for sincerity to my interviewees, I convey their recollection to the reader while keeping and —in fact— highlighting all the fragmentary splinters that marked their engagement and framing of the uprising.

Chapter 5[173]

"Betoʿ Sūzān" [Suzanne's Clique]:
Gender and Political Opportunities in the 2011 Uprising

[173] An abridged version of this chapter was presented under the title "Women's Collective Action Frame in the 2011 Egyptian Uprising" at the 111th 2015 American Political Science Association (APSA) Annual Meeting & Exhibition, San Franscisco, U.S.A, September 3-6, 2015.

Introduction

> As women's rights groups struggled to attain more political, social, and legal rights, they accepted what the state offered them in terms of limited gains and increased visibility. This association—between feminist groups and the regime— advanced women's rights on several limited fronts. The regime, however, ignored acknowledging the efforts and struggles of independent feminists and their role in advancing women's rights.This has contributed in part in viewing activists demanding gender equality post the uprising as *'Beto ʿ Sūzān* ' [Suzanne's clique].
>
> Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader at the United Nation Development Program/ Middle East Office (UNDP) and the former Country Program Manager at United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM).[174]

In the shifting political landscape that accompanied the 2011 Egyptian uprising, voices speaking up for women's rights were often cast out as "residuals of the old corrupt regime"[175] and/ or called, as Maya Morsy, attests *"beto' Sūzān* " in reference to being a clique of Suzanne Mubarak—Egypt's former first lady. The first lady, Suzanne Mubarak, appeared to take on the role of championing women's rights and gender equality via public discourses and policies. Legislations and laws promoting gender equality was indeed increasingly called 'Suzan's laws'. Furthermore, Morsi ads, in this context, the regime eliminated any feminist movement that existed in opposition to the state. Where feminist organizations did exist, they had to act often in accordance with the state's political priorities. Mubarak's government, furthermore, was heavily critiqued for systematically and explicitly exploiting the agenda of women's rights for political priorities narrowly linked to enhancing the image, prestige and ideological sustainability of the authoritarian regime (Elsadda 2011; Morsy 2014).

The close association between women's rights and Mubarak's regime had negative implications for women's issues particularly at times of regime change and political

[174] Author's Interview Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader at the United Nation Development Program/ Middle East Office (UNDP) and the former Country Program Manager at United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Cairo Egypt, October 2014
[175] Interviewee 60. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, October 2014.

transformation. Since the old regime appropriated the issues of women's rights in service of the *status quo*, rejecting the old regime entailed at least in part, rejecting these values. The absence of complete autonomy for feminist groups, and the complexity of gender related projects at the state level and in other activist groups served as an important component of the political opportunity structure of the 2011 uprising. In the social movement paradigm, political opportunities are defined as the political, social, economic and subjective conditions that help movements to emerge and grow (Kries 1989, 1995; Kitschelt 1986; Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tarrow 1983, 2012; Tilly and Tarrow 2007; McAdam 1985; McAdam et. al.1997). Within the tradition of the political opportunity approach, scholars have furthered focus on the opportunity structure of specific groups such as women and how they change over time (Abdel Rahman 2012; Noonan 1995; Kuumba 2002; McAdam 1990, 1992).

In understanding women's engagement in the uprising, I apply an explicit gender lens to the political opportunities model. A gender-conscious approach to political process focuses on gender structures and subjectivities as important components of the political opportunity structure (Kuumba 2002; See also: Abdel Rahman 2012; Noonan 1995 to cite a few). Unlike conventional approaches to political process, a gender explicit approach uncovers the systemic divisions and inequalities between women and men, in the context of related systems of inequality. That is, it makes these inequalities clearly essential in the analysis (Kuumba 2002). This approach, I demonstrate, is appropriate for understanding and explaining women's activism in this initial episode of contention.

Utilizing a gender-conscious approach to the political process model, this chapter uncovers the political opportunities and constraints that framed women's engagement in the 2011 uprising from the standpoint of women. First, in elucidating the challenges to women's

mobilization, I demonstrate how women negotiated sexism and ageism directed at young women in order to participate in demonstrations. Unlike conventional approaches to political process, this gender explicit approach to political structure reveals the deep divisions and institutionalised inequalities between women and men and how it affected their engagement positively and negatively (Abdulhadi 1998; Kuumba 2001,2002; Noonan 1995). Second, I trace women's agency and activism in the period prior to the uprising by very briefly surveying women's activism and participation in labor unions and philanthropic organization at this time. Women's forms of participation in these venues, I argue, are among the political opportunity structures that contributed to the mobilization and politicization of women. In making this argument, I expand the concept and meaning of women's activism within Egypt's specific political, social, and cultural structures where the venues of women's rights and empowerment initiatives were too easily appropriated by the regime in power.

Locating Political Opportunities

The political process model emphasizes the conditions that allow movements to emerge and grow. Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly (2008) contend that favourable political opportunities provide space and momentum for social movement mobilization and increase the likelihood of success (McAdam 1982; See also: Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tarrow 1983; McAdam 1985; McAdam et. al.1997). Political opportunities cluster around three factors: shifts in the political opportunity structure, the organizational strength and resources of the insurgents, and the participants' consciousness and perceived probability of success (Goldstone 2001; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Tarrow 2012). The political opportunity structure generally refers to the interplay between external institutionalized power relations and the social movement. The

openness of the system, the stability among elite networks, and the capacity for repression are among the commonly cited political structures (McAdam 1985; Tarrow 1996; Kuumba 2001). According to the theory, shifts in the political structure combined with the movement's ability to galvanize organization and the participants' perceived likelihood of success catalyze protests.

The idea that the relative openness of the system encourages protests was initially put forward by sociologist Peter Eisinger (1973). In his analysis of different kinds of municipal structures in the United States, Eisinger (1973) argued that the relationship between protests and political opportunities is curvilinear. Protests are most likely to take place in systems characterized by "a mix of open and closed factors" (1973:15). This is particularly significant in the context of non-democratic regimes; social movements' scholars note (Tarrow 1998; Bunce 2003). The narrower the pre-existing avenue to participation, Tarrow contends (1998:78), the more likely each new opening is to produce new opportunities for contention. In the case of Egypt the appearance of movements such as the Kefaya and April 6th movements is often cited as significant in giving activists a site in which they could engage in action, access participation and thus trigger wide contention.

In addition to these sites, Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow (1977) argue that the appearance of influential allies is crucial for the emergence and spread of contention. Influential allies, I argue are not limited to national actors; international powers are also powerful and necessary friends. International actors are equally important allies especially in an increasingly interconnected world and specifically in a strategic geopolitical region such as the Middle East. In the case of Egypt, the success of the Tunisian uprising and the de-certification of the Mubarak regime by the United States contributed to widening contention. It communicated a message to

protestors that the US administration "blessed their uprising"[176]. It is worth noting that many protesters were not initially "luring for the West's approval"[177], and in fact many activists deliberately distanced themselves from Western discourses as these framings could have potentially "casted doubts upon their agendas"[178], and discredited their "nationalist sentiment"[179] and "loyalty"[180].

The American de-certification of the Mubarak regime was, however, significant as it delegitimized the regime and left it powerless and vulnerable in the face of a mounting opposition. The implications of this new image of the regime as powerless and lacking support were significant. Among these implications was encouraging further mobilization among participants, who now believed that the success of the uprising was possible. Most importantly, I argue, it deepened divisions among national elites as seen in the defection of the Egyptian army (Ketchley 2014; Nassif 2012). This is significant in light of the long relation of economic dependency of the Egyptian army on the US administration (Abul- Magd 2011). This was a relationship dating back to the 1978 Camp David Accords that established the peace terms between Egypt and Israel under the sponsorship of Jimmy Carter's administration and led directly to the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (Camp David Accords 1978[181]; Telhami 1990). Camp David is also widely seen to mark the death of pan-Arab nationalism. As part of the negotiation, the United States committed several billion dollars' worth of annual subsidies to the Egyptian army (US Department of State)[182].

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[176] Interviewee 63.
[177] Interviewee 44.
[178] Interviewee 49.
[179] Interviewee 9.
[180] Interviewee 50.
[181] See "The Camp David Accords", URL: http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/. Accessed 19 May 2015.

Divisions among elites, scholars note, provide incentives for groups with limited resources to engage in collective action and widening the circle of conflict. In the case of Egypt, elite defection can be seen as the army initially refused to violently suppress protests. Indeed images of army protecting protests and the slogan of the " The Army and People are United" [*AL- Giesh wa Al-Sha'b Id Wahda*] marked this episode of protests (Korany and El-Mahdi 2012; Lynch 2013). By seizing the role of "tribune of the people"(Tarrow 2012: 80), the army ensured that it preserved and increased their own political influence. The implications of this move as well were: mobilizing more protestors and legitimating the uprising at large. This move therefore generated political opportunities for activists and groups in the uprising.

Repression is another, unlikely, factor that has ostensibly widened contention in Egypt (Tarrow 2012; Korany and El-Mahdi 2012; Lynch 2012 to cite a few).While repression could be viewed as a factor that deflates mobilization, in the case of Egypt early acts of repression angered the masses and encouraged and justified further and wider mobilization. Della Porta and Reiter (1998) elaborate that violent and capricious police who throw sincere and peaceful protesters into jail are easier to mobilize against than reasonable-sounding public security authorities. This is particularly true in the case of Egypt. The early acts of police brutality to suppress protesters who were initially calling for reforming the security forces resulted in turning people's resentment to more solid opposition. It, indeed, turned moderate dissenters into opponents of the regime and forced them to pose the problem of regime overthrow as the condition for reform.

As the above analysis demonstrates, the political opportunity approach offers valuable insights into understanding the spread of contention in Egypt. Notwithstanding the significance

of the above surveyed aspects of opportunities in mobilizing protesters and encouraging participation in collective actions, these factors did not directly translate into opportunities for women's engagement. That is, these opportunities did not equally encourage and facilitate women's participation in the uprising. Women continued to negotiate cultural and social constraints limiting their activism. Salient among these constraints were gendered forms of ageism toward youth. In the following section I elaborate the implication of these factors on women's activism and how they were able to negotiate these constraints. In so doing, I demonstrate the gendered nature of political opportunities. Specifically, I uncover how the same political opportunities differently mobilize and encourage activism for both women and men and the ways in which gendered dynamics facilitate or constrain activism.

Gendering Political Opportunities

Feminist scholars have extended the political opportunity approach to consider gender structures and the ways in which political opportunities are gender differentiated (Noonan 1995; see also Abdulhadi 1998; Blackstone 2004 McAdam 1990, 1992; Kuumba 2001). As opposed to the larger political structure affording potential activists undifferentiated opportunities to rebel, a gender perspective, Bahanti Kuumba (2002) holds, reveals that the differential experiences and structural locations of women and men must be taken into account (Barnett 1993; Robnett 1997; Walker 1991). In her study of the Montegro movement and anti-pass movements, Kuumba (2001) argued that the differential experiences and structural locations of women and men, within the context of global gender and class-based systems of power, constrained and catalyzed social movement activities. Political opportunities, Rita Noonan (1995) elucidates in the same line, do not open up equal political spaces for men and women (Noonan 1995; see also McAdam

1990; Kuumba 2001). In this section I build upon this fledgling body of literature and demonstrate the ways in which sexism and ageism toward youth and young adults shaped and constrained women's activism notwithstanding the leverage afforded by the political opportunities that opened up at the time of contention.

Young protestors made up the majority of participants in the uprising (Hoffman & Jamal 2012; Osman 2012; Singerman 1995). Indeed the uprising has often been dubbed in scholarly and popular accounts as the "Youth Uprising". However, the age of participants was often an obstacle to their participation. Several participants complicated the picture of their engagement by introducing the age factor as a constraint to political activism. Many noted how the political participation of youth broadly is limited by their parents' consent.

The literature on youth civic engagement echoes this point. Scholars within this tradition have observed that young people are spatially constrained and face age-related challenges that hinder their particpation in ways that differ from adults (Gordon 2008; See also: Lucas 1998; Sibley 1995; Westman 1991).[183] Jack C. Westman (1991) coins the term "juvenile ageism" to refer to the different forms of discrimination against young people carried out by a variety of adult social actors as well as institutions. Less developed in this literature is understanding how emmbedded gender relations and dynamics shape younger people’s activism in the public sphere (Gordon 2008; Yates and Youniss 1999; Youniss et al. 2002). This is especially important in the context of Arab societies, where young women —especially unmarried ones— live with parents.

Recollecting their experience in the uprising, many female protestors emphasised their parents' reluctance—and many times outright rejection—to allow them to participate in protests.

[183] Another participant underscored the age factor in influencing young people’s political participation sharing with me a popular joke at the time of the uprising. Young people, the joke goes, found it easier to confess to their parents that they failed in school exams rather than joining a demonstration.

Many protestors confessed to simply withholding information because their parents always worried about their safety. "Negotiate if they said no calmly sneak out"[184], one protestor said when asked to describe her strategy. Indeed 'sneaking out' was a very common strategy among my participants. Sneaking out often meant making up stories, skipping work or university to participate. Fully sixty-one percent confessed often participating in protests without their parents' knowledge. Some however used a confrontational approach, one participant describes how she initially, at the early episodes of demonstrations, participated behind her parents' back but then "got tired of leading this double life" and confessed to them[185]. While her family did not support her participation, they ultimately did not stop her.

Another intriguing theme raised by several participants was the contrasting views displayed by their parents regarding virtual versus on-ground activism. During the interviewes, a female protestor described how her parents as very supportive of what she called "domesticated activism"[186]. That is they admired her political views, engaged with her in political discussions, as well as shared her political updates over Facebook. They even re-tweeted her political views. They however, she described, opposed her participation in on-ground protests. Their rejection to her on-ground activism, she explains, was because "they feared for my safety"[187]. This fissure between the virtual and the street in parents' views regarding their daughters' activism was echoed by a number of participants.

Several female protestors described how their families were receptive and often took pride in their daughters' activism on social media. However, parents displayed great opposition as their daughters took their activism to the public space. Parents' differential view surrounding

[184] Interviewee 47.
[185] Interviewee 26.
[186] Interviewee 58.
[187] Interviewee 58.

virtual versus on-ground activism complicates our views regarding challenges to women's political participation in Middle Eastern societies. It reveals that these challenges are not always a sign of women's oppression or inferiority in their societies; it is rather situated and often rooted in larger and more complex socio-cultural relations and anxieties. These socio-cultural relations and anxieties were not displayed by the father only but the mother as well and also other male family members— such as husbands and brothers.

It is however worth noting that these anxieties and socio-cultural constraints are often mediated by women's positionality and socioeconomic background. Even if virtual activism opened up a narrow space and opportunity for women's political activism, this opportunity was not accessible to all women. For instance, while in my interviews participants from the middle and upper middle class, particularly from Cairo—the capital city of Egypt— had no problem accessing internet activism; many other participants from the conservative rural town of Al-Fayoum however did not enjoy this privilege. They did not enjoy such privilege because of a stronger belief in this rural setting that "chatting with men and strangers was [*Aib*] 'a wrong doing', even if it was on a non-physical platform, like the internet"[188]. Thus, although new information technologies allowed some young women to access the internet and virtual publics, this accessibility varied according to the woman's socioeconomic background and positionality. Furthermore, the significance of women's online activism was limited given that electronic communication cannot completely substitute for face-to-face movement participation (Christensen 2011; Gladwell 2010; Gordon 2008; Morozov 2011; Newsom and Lengel 2012; Rich 2011; Shirky 2008).

[188] Interviewee 84. Author's interview, Al-Fayoum, Egypt, November 2014.

The issue of mobility is particularly important for female young activists trying to access public spaces and political organization and particpate in social movement participants (Gordon 2008; Westman 1991). This "public" aspect of social movement activities that Jürgen Habermas (1989) described emphasizing its importance for collective action, was often not as accessible as the virtual aspect for female protestors. While the internet gave female activists the wings to soar[189], their activism needed to be grounded in real life and in public space to make any change. Some participants even emphasized that limiting your activism to the internet "won't take your cause so far"[190].

The few who participated with their parents blessing and knowledge described a strong kind of poise in their relationship with their parents. This, however, was rarley the case with other female protestors in my study. A female protestor in her late twenties acknowledged that privilege and that her family's attitude towards her activism is not representative of the conventional perspective in Egyptian society[191]. She explained how this attitude stemmed from her parents' long history of political activism, a history that dates back to the 1970s. It was an activism, she added, that has earned her father several years in prison.

Although some protestors cited parents as their original inspiration, many parents were still reluctant and outright opposed their daughters' public activism. Parents were often concerned with their daughter's physical safety and personal security. For instance, an activist explained how while her parents did not allow her to spend the night at Tahrir square, they did

[189] In the case of Egypt, women were indeed very active in Internet political activism. For instance, Israa Abdel-Fattah, also known as Facebook Girl, helped to found Egypt's 6 April Youth Movement in 2008. Also, Asmaa Mahfouz was credited among others for sparking the uprising after posting a video blog mobilizing Egyptians to protest on January 25th. For a detailed discussion of Asmaa Mahfouz role in the 2011 uprising see: Wall, Melissa, and Sahar El Zahed. 2011. "The Arab Spring| 'I'll Be Waiting for You Guys': A YouTube Call to Action in the Egyptian Revolution." International Journal of Communication 5 (0): 11.
[190] Interviewee 42.
[191] Interviewee 60.

not judge the young women who did[192]. A number of female protestors also described how their parents strongly believed in the uprising and viewed it as "an ideal"[193] ; they however utterly rejected "self-scarifying for an ideal". Explaining her parents' initial reluctance towards her participation in the 18-days demonstrations, a protestor described her parents' stance stressing that:

> They strongly believed that people were unjustly suffering under Mubarak's regime. They strongly believed in the revolution, and that something needs to be done to amend this unjust situation. They, however, were far from ready to risk their daughter's safety and wellbeing for the sake of this cause, regardless of its significance. [194]

However, parents' concerns over their daughters' activism was also deeply embedded in overlapping gender and social contexts. One participant—whose activism dates before the uprising— explained how it is not only your personal safety they are concerned with, parents think they are "safe guarding your reputation in the neighbourhood"[195]. They worry, she describes, about "what the doorman will say if you returned late, what neighbours will think if they saw you participating in a sit-in or marching in a protest"[196].

Another protestor highlighted that while her family supported her activism, the "street did not." [197] She recalled how the taxi driver who was driving her to the Tahrir square kept asking "what's in it for you?" and took the liberty to condone her actions as "inappropriate for a young decent woman"[198]. These forms of community surveillance are carried out by not only men but also women. One of my participant recalled how on her way to protests and while riding the

[192] Interviewee 42.
[193] Interviewee 9.
[194] Interviewee 10.
[195] Interviewee 23.
[196] Interviewee 23.
[197] Interviewee 60.
[198] Interviewee 60.

Women-Only Metro carriages[199], some female passengers insulted her for participating in demonstrations[200]. They could often tell that she was on her way to demonstrations, my interviewee described, as she would be carrying Egyptian flags with her. She remembers her shock when one of the women called her "a slut" and accused her of joining demonstrations to "hook up with men"[201]. This perspective is deeply rooted in the social norms emphasizing the value of female virtue and modesty in Egyptian society, as well as nurtured and fostered by the ruling regimes practices and discourses and broader ideas of family honour, and community forms of surveillance of behaviour.

Women in Egyptian society are at the forefront of ongoing debates over social culture and the interpretation of Sharia. Such debate had its consequences on their political activism. Hence as men confronted security authorities, women confronted formal and informal social authorities and constraints. In the context of Egypt, and to a varying degrees in other Middle Eastern and North African societies— certain interpretations of Sharia law that discourage women's presecence and particpation in the public and politcal space (Abu El-Komsan 2012; Abouzeid 2009, Booth 2001; El-Sadawi 1997, 2007). Egyptian reformers tried to show that it was not the tenets of Islam that subordinated women but rather an incorrect interpretation of it. Their efforts date back to the time of Sheik Rifaa Rafii El-Tahtawi (1801-71), Sheik Mohamed Abduh (1849-1905) and his disciple, Qasim Amin (1895-1908) —the intellectual reformer. On the basis of texts from Quran, these leading religious intellectuals and reformers argued that female seclusion and subjection was un-Islamic (Amin 1992; Philip 1980; El-Saadawi 2007; Jayawardena 1986). Two hundred years later, discussions over women's position in Islam still

[199] On all Cairo Metro trains, two passenger cars of each train are reserved for women. This policy was introduced as a way of protecting women from sexual harassment on crowded train lines.
[200] Interviewee 18.
[201] Interviewee 18.

remain widely disputed in Egypt. Amina Shafiq, the first and only female secretary-general of the Egyptian Press Syndicate (1989-1993), as well as a symbol of 1960s leftism in Egypt, explains in a personal interview that this remains the case given the growing religious and conservative influence in society over the past few decades[202].

This increase in the influence of conservatives is a function of at least two interrelated factors. These factors are the return of Gulf immigrants and the rise of popular Islam. First, the late 1980s Egypt witnessed mass economic immigration to the Gulf countries. The migration coincided with the oil boom in the Arab Gulf countries and the resulting demand for labour. This regional migration, scholars show, has often been temporary, that is families eventually returned and settled in Egypt (Reichert 1993; Gruntz and Pagès-El Karoui 2013). Sociological and psychological studies that have been carried out on Egyptian migration to the Gulf countries, however, emphasise the impact of this experience on the migrants' value system (Reichert 1993; Gruntz and Pagès-El Karoui 2013). Specifically, Amina Shafiq argues that migrants brought along the Gulf norms of female segregation and religious conservatism to the Egyptian society.

Second, the increase in the influence of the conservative religious tide is also a function of the distinction —and often contradiction—- between what Baqer S.Alnajar (2015) terms popular religion and official religion. According to Alnajar, popular religion is imparted by families, neighbors and friends. Meanwhile official religion is an integral part of the state, engaging in political discourse and legitimizing political regimes. Popular religion, I would further add, is increasingly acquired through the electronic medium as well as through private religious television. These channels, however, scholars have noted, lean towards a proliferation

[202] Author's Interview Amina Shafiq, founder of left-wing Tagammuʿ Party, Cairo Egypt, November 2014.

in production and dissemination of a radical religious intolerance within Islam and between Muslims and non-Muslims (Arab Human Development Report 2014).

The distinction between official and popular religion produced various configurations in Egyptian society, where official religion was increasingly viewed as regime propaganda. Meanwhile, popular religion with its conservative leanings claimed a position of legitimacy above and over official religion. This strand of religion presented itself as unbiased/objective and closer to the heart and essence of Islam, "not taunted by the hands of the corrupted regime", that is not manipulated to support the regime policies. The official religious messages and teachings communicated through its educational syllabus and state-owned channels were viewed as part of the regime apparatus. Thus popular religion with its conservative message gained more resilience and popularity among poor as well as upper classes (Alnajar 2015: 290-293). This influence was even strengthened by the Muslim Brotherhood proliferation across the poor classes in Egypt in its bid for votes. Beyond its political wing, the Muslim Brotherhood has garnered support among the population for its decades of experience providing social services to the poor segments of the population (Lynch 2013).

The ruling regime fostered and nurtured these conservative views and cultural norms regarding women's role and status by employing sexual harassment against female protestors to deter and sanction women's political activism and anti-regime activism at large. In a society where family honor is defined in large part by its females' honor, women's participation in protests was deemed to not only harm her reputation but also that of her entire family. Nehad Abu- El Komsan (2012) argues that the security forces made use of this culture by sexually harassing female political activists. Abu-El Komsan (2012) reads intentionality behind the media coverage of the incidents of sexual harassment that targeted female protestors by "regime hired

thugs" in the protest that took place in 2005 against the National Democratic Party-the ruling party at that time. She explains:

> Cameras captured and aired the carrying out of gang harassment for political reasons. The goal was to terrorize Egyptians, the female protestor was not the goal but a means to breaking the protestors and to sending a message via the television to all Egyptians who dared to go out against the will of the ruling party or even to just criticize it (Abu- El Komsan 2012:44).

In that sense, sexual harassment became the weapon of choice to break the will of the activists both male and female. The incapacity of the movement to protect its female supporters embarrassed the movement. Furthermore, families who watched the acts of sexual harassment became even stricter in preventing female members from participating in any form of political activism.

As such, despite the perceived relative openness of the Egyptian society, the prevailing culture continued to deal with women as the weaker person constituting a potential threat to family honor. Restrictions on women are even often justified on the basis of protection, care, and love. The basis of these norms are often customs and traditions and not religion per see, they largely contribute to impeding women's political activism. The extent, to which these norms prevail, however, varies relatively across different classes and communities in Egypt, as well as within specific families as noted.

As a response to the security vacuum that marked the period after the uprising, Rania Ramadan a facilitator at the Population Council project's Neqdar Nesharek [We Can Participate] in Al-Fayoum, notes that many families forced their young daughters to get married as a way of protecting them[203]. The same observation was made by another female participant from Al-Mahla. She, as well, noted that a growing number of young girls— as young as 14 and 15 years

[203] Author's interview. Rania Ramadan a facilitator at the Population Council project's Neqdar Nesharek [We Can Participate], Al-Fayoum, Egypt, November 2014.

old— wed to older men following the uprising[204]. She, however, argues that this is because of the deteriorating economic condition, lax legal enforcement of the minimum age of marriage and—relatedly— the spread of corruption. These create the conditions which may allow some families to get away with wedding their girls at young age.

In this section, I demonstrated how the immediate political opportunities were insufficient to mobilize women and facilitate their participation in the uprising. An opening in the political structure was not a sufficient condition for women's participation. Women still negotiated societal constraints that governed their participation. Salient among these constraints is navigating parental worry and power. While this can be said to have affected both male and female youth broadly, women were often more influenced by this factor than their male counterparts. Women's understandings of parental power, and how they negotiated with their parents affected how they benefited from the political opportunities at the time of the uprising.

Shifting Opportunities and Constrains

In their study of historical and modern movements, Tarrow and Tilly (2007) observe that while opportunities signaled to "some" are also available to "many", the different sectors of movements experience opportunities differently (Tarrow 1998: 77; also Tilly 1978; McAdam et al. 2001). This is because, I suggest, the nature of opportunities follows the inclination of the early vanguards, who initially contributed to cracking the structure and thus creating opportunities. Political opportunities furthermore are a by-product of the immediate policy environment as well as the regime's relations with different groups.

[204] Interviewee 78. Author's interview, Al-Mahala, Egypt, November 2014.

In the 2011 uprising, the vanguards—such as the April 6 Youth Movement and Kefaya—were largely social movement organizations with diverse backgrounds and cross-sectional affiliations. They were in a sense a movement of movements. Donatella Delia Porta (2005) writes extensively about the significance and nature of this "movement of movements" (Della Porta et al' 2005).The April 6 movement in 2008, and Kefay are examples of these movements. According to Singerman, they were designed to work across ideological lines and to build a more diverse, internally democratic, and youthful coalition for Egyptian oppositional politics (see Singerman 2013; Shorbagy 2013). The significance of this movement of movements' model is that it broadened participation and thus generated more of an impact on the regime.

In these organizations, activists who were at the time of the interviews members in the April 6th Movement, elaborate: "women's rights were part of a broader agenda"[205], they were "never explicitly articulated as a standalone objective"[206]. The absence of women's rights from this model contributed to sidelining gender issues from the political opening. While these sites are significant for locating women's agency, their impact on pushing forward the agenda of women's rights in Egypt is largely contested. This is particularly the case as the vocabulary of women's rights and gender equality was not explicitly prominent in their agenda. The agenda of women's rights, as such, continued to be appropriated and institutionalized by the corrupt ruling regime in Egypt.

I do not wish to deemphasise the significance of the Kefaya and April 6th movements in effectively challenging authoritarian regimes. Indeed, the Egyptian regime was more effective at coopting and/ or dividing institutions, parties, and formal organizations (Hassan 2010; Lim 2012; Shorbagy 2013; Singerman 1995). According to Singerman, it was less

[205] Interviewee 18.
[206] Interviewee 20.

successful,however, when the April 6 movement, and Kefaya before it, creatively adopted a model for collective action that was organically suited to the vast informal and subterranean networks already dominant within Egyptian life (see Singerman 2013). My point is that the weakness of Kafaya and April 6 movement lies in its inability to open up political and public discussion on women's rights and to introduce new language and vocabulary on gender equality.

The agenda of women's rights in Egypt is, in fact, rife with complexities and tensions. The framing of women's rights as a dimension of liberation has always been challenged in Egypt. Before the uprising, women's rights, as already discussed, were identified with policies of state sponsored feminism. However, the agenda of gender equality, Sholkamy critiques, was the "pet project of the regime" (2012a:156). The National Council for Women in Egypt, which is the national machinery for the empowerment of women, was commonly perceived as the "regime mouth piece"[207], describes Fatma Khafaga director at the Alliance for Arab Women and former director of the Office of Women's Complaints, National Council for Women, 2000-2002. She further critiques the council for its role in circumscribing independent feminist organizations. The crisis and isolation of the feminist movement indeed came to fore in the first few months after the 2011 uprising. Elham Aidarus, legal representative of the Bread and Freedom Party, highlighted this crisis and isolation citing the mounting calls to dismantle the council in the period immediately following the uprising and adding that "some feminists refrained from becoming members in it"[208].

In addition to isolating the feminist movement from the masses, the policies of state sponsored feminism, several scholars note, yielded modest and class-differential improvements

[207] Author's Interview, Fatma Khafaga, Alliance for Arab Women Director, Cairo Egypt, November 2014.
[208] Author's Interview, Elham Aidarus, legal representative of the Bread and Freedom Party, Cairo Egypt, November 2014.

in the status of women in Egypt (Abu-Lughod 2001; Ahmed 2012; Badran 1988; Baroon 2005; Dawood 2012; Hatem 1994, 2011; Sholkamy 2011, 2012). This is because the policies were largely instrumental and politically motivated. The most evident case was the approval of a women's quota in the 2010 parliament and the allocation of sixty-four seats to women ("Official Results", 2010).. On the surface it appeared as advancement for women, while in reality fifty-six seats went to the ruling party, reinforcing its domination over political life ("Official Results", 2010). Women's friendly policies did not, as such, necessarily deliver real cultural changes and/or substantial gender equalities.

This is "the classic trap for feminist movements in Third World countries"(Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2013), as authoritarian governments attempt to contain the feminist movement without offering any genuine gains[209]. In the case of Egypt, notwithstanding the relatively progressive laws and policies criminalizing female gentile mutilation or women trafficking, poor working and rural women continued to pay the heaviest price for corruption and sexual violence (ECWR Egyptian Women's Status Report 2010).

The implication of this full control in conjunction with the cosmetic changes in women's rights was it distanced the discourse of women's rights from its grass root bases and moved it towards the regime in power. On one side, the regime stopped every independent initiative and appropriated "gender issues" under its name (Sholkamy 2012a; Sorbera 2013). Even long daunting struggles carried out by women's rights groups and activists against the regime were omitted. Victories following the long struggles with the regime was not attributed to women's groups and their struggle but rather presented as a grant from the regime. A case in point is the appointment of female judges in Egypt's legal system. The appointment came, Maya Morsy

[209] I am thankful to Dr. Martina Rieker director of the Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women's Studies at the American University in Cairo for directing me to this body of literature, November 2014, Cairo, Egypt

explains, following furious debates between the regime and several women's right groups and advocates[210]. These struggles however, went unnoticed and unacknowledged and the appointment was represented to the public as a gift from the regime.

On the other side, the Islamist opposition and labor movements have been effective in mobilizing the lower classes, for which the discourse of feminism and gender issues appears alien in terms of class and culture (Nelson 1991; Zuhur 1992; Meriwether and Tucker 1999; Sholkamy 2012a; Sorbera 2013). A case in point for the absence of gender issues from the labor movement was the Al-Mahala strike. The Mahala strike is now acknowledged in popular and scholarly accounts to have been the first flutters of a popular rebellion (Dubuc 2013). The workers of Mahallah went on strike for the first time in almost a decade to demand disbursement of an overdue annual bonus. Marie Dubuc (2013: 29) in her ethnographic study of the protests comments that the strike "began when female workers mobilized and chanted the slogan, "Where are the men? Here are the women!" to shame their colleagues into joining the strike.

Unions struggling for freedom of association and the right of collective action attracted women such as Fatma Ramadan, who has spent more than a decade in courts fighting for the right to membership in unions and workers' committees (Shalkamy 2011). Some of the grievances were related to "the need for matrimony permission from management"[211] and complaints about "harassment "[212]. The master frame however clustered mainly around the management's anti-unionist attitude and issues related to poor working conditions (Debuc 2013).

[210] Author's Interview Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader at the United Nation Development Program/ Middle East Office (UNDP) and the former Country Program Manager at United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), October 2014.
[211] Interviewee 78.
[212] Interviewee 79. Author's interview, Al-Mahala, Egypt, November 2014.

Less emphasised though were women's specific grievances and gender inequalities in the factory premises.

An equally important channel for mobilizing and politicizing female participants is their involvement in charitable organizations and community development initiatives. These organizations and initiatives, studies have shown, have grown exponentially in Egypt since the 1990's (Daly 2010, and Amer, Haddara, Jalal, Anderson and Simons-Rudolph 2013)[213]. In line with the literature, I argue that these organizations are important sites for empowering and politicizing youth and particularly young women (Byat 2010; Daly 2010, Pruzan-Jørgensen 2012; Mahmood 2005; Ibrahim and Sherif 2008). These sites in my view are significant for a number of reasons. In authoritarian regimes these seemingly apolitical sites are tolerated and often encouraged by the state as they step in to fill the state's economic and social role by providing goods and services for the poor. They as such are perceived as "agents maintaining the status quo", Shaheda El-Baz, director of the Arab and African Research Centre contends[214]. In a personnel interview, she explains how by satisfying some of the basic needs of the poor segments of the population these organizations contribute to assuaging the masses' anger and frustration against an unresponsive government.

A contrary view, however, is advanced by Asef Bayat in his book *Life as Politics* (2010). In it, Bayat draws our attention to how these sites are indeed political, they tell us about the “art of presence,” and "agency in times of constraints" (Bayat 2010:15). Barbra Ibrahim (2008) further unpacks the implications of political constraints on civil society and youth activism in Egypt. Analysing civil society in Egypt, she stresses that activist outlets taken for granted

[213] I am thankful to Dr. Mona Amer, Associated Professor at the American University in Cairo Egypt for directing me to this body of literature, December 2014, Cairo, Egypt.
[214] Author's Interview, Shaheda El-Baz, director of the Arab and African Research Centre, November 2014.

elsewhere maybe closed off in an authoritarian political climate such as in Egypt. In line with these lines of thinking, I contend that these sites are indeed an umbrella under which new challengers are often formed and actors are indeed politicized.

Many of my participants describe how their involvement in charities and community volunteering transformed them. It particularly brought them closer to the regime injustices evident in "the dire poor condition suffered by many segments of the population "[215]. Through their involvement, activists were exposed to the "plight of poverty"[216] that marked the life of the majority of the population. Activists were further politicized in these sites as the latter served as a space to debate politics and share information. For instance, one of my participants described how "her journey to politics"[217] started at a community organization working on poverty reduction. She describes how she did not really follow the news before the uprising; however it was through her involvement in charity work that she became aware of "the stories of regime's corruption"[218]. The informing function of these organizations was underscored in a number of my interviewees. The discussions in the organization meetings and among members about the politics of state corruption and injustices became one of the major sources of trusted information for them.

Access to these informal, and ostensibly apolitical sites, are particularly significant for women's mobilization. In her introduction to *Avenues of Participation*, Diane Singerman (1995) launches a searing and eloquent critique of political theory that locates political power only in state institutions. For women in the Arab Spring who are largely marginalized from the formalized political structures of the state, the civic domains of social life become sites for the

[215] Interviewee 61.
[216] Interviewee 53.
[217] Interviewee 41.
[218] Interviewee 41.

cultivation of agency (Singerman 2013 See also Bayat 2010, Bilge 2010; Jaunzems 2011; Mahmood 2005; McLarney et al. 2015; Winegar 2012; Zaatari 2006). Indeed, several of my interviewees stressed how the seemingly apolitical nature of these sites offered women important opportunities to access political knowledge, action and participation.

Volunteering are also largely acceptable for young women. This, in no doubt, plays on gender stereotypes and the essentialist representation of women as the caregivers. For instance, one of my participants mockingly described how her parents made sure to mention her charity work to prospective grooms, and specifically that they mentioned her volunteer activities to show that she had a "kind heart and warm feminine quality"[219]. Another interviewee contrasted her parents' pride in her volunteer and charity work with their anger and rejection of her activism in student union[220]. While charity work could be interpreted as extension of women's care jobs and role in domestic space, these sites were important outlets for women's social and political engagement. The emancipatory features of these activities were indeed emphasized by several participants. They described how their involvement in these organizations and initiatives allowed them to "push the limits with their parents"[221], and negotiate some of the restrictions, such as "extending the curfew"[222], and "travelling to dis-privileged locations"[223]— which are often seen as unsafe for women. It thus allowed activists to renegotiate the limits of young women's activism.

However, the success of labor movements, charities and Islamic opposition in mobilizing women, Sorbera (2013) argues fostered a view of feminism by the majority of the population as

[219] Interviewee 35.
[220] Interviewee 31.
[221] Interviewee 23.
[222] Interviewee 18.
[223] Interviewee 27. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, July 2013.

an elitist movement, sometimes accused of being incapable of producing grassroots activities. Additionally, the association of women's rights with the old corrupt regime in Egypt explains in part why protestors distanced themselves from the discourse of gender equality in the framing of their demands in the 2011 uprising (Sholkamy 2012a). As such, the uprising expanded political opportunities for women to participate and voice their demands as citizens of Egypt. However, it was not an opportunity to voice gender specific demands. Political opportunities were situated within the group's prior relation with the former regime and its tradition of activism.

Conclusion

In his analysis of political opportunities, Sidney Tarrow describes opportunity structures as the "basic grid within which movements operate" (2012: 85). This grid however, Tarrow emphasises is "seldom neutral between social actors". This chapter has offered a survey of the political opportunities that served as the grid for the 2011 uprising in Egypt with an eye to how gender mediated women's access to these new openings in the system. Specifically, I highlighted the ways in which sexism and ageism towards the young shaped and constrained women's activism notwithstanding the leverage afforded by political opportunities at the time of contention. Furthermore, I uncovered how the agenda of women's rights suffered from constricted opportunities in the political environment of the 2011 uprising and situated this within the group's prior relation with the regime. The chapter thus offered a nuanced view of political opportunities, a view that situates them in a system of gender inequalities and relations with immediate and distant conventional and contentious politics.

Writing about women's experience in the Arab Spring, John Davis (2015) describes how things that happened to women as women did not happen in a vacuum. Women's experiences are rather related to gender, class and cultural structures. This occurs within a system of constructed symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce and sometimes reproduce gender divisions, and differential access. The character of opportunities, I further suggest, is situated within this overall structure and relation between the state and different groups. This relation has an influence on the articulation of the movement's demands and the framing of participation by its different groups. I am not implying that this influence is detrimental; a movement's agenda can be influenced by its different subgroups. The influence of different groups, however, is determined by their available resources, the resonance of their message and frame, and the opening of new opportunities. Political opportunities, scholars of social movements highlight, are a system of openings and closures that both isolates demands and makes the same demands possible by triggering further openings and opportunities (Tarrow 2012:77-92; see also Kuumba 2001; Noonan 1995).

Notwithstanding the limits of political opportunities that gave rise to the 2011 Egyptian uprising, the uprising had significant mediating effect on women's agency and activism. "One of the most remarkable characteristics of contentious politics, scholars note, is that it expands the opportunities of others. Protesting groups put issues on the agenda with which other people identify and demonstrate the utility of collective action that others can copy or innovate upon " (Tarrow 2012: 89). As we will see in the concluding chapter, the 2011 Egyptian uprising expanded the doctrine of dignity and rights that later became the master frame of women's movement. It showed others, in a dramatic way, the path for change.

Conclusion[224]

The Politics of Disappointment:
Summary, Contribution and Future Research Areas

[224] An abridged version of the concluding Chapter was published at the London School of Economics Middle East Centre blog under the title "What Holds Next? The Politics of Disappointment". The full article can be found at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2015/08/11/what-holds-next-the-politics-of-disappointment/

Summary

This study focused specifically and primarily on women's engagement in the 2011 Egyptian uprising. I interrogated how women framed their participation in the uprising and situated their framing within the socio-economic flows, political trajectories and historical contours in Egypt. The project thus offered an oral history of women's participation in this historical juncture of Egypt's politics. My focus, however, was not only on documenting their accounts, but also on situating their experience within the contentious and conventional politics of Egypt.

In Chapter one, I addressed the historical framing of women's engagement in Egypt's political struggles, specifically in the 1919 nationalist revolution and the 1952 military coup. I analysed women's experiences in the past, with an eye to the implications for the present. My objective was to identify continuities and ruptures in the framing of women's national activism in Egypt. The literature review revealed the tensions involved in documenting, remembering and commemorating women's engagement in political struggles. In this regard, I contended that women's political culture has often been excluded from the collective memory or remembered only selectively at key moments when it served some symbolic purpose. Despite this seemingly ineluctable disappointing relation between women and political struggles, the chapter emphasised the liberating consequences of these struggles on women's activism in Egypt. Notwithstanding the nationalist regime's hostile attitude towards feminist activists, women's experience and struggle provided a strong base of experienced activists, as well as established network ties to internal and international collaborators.

Continuity in the framing of women's activism in Egypt's political struggles was highlighted in Chapter Two[225]. My analysis of media coverage in key national and international newspapers suggested that traditional motifs of passiveness coexisted along new ones of feminine agency in their coverage of the 2011 uprising. By evoking the myth of female passiveness and framing women's activism within a feminine framework, the coverage assuaged the effect of women's activism in challenging traditional gender stereotypes (Allam 2014). The analysis also explicated the variation and multiplicity involved in the practice of othering and the ways in which the participation of women was erased from discourse as a result of patriarchy and/or Orientalism. The representation of women in the media coverage of the uprising, I thus argued, was a paradigmatic example of what Gramsci called "the trenches and fortification" of existing order (Gramsci 1971 cited in Tarrow 2012: 2). It exposed some of the tensions that women carried out their activism within as well as revealed some of the ways in which power is exercised in society through media discourses.

In Chapter Three, "Trenching Dissent: Women's Collective Action Frame in the Uprising," I continued to situate women's experience in the uprising within the political trajectories as well as the historical contours in Egypt. In so doing, I highlighted the ways in which women's frame was not simply impermeable to external influence, but a response to inherited cultural materials as well as dominant and historical framings of political struggles. In the absence of an alternative strong discourse for women's activism, the national unity frame, I demonstrated, represented an important cultural reservoir for framing women's engagement in past and modern struggles. This framing was modular as it resonated with the cultural pre-

[225] An abridged version of this chapter was published under the title "Activism and Exception in Covering Egypt's Uprising: A Critical Reading of the New York Times Representation of Female Protestors", Sociology of Islam, (2014) 310–327.

disposition of the Egyptian society. It thus encouraged collective action among women and participants broadly in the 2011 uprising.

In Chapter Four, I expanded the contours of framing theory to consider the influence of women's experience during contention on their collective action frame. Building upon my participants accounts, I argue that women's subjective experience of solidarity during the days of protests contributed to the absence of gender from their collective action framing. I used the case of the absence of sexual harassment to demonstrate the prevalence of the sense of "communitas" —that is shared community— and to highlight the temporal limitation of this "liminal" phase (Turner 1974). I argued that given the widespread ethos of equality and solidarity during the 18-day uprising, women actively framed their participation utilizing the citizen frame. A frame that was viewed by many women as sufficient to guarantee their rights in the morrow of the uprising. The analysis presented in this chapter aimed to capture the experience of female protestors as fully as possible.

The mobilizing —as well as constraining structures— that influenced women's engagement and experience in the uprising is explicated in Chapter Five. In" ‘Betoʿ Sūzān’ [Suzanne's Clique]: Gender and Political Opportunities in the 2011 Uprising" I identify and analyze the political opportunities and constraints that shaped women's engagement in the 2011 uprising from the standpoint of women. First, in elucidating the challenges to women's mobilization, I demonstrated how women negotiated sexism, parent's control and past relations of co-optation with the regime. Unlike conventional approaches to political process, this explicit gender approach to political structure reveals the deep divisions and institutionalised inequalities between women and men and how it affected their engagement (Abdulhadi 1998; Kuumba 2001, 2002; Noonan 1995). Second, I traced women's agency and activism in the period prior to the

uprising by surveying women's activism and participation in labor unions and philanthropic organization at that time. Women's participation in these venues, I argued, is among the political opportunity structures that have contributed to the mobilization and politicization of women. In so doing, I expand notions of women's activism within Egypt's particular political and cultural structure where the routes of women's empowerment projects were too easily appropriated by state forces.

As these chapters have shown, studying women's engagement in the 2011 Egyptian uprising is significant as it adds to our stock of knowledge on the Arab Spring and particularly the gendered processes of regime change. By offering a gender analysis of these early interactions, the dissertation contributes to recovering the history of women's engagement in the uprising. Women are also brought to the centre of our analysis and their agency is reclaimed.

My findings also enrich the study of women's engagement in nationalist struggles. Specifically, the analysis presented contributes to complicating and expanding debates on women's participation in national struggles beyond reductionist accounts that view them as misguided or passive. By offering a nuanced view of women's engagement in modern and historical political struggles in Egypt, I problematized the mainstream literature's tendency to theorize a single, common relationship between nationalist movement and women's rights. This tendency obscures the complexity of the issue and overlooks the positive influence of women's experience during contention on their activism, agency and sense of empowerment. The dissertation, as such, contributes to de-essentializing the category of women, in it; I also suggest areas for continuities or junctures in the assumed relationship between women and political struggles.

Beyond the gender politics of the Middle East and North Africa, the dissertation also offers significant contribution to the field of political science broadly. It offers an analysis of the affective stimuli and blockages to women's political activism and engagement in contentious episodes. In so doing, I uncovered the factors that make political action conceivable at all, or that make some forms of activism thinkable while others are, or become, wholly unimaginable (Gould 2009: 3-9). Answering these questions is important for the discipline of political science as it contributes to uncovering the processes through which power is exercised and reproduced in our forms and frames of activism. It also promises to reveal the ways in which a prevailing or hegemonic political discourse might be challenged and transformed.

The dissertation contributes as well to post-colonial feminist studies by offering a narrative of women's experience, knowledge and recollections of their engagement in the Egyptian uprising. This narrative of knowledge captures women's experience in its entirety and situates it within the contentious and conventional politics of Egypt. It emphasises the influence of history, politics and institutions in framing and mediating women's experience in the uprising. The analysis presented opens up a space in our research for the "subaltern to speak", appropriating the critical theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's connotation, it grants women from the Middle East and North African societies a place of enunciation in our scholarship. It challenges and deconstructs orientalist and/or patriarchal frames and discourses that have often dominated the representation of non-Western women in the literature on women's engagement in national struggles. The resulting organic and situated knowledge is important in order to understand women's different and specific experience in political struggles in Third World countries with a view to locating their agency rather than their plight.

The study also contributes to the field of media studies and political communications. An analysis of media framing of women's activism illuminates the ways in which gender stereotypes are embedded within and make themselves manifest in text. Such analysis is significant as it draws critical attention to some of the dominant frames that women negated in framing their experience, and reveals some of the ways in which overt gender stereotypes are embedded in the media representation of women's activism in national struggles.

This analytical exercise is also significant given the implications of media on the social schisms in society and its centrality in demarcating cultural difference as well. In this regard, the image of women, I elaborate, corresponds to Egypt's social context and the representational history of women in Western media. Despite the significance of this topic, the question of women's representation in media is an under-researched area in Middle Eastern studies. The dissertation, thus, contributes to filling this scholarly void.

Finally, the dissertation advances social movement theory by applying the political process model to non-Western cases and expanding the contours of its political opportunities and framing thesis to integrate gender structures and frames. While the literature on social movements offers many valuable insights and interesting lines of inquiry, studying women's engagement in the 2011 Egyptian uprising brought to light the present omissions and shortcomings of the literature. The analysis uncovers the ways in which collective action frames are not merely a deliberate formulation in response to the legitimacy of the dominant framing of political struggles. While accounting for these factors provides collective action frames with credibility, activists continue to take cues from the surrounding environment during political struggles. This study thus complements social movement scholarship by foregrounding the

important role of gender structures in movement processes and the ways in which issues of interpretation and meaning-making are central to the story of all social movements.

What holds next? *The Politics of Disappointment*[226]

For many observers, the return of authoritarian confidence, the changing zeitgeist among activists and the mixed gender outcomes following the Egyptian uprising are signs that the grand visions of the uprising are gone. More dramatically, that the "Egyptian Spring"[227] was a false hope in a future that never came and that politics now is one marked with disappointment. I palpably felt that disappointment was the overarching and bitter emotion that characterized the last rounds on my field research in Egypt, June 2014 - December 2014.

Disappointment emerges as people compare the expectations of the revolution to the post-revolutionary realities. It also emerges as people contend with the murkiness and contingency of political agency under such conditions (Greenberg 2014:8; Gould 2001; 2009). Jessica Greenberg (2014) in her study of the experience of activists in the post uprising period in Serbia defines disappointment as a condition of living in contradiction, of persisting in the interstitial spaces of expectation and regret (2014:8). In mapping the field in which politics unfolded in Egypt after the uprising, researchers should analyse in greater comparative detail the conditions under which the politics of disappointment prevail. Most importantly, this analysis should be carried out with an eye to how actions and activism continue nonetheless to take place despite a sense of dismay or even perhaps futility.

[226] I am thankful to my friend and colleague Dr. Sarah Elizabeth Parkinson, Assistant Professor at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota for directing me to this body of literature, June 2015, Rabat, Morocco.
[227] Interviewee 70.

This is particularly important as disappointment is the ethos of many new—as well as older—democracies in the MENA region and beyond (Amanat 2012; Brownlee et al. 2013; Byman 2012; Doran 2011; Tabaar 2013) ."All, all dead..." Thomas Jefferson, American Founding Father, wrote to a friend near the end of his life (Wood 1993: 368). Jefferson's disillusionment, historian Gordon S.Wood explains in his book *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, resulted not from activism itself, but from the ambitiousness of his vision for America and the revolution's actual outcome (Wood 1993: 368). The same was true, Tarrow (1998) observes, in his study of the 1960's activism in both Europe and the United States. Tarrow notes that disappointment following major episodes of contentions as experienced in direct proportion to the utopianism of the revolutions' claims (1992: 165).

Furthermore, studying the politics of disappointment is momentous and meaningful as disappointment is a powerful force with significant influence on political engagement and participation. As a result of being disappointed in the political process, individuals may self-censor their actions and distant themselves from activism and political engagement. In understanding the puzzle of collective action and inaction, economist Albert Hirschman writes on the "rebound effect" in which individuals who threw themselves into public life and activism with enthusiasm return to private life with a degree of disgust proportional to the effort they have expended (2002:80). Disappointment in the political process and its outcomes following episodes of contention is thus a huge force in curbing —not only inducing— activism and thus contributes to explaining setbacks following major political transformation.

Finally, and more specifically in line with the crux of my dissertation, women are largely the first and foremost group to experience disappointment following political struggles and regime change. This seemingly disappointing outcome is evident in the mixed gender outcomes

of regime change and democratic transition along history and across different societies in the MENA region and beyond. Indeed, more than any other recent movements and scholarships, women's movement and feminist studies have led to the recognition of the force of emotionality in social movements (Tarrow 1998: 112; Taylor 1995: 226-229).

Underpinning the argument that disappointment is an important aspect in studying post transitional politics is a view of feeling and emotion as fundamental to political life (Gould 2009; Greenberg 2014; Taylor 1995). They are important not in the sense that they overtake reason and interfere with deliberative processes, but as Gould (2009) argues in the sense that they are an affective dimension to the processes and practices that make up the political broadly defined. The significance of emotions in social movement has recently gained scholarly attention among social movements analysts and theorists. Particularly within the tradition of political process, scholars offer "a multifaceted picture of human beingness"(Gould 2009: 17). They recognize emotion as "a ubiquitous feature of human life" that is present in, influences, and brings meaning to every aspect of social life, including the realm of political action and inaction (Gould 2009: 17; see also: Ahmed 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Aminzade and McAdam 2001: 17). Activism, I contend in line with Gould (2009: 16-19), includes not only expected and common feelings in the realm of activism, like hope, pride, and solidarity, but also those that might be less perceptible, like fear, shame, guilt, desperation, and disappointment.

Disappointment can be seen in the politics of post-uprising Egypt as a result of the infighting within the parties and opposition and the wear and tear of the political process that stripped many politicians[228], parties and revolutionaries of their its initial popularity and

[228] El-Baradei's name has been prominent as a key figure in the 2011 Egyptian uprising. His credibility and popularity suffered negatively following his resignation on 14 August 2013, following a violent crackdown by security forces on supporters of deposed president Mohamed Morsi. He stands accused of "betraying" and

credibility (Al-Regal 2015; Alaa 2015; Al-Khazendar 2015; Fadl 2014). These political, economic and social challenges were not created by the political vacuum and economic *chaos* that followed the 2011 Egyptian uprising solely. Writing on the Muslim Brotherhood's political missteps following the 2011 uprising in Egypt, Mohamed and Momani (2014:199) trace these challenges to the influence of a wider political culture of cynicism and distrust among politicians and citizens. A culture that could have been challenged and deconstructed if in the morrow of the uprising, different parties and factions —let it be Islamist, secular or leftist— were able to pause valid political solutions, coordinate efforts, share power and articulate future road maps.

Describing the political landscape at this time, Ahmed Al-Muslimani, Former Egypt's interim presidential media advisor explained during our interview how articulating a common political agenda was increasingly challenged by the divisiveness of post-2011 Egyptian public discourse and politics[229]. The coalition of opposition parties, citizens' organizations, and ordinary people that joined forces to overthrow Mubarak was politically and ideologically diverse. Once the unifying goal was achieved, fractiousness followed. Furthermore, after the uprising, protests and acts of dissent that had been iconic of resistance and democratic force became increasingly framed as disruptive. Framing them as disruptive legitimated their suppression—sometimes violently. This, I argue, contributed to creating a form of 'authoritarian confidence'. As many segments of the population grew tired of the economic and political burden

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"breaching" the national trust and the public by resigning, a misdemeanour charge that could carry $1,430 fine if he is convicted (Al-Jazeera 2014). The charge and the public reaction to El- Baradie's resignation, Khaled Dawoud, a former spokesman of the National Salvation Front of which El-Baradei was one of the founders explains is a reflection and indication of the polarization of politics in Egypt, where independent stands are un-tolerated and even --as the case of El-Baradei shows-- sanctioned. El-Baradei left Egypt for Vienna days following his resignation, and remains outside the country.

[229] Author's Interview, Ahmed Al-Muslimani, Former Egypt's interim presidential media advisor, Cairo Egypt, February 2014.

of contention they thus showed support for the government's repressive acts against activists and political dissidents.

My observation—regarding the rise of authoritarian confidence—is not to be understood as an observation to essentialize the Egyptian society and/or paint its entire sect with an orientalist brush. Growing impatient of dissidence and contention is a defining character of post-uprising politics in Western and non-Western societies. Tarrow (1998:160) writing on the waves of collective action from 1845 revolutions onwards notes the spread of "exhaustion" and disappointment as the cycles of contention winds down. Zolberg (1972) even goes further writing "what we remember most", after the intoxication of protests cycles, "is that moments of political enthusiasm are followed by bourgeois repression or by charismatic authoritarianism, sometimes by horror but always by the restoration of boredom" (1972: 205). Exhaustion, disappointment and the return of authoritarian confidence following episodes of major contention are thus important areas of study for future research on social movements and democratic consolidation. A close analysis of the dynamics and tensions underlying these issues is significant to understanding the complex field of action in which the post-uprising political practice unfolds in often contradictory and disappointing way.

Studying the influence of the deep state and the closing of political space is another incredibly important research area to understanding the complex and contradictory unfolding of events in Egypt post the uprising. The notion of the deep state is useful in understanding some of the challenges that face the revolutionary forces in revolutionary situations and that obstruct the actual materialization of revolutionary outcomes. In its original sense, the concept of the deep state was first used in the context of the Turkish political system to describe a group of influential anti-democratic coalitions within it (Karpat 2004).The notion assumes the existence of

an influential group of people, from the military, intelligence, judiciary, and major business who run the state almost in the background, as opposed to explicitly in the foreground. In Egypt, it is used to describe those elites who have remained impervious to the changes brought about by the fall of Mubarak, mostly the military which has been in power and the judiciary that has collaborated with the ruling elites (Abdelrahman 2012; Albrecht 2012, 2015; El-Amrani 2012; Kaminski 2012). Their actions are believed to be driven by fear of losing their grip on power and wealth.

Such analysis draws our attention to the ways in which the arrival of new government, in Egypt as in other Arab Spring countries, did not completely erase existing power dynamics, forms of inequality, state-citizen relations and understandings of the political. As an activist eloquently described, understanding the complex unfolding of post-uprising politics in Egypt should begin by analysing Egypt's former President Hosni Mubarak's speech that was delivered by his Vice-President Omar Suleiman on the night of February 11, 2011. In the former president's resignation speech, Suleiman announced that Mubarak "has *charged* (italics mine) the high council of the armed forces[230] to administer the affairs of the country" (CNN 2011). According to my interviewee, a prominent activist and a vocal women's rights supporter who wished not to be identified, the speech should be read as a "delegation" rather than "resignation" speech[231]. Even as Mubarak resigned, she explains "he still gave himself the right to delegate state authority to the army rather that leaving it to the parliament or the constitutional mandate"[232]. The speech is thus an emblematic reflection of the power of the deep state in Egypt. Analysing the forces and dynamics of the deep state and its security apparatus should be a

[230] The SCAF, Egypt's highest military body, was created by President Gamal Abdul Nasser following the country's defeat in the 1967 war.
[231] Interviewee 102. Author's interview, Cairo, Egypt, December 2014.
[232] Interviewee 102.

critical and growing area of research importance that promises to uncover some of the complexities and challenges of democratic transition and regime change in the MENA region (Abdel-Rahman 2012; Albercht 2014; Hinnebusch 2015; Lynch & Dodge 2015; Shehata 2014).

However, an important area and much under researched area that is worth equal attention is how civil society organizations and their members have contributed to the changing zeitgeist of the post uprising politics as well. During my fieldwork, several activists described how their experience in the newly emerged organizations and political groups did not live up to their expectations and was marked by disappointment. Examining what I would term the 'democratic deficiency' in civil society organizations is an important analytical venture as it forces a self-reflexivity in assessing the stakes of hope and despair that came out of the uprising. While acknowledging the influence of structure in conditioning and sanctioning our choices and options of action and (in) actions, scholarly analysis would be incomplete without accounting for our own actions and (in) actions. This is significant for not only academic research but most importantly for the lives and the future of the masses in the region.

Specifically during the last round of my field research in Egypt in 2014, several of my participants revealed how their experience in the post uprising activism was not void of the very challenges that gave rise to the uprising. "Yesterday's activists", an activist contends in disappointment, "became today's fascist leaders"[233]. Robert Michels' iron law of oligarchy is relevant to understanding the issue of democratic deficiency in newly emerged political organizations. Observing the governance of political parties and trade unions in 1911 in Europe, Michels famously argued that "Who says organization, says oligarchy" (Michels 1915: 15). He

[233] Interviewee 89.

observed how leaders of organizations tend to take more power than the members who selected them and once in power they are not influenced by opinions from below.

Others explained how the dynamics among group's members in Egypt were often marked by struggles for power and animosities. Members had a very different approach, as well as competing ideas about the "most democratic" way to structure organizations, represent interests, interact with political institutions, and other activist groups (Fadl 2014; Shams El-Din 2015a; 2015 b). Contentions and problems appeared among members of the newly emerged NGOs because of their inability to move beyond their diverse and sometimes competing views and reconcile them.

This is not only the case for women's groups; the activist community in Egypt at large has been increasingly critiqued for suffering from the replication of authoritarianism in their process and discussions. It is not self-evident how this corrupt political culture affected and translated into particular kinds of exclusionary (authoritarian) artifacts and practices among oppositions and social movement members. This, however, might be explained as a function of the decades of authoritarian rule that have corrupted the political culture in Egypt. The political regime tolerated critiques from the opposition forces as evident in the growing number of opposition newspaper and media outlets, however; state security forces heavy-handedly punished any effort for collaboration and collective action across different oppositional forces. Activists and political opposition forces thus were not ostensibly accustomed to working together and reconciling their political differences towards constructing a viable sustainable political project.

It would definitely be an overstatement to generalize this observation and ascribe it to every oppositional group, social movement organization and/ or NGO in Egypt's civil society. First, the observation is in itself a bold statement, and some of the activists who made this

observation conveyed it in an *off record*[234] milieu. This is in sharp contrast to their outspoken revolutionary persona, indeed, the same activists were largely open to voicing their opinions and views on other various and most importantly politically sensitive matters. The question of how a group of activists who understand themselves as committed to democracy can produce practices that can be exclusionary is thus a tough question to ask and —not surprisingly— difficult to answer. It is, however, incredibly important to understanding the challenges of democratic transitions and tracing the enduring effects of authoritarianism on political culture and its processes. This analytical venture promises to explain the experience of moving both forward and backward as revolutionaries and activists try to navigate a post-revolutionary present in the shadow of the past.

The politics of disappointment, however, I believe in line with social movement theorizing, is a "complex political" and affective form in its own right (Greenberg 2014: 11; Gould 2009; Tarrow 1998: 169). A focus on the politics of disappointment challenges us to ask how women as a group configure political action and agency in the face of such ambiguity and in "the shadow of idealized moments of social transformation" (Greenberg 2014: 11). For instance, while women's rights groups in Egypt continue to fight for formal representation in political institutions and legal rights in the constitution[235], they are increasingly focusing on bringing to light issues of gender inequality across Egyptian society. This is because, as Elham Eidarous contends, "the revolution, which was essentially a liberation project, has not only faced the

[234] I asked my particpants for their permission to share their observation without dircetly quoting them or including their actual words.

[235] The invisibility of women from the formal political landscape is evident in the weak representation of women in parliament, government and political parties in the period post the uprising --whether under SCAF rule, Muslim brotherhood, or under the current regime.

political authority, but also, unmasked accumulated layers of societal decay"[236]. This decay has been manifested, she adds, through" the high level of sexual violence against women in public places, unlike the atmosphere of liberation during the first 18 days in 2011". Thus rather than the top down approach that has been often adopted by women's right groups during the last decade, the younger generation of women's rights activists that has emerged following the 2011 uprising emphasises rooted and localized activism that takes shape in non-conventional initiatives.

Under these emerging forums of activism, gender issues figure squarely and centrally. Salient among these initiatives are anti-sexual harassment campaigns, women's oral history projects, as well as visual and literal arts productions. For instance, among the memorable moments of my field trip in Egypt in fall 2014 was attending a participatory theatrical play on the issue of female genital mutilation at the Swiss Club in Al-Kitkat neighbourhood in Cairo, Egypt. The play was among a number of grass roots initiatives launched to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The show narrated the life and daily struggles of Hania, a young middle class Egyptian girl as she confronted harassment and gender discrimination at school and home. The story reached its climax as Hania's parents decided to circumcise her, the play closed with Hania's emotional cry as she is pushed to the floor, strangled by her mother and the midwife approaching her with a knife.

"And everything froze," I wrote in my field notebook, "the silence seemed so loud in the crowded room where over 200 people were watching the play". The heavy silence continued as the director took the stage asking for the audience's reactions as well as what they thought Hania should do. The first to speak was a middle age Sheik, speaking in a confident voice, he insisted that female genital circumcision is a religious obligation rooted in Islam and dictated in its

[236] Author's Interview, Elham Eidarus, legal representative of the Bread and Freedom Party, Cairo Egypt, November 2014.

teachings. Before he could finish his sentence, the majority of the women in the room raised their voices in dismay, shouting that the practice was inhumane, and some even outright challenged the Sheik's religious view, insisting that female circumcision is rooted in systems of discrimination, oppressions and patriarchal traditions.

It is worth noting that the act was being played at Al-Kitkat neighbourhood in Egypt, one of Egypt's poorest slums. Unemployment, violence, crime, radicalization are among the long list of socio-economic ills that are salient in the neighbourhood. I thus found it surprising—yet promising—that the show was held there. Indeed, Magy Nabil, an actress in the play, emphasised in our interview following the play that the group deliberately showed their plays in rural and poor areas as part of their effort to reach out to the poor and disadvantaged segments of society, who may be among those more likely to still practice female circumcision[237]. Women's assertive reaction to the Sheik's statements took me back by surprise as well. I left with a sense that change and social transformation are indeed possible, and that they can take place when and where we least expect.

Beyond the creative and localized approach of these initiatives, these forms of activism and engagement hold great potential as they are often, but not always, tolerated by the regime. They potentially may escape all together the radar of state censorship and security surveillance. In an increasingly narrow political space these venues thus hold potential for sustaining engagement and pushing for social change. Furthermore, these initiatives are significant in

[237] Author's Interview, Magy Nabil, Actress in "One Voice" Theatrical Group, Cairo Egypt, November 2014. It is however worthnoting the FGM/C is not only limited to the poor segements of the society, according to the Population Council PANEL SURVEY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EGYPT (SYPE) 2014 survey, FGM/C was more common among rural female respondents (87.9%) than their counterparts in informal urban (74.8%) and urban areas (66.3%). Respondents from rural Upper Egypt were the most likely to have undergone FGM/C (91.6%), while those from the Urban Governorates were the least likely (55.6%).The practice of FGM while largely prevelant in rural areas, it cuts across different socioeconomic classes in Egypt. The full report can be accessed at: http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2015PGY_SYPE-PanelSurvey.pdf

raising consciousness about gender inequality and women's rights among women as well as the broader Egyptian society. Awareness of one's own interests both precedes and enables democratic representation to take place (Greenberg 2014). Indeed, carving a space outside of politics for grass root activism and social empowerment recuperates a potentially democratic project in a closed off and politically sensitive context.

The ostensibly benign political nature of these mundane forms of activism is a response to and a path out of more intimate encounters with violence, as well as the kinds of political and social dilemmas that the history and the present of Egypt's contentious politics pose. Members of these artistic initiatives are also somehow viewed above the fray of messy political and ideological life, and thus better able to represent the interest of women and introduce social change. A focus on these forms of activism is important area for further research as it complicates our understanding of activism under politics of disappointment. It encourages a view of activism not only in multiple sites but also at multiple scales of action and meaning.

The poignancy of this research area is ignited by participants anguish over the ugly turn of events in Egypt, after the uprising, yet their affirmation that their experience in the uprising had changed them, and that "things cannot go back to the old days of Mubarak "[238].

Attention to the politics of disappointment is significant for understanding the unfolding of politics following regime change in the MENA region and beyond. It not intended to heroicize women groups—or any reform activist group for that matter— for fighting the odds at all costs. Rather, it is to draw the lessons that change and reform —even seemingly diminutive forms— can happen even in the face of disappointments. This approach encourages us to locate not only

[238] Interviewee 95. Author's Interview, Cairo: Egypt, November 2015.

the causes of disappointment and roots for democratic setbacks, but also to locate agency and actions amidst all the odds.

Concluding Comments

Throughout my dissertation, I sought to demonstrate that women's engagement in the 2011 Egyptian uprising existed in dialectical relation and sometimes tension with long-standing social relations, institutional forms, and cultural practices. It took shape under the legacies of the past and their activism after the uprising as well continued under the public's sense that the political system was corrupt and that the Egyptian state's ties to the old regime of Mubarak and the corrupted legacies of the past had not been broken. In their struggles with the regime, and the larger publics, women attempted to authorize their participation and engagement both in terms of and despite these histories and messy realities.

The analysis offered is thus animated by the knowledge that there is no political project that is not imbricated in multiple contexts simultaneously at all times (Gould 2009). Women's political activism and engagement in the uprising and after the uprising, remained fundamentally hybrid, with multiple meanings. This view encourages us to consider women's political activism as subject to constant reinterpretation and reframing in ways that can make the work of assessing it incredibly destabilizing and deeply challenging.

This conclusion is not, however, a *cri de cœur* and/ or a cry of disappointment. Disappointment, scholars emphasize, is not the end of politics (Greenberg 2014: 11; Gould 2009; Tarrow 1998: 169). This is rather an invite to researchers to consider more urgent— though not unhopeful—set of questions about the kind of world we live in, the possibility of social change

and people’s hopes for a better and more equitable life. These questions should be animated by a quest for locating people's agency rather than plight.

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