Gendering Egypt’s January 2011 Revolution: The state, feminism, and competing for the Egyptian nation.

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Abstract

This thesis highlights the fact that the Egyptian state has competed and continues to compete against political forces opposed to their rule, and that this contestation over the framing and image of the Egyptian nation is constructed along, among other things, gendered contours. Specifically, that the nation is often imagined and identified by both the Egyptian state and opposing political forces by defining expectations and roles of Egyptian masculinity and femininity, and those failing to uphold such standards find themselves excluded, or worse, targeted. These competing political forces include the Egyptian state, namely the office of the presidency under both Hosni Mubarak and Abdel Fattah el Sisi, and all those under their jurisdiction, such as the police and the armed forces. In light of this, this thesis emphasises that any understanding of the way in which the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath was contested, must come with an understanding of the importance of gender performativity and expectations in Egypt, as these are continuously evoked within the political struggle. At the heart of this, the thesis underscores the consequent challenges and objectives the Egyptian women’s rights movement have faced as a result of the ongoing political turbulence in Egypt, and the consequences for them of a gendered discourse being used by political factions.
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Declaration of Originality

I hereby confirm that this work is my own and that where the work of others has been used, they have been appropriately referenced. Parts of this thesis have already been published by the Journal for Cultural Research (2015) in a special volume on the 2011 Egyptian Revolution entitled “Women, Culture, and the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution”, edited by Dalia Mostafa.
Plagiarism and Copyright Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is my own work, is not copied from any other person's work (published or unpublished), and has not previously been submitted for assessment either at Imperial College London or elsewhere. I confirm that I have read and understood the Department and University regulations on plagiarism.

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Notes on Transliteration

This thesis has transliterated Arabic words into English spelling by following the transliteration system prescribed by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Diacritics have not been used except for the *hamza* and *‘ayn* as advised by the IJMES. All Arabic names and terms have been italicized with the English translation provided in brackets by the author immediately after.
Acknowledgements

This PhD thesis began long before I formally began the process in September 2012. As an Egyptian living in Egypt during the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, I, like many millions of Egyptians in Egypt and abroad, was inspired by what was happening in Tahrir Square. I had moved to Cairo in April 2009 uninterested in Egyptian politics because to me, it did not appear to exist. There was Hosni Mubarak, who had been president before I was even born, and all the talk about his successor started and stopped at the mention of his son, Gamal. Both family and friends in Egypt appeared to have no interest in topics like government or elections, often responding with a joke or two about the situation. I remember my cousin, Amr, telling me, “Mubarak is like your Robin Hood in England, except he takes from the poor to give to the rich”. He followed this with a laugh, but that did not make it any less true or meaningful to him. My cousin at the time was a recent graduate with a degree in Economics but could not find a job. His case was not special. Most of his friends were in the same situation. In short, a frustrated generation with qualifications but no opportunities, and it would be this youthful generation that I would see most in Tahrir Square, seemingly trying to right the wrongs of generations gone by. As a result, my first thanks for helping me through this journey go to Amr and his parents, my uncle Abdullah on my mother’s side, and his wife Maha, who housed me in Cairo for much of my stay, and who imparted so much of their wisdom, feelings, and experiences of Egypt that aided my understanding of my Egyptian heritage. I will always be thankful for them correcting my Arabic and answering all my questions over the dinner table every evening.
My mother, Nabila, also played a crucial role before and during this PhD process. I think she would be the first to admit that she was sceptical about me moving to Egypt in 2009, wondering why I would seemingly trade ‘the first world’ for ‘the third’. She worried that I would not be able to adapt; that “Egypt has its own way” she would tell me, and she was right. It does. Yet the process of finding out how Egypt operates on a day to day basis, what I call ‘organised chaos’ when people ask me about living there, has been extremely rewarding. There were certainly times and days living there that were very frustrating, but it prepared me well for being able to research and write about Egypt for this PhD thesis at a pivotal time in its history. My mother has been a pillar of support for me for the past six years, and indeed my entire life, and while she jokingly always tells me she does not always understand what I write when she reads it because English is her second language, she tells me she is glad that I am writing about Egypt and that I am passionate about her and my father’s Egyptian roots.

I want to thank my two academic supervisors at Imperial College London who have supported and advised me since we met in September 2012. Dr. Maggie Awadalla, my main supervisor, for her guidance and suggestions, reading my work with a critical lens and asking me questions that aided my analytical development. Professor Charmian Brinson was a constant source of support for me at the university, helping me settle in quickly and always on hand to help me whenever I needed it. In particular, her suggestions led me to thoroughly enjoy reading and understanding the process of using oral history as a source, and the benefits and drawbacks that can arise. I hope they are pleased with the end product which is this thesis.

Finally, I want to formally thank every interviewee that graciously gave up their time to be a part of this PhD process, making it possible in the first place. There
is no doubt that events in Egypt over the past five years have had a profound emotional impact on many activists, including some of those that I interviewed. Nevertheless, they still spoke with me, answered my questions, and offered me so much to contemplate, both academically for this thesis, and personally as well. I hope I have done their sentiments justice in this thesis and that they received a benefit from speaking with me just as I did with them.

I end with a reflection of how this process began. I was in Tahrir Square on the evening of 12 February 2011 when Hosni Mubarak’s resignation was announced on the large projector erected to a western wall of the square. My friends and I celebrated next to hundreds of thousands of Egyptians in the square, if not a million. That night I returned home and in the early hours of a winter morning in Cairo and wondered what would come next. I soon found myself typing a note of reflection of events that would become an article published the following week by the newspaper *Daily News Egypt*. It was that early morning, still grasping that ‘we did it’, that I realised that after revolution, the events, feelings, and experiences of this momentous occasion must be documented. This is my attempt.
Introduction

i. Aims of the Thesis and Chapters’ Outline

Popular uprisings that have evoked a concept of nationalism and the subsequent treatment and status of women in the aftermath of the uprisings have long been a focus for Middle Eastern scholars. In the fields of gender studies, anthropology, sociology, political science, and others, 20th century Egypt has often been used as a case study. Margot Badran (1995, 2009), Selma Botman (1999), and Mervat Hatem (1992, 2002) have discussed and linked the progression or stagnation of women’s socio-political rights in Egypt to the political upheaval that came with Egypt’s 1919 and 1952 Revolutions. In doing so, scholars have engaged in a number of debates and discussions across a number of platforms and themes. Do women, for example, benefit or suffer in any way from mass political changes that see the toppling of one state which is then replaced by a supposedly very different one?  
Discussions have also taken place on what exactly is meant by women’s rights, with attempts to distinguish between public and private rights, local and universal feminism, and to understand the root and nature of patriarchal control over women (Ghannam 2013), and how this control is exercised, reinforced, accepted or revolted against.

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1 An expanded definition of ‘state’ will be offered at the beginning of Chapter Two in relation to its distinction from the meaning of ‘nation’ through Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak’s theoretical treatise, ‘Who Sings the Nation-State’ (2010). In short, the term ‘state’ is being used in this thesis to denote the formal institutional branches and mechanisms of government such as the office of the president, the police and security apparatus, the judiciary, and government ministry departments, whereas ‘nation’ denotes a much less concrete mode of thought that denotes the values and expectations of citizens that forms part of the identity of peoples within a geographical border. These differentiations and definitions will be widely discussed in Chapter Two. For wider discussions on statehood, see Kiernan 1965, and Wimmer and Feinstein 2010.
The aims of this thesis are ambitious in that it seeks to understand both the objects and subjects of power. Using the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution as its centre point, it seeks to understand how successive Egyptian states since and including Hosni Mubarak’s state have not only sought to control women’s bodies physically, through alienation and expulsion from public spaces including ‘the street’ and formal political processes, but control over the semantics of womanhood, specifically women’s bodies, that reinforces their overall attempted subjugation of not only Egyptian women but also Egyptian men. In turn, this thesis does not argue that this is a one-sided domination of patriarchy, but rather a continued contestation between patriarchy and those opposed to it. Those opposed to it, as this thesis will later illustrate, are both men and women, older and younger, secular and religious, and those who do and do not adopt the label of ‘feminism’. I argue that this contestation, in the context of revolution and post-revolution, is fought along contours and notions of nationhood and what exactly is meant and denoted in the context of the Egyptian ‘nation’.

Egypt has been chosen as the case study for a number of reasons. Its revolution of January 2011 offers the opportunity to place questions and discussions of controlling and defining masculinity and femininity, national identity, and a number of other often abstract notions, in an event that continues to unfold in the present. Egypt’s post-revolutionary period has provided this thesis with numerous avenues which discuss existing questions, as well as raising new ones, and while there are drawbacks to studying an ongoing event, it has also offered numerous opportunities for understanding the dynamics of power in a changing social landscape.

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2 Patriarchy can be defined and conceptualised along several different platforms including class, family, and politics (McDonough and Harrison 12). For the purpose of this thesis, defining patriarchy in Egypt will be analysed and understood through the notion of nationhood as shall be illustrated later in this chapter. For a wider discussion on patriarchy, see Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (2000).
advantages. Moreover, as this chapter and Chapter One will highlight, the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution can be contextualised not just universally but domestically, where Egypt’s rich history of revolution in the 20th century offers avenues for building thematic and comparative analysis with that of January 2011 and events since. This approach provides an understanding to several key nuances within women’s rights and feminist activism in Egypt today. For instance, this historical reflection enables us to understand why feminism and any advocacy of gender equality in Egypt today makes references to Egypt’s colonial history, and that some of the lessons women’s rights activists today have learned have come from understanding Egypt’s history of revolution.

The thesis aims to provide understanding rather than answers. This understanding is not limited to somewhat expansive notions and debates on gender, feminism, nationalism, and revolution, but also attempts to understand the individuality of experiences and character that give meaning to these notions. In Chapter Four, for example, the thesis hones in on the lives of ten chosen gender rights activists, often referred to as herstories. This provides a much needed understanding of the past and present experiences that have shaped the current hopes, motivation, and daily struggles of activists that are often nameless but bundled into a wholesale depiction of ‘protestors’ or ‘activists’. Moreover, recording the experiences of Egyptian men and women at such a pivotal time in Egypt’s history is crucial to the documenting of the revolution itself, and necessary in providing an alternative history.

3 Sections iii and iv of this chapter address the methodology for undertaking research on an event that can be considered ongoing, as well as my own positionality within the research process. Where relevant, the thesis reflects on the methodology and the advantages and disadvantages of researching and writing on an ongoing event in other chapters, such as Chapter Three, which deals with very current events at the time of writing the thesis which had an impact on writing that particular chapter.

4 For more on framework and usage of herstories, see Simien and McGuire 2014, and Durakbas and Ilyasoglu 2001.
to the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution to counter any hegemonic views that could be disseminated by future political and state leaders. This has proved to be a very rich undertaking because it has provided meaningful analysis and understanding of what exactly is meant by feminism in Egypt, how it is defined, and where it is accepted and rejected across numerous everyday spheres of life. In light of this, patterns can begin to be traced in understanding how gender rights activists have formed their characters and agendas, and begin to understand the nature of their demands and their strategy in achieving them. What is most interesting, however, is where these patterns begin to break. This thesis will highlight that gender rights activists are not one character or upbringing but several, and that they often differ in their demands and strategies which will be highlighted in Chapters Three and Four. This differentiation becomes important because it raises key questions and considerations. For example, if not all gender rights activists agree on what rights must be sought and how these rights are prioritised and articulated, it can lead to divisions, particularly in light of the differing levels of financial resources and access to political actors that gender rights NGOs and groups have from one another. This differentiation becomes particularly important with consideration of the upheaval that Egypt has gone through since 2011, a time where there have been, and are, numerous competing forces across a number of different platforms including political power and religious authority. As a consequence, any major divisions within any social or political movement may find themselves disadvantaged, and this is no less true

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5 It could be argued that a hegemonic view of the January 2011 Revolution has already begun to be spread by what I call in later chapters, the ‘post- 3rd July state’. One example is the way in which the 25th January protests in 2011 against Hosni Mubarak have been grouped together with the 30th June 2013 protests against President Mohamed Morsi. For example, in the January 2014 constitutional referendum that was led by the post-3rd July state, the author witnessed posters and billboards littered across Egypt with the message: “A ‘yes’ vote to the constitution is a ‘yes’ to the 25th January and 30th June Revolutions”. In contrast, however, many of the activists interviewed who protested against Mubarak in 2011 were against Morsi’s ousting by the military in 2013. This is just one example of how the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution has already begun to be used as a political tool.
concerning a movement for gender rights equality. By the same token, diversity has also proven to be a strength if not a necessity, where in a population of over eighty million people, as is highlighted in Chapter Three concerning the drafting of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution, diversity among gender rights activists has been vital in ensuring that Egypt’s social demographic are represented. However, as is also discussed in Chapter Three, there remains the problematic area of ascertaining who ‘speaks’ for Egyptian women and on what authority do they do so.

By far one of the biggest challenges in this thesis has been understanding and defining the turbulence that has engulfed Egypt during and since the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Where protestors shouted in Tahrir Square, “El sha’b yured iskat el nizaam” (the people demand the fall of the regime), we were already left with questions: who were “the people”, and who and what exactly was the regime? Did the fall of Mubarak mean the end of his regime, and how might this apparent democratic expression by protestors manifest and translate itself into post-Mubarak politics? These are struggles and questions that continue to hang over academics and analysts on Egypt. In addition, while the thesis focuses exclusively on Egypt between January 2011 and the summer of 2014, it must be acknowledged that protests in Egypt in January and February 2011 were part of a wider movement in the region, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring. Specifically, the effect on Egyptians of the protests in Tunisia in December 2010 that led to the resignation of long-standing president Zine El Abdine Ben Ali on 14 January 2011 cannot be ignored. Obvious parallels can be drawn between the two countries and their respective revolutions. Both had long-standing presidents, and both sets of protestors evoked the concept of the martyr that became a symbol of their revolution: Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia and Khaled Said in Egypt. Moreover, protestors in Egypt used the same formal Arabic dialect in their
chant calling for the removal of Mubarak and his regime that was used in Tunisia: *el sha‘b yured iskat el nizaam* (the people demand the fall of the regime). In light of this, while the thesis stringently only looks at the case of Egypt, there are certainly avenues for comparative research in the future between Egypt and other countries within the collective Arab Spring, with Tunisia being an obvious example. Moreover, it is important to note that while Tahrir Square was the focal point for the protests against Hosni Mubarak in January and February 2011, and as a result, Tahrir Square received the most attention in the media, protests also took place in other Egyptian cities, including Alexandria and Suez. In addition, the protests in 2011 did not occur in a vacuum, but can be seen as an extension to the protest movement in the previous decade (El Mahdi and Marfleet 2). El Mahdi and Marfleet highlight “the importance of politics ‘from below’”, where activists in Egypt have exercised forms of resistance to dictatorship in the 2000s (El Mahdi and Marfleet 154), and while such resistance did not bring the fall of Mubarak at the time of publication in 2009, El Mahdi and Marfleet’s work is significant because it highlights that the 2011 protests that led to Mubarak’s fall can be seen to have started long before 2011. Maha Abdelrahman has come to a similar conclusion, arguing that protests in Egypt support of Palestinian liberation, including the two *intifidahs*, as well as protests against the invasion of Iraq in 2003, can be seen as a starting point for calls for democratisation that grew louder in 2011 (Abdelrahman 29).

Where prior to the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution one could confidently refer to ‘Mubarak’s state’, this seemingly abstract notion becomes even harder to make tangible. Chapters Two and Three highlight how difficult it is to understand whose ‘state’ Egypt has been under since Mubarak’s resignation on 11 February 2011. Using Butler and Spivak’s discussion on the differences between what is meant by
'the nation’ and ‘the state’ as a theoretical platform, Chapter Two underlines why an understanding of ‘the state’ becomes important in consideration of what is meant by ‘the nation’ and national identity, and how these concepts are defined along gendered imaginations and formations by opposing political forces.

Finally, the thesis is structured to read as a journey, beginning with historical context through to the end of 2014. Chapter One provides context on important debates and concepts that are integral to understanding how colonialism, Islam, and the power of the Egyptian state, impact the way in which gender roles and feminism are perceived in Egypt since the beginning of the 20th century. Chapter One also introduces the debate surrounding what exactly is meant by the Egyptian nation and how it is articulated, as well as an understanding of state feminism. Chapters Two and Three are connected in that they seek to analyse the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath from a gendered lens in that they both highlight how competing political forces and movements contested one another along gendered contours, among other things. Chapter Two shows how protestors in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011 articulated their image of the Egyptian nation by highlighting the parity between men and women, noticeable through a lack of sexual harassment, and in turn, placing the blame on gender disparities and gender-based violence in Egypt, such as sexual harassment, on the shoulders of Hosni Mubarak and his state, thus excluding Mubarak from the Egyptian nation. Chapter Three focuses on the objectives of the Egyptian women’s movement in the aftermath of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the challenges they have faced at a politically turbulent and violent period in Egypt’s history. In doing so, Chapter Three raises awareness to the concept of patriarchal bargaining and how this provides a platform in order to understand how the women’s movement has thus far managed to not only survive, but
to an extent thrive, despite severe challenges. Chapter Four differentiates from Chapter Two and Chapter Three because it focuses on the personal rather than the public elements of feminist and political activism in Egypt. It specifically highlights the everyday personal struggles of activists that is often not researched and thus not understood, and in turn, these personal struggles inform the public and political activism of activists, and vice versa. Chapter Five serves as a conclusion which both reflects on the past five years in Egypt and how the thesis can be built upon by future scholars. As a result, the thesis can almost be read as a historical journey towards understanding how important it is to analyse the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution from a gendered lens and the numerous nuances that can be derived from doing so.
ii. An Overview of Sources Used and the Relationship between Gender and Nationhood.

The biggest challenge in researching and writing this thesis has been doing so on an event that can be argued is still ongoing. This was most true in 2012 and 2013, the first eighteen months of the research phase, where Egypt was experiencing perhaps the peak of its political upheaval in the wake of the January 2011 Revolution. As a result of researching and writing on an event that is currently unfolding, academics on Egypt and the Middle East are naturally trying to keep up. This has had significant implications on the research for the thesis. Importantly, it has meant that unlike other academic works, the thesis has not solely relied on other academic works on the topic of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution as so few exist. These few works have begun to emerge in the latter stages of 2014 and thus far in 2015, when the bulk of the research for the thesis was already conducted. However, the thesis has been able to still conduct in-depth research, and as a result, as well as the thesis drawing upon academic works and fieldwork interviews, it also relies upon a number of different types of sources throughout, including online news reports, online blogs written by activists, open-editorials, and NGO reports.

The use of academic literature and fieldwork interviews will be discussed at length later in this section in relation to their benefits, drawbacks, and considerations taken into account when using them as sources. However, there were also numerous advantages using secondary sources such as online news reports and open-editorials. For instance, where an interviewee during a fieldwork interview discussed a point that included their mentioning of a specific event or speech, online news reports of that event were readily available to be researched and place the point made by an
interviewee into more context. In light of this, fieldwork interviews as a source and news outlets as a source were on occasion connected. Moreover, an open-editorial was on occasion used as a reference point by an interviewee, for example, citing it as a marker of how they feel towards something or someone, which could then be read after the interview if I was not already aware of the open-editorial in question. This served as a point of engagement and highlights in real terms how sources overlapped with one another.

News reports and open-editorials could also be used in isolation from fieldwork interviewees in order to substantiate a point made in the thesis. However, more than one online report would be sought to provide evidence of an event or speech, but rather several were used in order to ascertain any important differences in the event and the way in which the event or speech was reported. This was particularly important when contrasting the language used by news reports between domestic and international media outlets and an awareness that domestic news outlets could not be used if they held any Egyptian governmental associations or fell under government ownership. In light of this, domestic media outlets were rarely used to substantiate a point made in the thesis, unless the point was to highlight their very bias. Moreover, this was not limited only to Egyptian domestic news outlets. Likewise, there was awareness that some international news outlets could not be used as reliable sources if there was an obvious bias or conflict of interest in their reporting. For example, any information provided by Al Jazeera after July 2013 could not be used as Al Jazeera by this stage were politically engulfed in the controversy surrounding the removal of president Mohamed Morsi on 3 July 2013.6 In contrast, however, some news outlets

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6 A more detailed look at how Al Jazeera has been compromised as a ‘credible’ news source on Egypt is provided in Chapter Three, footnote 5.
could be used without this threat of bias. Most notably, *The Guardian*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and others, have all at some stage, if not entirely throughout since January 2011, had a full-time correspondent in Egypt to ensure that events are covered as they unfold, and there are no obvious biases these two news outlets have towards their reporting on Egypt.

Consequently, where Chapters Two and Three heavily focus on events and analysis in 2011, 2012, and 2013, many of the references are to either academics who have written for a news outlet, or a news outlet itself reporting on an event. While this may not hold the same weight as a peer reviewed academic text, this use of news reports and open-editorials has nevertheless proved valuable in understanding and drawing from the arguments made by academics in this field and by interviewees during their interviews. Moreover, open-editorials by academics have provided a wider platform for debate and discussion that is arguably much larger than the scope of academic circles. In other words, their open-editorials are far more accessible and readable as open-editorials rather than academic peer-reviewed journals, creating a larger audience and scope for debate and engagement by those following Egypt, including both researchers and activists. This was most evident in the way in which open-editorials would be mentioned by activists themselves because they had read the open-editorial online or in a newspaper, rather than needing access to an academic journal or a university library to be able to read it. However, one major drawback behind using open-editorials as a source is that it can be very easy to misinterpret the author’s point because open-editorials are often short in nature, limited by a word
count often not exceeding one thousand words, providing a margin for error to not understand their arguments fully.\(^7\)

While several different types of sources were used to provide research for the thesis, in many instances, they complemented each other. Open-editorials written after an event or speech could be read in relation to the news reporting of the event or speech in question, providing not just information from the news reports, but analysis on this piece of news by the open-editorial, providing scope to understand the differing opinions on the matter and the varying ways it has been received. Moreover, fieldwork interviews and the opinions and feelings of interviewees who are activists could be compared to the analysis provided by open-editorial authors on current events in Egypt, gauging whether their opinions agreed or disagreed with what has been written, which in turn provided them a platform to explain their own feelings and opinions. The same is also true of academic works, where points in Egypt’s political past or present, or concerning gender rights in Egypt, were discussed in interviews, and as a result, arguments or theories put forward in academic texts could be compared directly to the opinions of interviewees and my own analysis of the fieldwork compared with what has previously been written on Egypt and gender. Finally, the spheres of academia and fieldwork interviews intertwined in the form of academic conferences that invited Egyptian activists to speak, which provided me with the opportunity to expand my own academic questions for this thesis, and an opportunity to meet activists who in turn became either a participant in this thesis as an interviewee, or as a point of contact introducing me to potential and relevant interviewees. In particular, in November 2012, I attended the first of a two-staged

\(^7\) The author has written many open-editorials on political events in Egypt since 2011 and is aware of the difficulty in fully explaining a point within the word count assigned by news editors.
conference at the University of Manchester, with the second stage taking place in March 2013 at Ain Shams University in Cairo. In the first instance I was an attendee having just begun my PhD two months earlier. The conference provided invaluable space for both academics on Egypt and activists in Egypt to speak and debate at a time where Egypt was still fresh from its first democratic presidential elections earlier that summer, as well as in the middle of writing its first constitution after the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. The second stage in March 2013 provided me with the opportunity to both once again attend and listen to activists, as well as the opportunity to speak at the conference now that my research had progressed. Speaking at the conference was a deeply enriching experience, where I met future interviewees for the very first time who took an interest in my research, as well as future friends and academic mentors from both the University of Manchester and Ain Shams University.

Peer-reviewed academic texts were used whenever possible, most commonly in relation to theoretical frameworks and arguments put forward on the link between Egyptian nationhood and how such nationhood is often constructed along contours of gender performativity and expectations. Beth Baron provides historical insight, noting, “Egypt appears to have the most natural of all nationalist pedigrees. Anchored in the ancient world, it presumably had fixed boundaries for millennia, continuous settlement of a people on a land, and a river system that bound the people together” (Baron 3). Moreover, attention to Egypt’s link with these concepts has often been tied to metaphorical depictions of Egypt along familial terrains, where Egypt itself occupies a role as a ‘mother figure’. Baron notes:

According to its proponents, ‘one family’ descended from the same roots with shared blood. Young men, the foot soldiers of the nation, were its ‘sons,’ and young girls became its ‘daughters.’ At the head of the nationalist movement
generally loomed a dominating ‘father’ figure or group of ‘founding fathers.’ Nationalists hoped to replicate the sense of belonging and loyalty experienced within the family on a national scale. (5)

In addition, it has been argued extensively that such depictions have gained hypervisibility and popularity at times of political struggle, where, as Chapter One will illustrate, leaders such as Sa’ed Zaghlul and Gamal Abdel Nasser utilised notions of Egyptian nationhood in order to popularise their leaderships and carry out political objectives. As Baron noted, they did so by placing themselves within this nationalist rhetoric as the ‘father figure’ to Egypt as a mother. Under the leadership of Nasser, for example, Jack Crabbs explains:

A spate of books and articles appeared defining civic duties under the new order and the principles upon which that order was to be based. The good of the people, rather than the individual, was stressed, and Egyptians were called upon to act not in their own interests but in those of the (governmentally defined) whole. (387)

As a result, this thesis builds upon these patterns identified by previous scholars on Egypt’s marriage between gender and nationalism by using the January 2011 Revolution as the case study. In doing so, this thesis will be able to contribute to the already substantial literature on the dynamics and nuances within the relationship of gender, politics, and nationalism, and identify patterns that resemble or differentiate from the past. For example, Chapter Two will note how Hosni Mubarak attempted to make use of Egypt’s previous history and experiences by evoking concepts such as nationhood in order to reaffirm his legitimacy as leader of the nation, but that such attempts failed because protestors against his rule succeeded in
removing Mubarak’s claim to speak on behalf of the nation, and in doing so, began to forge their own symbols and rhetoric on Egyptian nationhood that placed Mubarak and his regime as its binary enemy. In light of this, this thesis both builds on Baron’s arguments and departs from it in that it exclusively looks at the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution as its case study. In turn, the thesis extends Baron’s work and puts to test exactly how Egyptian nationhood appears to be intrinsically linked with images and constructions of masculinity and femininity, and how this is acted out in this specific turbulent period in Egyptian history.

What is perhaps most interesting, and problematic from a feminist viewpoint, is the construct of the Egyptian nation as a woman and mother figure, where political leaders seek to fill the role of the father and protector and thus reinforce the strong male and weak female dynamic. In this case, it is Egypt (female) that needs to be protected by its (male) citizens, the most important of whom being the president. Farha Ghannam’s ‘Live and Die Like a Man’ (2013) is perhaps the most comprehensive and nuanced analysis of how such a male and female dynamic is constructed within Egyptian households. Focusing on families and neighbourhoods in Upper Egypt, Ghannam reveals her years of anthropological fieldwork to illustrate what exactly is meant by Egyptian masculinity, how this meaning is applied to young Egyptian boys, and as a result of understanding the construction of Egyptian masculinities, manhood, and expected masculine behaviour, this in turn reveals more about the expectations over Egyptian femininities and womanhood. As a result, Ghannam’s work has proved to be an invaluable tool in understanding the connection between political and familial realms in the context of the January 2011 Revolution. For example, in Chapter Two I discuss how Hosni Mubarak evoked the concept of himself as a father figure to the nation through his position as president.
Consequently, if the pattern of the president representing the father figure is meant to mirror familial relations on a local level where the father of the household reigns as its patriarch, then this imitation of this pattern on a nationwide political scale only reinforces this familial dynamic and vice versa. In light of this, familial and political gender constructs feed into each other, not allowing for any room to manoeuvre in seeking change in such gender roles and depictions. Consequently, Ghannam’s work provides a platform to understand Egyptian familial dynamics and the lines of which such dynamics are based on gender performativity and expectations, and in turn, the thesis adopted this platform to explain the position and significance of Egyptian nationhood and state leadership, namely the office of the presidency, as a reflection of such familial dynamics.

This becomes an important observation when analysing the concept of revolution and its effects on gender relations. Multiple questions and considerations arise. First of all, revolution within itself is an expansive term. At its heart it infers change, but the term itself remains indefinable and unrestricted to one mode of thinking. As a result, it is arguably more meaningful to specifically consider the revolution in question and ask whether there are any elements within a revolution that infer that anything pertaining to gender should or will change in the aftermath of the revolution. In the case of Egypt, scholars concerned with gender studies in the Middle East have varied outlooks towards gender and revolutions evoking a notion of the nation and nationalism. For example, one argument concerning Egypt’s 1919 Revolution in its quest for independence from British colonialism is that while women participated in the revolution that drew upon and evoked a notion of nationalism as the basis for their claim to revolt, women consequently found that in the aftermath of the revolution, the new political establishment and the toppling of the former political
leadership brought no new change to their lives (Hatem1992; Badran 1995). As a result, one could argue that high levels of female participation in a revolution should assume that women will fare better if the revolution succeeds, particularly if during the revolution itself, most often defined by protests, allowed for new gender roles to flourish. Marnia Lazreg disagrees with this reading. Rather, using Algerian women as her example and their participation in Algeria’s national struggle for independence from France in 1954, she disagrees with the notion that women were “duped into joining the nationalist movement by unscrupulous men who later did not share with them the spoils of independence” (Lazreg 118). Rather, she argues that women chose to fight as citizens against a colonial power in order to see their country liberated, and that any aims of achieving gender equality needs to be treated and addressed separately rather than as a failure of the national struggle. This raises a key discussion that will be considered in Chapter Two concerning the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, namely that the protests against Mubarak’s state both reinforced pre-existing gender roles and stereotypes while simultaneously creating new gender roles and depictions in its forging of a new Egyptian nationhood to juxtapose that of Mubarak and his state. Moreover, while Chapter Two highlights new modes of gender relations that took place in the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, Chapter Three addresses how and why new imaginings for gender rights equality and overall gender relations have struggled to flourish in the aftermath of the revolution amidst political turbulence and violence, and the measures and strategies a visible women’s movement has taken in order to both survive and achieve some of its objectives.

Chapters Three and Four build upon the work of previous gender studies academics and anthropologists in attempting to identify and understand what is meant by an Egyptian women’s movement and feminism in Egypt. In particular, academics
such as Badran (1995, 2009), Baron (2007), Bier (2011), Botman (1999), and Hatem (1992), have written extensively on their research on women’s rights activists and feminists who actively sought to enhance the lives of women in Egypt in the 20th Century. For example, Margot Badran (1995) provides an in depth understanding of the role of a women’s movement in Egypt in the first quarter of the 20th century in Egypt’s quest for independence from British colonialism, highlighting key activists and organisations such as Hoda Sha’rawi and the Egyptian Feminist Union. Her work provides a foundation to understand the early beginnings of a feminist movement in Egypt, and a model to compare the strengths, weaknesses, and struggles for Egyptian women’s movements in two separate revolutionary periods in Egypt. As her work also centred on the lives of renowned feminist figures in Egypt like Sha’rawi, it was possible to compare her analysis of Sha’rawi and the women’s movement in Egypt in the early 20th century to how contemporary feminist activists in Egypt look upon Sha’rawi as either one of their predecessors or pursuing policies entirely different to their current causes and struggles. In this way, the fieldwork interviews and the academic literature could on occasion be looked upon in tandem.

Laura Bier (2011) and Mervat Hatem (1992) concentrate their efforts on understanding the concept of state feminism under the tenure of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s and offer nuanced explanations to this manifestation of state feminism, and how it became a tool in Nasser’s nation-building program after independence from the British. This notion of state feminism in Egypt in the 20th century under successive Egyptian presidents, from Nasser to Mubarak, spanning the course of more than half a century, was used as the foundation in the thesis to understand two very important observations concerning gender and the January 2011

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8 Hoda Sha’rawi and the Egyptian Feminist Union will be discussed in more detail in Chapter One.
Egyptian Revolution: first, as is explained in Chapter Two, how this era of state feminism was broken by the January and February 2011 protests where protestors sought to regain control from Hosni Mubarak and his state over the narrative of expectations of gender roles and expectations, and two, as is illustrated in Chapter Three, the apparent return of control by the Egyptian state over the direction and narrative of gender rights, and expectations of Egyptian masculinity and femininity. In light of this, this thesis adds a new contribution to previous scholarship on state feminism in Egypt by outlining how control over gendered contours are contested by the state, opposing political parties to the state, and gender rights activists themselves.

Nadje Al-Ali (2000) has perhaps provided the deepest insight into an Egyptian women’s movement in the contemporary period, where her fieldwork focuses specifically on women’s rights groups and feminists in Egypt in the 1990s. Highlighting specifically secular groups and activists, her book Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women’s Movement builds upon the work of Badran, Baron, and Hatem whose work focused primarily on Nasser’s, and to an extent Sadat’s state, and offers a much needed update on the marriage between the Egyptian state, gender, and the make-up of the Egyptian women’s movement under Hosni Mubarak. One of Al-Ali’s findings, which she herself reflects on at different stages in her book, was the fragmentation within the secular women’s movement as a result of the disparity in funding and levels of access to the Egyptian state that bred tension and animosity. One extension, and challenge in this thesis to Al-Ali’s work, is the argument presented in Chapters Three and Four that the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution has had an extremely positive effect on the unity of the women’s movement that Al-Ali argued was lacking when she wrote her book in 2000. That is not to say that Al-Ali’s assertions were inaccurate, but rather highlights the
importance of writing this thesis in order to provide an update on an important subject in light of the extraordinary events and changes that have unfolded in Egypt since 2011.

In addition, the thesis has the opportunity of being one of the first attempts to reanalyse the dynamics between the Egyptian state and gender since January 2011 and examines whether these dynamics remain unchanged in comparison to the arguments made by Badran, Baron, Bier, Hatem, and Al-Ali, who analysed the dynamics between the Egyptian state and gender in the 20th Century. Just as the thesis can update Al-Ali’s arguments concerning the unity within the women’s movement, so too can it add to the analysis on whether the composition of state feminism and the state’s attitude towards gender and women’s rights has changed at all at a time when everything appears to have changed in Egypt since January 2011. As a result of this previous scholarship, the thesis can be read as a continuation of the dialogue that has already taken place before it by academics analysing Egyptian nationhood and its intrinsic use and link to Egyptian manhood and womanhood. For example, by taking ‘advantage’ of the unfolding of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, the thesis draws upon comparisons in the way in which Badran discusses and investigates how Hoda Sha’rawi and the Egyptian Feminist Union were sidelined in the post-1919 revolutionary period by various post-revolutionary governments to how female protestors were sought to be controlled by various post-January 2011 governments. The same can also be said of Laura Bier’s and Mervat Hatem’s work on the post-1952 revolutionary period. In particular, their arguments of state-sponsored feminism led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and his regime has been used as a platform on more than one occasion in this thesis, asking whether the post- 3 July 2013 Egyptian government, led by current president Abdel Fatah el Sisi, can be seen as a reinvigorating state-
sponsored feminism in Egypt that was born under Nasser. As a result, this thesis serves as a continuation of their work, being able to re-ask their questions and use their analysis on the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, as well as asking entirely new questions and opening up new paths of investigation.

Moreover, Al-Ali’s work on the Egyptian women’s movement in the 1990s has been vastly built upon in the thesis. Where Al-Ali focuses solely on the women’s movement in isolation, the thesis focuses on the women’s movement in relation to the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath. Specifically, by looking at the women’s movement in relation to such a dramatic event that has thus far encompassed every sphere of Egyptian life, including politics, society, religion, and the economy, this thesis has been able to highlight how the women’s movement has thus far managed to survive and still strive to achieve its short and long term objectives. In light of this, where Al-Ali’s work focuses on some of the struggles within the Egyptian women’s movement in the 1990s, the thesis has done so in the context and case study of one hugely turbulent period in Egyptian history, which underscores some of the challenges and issues that Al-Ali raised in her work and highlights these struggles in practice rather than just theory. Importantly, the thesis is just one of a new wave of academic scholarship on the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and what this revolution has thus far revealed about the formations and constructions of Egyptian nationhood, manhood, and womanhood, much in the way previous academics mentioned and discussed in this section formed the scholarship on the 1919 and 1952 revolutions respectively. As a result, this work, and others on the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution do not stand in contrast to previous scholarship on Egypt, but rather as their successors.
The previous section discussed revolution and its relationship and history with gender constructs and the women’s movement in the context of Egypt’s specific history of revolution and the subsequent scholarship on this. However, there has also been a focus within this research process to consider ‘revolution’ in a wider and more universal context that could inform some of the thinking on what has happened in Egypt since 25 January 2011. For example, are there any patterns or traits within revolution that seemingly point towards a change in gender expectations, gender constructs, and gender performativity? In turn, does a political revolution, namely the changing of one government to another government or form of governance, have direct implications on the lives of women specifically, either ‘positive’ or ‘negative’? If so, why, and if not, this is equally compelling, as is discussed in Chapter One, where it is proposed that women’s rights progression could have been a byproduct of women’s involvement and support for a revolution. However, this expectation may be unfounded when revolution is considered in a wider context and a deeper understanding of it is achieved. This will in turn provide alternative interpretations of revolution beyond a political sphere, and offer an understanding of what constitutes a revolution beyond this political sphere and whether and how it overlaps, and can be witnessed, in the realms of the social and familial.

Claude Lefort has written extensively on revolutions in the modern world and has highlighted patterns and put forward arguments of how a revolution, specifically revolutionaries, represent themselves, and some of the consequences that can arise from a revolution. He argues that the French Revolution was the site of the invention of modern democracy, forever alerting the permanence of a ruling family alongside a

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9 Gender expectations and gender performativity will be discussed at length in Chapter Four using the oral accounts of feminists and women’s rights activists in Egypt (both men and women) through Judith Butler’s understanding of gender performativity (1999).
religious establishment. In its place was the birth of the idea that power could be transferable and divided, giving way to what is understood as a separation of powers in modern government that blocks any attempt in a democratic country for one force to transcend a democratic model into an autocratic one (Plot 114). Most interestingly, Lefort looks at how the French Revolution ended in dictatorship and brutality, but rejects the notion that this happened midway through the revolution, but that this was inevitable from the very beginning, as revolution itself is both the birthplace of democracy and totalitarianism. He argues that the imagination of revolutionaries, in their attempts to provide an alternative to the ruling government or regime, provide an image of the people in power; a clear and simplified notion of democracy. However, the issue with such an imagination, Lefort argues, is that it presents an entirely unrealistic and unachievable expectation, and what transpires is a formation of dualities and binaries whereby those revolutionaries who assume power claim a revolution based on democracy, and those in favour of or opposed to their rise to power are placed as pro or anti-revolutionary respectively, thus providing the scope for later brutality and suppression which the French Revolution witnessed (115).

This resonated with the research process in this thesis concerning Tahrir Square in January and February 2011, which is discussed at length in Chapter Two, where protestors in Tahrir Square presented themselves as the antithesis to Hosni Mubarak’s regime. Lefort’s argument that a revolution paints an unrealistic and unachievable picture of the future governance in a country which will in turn lead to further brutality during and after the revolution, is useful in the context of understanding how the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution was articulated and expressed by its proponents. Specifically, according to Lefort’s viewpoint, such an articulation is arguably the beginning of causing conflict, not just between the ruling
regime and revolutionaries, but conflict in the aftermath of the success of the revolutionaries and how they must govern non-democratically to those who do not support their assumption to power. This is not just limited to the former regime who have been toppled by the revolution, but those who supported the revolution who are not in governance because governance cannot include every single revolutionary despite this being the image portrayed during the revolution itself. Ziad Elmarsafy echoes this same sentiment through Jacques Derrida’s notion that “we can never be democratic enough” (77). This is an important consideration when looking specifically at Egypt, where it is argued in Chapter Two that such an idealistic picture of a democratic Egypt was put forward by protestors in Tahrir Square that was united by a desire to remove Mubarak, but was by the same token, limited to their common enmity towards Mubarak. In turn, the actual fabric of the revolution can be seen to be very different by those in Tahrir Square, which sides with the logical view that while there may be several protestors in the same location and time protesting against the same thing, this does not constitute to them wanting exactly the same things. As a result, the often violent and brutal scenes that have occurred in Egypt by several political factions in Egypt since Mubarak’s resignation would have been deemed inevitable according to Lefort’s viewpoint, where different factions fight towards having their specific notion and image of the revolution accepted as the only image of the revolution. Moreover, violence and oppression would be possible after revolution according to Elmarsafy’s reading of Derrida because “the struggle for human rights always finds new obstacles and renewed calls for revolution; that the passage from authoritarian to democratic regimes – and indeed the evolution of rights and justice in ostensibly democratic societies – is neither simple nor straightforward” (77).
Lefort’s viewpoint is also useful when analysing the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the contestations that followed after Mubarak’s resignation because it provides a lens for understanding the fragility of what is casually referred to as ‘revolution’, and how such a term is fluid and ever-changing amidst the mêlée of political factions that attempt to consolidate this concept of revolution as not only concrete and fixed, but fixed upon their ‘version’ of the revolution and what it embodies and signifies. In light of this, while this thesis constantly refers to the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the post-revolutionary period, it is with the understanding that such a term and phrase is not unitary or unanimously decided upon. This is most evident in Chapters Two and Three where it is highlighted how gender constructs and expectations were intertwined with notions of nationhood and national identity that became a platform for competing political forces to propagate their image of the revolution as the only credible version. As a result, references to the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution are to specific time periods, such as January and February 2011 and the nationwide protests that occurred within this time period, rather than a specific notion of the revolution.

This understanding of the fragility and fluid nature of attempting to define revolution becomes equally important and useful when analysing whether there are to be any changes in the lives of men and women in relation to their gender roles, rights, and expectations, as males and females as a result of revolution. Specifically, if it is accepted that the notion of revolution is debatable and that the universal patterns of revolution are limited to a ruling regime being removed from power by another force, usually embodied by ‘people power’, there should in turn be no expectations that revolution should naturally affect gender contours. Consequently, Lazreg’s earlier argument that women’s rights progression should be looked upon separately from
revolution despite women’s involvement in supporting the revolution remains true. As a result, this thesis was less concerned with whether the 2011 January Egyptian Revolution resulted in improvements pertaining to gender rights and any changes in expectations of gender performativity, but rather how the 2011 January Egyptian Revolution represented a time and space that highlighted just how intertwined gender constructs are with notions of nationhood in Egypt, and what impact this has had on gender rights activists both politically and personally.

Another crucial consideration in the research phase of the thesis was considering exactly what was meant by phrases such as ‘the Egyptian nation’ or ‘Egyptian state’. Both of these concepts are discussed extensively in the works of gender studies academics on Egypt who have already been discussed in this section. However, there appeared to be a significant lack of in-depth consideration of how to separate the notion of ‘the nation’ and ‘the state’. In light of this, one of the first tasks within the research phase of this thesis was to attain a fuller understanding of these two concepts and how they converge and differ from one another. Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak’s *Who Sings the Nation-State?* (2010) provides a compelling platform on which to expand this understanding. Starting off with their analysis on what is meant by the nation and the state and how such terms are often incorrectly conflated together, their arguments and nuanced observations were applied in this thesis specifically to the case of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, specifically how protestors sought to challenge the power of Hosni Mubarak and his state. According to Butler and Spivak, the state is represented by government and those acting on behalf of the government such as the judiciary and the police. In turn, protestors in Tahrir Square, by constructing an image of the Egyptian nation and the symbolic meaning of what it means to be Egyptian, excluded any possibility of members of the
state, such as Mubarak, to be a part of their vision. This discussion is raised extensively in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, specifically focusing on how such contestations between opposing forces over the image of the Egyptian nation are contested along, among other things, gendered contours, including what it means to be, and what is expected of, an Egyptian man and woman, and whosoever fails to fulfill these expectations is found wanting and outside the realms of the Egyptian nation. In short, they are depicted as contrary to Egyptian nationhood, and as is highlighted in Chapter Two, one of the elements of success for protestors in Egypt in January and February 2011 was their ability to successfully place Hosni Mubarak and state police as binary opposition to their image of the Egyptian nation. As a result, Butler and Spivak’s work is a crucial element throughout this thesis, where their universal arguments could be specifically applied and tested in the case of Egypt between January 2011 and November 2014 where on numerous occasions Egyptian nationhood and the Egyptian state were not one, but either at odds or the notion of the Egyptian nation was being fought over by the state and those opposed to the Egyptian state.

Just as Butler and Spivak provide a theoretical platform in the thesis that is non-Egypt specific, so too is Deniz Kandiyoti’s notion of patriarchal bargaining used in the thesis to highlight and understand the struggles of the Egyptian women’s movement in Egypt since January 2011, and their consequent strategies, or ‘bargaining’, to use Kandiyoti’s term, to overcome such struggles. As is highlighted in Chapter Three, Kandiyoti argues that women’s rights activists and feminists must often strategise in order to obtain some of their objectives, and this strategy often takes the form of offsetting one thing for another, or bargaining, and that such bargains are in essence with patriarchy itself, allowing patriarchy to continue in one
element while curtailing it in another. This understanding of patriarchal bargaining is incredibly important in Chapter Three, specifically in the discussion on the 2013 Egyptian Constitutional Process, because it raises awareness to the fact that the objectives of women’s rights activists, and their struggles to overcome them, must be understood through a critical lens but also a sympathetic one. In other words, one does not simply overhaul patriarchy, especially a patriarchal entity such as the Egyptian armed forces that were de facto governing Egypt throughout 2011 after Mubarak’s resignation, and again after Mohamed Morsi’s removal in July 2013. On the contrary, at a time in one of Egypt’s most violent periods in history, spanning the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014 where it was arguably the most dangerous time to be an opposing political activist to the Egyptian state, women’s rights activists needed to take careful steps to navigate through a violent and volatile terrain if they were to remain both unscathed and achieve some of the gender rights protections they sought in the 2013 constitution. This understanding of their difficult and sensitive task that needed to be approached strategically was aided by understanding Kandiyoti’s notion of patriarchal bargaining, and in the case of Egypt, offered a very practical tool of Kandiyoti’s theory of patriarchal bargaining in action.

The use of oral history in this thesis was not the only consideration in relation to references. Chapter Three is focused on locating and understanding the formation of an Egyptian women’s movement in the immediate aftermath of the January 2011 Revolution to October 2014 when the final fieldwork interviews were conducted for this thesis. Specifically, Chapter Three is concerned with how the women’s movement has formulated and grown since January 2011, its strategy within a politically

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10 It could be argued that the Egyptian military is the most politically powerful institution in Egypt. Every Egyptian president, with the exception of Morsi’s brief one year in office before he was removed by the army, every Egyptian president has hailed from the Egyptian armed forces.
turbulent and ever-changing socio-political landscape and how this strategy can be understood through theories of patriarchal bargaining (Kandiyoti 1988) and strategic gender interests (Moloney 1985). Moreover, Chapter Three highlights and analyses how the women’s movement sees itself, illustrated through the voices of activists themselves. As Chapter Three focuses primarily on events in the years 2013 and 2014, and the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution itself took place in very recent history, there is understandably very little academic literature on the event and its aftermath as academics concerned with Egypt attempt to catch-up. There has been a steady rise in the number of academic works on the political events that took place in Egypt in 2011 and 2012. However, very few of these works approach the January 2011 Revolution from a gendered perspective but rather through approaches related to political science and political economy. Two recent academic volumes have focused on Egypt in 2011 and 2012 from a gendered perspective (El Said, Meari, and Pratt 2015), and (Mostafa 2015). Both volumes were extremely rewarding to read as they highlighted that academic literature on the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution has now begun to surface, including viewing the revolution through a gendered lens. In light of this, this thesis will not stand in isolation, but can be read in conjunction with the works of other scholars on Egypt. Moreover, articles in both volumes raise and discuss some of the questions that are posed in this thesis, meaning that I was able to review and compare my own ideas with those in each volume at the end of the write-up phase.

Paradoxically, there have been a large number of open editorials by columnists and analysts, NGO reports and surveys, as well as news reports, on the revolution and since. As a result, because Chapter Three focuses on recent events in Egypt, much of the referencing has relied upon these non-academic works. Academic peer-reviewed texts have been used whenever possible, however it is important to highlight several
considerations that were taken when referencing throughout Chapter Three. It is important to first note that NGO reports, while they fall outside the classification of ‘academic’, are nonetheless compiled vigorously over a period of months and regulated and checked internally by the NGO conducting the research report, making them a primary source. It is for that reason that NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are frequently trusted and referenced in academic works by academics, as is done in Chapter Three and elsewhere in this thesis.

Secondly, while open editorials by writers go through a much less rigorous editorial process before they are published, they have provided a much faster way for academics to present their analysis than the process within peer-reviewed academia which can take several months before publication. Consequently, while an academic on Egypt may be working on a much larger academic work that may take several months or years, open editorials have provided an opportunity for them to present their analysis almost immediately, albeit with much less detail and without their analysis being reviewed by other academics before publication. Inevitably, this highlights that some open-editorials may be more reliable than others, and in light of this, where open editorials have been cited in Chapter Three, it is always work written by an academic with a known academic track record. This has been done in order to maintain a minimum quality level of references and to be able to engage with the work of academics on Egypt’s recent history since 2011. Moreover, open-editorials can be discussed and challenged when they are published, providing another platform for debate and engagement with their work.

Finally, and perhaps the most challenging aspect of referencing in Chapter Three, has come in the decision of which news reports to cite when the chapter deals with very recent events, such as elections or incidents of violence. On a basic level,
news reports can be split between international and domestic media. There were no instances when a key event was not reported in either of these two spheres of media. It was then decided that in order to maintain as much credibility and standards of referencing as possible, details of an event would only be taken as fact if it was reported by five or more credible news outlets.\textsuperscript{11} This being the case, the chapter then cites one or two of these news reports concerning a specific event or detail rather than citing the multiple sources that also reveal the same information. Any news outlets that were perceived to have any biases have been discarded and only mentioned in order to highlight their bias rather than as support for an argument or detail. This was often the case with Egyptian state-owned or state-influenced media in Egypt, and where this is the case, Chapter Three relies more on international reports on an event where biases are less frequent.

One of the major considerations that were taken into account at the start of the research process was the place for qualitative interviews as a resource bank. The recent nature of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and events that have occurred in its aftermath has meant that the thesis could not solely rely on academic sources that have simply yet to emerge in the volume necessary to constitute a large enough collection of work that could be analysed and discussed. For that reason, newspaper columns and blogs have been used, and is also the reason why it was decided very early on in the research process that qualitative interviews would have to be conducted. As a result, prior to, during, and after the qualitative interviews, I was aware of the academic literature on oral history and how it has been used effectively

\textsuperscript{11} ‘Credible’ refers to an internationally recognised news outlet, such as The Guardian or the BBC, and a select few domestic news agencies that the author has followed closely since 2011 and has deemed to be reputable in their research and publishing process. However, the author accepts that no news outlet is without fault, and it is for that reason that any details presented as fact must have been a common theme in five or more news outlets.
in other research areas. I was encouraged by the use of oral history in other fields and the multiple advantages that could stem from it. For example, Paul Thompson, who played a leading role in the creation of the British Oral History Society noted in his seminal work ‘The Voice of the Past’ that oral history can “shift the focus and open new areas of enquiry, challenge some of the assumptions and accepted judgments of historians, [and] bring recognition to recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored” (Thompson 25). This immediately resonated with the research focus for this thesis for two reasons. First, that an oral historical account into events and feelings surrounding the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution would provide an avenue to an alternative history to the overwhelming historical narratives propagated by large and rival political factions over the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Indeed, despite its infancy, and as is shown and discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the fight over ‘claiming’ the revolution as one’s own has been ongoing since it began, with former president Hosni Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the current regime led by Abdel Fattah el Sisi, to name just a few, have all sought to monopolise and enforce the meaning and outcomes of the revolution based on their own interpretation. Consequently, the opportunity to provide an alternative voice, and in turn historical account to such an important event in a country’s history such as a revolution, was welcomed. This became more important as the space and freedom to voice an opinion that ran contrary to any of the ruling governments after Hosni Mubarak’s resignation dissipated, as is highlighted in Chapters Two and Three. As Thomson explains, “since the nature of most existing records is to reflect the standpoint of authority, it is not surprising that the judgement of history has more often than not vindicated the wisdom of the powers that be…oral history by contrast make a much fairer trial possible” (28).
The second reason why Thompson’s praise of oral history resonated with this research process was the opportunity to not only provide an alternative history through oral accounts in an already muddy battle for putting forward one narrative of a country’s revolution, but to provide a historical account of a demographic that had a history of being silenced in Egypt’s history, namely women’s rights activists. Chapter One goes into detail of this, specifically looking at the prominent role of women’s rights activists in Egypt’s 1919 Revolution and their consequent sidelining in its aftermath, as well as the treatment of women’s rights activists after Egypt’s 1952 Revolution. As a result, the opportunity to interview and document the experiences of women’s rights activists who witnessed and were involved in the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath provided an opportunity to break this historical pattern and ensure that their voices were not lost. As Thompson notes, oral history “can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place” (26).

Thompson also comments that another advantage of the oral historian is the freedom to choose whom to interview, and to ask questions on their issues of concern and research. Moreover, the process of interviewing someone leads to further avenues of discovery, such as documents or photographs that would have otherwise been undiscovered (28). In this specific research process, almost every interview led the interviewee to recommend someone that I interview on a particular point of concern or event. In this way, I was given recommendations that led to interviews with people I never would have heard of or spoken to. Another advantage of oral history that Thompson notes directly related to one of the research focuses of this thesis, most evident in Chapter Four which hones in on the personal lives of women’s rights
activists and their personal relationships with family and friends. Thompson highlights that oral history has a:

transformation impact...[on] the history of the family. Without its evidence, the historian can discover very little indeed about either the ordinary family’s contacts with neighbours and kin, or its internal relationships. [For example] the roles of husband and wife, the upbringing of girls and boys, emotional and material conflicts and dependence, [and] the struggle of youth for independence. (29)

This avenue that oral history provides in exploring the more personal and often hidden elements of history and their lesser known participants directly corresponds with the objectives of Chapter Four. Where Chapters One, Two, and Three, focus on what may be termed analysis of ‘political’ or ‘public’ events, discourses, and their outcomes, chapter four is wholly concerned with the individual and personal lives of women’s rights activists and their every day conflicts and concerns within their own lives, including friendships and relationships with parents and lovers. As is demonstrated in Chapter Four, the lines are not split between the so called public and the personal, but rather each sphere is influenced and informs the other. However, the breaking down of this binary would perhaps not be possible with regards to this thesis and its research objectives if the oral accounts of activists on their personal lives had not taken place. It is for that reason that these oral accounts feature predominantly throughout the thesis, and are heavily used in-depth in Chapter Four.

Ronald Grele is concerned with the process of how an oral account becomes a part of, and can be considered to formulate, a history of a country, event, or people. In

Grele argues that the distinction can be seen when oral accounts are placed into historical context and critique, and that such critique by a historian is done so with their own imagination that is carried out with the good faith of attempting to understand what was said. In light of this, Grele places great emphasis on the historian’s role in the integrity of oral accounts being used as a historical source. Moreover, the use of oral accounts to only confirm an existing historical narrative detracts and weakens the integrity of oral accounts because the interpretation to such accounts are subjected to a pre-existing narrative. In other words, the oral account is not interpreted without prejudice, but is viewed upon with the intention of seeking something specific that may or may not be there, but will nevertheless appear because the historian’s prejudice is seeking it regardless, and will find it with their imaginative interpretation that is in fact not imaginative at all, but fixed upon one idea or interpretation beforehand. As Grele states, “Oral history should be a way to get a better history, a more critical history, a more conscious history which involves members of the public in the creation of their own history” (xvi).

Grele’s warning on not interpreting oral accounts with pre-existing notions and prejudices towards a specific history was highly relevant in the fieldwork interviews for this thesis for two major reasons. One, that despite the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution being very recent, competing historical narratives are already contesting and challenging one another, with political opposition in Egypt vying to monopolise their views on the revolution to a narrative that suits their political objectives which are primarily centred on ruling Egypt. This meant that the interpretation of the fieldwork interviews on questions concerning the revolution were
not done in isolation or in a vacuum, but rather through with an awareness of such competing narratives. However, this was by no means wholly a detriment, as Grele argues that oral accounts can only be interpreted with historical context, and that historical context should not compromise the interpretation of the oral account so long as the historian interprets critically and without bias. Grele’s words were heeded during this process. The second biggest challenge concerning interpretation of the oral accounts was my own position as historian and participant. Specifically, that many of the events and topics that were discussed with interviewees, I also had first-hand seen and experienced. This made me highly aware that I may have a bias in both my line of questioning and later interpretation of their answers. While there is no hard evidence I can produce that demonstrates I did not succumb to this danger, I was acutely aware of how personal bias may corrupt the interpretation of oral accounts, and as such, the oral accounts were read several times before committing to written analysis on them. Moreover, I was conscious during the interviews themselves to only ask questions and follow-up questions, rather than highlighting my own opinion on any given matter so as not to sway their answers.

Overall, the different types of sources throughout the thesis often complemented each other in the different perspectives and avenues for discussion each source provided, and this complement of one other was not limited to agreeing with one another, but often disagreeing, which also served as a catalyst for further debate and discussion. In light of this, the thesis can be seen as stronger rather than weaker for not wholly relying on one or two types of sources, but rather strengthened by the base that has been provided by numerous different sources which has provided multiple scopes for analysis. In particular, the use of fieldwork interviews, which shall be discussed in greater length in the following section with regards to methodology,
can be seen as unique and timely, capturing the voices of those who may not otherwise be heard, and act as an invaluable source, and time capsule, to be looked at and built upon by future scholars on Egypt.

iii. Methodological Approaches and the Fieldwork Interviews

At the heart of this thesis are fieldwork interviews conducted with independent gender rights activists, established gender rights NGOs, as well as self-funded and unregistered gender rights groups that regularly meet and launch initiatives pertaining to gender rights and protection. All of these individuals, NGOs, and unregistered groups that were interviewed are secular. That is to say, they frame their discourse and activism without any grounding in religion. That is not to say that religion, specifically Islam, did not appear in the interviews themselves, nor is the role and importance of Islam, particularly political Islam in the post-revolutionary period, wholly ignored in the thesis. The political rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood between 2011 and 2013 is an integral part to understanding the social and political makeup of Egypt since 2011. Moreover, activists themselves very often cited the Muslim Brotherhood government that occupied office between June 2012 and June 2013 in relation to their struggles in advocating gender rights equality to the government across a number of platforms. However, this thesis itself does not attempt to entrench itself within a debate of the role of Islam or political Islam in Egypt pertaining to gender rights, except at brief moments to provide some historical or cultural references that include Islam to a particular point or observation being made.
Thirty qualitative interviews were conducted between September 2013 and November 2014. These were conducted exclusively in English or Arabic and the interviewees occasionally speaking Arabic if they wanted to use idiomatic Arabic to convey a certain sentiment. Where an extract is quoted in this thesis and was spoken in Arabic, it is presented in English but made clear that this was translated into English by the author. These interviews were conducted over the course of three one month trips to Egypt. On four occasions across October and November 2014, an online follow up interview was conducted through Skype with four separate interviewees as further answers from them were sought to questions that had been asked in person in Egypt in the first interview. These were very short interviews as the purpose of the interviews was to add information to the face-to-face interview.

Specific gender rights NGOs, particularly Nazra for Feminist Studies and the Women and Memory Forum (WMF), were chosen based on them being established several years prior to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, and thus having experience in the Mubarak and post-Mubarak era which offers interesting comparative analysis in the way women’s rights have been addressed and articulated by previous and current political actors. Furthermore, a specific focus on these two NGOs is undertaken because they took a lead role in providing recommendations to the 2013 constitutional committee on constitutional clauses pertaining to gender and women’s rights. This constitutional committee oversaw the drafting of the constitution which was eventually passed by referendum in January 2014.

The important role Nazra for Feminist Studies and the WMF had in engaging with the constitutional committee will be crucial to later questions on how a women’s movement actually functions in terms of communication with one another and problematising whether a women’s movement in Egypt can ever be truly
representative of the entire female population, and moreover, problematising the
different levels of resources and access to policy makers that some groups have over
others. This perhaps opens up an even deeper scope for analysis on the concept of
legitimacy and whether a women’s movement speaks in one voice or several. This
train of thought is taken from the scholars Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak who
probed the concept of who has the legitimacy “to sing for the nation-state” (Butler and
Spivak 1), and how the notion of nationhood is often subjective to the one speaking
on the subject and does so for their own specific, often political, agenda. As
previously discussed, Butler and Spivak were primarily concerned with how
governments assert their specific criteria on what it means to be part of the nation, and
with this critical thought process in mind, a critique will be offered regarding the way
women are spoken of as one homogeneous body by both the state and by women’s
rights activists themselves. This also affords an opportunity to problematise the notion
of whether it is possible for a women’s movement to function as a unitary body and
whether, for example, Nazra and the WMF had a legitimate mandate to speak to the
constitutional committee on behalf of over forty million women.

As a result, it was important for the fieldwork interviews to include the voices
of independent activists, as well as groups that lay outside the formal structure of an
NGO, in order to go some way towards answering these critical questions, and to
ensure that our notion of a women’s movement is not limited to just the formal
structure of an NGO. Independent activists were located through snowball sampling,
starting with my own network of friends and activists whom I met during my time in
Cairo from April 2009 to July 2012. Unregistered groups were located primarily
through their social networking presence which many of them actively use as a way of
publicising their group at minimal cost. In addition, there were elements of snowball
sampling where one group would recommend another group that they had worked with, and in this way I was also able to see how unregistered groups within the women’s movement work with one another, providing a different line of communication beyond NGO to NGO cooperation and another lens to view the women’s movement in context and practice.

Interviews with NGOs involved interviewing two or more members of the NGO, often separately for comparative purposes, in order to understand the history and discourse of the NGO, how it is run on a daily basis, and to understand what exactly it is trying to achieve in the short and long term. Beyond the scope of the NGO itself, in-depth questions on the upbringing, education, and objectives of interviewees were asked in order to ascertain whether there are any patterns in the lives and experiences of individuals who become involved with gender rights advocacy. This is an important consideration because NGOs as organisations, as well as gender rights advocacy itself, have negative stigmas attached to them which will be addressed in the thesis. As a result, to work for a combination of the two (a women’s rights’ NGO), is an important note when trying to understand how a women’s movement, defined and compiled by its members, is formed.

Interviews with unregistered, self-funded groups followed the same line of questioning as with NGOs. However, it was always very interesting to see how NGOs view unregistered groups and vice versa, with unregistered and self-funded groups often less approving of the type of work that some NGOs do, as well as the way their larger budgets are utilised. This will lend itself to discussions on the cohesion of the women’s movement and whether in fact it can be considered a movement going in the same direction despite so many differences within it. Independent activists were primarily asked questions on how their gender rights discourse was formed, as well as
their primary objectives and their opinion on the women’s movement and where they see themselves within it, if at all. In all interviews, where possible personal questions on their family and upbringing were asked in order to understand their women’s rights or feminist discourse and how it has been shaped. For example, how an activist understands patriarchy may have roots in the way patriarchy was exercised or performed in their own household, and this may shed light on what an activist is trying to achieve in relation to gender rights today. On more than one occasion, domestic violence against women was a key priority for activists who had witnessed or suffered from domestic violence in their own home.

Broaching questions relating to an interviewee’s personal life was not always standardised. While I had a set of interview questions in a particular order, it was often more beneficial to allow interviewees to keep on speaking if they were free flowing in answering a question. That is to say, if their answer to one question began to cover another area of questioning I had planned, they would not be interrupted at all, avoiding the risk that any interruption would cease their line of answering. It was also not always easy to gauge whether personal questions could be asked with an interviewee. At the commencement of interview, I told each interviewee that my research was interested in both their political struggles as well as their personal lives as it may shed light on their motivations and political and gender rights views, and in light of this, I may ask some personal questions. No interviewee objected. However, during each interview, it became very apparent which interviewees would be comfortable and open about their personal lives to those that would not. This often took shape in an interviewee being very friendly and clearly at ease. This manifested itself in several ways, including laughing together at the memory of an event or use of
Egyptian slang. Body language and facial expressions were also very telling, often indicating how far I could probe without making the interviewee want to object.

In contrast, if an interviewee was very short in answering questions about their political and public gender rights activism, and there was not an obvious rapport between interviewer and interviewee, I was more reluctant to begin a line of questioning about their personal lives on the logical basis that it would be unlikely they would be open about this aspect of their life if they were seemingly reluctant to elaborate on their public life. There were occasions, however, where an interviewee seemingly began an interview as quiet and non-expansive with their answers, but after some time during the interview, where we were able to find some commonality and laugh at something that had arisen within their answers, this would often act as a platform for the interviewee to be more expressive, and consequently allow for the possibility of personal questions then being asked. I believe my own Egyptian heritage allowed for rapport to often be built with interviewees as they could answer in Egyptian slang or with a famous idiomatic Egyptian expression that can often be humourous in nature, and thus allow us to share in the joke that may have otherwise been impossible if I was non-Egyptian, or at the very least, non-Arabic speaking. If an interviewee was clearly quiet and not entirely at ease, I could respond with an idiomatic Egyptian expression if it was relevant to their answer, which acted as a catalyst for them to realise that I am not just an interviewer or academic, but also an Egyptian who is very familiar with the country, despite by British roots as well.

This is a crucial consideration because many of the interviewees had already been interviewed by journalists since 2011 as Egypt had become an important international story since the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. It was consequently important to try and differentiate the purpose of my interview, and myself as an
interviewer, from their past experiences of answering questions for foreign journalists in order to justify my desire to delve into their personal lives which journalists almost always did not. In particular, while as an interviewer my role was to get their perspective, this did not leave me without perspective and personal experience and firsthand knowledge of not just being in Egypt during and after the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, but being Egyptian as well. This provided a crucial stage to be able to ask personal questions without offending or alarming interviewees, setting up almost a scene of two friends talking rather than a formal interviewer and interviewee relationship.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with several interviewees across NGOs, unregistered groups, and independent activists. This was due to the fluid and fast changing political events in Egypt, particularly the new military regime after 3 July 2013. Questions were centred on comparatives between the three regimes in the post-Mubarak era and whether any nuanced comparisons or analysis can be drawn in the way each regime has addressed women’s rights and interacted with the women’s movement. Follow-up interviews were chosen based on how strong a rapport was built in the first interview, or whether a specific interviewee would have more insight into an event or question based on their positionality. For example, the WMF or Nazra were chosen for follow-up interviews concerning the 2013 constitution due to their close proximity to the drafting process. While I had a list of questions that were to be asked of every interviewee, it was often the case where an interviewee’s line of answering would lead down a very compelling and insightful avenue. As long as this avenue was saliently relevant to the thesis questions and topics, the interviewee would not only not be interrupted, but more importantly, follow-up questions were asked as a result of their answers.
The result is that the fieldwork interviews yielded far more than I imagined, with a wealth of information and insight added to areas I had already considered and asked about, and areas that I have previously not considered. I believe this has progressed the overall analysis and questions of consideration in the thesis. However, I was also acutely aware that it would be very easy to get distracted or sidetracked from the topic or questions at hand, and so while the interviews produced more than I hoped, it did so after it had produced what were within my expectations before the process, thus allowing me the opportunity to manage all the information after the fieldwork had finished and process what was directly relevant to the thesis and what was not, even though such information was almost always interesting. In light of this, I did not feel after the fieldwork that I had ‘missed something’ or that interviewees did not at the very least all answer the same set of questions that were set-out, in order to maintain consistency.

Prior to beginning the qualitative interviews, I was conscious of myself as an interviewer, of which many of the details I shall address in the section on positionality. However, concerning oral history and methodology, it is worth noting in this methodology section that I was aware that I should not expect interviewees to always want to reveal personal details or thoughts about their lives. Fortunately, I found that I was able to build a rapport and level of trust with many interviewees that led them to feel comfortable enough to share such details, and agree to second, and in some cases, third interviews. I was also aware of another of Thompson’s warnings, that “the selected group [of interviewees] will rarely be fully representative of a community” (30). This was no doubt always going to be a problematic area in this

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12 These additional insights from the fieldwork interviews may be used as platforms for future research questions, and so they are not wasted.
research thesis when trying to discuss and analyse what it means to be an Egyptian women’s rights activist, how this differentiates from Egyptian women who identity as feminist, and how an/the Egyptian women’s movement can be defined since January 2011. These questions and discussions, and more, relied upon the oral qualitative interviews as well as academic and secondary sources, and as a result, I was always aware of Thompson’s warning that oral history, and indeed any documentation of history, can ever truly be seen to represent the feelings and emotions of a mass group.

Arguably the biggest concern prior to commencing the qualitative interviews was the desire to not have these interviews solely serve an academic purpose for this thesis. Rather, having been acutely aware of the traumatic emotional disturbances and events since January 2011 that have affected many individuals who witnessed and experienced violence and sexual assault, it was important that interviews with interviewees who had experienced this did not simply serve as research material for the thesis, but that they gain something from the interviews as well. As Thompson explains, “oral history encourages teachers and students to become fellow-workers…[and] it helps the less privileged towards dignity and self-confidence” (31).

On more than one occasion, interviewees expressed at the end of an interview that the time and space allocated in the interview allowed them to reflect on events and experiences during and after the January 2011 Revolution. Based on the fieldwork questions but not limited to these questions as interviewees were often left to talk rather than disturb their narrative, they expressed that the interviews served as a therapeutic experience that they, until that moment, were unaware they needed. In one interview, whom the interviewee will not be named, broke into tears at several moments during a second interview, where they were reflecting on their relationship with their father. They later explained that this was an issue they had never addressed,
and were thankful for the opportunity to do so. It was on occasions such as these that strangely provided reassurance that the exchange between interviewer and interviewee was not one sided, and that interviewees also reaped benefits, for lack of a better term, from the process.

Chapter Four has provided the biggest challenge in relation to how to use the oral accounts of interviewees. The central theme in Chapter Four is concerned with how personal and political events impact and inform each other, where for example, political revolution may see a son or daughter consequently rebel against the patriarch at home, or vice versa, and the everyday challenges Egyptian feminists and women’s rights activists face in their lives that reflect Egypt’s political dynamic, and vice versa. While many parts of the oral accounts could be seen as self-explanatory, where for example, someone may declare their feelings towards a parent or friend very directly that leaves little ambiguity, this does not constitute the end of the possibility for interpretation and analysis of such statements and feelings. In other words, how does one provide an interpretation and analysis of someone else’s words without distorting them, and how does this interpretation affect the validity of oral history being used as a valid historical account? E.H. Carr argues that:

It does not follow that, because interpretation plays a necessary part in establishing the facts of history, and because no interpretation is wholly objective, one interpretation is as good as another, and the facts of history are in principle not amenable to objective interpretation. (27)

While Carr argues that one interpretation is not as good as another, it is not argued in the thesis that the interpretations that are offered in Chapter Four and elsewhere in this thesis on extracts from the qualitative interviews are absolute.
Rather, the fieldwork interview extracts in the thesis and the interpretations and analysis that follow serve as material that other scholars can lend their own interpretation to, and indeed challenge the interpretations in this thesis. This does not detract from the interpretations in this thesis because it serves as a platform for discussion that would have otherwise been impossible had the qualitative interviews not taken place in the first place. It is on this very point that oral history serves its main benefit: giving voice to stories that may have otherwise remain untold, and providing alternative viewpoints and avenues for further research and investigations that can lead to an alternative history to the one put forward by the powers that be. In light of this, this does not directly oppose Carr’s viewpoint, but adds that in-depth analysis can only commence once a discussion has begun, and the fieldwork interview extracts and the interpretations of these extracts in the thesis presented a beginning of the conversation for current and future scholars on Egypt.

Whereas all the interviewees were asked the same set of questions in relation to political events such as the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, this was not the case regarding personal questions pertaining to an interviewee’s family and relationships. This is an important consideration in relation to Chapter Four, which focuses on the relationship between political and personal struggles, and whether these two spheres inform and influence one another. As a result, the questions themselves were semi-structured, not necessarily asked in the same order, and often phrased differently. However, the answers, or rather the same theme or subject matter, were consistent, for instance, the relationship an interviewee has with their parents. A second consideration is that both male and female interviewees feature in Chapter Four as

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13 As the interviewer, I found it useful to use the same language and phrases that the interviewee used when talking about their personal life. This made it easier to start questions. For example, “You just said that your father was a ‘typical Egyptian man’. What do you mean by that?”
feminist activists were asked questions about their personal lives. As a male interviewer, I was aware that there might be a possibility that male interviewees might feel more open to discussing their personal lives with me due to feelings of familiarity or fewer fears of embarrassment than female interviewees because we share the same gender. However, I found no difference in the way in which male and female interviewees interacted and shared information with me. Interestingly, I found that my gender, as a male, and writing a PhD thesis on gender, became a point of trust and understanding with female interviewees.

As a result, I found that rapport was built quickly with female interviewees despite my gender as a male because my research focus appeared to negate any stereotypes or scepticism they may have had of men not being interested in, or understanding, gender inequalities and gender dynamics. What was different between male and female interviewees was the location where the interviews took place; I would have to meet female interviewees in public places such as coffee shops whereas I could meet with male interviewees at their home or mine. Consequently, female interviewees perhaps endured greater risk than male interviewees because they had to share both political and personal experiences in a public space such as a café or restaurant whereas male interviewees were often met at a private residence. Finally, where personal questions were asked in a semi-structured format and based on responses from interviewees, common themes and answers did appear when analysing the interview transcripts. As a result, Chapter Four includes extracts from sixteen

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14 The author is of Egyptian heritage and lived in Cairo for four years and was aware, prior to the commencement of the fieldwork interviews, of the cultural sensitivity of a man and woman who are not married or related meeting alone at a private residence.
interviews from the overall fieldwork, highlighting patterns and providing platforms for hypotheses and future areas of research.15

v. Positionality of the Researcher

Locating and navigating my way through several layers of my positionality in both researching and writing this thesis has perhaps been both my toughest challenge and most rewarding experience. From the outset I found that my own gender as a male studying and exploring gender spaces and relations in Egypt was often queried by women; both academics and gender activists who are predominantly but not exclusively women. Such queries were not in any way negative or accusatory, but served as a timely reminder that gender remains often thought of as a ‘women only’ arena of interest because it is they, not ‘we’ who are restricted by gender. This false binary was one I found myself discussing with activists I consider friends and many of whom also acted as interviewees for this thesis. I often found myself uncomfortably seen as a ‘progressive’ male, unsure of what exactly this meant and

15 These sixteen interviews represent half of the total fieldwork with the aim of providing enough scope to highlight and analyse patterns within the overall fieldwork. As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, not all interviewees were open to discussing personal elements of their lives and therefore the entire fieldwork could not be used for this chapter as it hone in on the personal realms of the interviewees.
whether I was deserving of such a label and whether such labels were problematic in the first instance.

A second problem arose out of this label which concerned my own upbringing and dual nationality. While I have clear physical Egyptian traits owing to the fact that both of my parents are Egyptian, as well as the fact that I speak Arabic, it would be my British nationality and upbringing in London that would seemingly take all the credit for any favourable views I was seen to hold concerning gender by gender activists. This became increasingly problematic and disconcerting the more I realised that this assumption was being made. I would routinely hear, “You’re not like Egyptian men because you were raised abroad”. This was disconcerting on a number of levels. It negated any possibility that views of gender equality could be held by a ‘native Egyptian man’, while also seemingly having no issue with attributing such views to a ‘Western’ male. This was problematic on at least two levels. It gave no credit to at least some Egyptian men I know who have never lived abroad and yet who I would confidently declare believe in full gender equality; while by the same token, I know many Egyptians raised abroad who do not share this view, as well as knowing men of ‘Western’ origin who, I would argue, hold views on gender relations that are disconcerting. In short, the generalisation being made that my desire for full gender equality could be attributed to my upbringing in the United Kingdom struck me as false stereotyping, and while I was almost being stereotyped in a positive way, it became an arena I wanted to challenge both personally with activists I call friends, as well as academically. This led me to the decision to also focus on the stories of men within the gender rights movement in Egypt in Chapter Four, in a bid to highlight that the 2011 Egyptian Revolution has had a positive effect on some men and that these men also seek to be liberated from strict gender roles and depictions. I recognise that
these men remain a small minority, but I hope that by telling their stories, it will go some way in dispelling the lie that Egyptian men cannot be favourable to gender equality without being influenced by the West, and in turn, I will also stop being stereotyped or treated as ‘unique’ in my views.

As I became more and more involved in gender activist circles, another challenge arose. I became entrenched as my fieldwork in Cairo developed, where, with extreme generosity and excitement, interviewees would insist that I interview this activist or that activist so that I could get a full picture for my research questions. I was slightly apprehensive before my fieldwork began as I was unsure how willing people would be to speak with a researcher at a time when Egypt was still going through mass waves of turbulence and violence in the aftermath of 3 July 2013 removal of Mohamed Morsi at the hands of the military. However, my apprehensions were laid to rest immediately as the snowball effect took off and I was put in contact with more people than I had hoped and planned for. A pattern emerged where I would interview an activist in a semi-formal structure which was recorded, but that once the interview was over and the dictaphone turned off, we would spend many more hours talking about all things gender, Egypt, and politics, but also more personal items of everyday life. In particular, it meant that interviewees had the opportunity to find out more about me beyond my research interests. On occasion, we would also meet again soon after because we had a lot of commonality, and would meet up as friends, and they would bring their friends (who would often also be within activism of some sort but most commonly within gendered realms), and I would soon find myself asking to interview them in the following days.

Social networking also meant I became ‘friends’ with interviewees, and in the case of four interviewees, I count them now as friends. I believe this duality of
relationship of interviewer/interviewee and friendship was able to co-exist because the former would be our initial phase of contact: I would interview them before we were friends. If after the interview we developed a friendship, this did not harm the already recorded content in the interview. The only scenario where this duality was relevant was in the circumstance where I would want to do a second round interview with an interviewee/friend, and I would have to assume a more professional approach to the follow-up interview in order to set the scene for a research interview. In turn, I believe my approach translated to the interviewee/friend, who would then answer questions with careful thought and consideration much in the way they had in the first interview.

I considered whether my friendships with people who were also activists should be considered an opportunity to find out even more about their lived experiences and opinions which they may reluctantly share or refuse to share in a formal or semi-formal interview. However, ethically and morally these were boundaries and lines I did not want to blur. Too many questions would have arisen for both myself and them: would a dinner date mean dinner with a friend or dinner with an interviewer/interviewee; if they revealed facets about their personal lives to me that intertwined with my research interests, how could I then as a friend ask “Can I use this for my thesis?”

There is one final part of my positionality that I believe I had to be acutely aware of when I undertook this research project. I participated in the now famous eighteen day protests in Tahrir Square against Hosni Mubarak. I was made aware of the planned protests on 25 January, much like many of my interviewees, through Facebook, specifically, the ‘We Are All Khaled Said’ Facebook page. I was aware and moved by my observations of anger, frustration, and hope, of activists online calling for people to take to the streets. However, I only joined on Friday 28 January,
the day dubbed ‘The Day of Rage’ after I realised that the movement did have popular backing and that Mubarak’s police apparatus were responding with disproportional force and violence. Upon arrival at Tahrir Square, I instantly felt a connection that, four years on, I still struggle to articulate. I knew the event, no matter how it would unfold, would remain with me for a great deal of time, and with events unfolding as they did, most notably the announcement of Mubarak’s resignation on 11 February which I enjoyed with thousands in Tahrir Square and millions watching, I now know for certain this was and remains a life-changing event for me both academically and personally.

As a result of non-partisan involvement in events in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011, as well as other events that followed in 2011 and 2012, I had to make a clear distinction for myself between what I felt, feel and experienced with that of my research pursuits where my aim was to find out what other people felt, feel, and experienced. In other words, I had to remind myself from the beginning that my opinion was not important. Consequently, I was very careful in articulating my questions in both their content and my tone of delivery in order to ensure I was giving my interviewees a neutral platform on which to respond. Again, as I became friends with activists who would then find out more about myself and my opinions on Egypt, this would no longer be relevant because the interview had already taken place and thus their answers had not been compromised in any way. With those whom I conducted follow-up interviews, I am confident that I remained neutral in my questioning and that their answers were in no way tailored to my own opinions.

I am reassured by the fact that I am not setting a precedent of navigating my way through my roles as an activist and as a researcher. Commenting on her positionality as a women’s rights activist with her own affiliations, and as a
researcher, Nadje Al-Ali notes: “My status as a researcher allowed me to move and talk to diverse women activists. The knowledge I acquired in the course of my research about the activities and opinions about ‘other women’ was occasionally sought out, and often made me feel uncomfortable” (Al-Ali 13). Overall, however, I can confidently declare that my experiences in conducting the interviews were positive, insightful, and beneficial on academic and personal levels. I also hope, perhaps naively, that my interviews benefited the participants as well, offering them an opportunity to raise key issues that they believe are being overlooked, as well as giving them a platform to speak at a time when emerging spaces for voices of dissent and activism are seemingly forever shrinking.

Chapter One

Contextualising Feminism in Egypt Before the 2011 Revolution

1.1 Feminist Formations and their Colonial Burden

Extensive research and analysis has been conducted on the history and formation of feminism in Egypt in the 20th century (Badran 1995; Botman 1999; Hatem 1992, 2002; Bier 2011). Such research has primarily centred on the role of Egyptian women during the 1919 and 1952 Egyptian revolutions, and the impact of the aftermaths of each revolution had on the lives of Egyptian women. This has
included any changes in the role of women in the economy, political participation, their accruement of any legal rights, and the way in which women have been used as symbols of revolution and nationhood (Baron 2007). While events of 1919 and 1952 greatly differed in their make-up and outcomes, both had a resonating effect on women’s rights awareness that saw the role of women being addressed by both women and the state in each post-revolutionary period but for very different reasons and outcomes. Moreover, what is also clear is that the nature in which the ‘woman question’ was addressed by political and state actors was intrinsically linked to their political agendas.

On the 1919 Revolution, Laura Bier notes that “Egyptian womanhood became the terrain on which British colonial officials and an emerging nationalist bourgeoisie contested Egyptian moral and political authority for self-rule” (Bier 27). Furthermore, on Nasser and the Free Officers’ Movement that overthrew the monarchy in July 1952, addressing the role of Egyptian women did not emerge through a desire of “granting civil rights but as a means of achieving economic modernization and nation building” (Botman 52). At the centre of this contestation over the role of Egyptian women by political and revolutionary actors that cut across political, economic, social and religious pillars of the country, women themselves have exercised their own socio-political agency amidst the political upheaval. Within the framework of this scholarship, Leila Ahmed (1992), Saba Mahmood (2005), and Madiha El-Safty (2004), and others, have explored how Islam has been both a limitation and valuable tool for Egyptian women’s agency. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the complexity of the formation of Egyptian feminist consciousness amid political tensions between British colonialism in Egypt and the Egyptian nationalist movement for independence in the first quarter of the 20th century. The reason for readdressing
this formation and stressing the tension between feminism in Egypt with Western colonialism is because this intrinsic link remains prevalent in Egypt today in the aftermath of the 25th January 2011 Revolution.

It also offers a platform in trying to understand deep seeded patriarchal constructs and stereotypes that remain a major obstacle to gender equality today despite these constructs and stereotypes being formed over a century ago. A further aim of this chapter is to understand how the post-colonial era of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the emergence of ‘state feminism’ did open up new possibilities for women in important spheres such as education and the economy, but that such new spaces were still confined to patriarchal limitations. Finally, by understanding how debates on ‘secular’ and ‘Islamic’ feminism have been structured and articulated will provide invaluable insight into the formation of feminist consciousness in Egypt in the latter years of the 20th century, and how this debate has influenced and shaped current gender activists in the post-revolutionary period of 2011. In light of this, this chapter will provide a foundation in Egypt’s historical past with feminism and revolution because it may aid our understanding of many of the patterns being repeated in the 2011 Revolution and its aftermath.

Any focus on Egypt’s modern history of feminism must be contextualised within the socio-political setting of the country. M. M. Badawi comments on the importance of 1798, the year Napoleon and his French campaign entered Egypt because “it marks the dramatic opening of the Arab world, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire, to the West, ultimately with momentous consequences in its political, economic, social, and cultural development” (Badawi 1). Napoleon was eventually driven out of Egypt in 1805 by Muhammad Ali whose dynasty would go on to rule Egypt until 1952 (4). The 19th century break from the Ottoman Empire,
however, did not coincide with a complete breakdown of Ottoman and Islamic traditions within Egypt. Perhaps the most notable long standing custom that remained for upper and middle-class Egyptians from the Ottomans was that of the harem: the living quarters of wives and concubines. Where the harem has traditionally been viewed as a source of subjugation for women, Nawar Golley highlights Leila Ahmed’s alternative view, where she notes:

Instead of looking at the harem as an enclosed space within which women are locked up and domesticated, Leila Ahmed sees it as a source of women’s strength and mobilisation. Contrary to the general belief that it was men who imposed segregation upon women, Ahmed argues that it was women who desired it. One of the variants of the term ‘harem’ is *haraam*, meaning ‘forbidden’, which suggests to Ahmed that ‘it was women who were doing the forbidding, excluding men from their society, and that it was therefore women who developed the model of strict segregation in the first place’. (Golley 527)

Building on this insight, it is actually within the realms of the upper class and the confines of the harem where Egypt’s feminist history begins. In 1899, Qasim Amin, an Egyptian lawyer and member of the upper class wrote and published *Tahrir al-Mar’a* (The Liberation of Women). He wrote: “I call on every lover of truth to examine with me the status of women in Egyptian society. I am confident that such individuals will arrive independently at the same conclusion I have, namely the necessity of improving the status of Egyptian women” (3). Marilyn Booth explains that Amin’s work was part of a wider debate in the early 20th century, where the period was marked by the competition of emerging nationalist agendas:
The woman question offered an issue of central importance to the definition of a new society...[and] that men's writings on the woman question had to do not so much with the life conditions of real women as with competing nationalist ideologies that presume a nation maintained by a male leadership. (Booth 173)

This link between nationalism and the role of women would continue in the immediate years following Amin’s work, where the calls for Egyptian independence from British colonialism would grow louder. This is perhaps most evident in the story of Hoda Sha‘rawi, perhaps the best known ‘first feminist’ in Egypt. Middle East historian Margot Badra writes that Sha‘rawi, herself confined to harem quarters and thus segregated from public spaces, began working as a social philanthropist which gave her and her peers “a door to the outside world and new social roles” (Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation* 48) which would otherwise had been closed off due to the restricting nature of the harem. However, Badran also notes that while Sha‘rawi and women like her afforded themselves new spaces, they did so “while ‘respecting’ the dictates of harem culture”16 (47). However, as the demand for Egyptian independence heightened in the aftermath of World War I, Sha‘rawi found herself with a direct opportunity to involve women within the nationalist struggle. As the wife of Ali Sha‘rawi, the deputy leader of the Wafd Party which was the main movement that was calling for independence, she found herself in a position of being well informed of the plans of the Wafd leadership. Moreover, as British forces began to retaliate towards the efforts of the Wafd Party, including exiling its leader, Sa’d Zaghloul, to Malta in 1919, Hoda Sha‘rawi formed the Wafdist Women’s Central

16 This ties in with the criticism that is often directed towards Sha‘rawi by current Egyptian feminists in that she assigned limits to the gender equality she sought. This criticism will be addressed later in this chapter and in Chapter Four when highlighting the personal lives of current feminists and how they view Egypt’s feminist history, including their opinions on figures such as Qasim Amin and Hoda Sha‘rawi.
Committee (WWCC) in a bid to carry on the calls for independence if the senior (male) leadership were imprisoned, exiled, or killed (75). However, the WWCC and the role of women in the nationalist struggle were not limited to a physical involvement of women participating in protests. The presence of women was also of symbolic importance because women were part of a previous contestation between British colonial forces and Egyptian nationalists over Egyptian nationhood and identity. On the one hand, competing Egyptian nationalist agendas saw “the woman question… [as] an issue of central importance to the definition of a new society” (Booth 173), while on the other hand, the British colonial government attempted to deny the very existence of an Egyptian nationhood, and thus deny the very concept of ‘Egyptians’, opting instead to label Egyptians ‘natives’ (Badran, Feminists, Islam, and Nation 12). Moreover, critics of Qasim Amin highlighted that the lack of development of Egyptian women that Amin highlighted was not down to the fault of Egyptian men and women, but due to British colonialism, arguing that male Egyptians kept the women in their family away from public spaces as much as possible for fear of the harm that could be done to them by British forces. Booth notes one critic of Amin who asked: “Who would expose his woman to the revenge of a foreigner who faces only the ruling of his own consul?” (178). It is because of this previous female seclusion that the presence and active participation of Egyptian women in the protests against British rule came to signify an important development in the nationalist struggle for independence.

Another important element of this paradigm of Egyptian women in the nationalist struggle against British colonialism is the long-lasting legacy of British colonialism on feminism in Egypt, what Leila Ahmed has referred to as ‘colonial feminism’. In part, this reverts back to Qasim Amin, where his own ‘progressive’
views on women were linked to his own close relationship with the colonial government (Booth 178). Moreover, the colonial government itself, particularly Lord Cromer, the British governor of Egypt from 1883 to 1907, “championed the emancipation of Egyptian women…[and] the European obsession with unveiling women [was] reflected in the efforts of Lord Cromer” (Abu-Lughod 14). As a result, feminism was, and continues to be, intrinsically connected to ‘Western’ imperialism.

Leila Ahmed notes:

Colonialism’s use of feminism to promote the culture of the colonisers and undermine native culture has ever since imparted to feminism in non-Western societies the taint of having served as an instrument of colonial domination, rendering it suspect in Arab eyes and vulnerable to the charge of being an ally of colonial interest. (Ahmed 167)

This belief that feminism is a Western construct that seeks to impose itself on the East remains an issue today, with many women’s rights activists still refusing to call themselves or the groups they belong to as “feminist” (Hatem, Gender and Islamism in the 1990’s, 45). This tension over ‘the woman question’ amidst a nationalist struggle is perhaps most evident in the aftermath of the 1919 Revolution where nominal independence was achieved in 1922 and a constitution drafted in 1923. However, rather than seeing women being included in the post-revolutionary process and playing a role in shaping the future of Egypt as an independent country, women were marginalised in the process. Sha‘rawi felt betrayed because women were not granted suffrage and she consequently disbanded the WWCC and founded the

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17 Chapter Four will delve further into whether current gender activists view themselves as feminists or not and their reasons for their choices.

18 While Egypt’s protectorate status was removed in 1922, British troops remained in Egypt until 1956 (Kent 45; Lucas 7).
Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) which was to directly and exclusively advocate women’s rights progression without being a part of a political party as the WWCC had been (Badran, Feminists, Islam, and Nation, 81). The question remained: why this marginalisation? If women were secluded for their own safety for fear of what British personnel could do without fear of reprisal by their own countrymen, what justification was on offer for their marginalisation now that the British had been defeated? One possible answer is that ‘revolution’ in of itself does not merely represent a shift in political ideology and governance. Rather, as Michael Hardt notes:

Revolution is not just about a transformation for democracy. Revolution really requires a transformation of human nature so that people are capable of democracy. It’s a process that not only destroys habits of servitude and develops capacities for self-rule but also inspires political imagination and expands their desires, which can press far beyond the present political situation. (Hardt 138)

Hardt’s notion of revolution transcending political paradigms and extending to “human nature” becomes an important consideration in the context of the post-1919 revolutionary period, namely: what part of the 1919 Revolution signifies a break from the past beyond formal politics? Lucia Sorbera points out that women’s participation in the protests against British rule was a challenge to two patriarchal cultures: British colonialism and “indigenous patriarchal culture” (Sorbera 65). She argues that women’s participation in the protests, while beneficial to the wider movement for independence as described in the efforts of the WWCC, did not necessarily equate to Egyptian men accepting women’s equality beyond the call for independence. In addition, Judith Tucker has highlighted that the beginnings of women’s
marginalisation occurred with the strengthening of the modern Egyptian colonial state, marked by the increased crackdown on resistance on men and women by the colonial state. At the turn of the 20th Century, however, and the rising call for independence, Tucker notes that where there was gender quality in the way in which both Egyptian men and women were suppressed by the colonial state, the call for independence did not contain such gender neutral elements. Rather, taking the viewpoint that women’s participation in the 1919 Revolution was not wholly inclusive of women but rather cases of rarity, she notes:

With the passing of mass political movements also came the expansion of the formal sphere of political activity: protest against the colonial state moved into elite educated circles where it was to give birth, eventually, to Egyptian nationalism. Women, regardless of background, were largely excluded from this formal sphere, for the nationalist movement, in its leadership and aims, was a male affair: only a few “women worthies” played a supporting role. As politics became formalised over the course of the century, access to the political sphere was ever more strongly tied to gender. For lower class Egyptians as a whole, the sphere of politics narrowed; for women, however, it disappeared almost altogether, exacerbating an already vulnerable social position. (Tucker 13)

In light of this, the role of Hoda Sha’rawi and the WWCC in the 1919 Revolution becomes less convincing in the promise that women on the whole would be provided with more spaces and opportunities to partake in shaping Egypt’s future.

Timothy Mitchell’s Colonising Egypt (1988) is perhaps the most comprehensive body of work on the way in which British colonialism was exercised in Egypt. Saad Abi-Hamad (6) also discusses the relationship between the British colonial government and Egyptian people, and the various methods the British colonial government sought legitimacy to their rule.
While this may highlight a suggested manipulation of women like Sha’rawi in the nationalist struggle, Marnia Lazreg refutes this notion with a similar paradigm of nationalism and feminism in Algeria, instead pointing out that women protesting for the liberation of their country should be looked at at face value, rather than women being somehow misled by (male) nationalists (Lazreg 118). However, having been so active during the revolutionary period, going so far as setting up the WWCC which played a key role in “broadening the base of the Wafd’s popular support” (Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation* 81), Sha’rawi and her colleagues at the WWCC did see this as betrayal, and consequently dismantled the group and set up the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) in reaction to their marginalisation and alienation by Wafd leaders, including Sa’d Zaghlul himself. To add insult to injury, the 1923 Egyptian constitution stipulated that all Egyptians have equal civil and political rights, only for weeks later this to be declared void by an electoral law that limited political rights to Egypt’s men and not its women. While Tucker is of the view that the nationalist movement became exclusively the domain of upper class men and some women within this social class, others have presented the viewpoint that a wider feminist awakening was conceived alongside this nationalism. What is undeniable is that the ‘woman question’ was a crucial part of the contestation between British colonialism and Egyptian nationalism and that the consequent marginalisation of figures such as Sha’rawi should not be viewed as defeat to feminism. Rather, it can be viewed as a continuation of the tension and instability of the period where the 1919 Revolution did not in itself provide a break with colonialism, and by proxy, not signify the end of importance for feminism to both the British and leading nationalists. Moreover, it

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20 In particular, women-owned magazines centered on the subject of womanhood are often highlighted as evidence that a feminist awakening was taking place. See Badran 1988, Booth 2001, Philipp 1978, and Ramdani 2013.
highlights that both Egyptian nationalism and feminism were still in the process of articulation and change because both were in their relative infancies, and for that reason, shifts in positions and contradictions are of no surprise.

One case that illustrates the tension between colonialism, the Egyptian nationalist movement, and women, is that of the trial of French national Margaret Laurent Fahmi, who was accused of murdering her Egyptian husband and nationalist leader, Ali Kamil Fahmi Bey, in 1923. The defendant argued she committed the act in self-defence after months of abuse at the hands of her husband, and she was subsequently acquitted in a British court. Hanan Kholoussy notes that the case became a centre of contestation over national honour in Egypt’s struggle for independence, where on the one hand British and Western press criticised Egyptian and Islamic practices with women, while on the other hand, Egyptian nationalists sought to defend their national honour, Islam, and their treatment of women (Kholoussy 207). In this way, any notions of new gender roles or equality were dismissed as part of a framework that was still trying to defy all things related to colonial rule, including the concept of women’s equality equating to a digression away from Egyptian nationhood because of its supposed link to British colonialism. As Badran highlights, “debates on whether feminism in Egypt and more generally in much of the third world is Western have included in the circumference of interrogation political issues of authenticity [and] national/cultural ‘treason’” (Badran, Feminists, Islam, and Nation 31). Writing more than seventy years after Egypt was granted nominal independence, writer Nawal El Saadawi noted that the term ‘protection’ has an inauspicious relationship with colonialism and that any notion of the West ‘protecting’ Egyptian women is now refuted by Egyptians (El Saadawi 158). This stigma of Western influence attached to feminism and the supposed protection of women in the West remains prevalent in
 Egypt today after the 25th January 2011 Revolution. Hala Kamal has been with The Women and Memory Forum (WMF) since its formation in 1995 (See Appendix: The Women and Memory Forum), an NGO founded by academics and researchers which provides an alternative history of the lives and roles of women in Egypt. The WMF also contributed heavily to the constitutional drafting processes of 2012 and 2013 in Egypt pertaining to gender and women’s rights. Concerning the constitutional drafting process of 2012, she tells an anecdote that underlies the inherent stereotypes associated with women’s rights advocacy and the activists themselves. After exhaustive research into previous Egyptian constitutions as well as fieldwork interviews speaking with cross-sections of Egyptian women from all class and social backgrounds, the WMF, along with other gender rights organizations, drew up a list of recommendations pertaining to women’s rights to be included in the constitution. Kamal explains what happened after this research process:

In March 2012 we organised a march to Parliament to meet the members of Parliament as well as the committee members drafting the constitution to present our findings and recommendations. That day, no one was able to speak with us and so the next day we returned and were met by one of the deputy speakers of Parliament, Ashraf Saabet, and we outlined our recommendations regarding the constitution to him. He said he was very surprised that we were not talking about freedom to wear whatever clothes we wanted, and that he was expecting to meet the type of women that wanted to drink beer and wear bikinis. (Kamal, Interview with author, 2013)

This is just one example where feminism and women’s rights advocacy continue to be misunderstood by a link with stereotypical and false depictions of ‘Western’ women. This presents an area of contestation because Kamal, much like
many other Egyptian women’s rights activists, considers herself a feminist pursuing feminism. Yet, Kamal and all the women in the fieldwork interviews who also held this position are Egyptian and have spent all or most of their lives in Egypt. Most importantly, they do not see their feminism as opposite to their Egyptian heritage. Rather, while their feminism advocates greater gender equality across all spheres, this equality is not at the expense of being anti-Islamic where Egypt is a Muslim country, nor does their feminism represent Western ideals that seek to replace Egyptian culture with foreign culture. Interestingly, Sarah W., an Egyptian in her late twenties who works for two prominent women’s rights NGOs in Egypt, noted her own struggle with the label ‘feminism’ before she finally adopted it:

I didn’t like the term ‘feminist’ before because of the bad reputation it had. A bad reputation as western, very liberal, very white and related to a hegemonic ideology. All these things that directly clash with your culture and they demonise your culture and it is related to Islamophobia. So I didn’t feel comfortable with all these connotations until I was exposed to other types of feminisms like African feminism, African American feminism – after that I felt more comfortable to call myself a feminist. (Sarah.W, Interview with author, 2013)

It is important to note that the label ‘feminism’ is perhaps not what is crucial, but rather the beliefs and actions behind it. As seen with Kamal’s experience with the deputy speaker, the latter did not associate Kamal with feminism after he had met her because she was not advocating beliefs he associated with (Western) feminism such as “wearing bikinis and drinking beer”. The irony is that having met and heard her demands, he did not associate her with feminism as he understood it, even if Kamal herself does call herself a feminist in the pursuit of feminism. This example
exemplifies that whether an activist considers herself a feminist or not, the real obstacle is educating those around them that feminism should not be forever stigmatised regarding the colonial tensions of a century ago. This is perhaps the largest obstacle for women’s rights activists and feminists today, and while the political tensions during the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath were much different to that of the 1919 Revolution, which shall be discussed in this chapter, ‘the woman question’ would once again find itself within competing nationalist agendas of which it may owe to Egypt’s colonial history and Egyptian nationalist formations in the first quarter of the 20th century.

1.2 The History and Rupture of ‘State Feminism’ in Egypt

The legacy of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt remains popular today. His staunch resistance to the statehood of Israel in 1948, resulting in successive wars in 1956 and 1967, as well as his much documented charisma and rhetoric promoting the unity of the Arab world, has enshrined his popularity. Even in his failure to put into practice his ideas of pan-Arabism and the crushing defeat by Israel in 1967, Nasser remains favorably remembered for his work in the wider region despite his shortcomings. There is little debate that a contributing factor of the popularity of his attempts in pan-Arabism was aided by the fresh memory of the oppressive legacy of European colonialism across North Africa and the Levant, and Nasser was seen as the
leader of banishing that legacy once and for all (Doran 2011). However, through his
 turbulent attempts in promoting pan-Arabism and leading the Arab front on the
 offensive against Israel, historian Derek Hopwood argues that Nasser’s defeat by
 Israel in 1967 had highlighted a growing need to focus on domestic rather than
 foreign policy. He notes, “Yet after the defeat of 1967, in a war undertaken by Egypt,
 Syria and Jordan on behalf of the Arab world, there was some feeling that Egypt had
 suffered enough for the Arabs, and that Egyptians should rely primarily on themselves
 for their salvation” (Hopwood 99). However, Nasser was to die of a heart attack only
 three years later after the 1967 defeat, and much of the scholarship on Nasser’s tenure
 has focused on his foreign policy and domestic political economy (Crabbs 1975;
 Hopwood 1991; Waterbury 1983). On the other hand, much less research has been
 conducted on the role his presidency had on the feminist consciousness that was
 awakened in the first half of the 20th century that was highlighted earlier in this
 chapter. Consequently, the aim of this section is to bring together the work that has
 been done on Nasser’s impact on this feminist consciousness and place it within the
 historical trajectory that leads to the way in which current feminists articulate their
 feminism and the challenges they face that can be traced back to Nasser’s presidency.

 Nasser was a career military man, and accompanied by his ‘Free Officers’
 movement, they overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in 1952 whom they blamed for the
 continued British influence and control over Egyptian politics as well for the
 economic stagnation of the country. As the main actors in the revolution stemmed
 from the military, Botman notes: “In keeping with military tradition and philosophy,
 there were no feminist-inspired issues on the revolutionary agenda of the Free
 Officers when they came to power” (Botman 51). Perhaps the largest body of
 criticism towards Nasser lay in his banning of political parties, as well as marrying
civil society to Nasser’s centralised government (Hopwood 86). As a result, outspoken feminists were either silenced or co-opted into Nasser’s vision for the country. Hatem describes this strategy, stating: “Nasser’s welfare state co-opted women’s progression and equality economically and socially, in return for giving the regime legitimacy” (Hatem, Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism 231). This co-opting of some feminists under Nasser is not where Mozn Hassan sees herself and her NGO, Nazra for Feminist Studies (See Appendix: Nazra for Feminist Studies), as a continuation of Egypt’s feminist past. Rather, she explains:

For me and many of the co-founders of Nazra, we thought feminists had killed the movement because they worked too closely with the government and wrote reports and discussed the same issues over and over again. It was actually a credit to dictatorship that you co-opt activists to work with you rather than against you while the activists think they are making progress but actually not moving anywhere. (Hassan, Interview with author, 2013)

While Nasser gave women the right to vote in 1956 and his social welfare state allowed greater access for women to education and employment, Selma Botman argues that Nasser and his Free Officers “had no interest in extending their progressive attitudes to the private domain of the family, considering traditional domestic relations inviolable. [Consequently] Nassir left untouched laws governing marriage, divorce, and personal status” (Botman 52). This reluctance by Nasser to promote feminism in the private domain of the family, coupled with his state either
co-opting or banning civil actors that included feminists, underlies Hassan’s disfavour towards Nasser where she proclaims: “Nasser killed the feminist movement” (Hassan). Where the first quarter of the 20th century saw the beginnings and growth of a feminist wave in Egypt, which in turn continued into the 1930s and 1940s, Nasser’s presidency saw this consciousness halted and then appropriated by Nasser’s state. Mervat Hatem has referred to this process as a manifestation of state feminism in Egypt which saw “the new welfare state offer explicit commitment to public equality for women...[and] introduce changes to Egyptian society and its gender relations.” In its own turn, state feminism contributed to the political legitimacy of Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime and its progressive credentials” (Hatem, Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism 231).

For the first time, women were provided with support by the Egyptian state to enter into employment and the economy, a move that can be viewed as both progressive and limiting. Progression because it offered women the opportunity to enter into public life under the support of the government, including wider access to higher education, while a limitation because such access was tied to Nasser’s state, which, despite these progressive steps, could at any time be removed or limited. Moreover, any change of the state or change of direction of the state could radically affect the lives women had begun to build for themselves. Due to the very nature of Nasser’s

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21 Perhaps the most notable example of a suppressed feminist voice by Nasser is that of Doria Shafik. Shafik was placed under house arrest in 1957 for her protests against Nasser’s erosion of democracy, and she committed suicide in 1975 (Nelson xiii).

22 Comprehensive literature on state feminism theory can be found in Mcbride and Mazur 2010.

23 This danger would become a reality as the collapse of Nasser’s state began after his death in 1970. His successor, Anwar Sadat, chose a markedly different direction, opting instead for *infitah* (open door) economic policies that saw a radically reduced welfare state compared to that of Nasser’s. In turn, women could no longer seek out the opportunities they once had without the economic support from the state they had once enjoyed (Hatem, Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism 231).
eighteen year reign that saw political parties being abolished and the political system founded on Nasser’s ambition to unite the Arab world, it is evident why current feminist activists view Nasser’s presidency as a major hindrance to the feminist movement that was developing prior to Nasser.

Nasser’s primary rhetoric was centred on emancipating Egypt from colonialism, which in turn took on a character of articulating and expressing national pride and promoting the nation’s strength. Frantz Fanon relays the process in which the post-colonial state embarks on a journey towards identifying its culture that was hidden from view under the control of its former colonisers. He states, “The native intellectual who takes up arms to defend his nation’s legitimacy and who wants to bring proofs to bear out that legitimacy, who is willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, is obliged to dissect the heart of his people” (Fanon 38).

During this process where the previously colonised state attempts to identify itself through a specific and unique national culture in reaction to being forced to follow the culture of the imperialist, Fanon goes on to argue that in actual fact, rehabilitating a national culture in response to previous colonisation actually takes on a much larger project of rehabilitating the continent it resides in because “the contention by colonialism that the darkest night of humanity lay over pre-colonial history concerns the whole of the African continent” (Fanon 38). What Fanon argues here is that because Western imperialism did not identify each colony as individually backward or savage, but rather, all colonies were collectively categorised as inferior, the struggle for a national culture took on a much larger project for the search of a continental culture that seeks to undo the stereotypes and assumptions formed under imperialism. This process closely resembles Nasser’s domestic and regional rhetoric against colonialism and the platform for his popularity. Moreover, this articulation of the
nation and national culture also encompasses the position of women in society, as seen in the previous section concerning the 1919 Revolution and its nationalist movement, as well as under Nasser’s state feminism, where women appear mobilised for the sake of the nation rather than for any genuine commitment to gender equality. Deniz Kandiyoti articulates this point when she explains:

Others expose state interventions as a sham by drawing attention to the purely instrumental agenda of nationalist policies that mobilise women when they are needed in the labour force or even at the front, only to return them to domesticity or to subordinate roles in the public sphere when the national emergency is over. The apparent convergence between the interests of men and the definition of national priorities leads some feminists to suggest that the state itself is a direct expression of men’s interests. (Kandiyoti 376)

This criticism of state interests in relation to women is echoed in an interview with the ninety-one year old Leila Doss who founded the Woman Organisation for Health Improvement. She recalls:

Nasser began our falling down. Actually I was very much with Nasser when he began because Egypt was degrading under [King] Farooq and his clique. So when he came and I saw that he was going to help the poor, I was completely with him. But on one occasion, I believe in 1955, I met with the Ambassador from the United States on the work I was doing, and a few days later I was summoned to the Ministry of Interior. I was asked if I had met with the US Ambassador and I said yes. He said I shouldn’t. I asked why and he said this is high policy - that if I have something to say I should say it to the Ministry of Social Work. I asked ‘Am I not free to say what I want?’ and he said ‘no’, and
then I began to understand the restrictions under Nasser. I carried on trying to forward my association whenever possible, and I was eventually placed under a travel ban from leaving Egypt in 1961 until Nasser’s death in 1970. (Doss, Interview with author, 2013)

It is therefore clear that Nasser’s state seemingly offered women new opportunities in public spheres but did so in order to further the state’s post-colonial interests. This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that Nasser did not in any way seek to alter the lives of women within the private spheres of the home because such changes would not benefit his state and political agenda. What was most damaging, however, was the restrictions Nasser’s state placed on civil society and actors that included feminists like Leila Doss and Doria Shafik. These restrictions that included house arrests for the aforementioned feminists meant that the growing feminist waves that were built over the previous half century prior to Nasser’s presidency were either halted or co-opted.

While Nasser’s unexpected death in 1970 saw his successor Anwar Sadat make peace with Israel and consequently usher in a new era of capitalism and free markets in Egypt, Sadat’s state still retained Nasser’s elements of authoritarianism and state centralised policies, including that of state feminism. This version of state feminism, however, would come to be symbolised in Sadat’s wife, Jehan, who took the lead role in pushing her husband to take measures to safeguard and enhance women’s rights (Beattie 111). This enhancement of rights saw changes in the personal status laws which pertain to the laws regulating private spheres of domesticity. Nadje Al-Ali explains:
The Personal Status Law of 1979, labeled ‘Jehan’s Law’, granted women legal rights in marriage, polygamy, divorce and child custody; it was implemented by presidential decree along with another law that introduced changes to women’s representation in Parliament. Jehan Sadat was instrumental in passing the 1979 Family Status Law that reaffirmed a woman’s right to divorce, gave her the right to travel without her husband’s permission and raised the legal age for marriage from sixteen to eighteen. (Al-Ali 74)

Al-Ali argues that these laws were passed in response and opposition to growing Islamism (Al-Ali 73), and in the aftermath of Anwar Sadat’s assassination in 1981 at the hands of Islamists, his successor, Hosni Mubarak, repealed ‘Jehan’s Laws’ in 1985 to appease Islamists who argued that the laws were against *Shar‘ia* (Islamic law). This pattern of creating and repealing of laws pertaining to women underlies how state and leadership-centric feminism had become, and only entrenched further the existence and dependence on state feminism. This pattern would continue under Mubarak’s tenure, with Mubarak’s wife, Suzanne as the First Lady, taking the lead role in directing the feminist movement as she saw fit. Most notably, Suzanne Mubarak pushed through amendments to the personal status laws, in particular Law No. 1 of 2000, which made it possible for women to divorce their husbands (known as *khul’*) on the premise that women forfeited their financial rights (Elsadda 67).

Suzanne Mubarak also founded the National Council for Women in 2000 and served as its president until 2011 when her husband was ousted. Sally Zohney, a gender and political activist who works for the United Nations Women’s Program and has worked for several women’s rights NGOs since 2006 recalls that “if there was a woman’s rights law that would pass, it had to pass through her [Suzanne Mubarak]. A million campaigns would not change that. And if she was convinced, she would fight
for it. If she was not convinced, it would end there” (Zohney, Interview with author, 2013). Zohney also recalls that Suzanne Mubarak would not be receptive to spheres of women’s rights advocacy and protection outside of her own agenda. For example, “Mubarak was keen on organising international events all the time on the idea of human trafficking and women trafficking. That was her edge over the last five years. She took the lead in pushing that as a cause that Egypt is pioneering. And I really didn’t see that as a main priority” (Zohney). This continuation of state sponsored-feminism in one form or another from Nasser’s presidency until the end of Hosni Mubarak’s in 2011 meant the notion of a feminist movement and consciousness in Egypt was skewed. On the one hand, state feminism clearly played the most important role in providing opportunities for women in the economy and education, and furthering women’s rights within familial law. On the other hand, there clearly existed feminist groups in the 1990s and 2000s that were not sponsored by the state, such as The Women and Memory Forum and Nazra for Feminist Studies, and others. This duality is an important consideration, because while there did exist feminist groups outside of the realms of the state, the high number of groups with a feminist agenda that were formed in the immediate aftermath of Mubarak’s resignation in February 2011 could possibly highlight just how dominant the state was seen in controlling feminist pursuits until 2011, and that more possibilities for expression of feminist consciousness were seen and seized upon once the state had seemingly been removed from the picture. In light of this, the role of state feminism between 1956 and 2011 cannot be understated. While certain developments were made with respect to women’s rights during that period, this same period also saw activists outside of the state mechanics either co-opted into state feminism, oppressed by the state itself, or simply drowned out by the much stronger state-sponsored feminism. With the control
of the state seemingly weakened with Mubarak’s resignation, and as shall be shown throughout this thesis, particularly in chapter three and chapter four, a strong and united women’s movement has emerged, evident in the number of new groups with a women’s rights and feminist agenda forming. Arguably the most illustrative example of a feminist consciousness with being outwardly expressed with renewed vigour in the wake of Mubarak’s resignation, which symbolised the weakening of the state, can be seen in the Egyptian Feminist Union, founded by Hoda Sha'rawi in 1923 and consequently banned by Nasser, being re-established. As a result, the long standing presence of state feminism for over half a century appears to be ruptured by Mubarak’s resignation, and this is further evident in the way many of the feminist activists that were interviewed for this thesis do not look upon their own activism as a historical continuation of the work of many of the feminist figures who operated under the era of state feminism, such as Jehan Sadat and Suzanne Mubarak. In many respects, therefore, it could be argued that the feminist consciousness and movement that emerged to the surface in the aftermath of Mubarak’s resignation was made possible by the notion that Mubarak’s resignation also signalled the end of state control over feminism. Chapter Three of this thesis analyses how this feminist consciousness after Mubarak’s resignation has manifested itself into a women’s rights and feminist movement without the shadow of the state.24

24 The distinction between a women’s rights movement and a feminist movement, and a women’s rights activist and a feminist activist in Egypt, will be discussed at length at the beginning of Chapter Three.
1.3 Understanding and Articulating the Nation and Nationalism in Egypt

The 20th century in Egypt proved to be a period of ongoing turbulence and change. While the world struggled with two major world wars and the Cold War, Egypt found itself involved in its own struggles including its quest for independence, two revolutions, four Arab-Israeli wars, and the identity shaping of its modern state (Nelson 119). The 21st century has continued in the same vein. Each year 25 January was traditionally celebrated as Egypt’s National Police Day which commemorates the
death of fifty Egyptian police officers who, on 25 January 1952, refused the demands by British troops to hand over their weapons and evacuate a police station in the north-eastern city of Isma‘laya (El-Hennawy 2011). They were to pay for this refusal with their lives and National Police Day was meant to serve as a reminder of Egypt’s struggle to free itself from British subjugation. The symmetry is not lost, then, in that over half a century later on 25 January 2011, Egyptians would choose that date to ignite another journey and struggle against oppression, this time coming in the form of one of their own: President Hosni Mubarak.

Revolution and uprisings have swept across the Arab world over the past four years which are now popularly referred to as the ‘Arab Spring’. However, Egypt’s involvement in revolution is by no means recent or rare in its modern history. The 1919 Egyptian Revolution saw the beginning of the uprising against British colonialism that would eventually last until 1956 (Jankowski 12). Despite British recognition of Egypt’s independence in 1922 and the removal of Egypt’s status as a British protectorate, as well as the forming of Egypt’s first constitution in 1923, these measures were only superficial. On the ground British troops still controlled the all-important trade route of the Suez Canal, and there remained the continued influence and power of British political forces over Egypt’s monarchy and overall governance (Baron 11). These issues would continue to heighten tensions between the two nations for three more decades, culminating in the 1952 Revolution that saw Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers Movement overthrow King Farooq for what they saw as the continued occupation of Egypt by Britain and the Egyptian monarchy’s corruption and complicity in this betrayal to the nation. Mohamed Naguib, Egypt’s first president and leader of the Free Officers Movement alongside Nasser, provided insight behind
the growing tension and frustration of the British-Egyptian relationship dynamic in the buildup to the 1952 Revolution when he declared:

During the war we suffered countless humiliations at the hands of the British, who failed, and still fail, to understand that our national interests are not, and can never be, the same as theirs. Of no country did the British demand more than they did of Egypt and of no country were they less considerate. (Nelson 112)

While the 1919 and 1952 Revolutions were uprisings against a foreign power and the pursuit of national independence, and indeed it can be argued that the 1952 Revolution served as the second wave to 1919, the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution is markedly different on the surface because it was an uprising against a domestic oppressor in the form of Mubarak’s thirty year presidential tenure and his regime that seemingly benefited itself rather than the people it was meant to serve. While independence is acknowledged as the primary main goal of 1919 and 1952 (Badawi 2001; Badran 1995; Hopwood 1991), the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution demanded democracy, justice, and an end of economic hardships for so much of the population, exacerbated by the corruption and private wealth of the Mubarak family and his aides (Bahgat 2014). However, while the 2011 Revolution can be separated from its two predecessors in the 20th century in that it was not an uprising against a foreign power, the 2011 Revolution does contain a very important element that was also prominent in 1919 and 1952: it was an uprising that evoked prominent elements of nationhood and nationalism.

Notions of the nation and nationalism are at the focus of this thesis because it argues that the prevalence of nationhood and nationalism in Egypt played and
continue to play an integral role in the dynamics of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Moreover, these notions pre-date the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and have a long and rich history in Egypt as shall be explained later in this chapter. However, before understanding the concepts of nationhood and nationalism in the Egyptian context, it is first important to understand what exactly is meant by these terms. Perhaps one of the most important treatises on nationalism comes from Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) where he argues, among other things, that “since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms; the People's Republic of China, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and so forth; and, in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the prerevolutionary past” (2). Anderson goes further in dissecting exactly what is meant by “national”, where he argues that “states have tended to become national not only in form but in substance, i.e., nationalist” (2). This insight is compelling because it begins to unravel exactly what is understood by these myriad of terms such as national and nationalist, that seemingly appear similar yet with subtle but important differences. Here, Anderson argues that national may refer to the physical form of a country, defined for example by its physical borders, of which we may term ‘a nation’, but nationalism refers to the character and identity of this nation. However, Anderson nuances this understanding of nationalism further by arguing that more than one nationalism can be present at one given time in one nation. He states, “Many ‘old nations’, once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by ‘sub’-nationalisms within their borders - nationalisms which, naturally, dream of shedding this sub-ness one happy day” (3). What Anderson highlights here, and what will become particularly relevant in understanding what is meant by the nation and nationalism in the Egyptian context of its January 2011 Revolution, is that
the claim to nationalism can be contested by different groups within one nation, and as a result, the prize for succeeding in winning this contest leads to the ability to define the nation itself through this nationalism. Lending to the title of his work, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson highlights the difficulty in defining exactly what is meant by nation due to its abstract nature, but does offer his own definition:

> It [the nation] is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (6)

The logic behind Anderson’s definition is that even members of the smallest nations cannot have face-to-face contact with every other member, and thus members of nations imagine their greater community rather than necessarily seeing it for themselves. In essence, the nation is imagined in the minds of its members who comprise this imagination of the nation based on their own traits and the traits of the community which they can see and interact with. As a result, the notion of the nation is based on a combination of tangible and abstract notions for its members: tangible where it sees its own community, and abstract where it bases the entire concept of the nation on their imagining that it replicates their own immediate community. Anderson goes on to argue that the nation is limited to its physical borders and that we may think of the nation as a community “because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7).
Anderson concedes that one of the main motivations for his work was the lack of theoretical thought on nationalism despite the obvious presence of it across the globe. He highlights that this is not due to a failure to attempt to understand nationalism, but rather a conceding of defeat that it remains out of reach for definitions. Anderson highlights Hugh Seton-Watson’s claim: “Thus I am driven to the conclusion that no ‘scientific definition’ can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists” (3). Perhaps one of the largest obstacles that remain in developing theoretical definitions for nationalism is the sheer expansiveness of possibilities for its reality and the possibilities for its presence in multiple forms at any given one time. Frantz Fanon argues for example that “when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state” (121). Here, Fanon alludes to the primordial way of thinking of nationalism, which traces the origins of the nation historically to links of race, ethnicity, or language, and that such links override any loyalty to what we term as ‘the state’, referring to the political apparatus of the nation. In light of this, there are certainly enough signs within the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution that indicate a loyalty to local kinship rather than the wider political state. As a result, Anderson’s concept of imagined communities as a method for understanding how the nation and nationalism are constructed is the most appealing and constructive method of thinking of these terms precisely because imagination lends itself to the apparent abstract nature of defining the nation and nationalism. The flexibility within this theoretical framework also lends itself to thinking about Egypt’s January 2011 Revolution because it offers a flexible enough lens to view multiple manifestations and imaginings of the Egyptian

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25 For more on primordial theories on nationalism and wider discussions on nationalism, see Hutchison and Smith 2004, and Gellner 2006.
nation and nationalism that were present during the protest uprisings against Mubarak, but also in the (re)construction of these concepts in the post-revolutionary period that saw (and sees) continued attempts by political actors and movements to define the Egyptian nation its nationalism that shall be highlighted in chapters two and three. Moreover, Anderson offers an insight into the origins of nationalism that highlights the importance of culture in the formation of nationalism. Where there is a tendency to align nationalism with the political, articulating that nationalism and the nation are a by-product of regional and international conflict, Anderson argues “that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being” (12). As a result, this offers another lens to understand how seemingly politically led discourses in the aftermath of Mubarak’s resignation transcended political rhetoric but rather intertwined with historical cultural thought and practices of nationalism. As this thesis is centred on how gender portrayals and expectations of Egyptian masculinities and femininities have been incorporated into the realms of the nation and nationalism during and after Egypt’s January 2011 Revolution, Anderson’s premise of the nation as an imagined community is precisely what this thesis will argue in chapter two: that contesting imaginations of the role of men and women in Egypt were presented by opposing political forces in order to lend legitimacy to their respective political struggles. Much in the way holy wars have been fought with both armies declaring God on their side, so too does Chapter Two highlight that political forces positioned their political claims with references to gendered images and concepts. Moreover, just as Anderson makes reference to the importance of culture in the political formation of the nation and nationalism, this thesis will highlight this theory in practise in Egypt, through examples, where notions
of gender that have become politicised transcend political realms and cut across cultural history and familial customs. Just as Anderson highlights that nationalism and the nation have cultural roots, this thesis will highlight how political actors have referenced cultural roots in order to articulate and authenticate their image of the Egyptian nation and nationalism. In analysing this contestation of the nation by political actors that was fought, among other things, on gendered terrains, this thesis will hope to draw out more nuances and complexities in the study and formation of the nation, nationalism, and gender.

1.4 Feminism and Islam
After the resignation of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 that signalled an opportunity to entirely overhaul the Egyptian state because of its supposed weakening, a political vacuum opened up that saw a number of new political parties being formed and a rejuvenation of political discussions that all centred on the political future of Egypt and what direction it would take. While there existed political parties and political protests in the final decade of Mubarak’s rule, and what some scholars argue provided the prelude to the 25th January 2011 protests (Abou El-Fadl 6), the post-2011 period was certainly marked by mass political engagement and interest. Amidst the formation of political engagement, this period also saw the reemergence of a long standing political force: the Muslim Brotherhood. The relevance of the overt presence of the Muslim Brotherhood after decades of being a banned entity became important because for the first time it was plausible that Egypt could be governed by an Islamic political faction.26 In the decades since the Muslim Brotherhood was banned in 1954 due to them being seen as a physical and political threat by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Muslim Brotherhood continued to exist and function underground, but were never in a strong enough position to successfully challenge the complete control of state politics in Egypt that saw Sadat inherit power from Nasser and Mubarak from Sadat. This possibility that the Muslim Brotherhood could govern Egypt after the removal of Mubarak is relevant to discussions on the formation of feminism in Egypt because of the ongoing debate on feminism’s position within Islam and whether Islam could provide a platform for women’s rights in Egypt to be protected.

26 It could be argued that supposed ‘secular’ parties such as Hosni Mubarak’s National Democratic Party were not entirely secular. However, the Muslim Brotherhood can be wholly defined as an Islamic group because their identity is founded on their interpretations of Islamic principles and they seek to support their arguments through their interpretations of Islamic doctrine.
On the rise of Islamic movements in the 20th Century and the consequent articulation of ‘the woman question’ framed around an Islamic narrative, Deniz Kandiyoti argues that the tension between feminism and Islam never moved beyond a debate framed around Islam itself, and that feminists often became trapped in articulating themselves through Islam rather than in secular terms. She notes:

[Islamic] Conservatives confirmed that existing gender asymmetries are divinely ordained, while feminists discerned possibilities for a more progressive politics of gender based on the egalitarian ideals of early Islam. These exegetical exercises mainly showed that, for both feminists and anti-feminists, Islamic doctrine continued to provide the only legitimate discourse within which to debate women's rights. (Kandiyoti, Women, Islam and the State 9)

As the construction of Egypt’s modern state continued in the 20th century, questions over the role of Islam in spheres of governance, law, and family, continued (Flores 33). With respect to feminism, Badran defines the progression of the feminist movement in the 20th century through waves, and concerning the first wave she explains:

Organised feminism and activism emerged in the 1920’s, and women began to participate in the Islamic movement in the 1930’s. Although first-wave women made choices between the two movements [feminism vs. Islamism], the period was not marked by adversarialism. (Badran, Feminism in Islam141)

In support of Badran’s observation, Lila Abu-Lughod argues that the rhetoric of Islamists towards feminism is in actual fact not as extreme or alien to secular discourse as is presumed. Rather, she argues that “what is characteristic of the
Islamists is that they stigmatise sexual independence and public freedoms as Western but much more gingerly challenge women’s rights to work, barely question women’s education, and unthinkably embrace the ideals of bourgeois marriage” (Abu-Lughod 243). This redirects us back to feminism’s colonial shadow that seemingly amalgamates feminism with negative connotations of Western liberalism. In this respect, one of the advantages of articulating feminism through Islamic principles and doctrine is that it can be presented through a prism of national and cultural authenticity, while feminism articulated in non-religious terms continues to fight off its stigmatism of being influenced by foreign practices that alienate or contradict a notion of Egyptian authenticity that includes an integral role for Islam. This binary of secular and Islamic feminism is part of a much wider debate on the modern Egyptian state, where, in the eyes of Islamists, Sadat’s neoliberal policies that continued under Mubarak coincided with an increase in government secularism and a decrease in Islamic values being upheld in family life (Ezzat 134). Fundamentally, the benefit of feminism articulated through Islamic history or a reinterpretation of Islamic doctrine that offers gender equality is that it seeks to highlight that Islam does provide a platform for protecting women’s rights. Moreover, it questions any gender-bias interpretations by Islamic male scholars and challenges any justifications for women’s subjugation made in the name of Islam (Jawad 1). In light of this, ‘Islamic feminists’ such as the prominent Zaynab al-Ghazali have argued that a woman’s position in society is safeguarded rather than hindered by Islam (Hatem, Gender and Islamism in the 1990’s 45), and thus Islamic feminism can be defined as “a brand [of feminism] [that] explicates the perspective of women (and men) who, although committed to Islam as an essential part of their identity, don’t hesitate to criticise and challenge the Islamic patriarchal authority” (Jawad 2).
In light of this, and with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to political power in 2011 and 2012, the fieldwork interviews revealed that feminists were fully aware that they could not articulate their feminism in non-religious terms if they wanted to be successful in achieving their aims.\textsuperscript{27} As Hala Kamal of the Women and Memory Forum and a coalition of women’s rights groups prepared recommendations pertaining to gender equality and protection to the 2012 constitutional drafting assembly that was dominated by Islamists, she recalls:

\begin{quote}
We decided to strategically focus on our Egyptian constitutions because it would look better to provide our recommendations in relation to our own historical past as opposed to saying we have copied or worked off the constitution of another country. (Kamal, Interview with author, 2013)
\end{quote}

This highlights the awareness that feminists have of the importance of providing a cultural, historical, and in this case, religious authenticity, to the articulation of their feminist objectives. In addition, it also highlights that the supposed binary and labels of ‘Islamic’ and ‘secular’ feminism are actually fluid and interchangeable because feminists such as Kamal have in the past also articulated their feminism objectives in non-religious terms. What cannot be understated, however, is that tension between Islam and feminism resides in how Islam is used as a justification for gender inequality through gender-bias interpretations of Islamic doctrine rather than feminists being adversarial towards Islam itself. This can be best illustrated through an anecdote told by Engy Ghozlan, a feminist and political activist

\textsuperscript{27}The Muslim Brotherhood won the majority vote in the parliamentary elections in 2011 through their political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, and won the presidential elections through Mohamed Morsi in June 2012.
who recalled what happened after she watched the announcement of Mohamed Morsi’s presidential electoral victory:

I watched the election result announcement at a cafe with a friend and then I left. On the way to the car some people were cheering, and these boys came to me and said ‘from tomorrow you won’t be able to wear those jeans, you’ll stay at home’ and a friend of mine that same night had rocks thrown at her because she was wearing a skirt and people were shouting at her ‘you are going to hell’. (Ghozlan, Interview with author, 2013)

As a result, it is perhaps no surprise that feminists worried over their rights under the governance of the Muslim Brotherhood. Paradoxically, however, the notion of an Egypt ruled by Islamic governance is, at least in principle, not new. Egyptian constitutions, for example, have a history of always placing Shari’a (Islamic law) as the governing law of the country (Arjomand 123), despite Shari’a being so expansive and open to a multitude of interpretations and implementations. However, in many instances Egyptian law can be seen to be both governed and not governed by Shari’a. In matters of family inheritance, for instance, Egyptian law does appear to follow principles of Shari’a, while other areas of Egyptian law are not based on an obvious connection to Islam. In light of this, it makes it extremely problematic to suggest that the modern Egyptian state can be labelled secular or Islamic because the two appear to converge, thus making it more difficult to completely divide feminism into categories of Islamic and secular. As is highlighted in Chapter Four, these terms may no longer be sufficient in explaining the character of current feminist activists. Rather, where previous scholarship has placed secular and Islamic feminists as binary opposites, Chapter Four points to a far more fluid process where current feminists may consider themselves neither secular or Islamist, or that such terms, if used, do not
necessarily stand in opposition to one another. Instead, it is possible for feminists to occupy positions as Muslim women articulating feminism in non-religious terms without any contradiction to their own religious beliefs, while by the same token, they can articulate their feminism through Islam without any compromises to their feminist beliefs. As a result, this tension between feminism and Islam is less of a religious tension but a historical and cultural tension stemming from the continued association of women’s freedom with Western liberalism and colonialism. For many Egyptian women’s rights activists and feminists, as is illustrated in Chapter Three with the example of the 2014 constitutional drafting process, articulating their advocacy through Islamic and regional Middle East history can provide some much needed authenticity to counteract feminism’s stigma, and not be seen as a threat to Egypt’s national identity where Islam plays an integral role.

Chapter Two

The Contestation for Egyptian Nationhood and Womanhood in Tahrir Square
2.1 Asmaa Mahfouz’s Gendered Call to Protest

“Show your honour and manhood and come down to Tahrir on 25 January. If not, then you are a traitor to the nation, like the police and the President are traitors” (Mahfouz). This extract is taken from the YouTube video posted by Asmaa Mahfouz that went viral in the days leading up to 25 January 2011. In the video, Mahfouz speaks on concepts such as dignity, social justice, and on several occasions, just like the above quote, genders her language. In her emotional appeal to her fellow citizens to join in her protest against Mubarak and his regime, she couples her political objective of removing Mubarak with notions of honour and manhood that already have an important place within the familial and social fabric of Egypt (Ghannam 85). This importance and recognition of manhood in Egypt can perhaps best be illustrated with the ‘Queen Boat’ case of 2001 which saw fifty-two men put on trial for attending a Cairo discotheque for the purpose of engaging in homosexuality. The case made headline news, and as Human Rights Watch have documented, the men were vilified and attacked on several platforms including their honour, religion, and manhood (Human Rights Watch, ‘In a Time of Torture’ 37). Very interestingly, one defendant, Bassam, a bodybuilder, explained, “I watched them [the other defendants] getting beaten, but me they didn’t beat. They hit them hard. I saw a lot of people with bloody marks on their backs from the belts…You know, I have muscles, I look like a man. The guards respected me. All along I was treated quite differently from the others” (33). Clearly manhood and how and what it signifies plays an important role in interactions in Egyptian society, where a specific image of masculinity is expected
and accepted, and any male failing to live-up to this image is looked upon and treated as inferior. Returning to Asmaa Mahfouz, she challenges her viewer’s manhood and honour along a political spectrum, where siding with her is to symbolise retaining honour and manhood, and to stand against her or be silent is to lose it. By proxy, she succeeds in appropriating what it means to be a man despite being a woman, and she appropriates what it means to be on the right side of social and political justice even though she is only one person. During the video, she also ignores any presupposed notions of Egyptian gender performativity as a woman where a woman’s honour is paramount to preserving her family’s honour and where her honour is protected through her marriage or virginity until married (Dunne 9). Mahfouz highlights and then openly defies this paradigm, proudly stating “people, have shame. I posted that I, a girl, am going down to Tahrir Square and I will stand alone, and I’ll hold a banner and perhaps some people will show some honour. I even wrote down my number so maybe people will come down with me, but no one came except three guys” (Mahfouz). By stating that she is a girl going to Tahrir Square on her own, as well as giving out her number freely to the public, she recognises that this action will not conform to societal expectations of her as a woman. However, in creating a new space for herself as a woman and ignoring all forms of gender expectations and conformity that she is clearly aware of, she is able to extend this gendered space to her political rallying call, and it is along these gendered lines that she is able to politically challenge her audience.

This new arena that Mahfouz creates for herself as a woman goes hand in hand with the new politics she is trying to create for the country. It could be argued, however, that by highlighting her own gender as a woman and drawing upon
references to gender taboos such as giving out her telephone number to the public and
being a girl alone in Tahrir Square, she does not seek change in gender performances
but rather seeks for it to be reinforced. This reinforcement can be seen in the way she
continuously evokes the concept of people regaining their *karama* (dignity), and then
specifically addressing men, stating, “If you think yourself a man, come with me on
25 January, and whoever says women shouldn’t go to protests because they will get
beaten, let him have some honour and manhood and come with me on 25 January”
(Mahfouz). Consequently, it is perhaps not new gendered spaces being created in
order to construct a new political space in defiance of Mubarak’s regime, but rather an
appropriation of existing gender paradigms used to oppose Mubarak’s regime,
whereby protesting against Mubarak alongside Mahfouz on 25 January represents a
restoration of men’s honour. What is clear from Mahfouz’s rallying call is that
Mubarak and his regime are placed as the binary opposition to metaphorical and
abstract notions of honour and manhood rather than drawing the dividing line over
specific political objectives and terms. This framework would be repeated once
protestors reached Tahrir Square en masse in late January and February 2011, where
the chants did not challenge Mubarak’s regime over specific political changes, but
rather upheld on Mahfouz’s evocation of honour and dignity, and it is within this
framework that a new image of the Egyptian nation was attempted to be forged. The
purpose of highlighting Asmaa Mahfouz’s call to protest at the beginning of this
chapter is because it serves as a platform for highlighting that any claim to speak on
behalf of the Egyptian nation does so, alongside other elements, on gendered contours
that shall be illustrated using Judith Butler and Gayatri’s theoretical treatise on the
divisions between the nation and the state.
2.2 Competing for the Nation in Tahrir Square
In Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak’s seminal work *Who Sings the Nation-State?* (2010), they pose important questions and considerations for our understanding of the terms ‘state’ and ‘nation’, and how the boundaries and lines of these terms can be drawn together and separated. They offer an important observation that provides a platform in understanding how protestors in Tahrir Square managed to separate Mubarak’s state from the concept of the Egyptian nation. They highlight that “the state is not always the nation-state” (Butler and Spivak 1), where their understanding of the state is “the legal and institutional structures that delimit a certain territory” (3).

In the case of Egypt, the state would point to the office of the presidency, the police, the judiciary, and the ministry of the interior, to name just a few branches and instruments of the state, and in the specific case of Egypt, there is enough evidence to suggest that such branches overlapped where they should not have, leading to widespread corruption (Aggour 2013; Bahgat 2014). This understanding and definition of the state that considers the state as tangible instruments of a territory allows us to think of ‘the nation’ in more abstract terms, where the nation “expresses a certain national identity” (Butler and Spivak 30) that cannot be pointed to but is understood and accepted. In turn, it is precisely within the realms of abstract identity and national symbolism that protestors in Tahrir Square were so successful in disjoining themselves from Mubarak’s state and presenting his state as a binary opposition to their forged image of the Egyptian nation that Mahfouz articulated through concepts of honour and manhood in the lead up to 25 January, and which continued once Tahrir Square was filled. Butler and Spivak argue that it is the state which binds a country together through institutional mechanisms of law and politics, and if “the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain vision of the nation…then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes. It [can] expel precisely through an exercise of
power that depends upon barriers and prisons” (5). In the context of the revolutionary uprising in Egypt in January and February 2011, the monopoly of the state in defining the nation and national identity was contested by the protestors, thus inverting Butler and Spivak’s premise. It is within this contestation which provides Egypt with its ‘revolutionary’ moment, where the protestors’ notion of the Egyptian nation successfully challenged and defeated the head of state, namely Mubarak, by placing him outside their vision of the nation. Butler and Spivak refer to those who are excluded from the nation as “the wanting ones... [where] one is found to be wanting” (31). While Butler and Spivak present this argument with the example of the institutional state excluding undesirables who do not conform to their homogeneous image of the nation, and excluding them often physically through exile or prison, the reverse is true in Egypt but the principle remains the same, where protestors found Mubarak “wanting” and excluded him from their homogeneous image of the nation, eventually forcing him to resign from the state on the evening of the 11 February.

Returning to Asmaa Mahfouz’s call to protest, the seeds of what would become the popular chants in Tahrir Square of ‘bread, freedom, and social justice’ were sown (El Saadawi 2011), and she provides directions on the elements that would eventually frame the protestors’ image, or as was highlighted in the Introduction, Benedict Anderson would argue, ‘imagination’, of the nation and national identity, on concepts of dignity, honour, and social equality. These elements that formed the protestors’ imagination of the nation were abstract, yet importantly, homogeneous. Butler and Spivak argue that if any notion of the nation is to survive, “it must be purified of its heterogeneity” (32), and this was clearly seen in Tahrir Square where chants, such as the people demand the fall of the regime (Abou-El Fadl 6), presented
‘the people’ as a homogeneous collective bound together by an abstract understanding of concepts such as dignity and honour, and a desire to rid the nation of an undesirable, namely Mubarak. As the protest movement in Tahrir Square began to strengthen, and its growth being documented by international, regional, and some private domestic media outlets, more tangible elements of this collective national identity were being presented through a number of forms including religious unity and gender equality. Popular images of Imams and Coptic priests hand in hand became widespread, particularly important in light of the New Years’ Day 2011 bombing of a Church in Alexandria leaving twenty-three dead and dozens injured. With the tragedy occurring less than a month before the outbreak of the revolution, the subsequent show of religious harmony between the Muslim and Coptic population in Tahrir Square became another weapon against Mubarak. Immediately after the bombing, several Christian Coptic leaders voiced their anger and frustration towards the government for failing to protect their community (Al Jazeera: “Clashes Follow Egypt Bombing”), and this evolved to where the religious unity that was now salient in Tahrir Square symbolically placed the blame on Mubarak’s state for the previous sectarianism and religious tension. As Copts watched over Muslims as they prayed their compulsory prayers in Tahrir Square, Mubarak and his regime had by proxy been placed as the antithesis to this show of religious unity.

If religious harmony between Egyptian Muslims and Copts became one of the first pieces of tangible piece of evidence of a new image of the Egyptian nation, gender equality in Tahrir Square would perhaps prove to be the strongest tangible weapon for the protest movement in excluding Mubarak’s state from this imagination of the new the nation. Specifically in this case, gender equality represented the equal
nature in which Egyptian men and women occupied Tahrir Square (Al-Ali, “Gendering the Arab Spring” 27) and the decision by both genders to either ignore or do away with existing gender expectations, roles, and customs. Engy Ghozlan, a female gender and political activist recalls, “I mean I smoked in Tahrir and it was fine and I remember thinking ‘this is crazy, I’m smoking in Tahrir and no one is looking or saying anything to me’. And I was never sexually harassed there either” (Ghozlan, Interview with author, 2013). Similarly, Sally Zohney who was regularly present in Tahrir Square and also works for the United Nations Women NGO as a Youth Initiatives Associate, notes, “I was not a woman [in Tahrir Square] of ‘Oh my god there’s a woman’…for the 18 days I was like everyone” (Zohney, Interview with author, 2013). Consequently, it is evident that the protest movement in Tahrir Square appeared to represent a shift away from what may be called existing gender-related expectations, which Ghozlan and Zohney allude to with the examples of women being able to occupy a public space alongside men, being able to engage in acts that may have previously been frowned upon such as smoking, and perhaps most importantly, occupying a public space in Tahrir Square without the fear of being sexually harassed or assaulted. It is perhaps this last point that facilitated the growth of the protest movement and what would eventually become a terrain on which Mubarak and his regime would fight back and contest the image of the nation the protestors had forged in Tahrir Square. Most importantly and much like the religious unity described earlier, the gender quality paradigm and the absence of the otherwise hyper-visible sexual harassment of women in Egypt (El-Dabh 2013) not being produced in Tahrir Square appeared to demonstrate that the people in Tahrir Square had provided a better version of the Egyptian nation than Mubarak’s state. In summary, the message was clear:
sectarianism and sexual harassment were not by-products of the people but by-products of the state.

It is within this gender equal paradigm and lack of sexual harassment in Tahrir Square that Mubarak’s regime appeared to choose where it would challenge the protesters’ imagination of the nation and attempts at forging a new image of the nation that demonised and exiled Mubarak’s state. Importantly, while this binary confrontation was taking place between protestors and Mubarak’s state, specifically his leadership, the police force, and the ministry of the interior, a third party had an important role in the outcome: the media. State-sponsored media either did not report or belittled the scale of the protests, while many private domestic and international channels counter-acted this state bias. Specifically with international media, the religious harmony and visibility of women alongside men became a prominent part in covering the Tahrir Square story. For example, Al Jazeera correspondents described a “festival-like and communal atmosphere at the protest, with protesters from all walks of life represented” (“Protestors Flood Egypt Streets”), and this was an often repeated sentiment in reports and broadcasts during the uprising. In almost a direct challenge to what Edward Said successfully highlighted of Orientalist depictions of Arab women portrayed as subservient to Arab men, the Tahrir Square uprising obliterated this depiction and provided journalists and news anchors with a much different story of women participating, and in some cases, for example Asmaa Mahfouz, leading men. The Orientalist image of an uncontrollable and unruly ‘Arab Street’ that required strong leadership, or more explicitly, a strong hand, to govern it had been reversed on its axis, where the strong leadership was now viewed as the cause rather than the preventer of chaos and violence. It is on the terrain of gender equality and a lack of
sexual violence in Tahrir Square that Mubarak’s state unsuccessfully attempted to challenge and distort the image of the protestors. As a result of the vivid gender equality in Tahrir Square, and in light of CNN’s Anderson Cooper being attacked and beaten by plain-clothed police officers, Paul Amar notes that “journalists articulated a tentative new discourse in which brutality in Egypt, including sexualized brutality, was seen as an instrument of state terror deployed tactically by the police state” (301). Consequently, not only had Mubarak failed to challenge the legitimacy of the protestors by dispelling its harmonious image, he also confirmed that the cause and blame of all brutality and gender disparity was on his and his state’s shoulders. This in turn supported Mahfouz’s and the protestors’ discourse where concepts of regaining dignity and honour were intrinsically coupled with ridding Egypt of Mubarak’s regime, and Mubarak’s failed attempts at brutality only supported their claims that to remove Mubarak would not just be a political improvement but a much wider social necessity.

On the formation of nationhood and a specific depiction of the nation, Butler and Spivak note that pluralism is expelled for the sake of national unity (Butler and Spivak 32), while Juan Cole and Deniz Kandiyote explain that “most writers on the subject [of nationalism] worry about how the culture of nationalism tends to create a positive image of the nation as homogeneous while defining itself against a hated and despised Other or set of Others, within and without” (Cole and Kandiyoti 189). This worry appears to be realised on several levels during the Tahrir Square protests and specific events that followed Mubarak’s resignation. While mechanisms of Mubarak’s state attempted to counter the harmonious depiction of the nation that placed Mubarak’s state as its antithesis, protestors in turn sought to respond to these
attempts. For instance, one narrative that appeared to reach Tahrir Square was that the protest movement was led by the historically demonised and banned Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in 1928 by Egyptian school teacher Hassan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood grew to substantial numbers in the 1930s and 1940s and was recognised as one of the largest and most organised groups in society. However, the group was continuously targeted by successive Egyptian state leaders, from Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950’s (Hopwood 39), to their prosecution under Mubarak’s regime (Human Rights Watch: “Egypt: Human Rights Background”). A large part of this persecution went beyond the physical realms but rather became an integral ingredient in the narrative of Mubarak’s state where the Muslim Brotherhood would often be blamed for any atrocities or defects in the nation (Dickinson 2011). This pattern of publicly scapegoating the Muslim Brotherhood for over half a century became a narrative that many Egyptians had become accustomed to hearing, and more importantly, many now believed and associated the Muslim Brotherhood with terrorism. This association was linked together through the thread of ‘Islamic terrorism’ which, while being a narrative that has widely proliferated in the West since 11 September 2001 Twin Towers attack, the notion of Islamic terrorism has a much longer domestic significance in Egypt, where the assassins of President Anwar Sadat in 1981 were Islamists. While the assassins had no direct link to the Muslim Brotherhood, Mubarak succeeded Sadat on a wave of fighting ‘Islamic’ terrorism of which the Muslim Brotherhood became the main target in the 1980s and 1990s (Al-Awadi 2). As a result, it was no surprise that one of the ways in which Mubarak’s state attempted to delegitimise the protestors in January and February 2011 was by associating the protestors with the then still banned Muslim Brotherhood. As a response to this narrative of the protestors being labelled as Muslim Brotherhood
members and thus terrorists, Sarah W., a political activist who participated in the protests in Tahrir Square from the very first day, recalls:

I remember when the cameras were there and journalists would be asking questions and there would be men telling women to be visible, saying ‘come to the front with your hair and stuff’. And it wasn’t just the men. We as women ourselves would put ourselves on display every time we were attacked as Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood) by saying ‘look at me, look at my hair [referring to not being veiled], I’m obviously not Ikhwan. (Sarah.W, Interview with author, 2013)

This rebuttal by protestors of the state’s attempt to discredit their protests by recycling a fear of the Muslim Brotherhood is important as it raises a number of considerations to the contestation by both sides of the notion of Egyptian nationhood. This willingness to present a certain image of unveiled women, or indeed, the very presence of women in Tahrir Square, as a proof that the protestors were not Muslim Brotherhood members is problematic as it only shows that not all the protestors were Muslim Brotherhood members. It does not, in other words, prove that the Muslim Brotherhood were not present. More importantly, by actively attempting to disassociate from the Muslim Brotherhood in front of the media which Sarah.W references, it only reinforces the narrative propagated by the state that the Muslim Brotherhood are terrorists rather than contesting this narrative of the state, which the protestors were doing on other narratives propagated by the state. It also leaves open the question of what a woman who is “obviously not Ikhwan” looks like, as well as problematising this attempt by the protesters to present a certain image of a woman as positive and an ‘Ikhwan-looking’ woman as negative. Moreover, by specifically presenting women to the media in order to demonstrate the inclusivity of the protests,
it raises a concern that women’s agency in Tahrir Square was only accepted by male occupants because of the practical need for women to be present in Tahrir Square in order to keep the number of protestors high, or to demonstrate that all segments of society, including both genders, wanted to remove Mubarak. Butler and Spivak note that when a group of people propagate a concept of the nation, that image must be homogeneous “except in those cases where a certain pluralism allows for the reproduction of homogeneity on another basis” (Butler and Spivak 32), and it could be argued that in this specific example of Egypt, allowing pluralism to take place in the form of women occupying and having agency in Tahrir Square was “allowed” for the sake of building a strong unitary image and voice against Mubarak’s state.

In the middle of this binary contestation between the state and protestors over legitimacy and ‘speaking’ on behalf of the nation, an important third party remained seemingly without a voice: the greater Egyptian population that was not protesting and was not part of the mechanisms of Mubarak’s state. While protestors and the representation of the state, namely Mubarak, both often cited or spoke on behalf of ‘the people’, the ‘people’ was and remains an abstract concept to quantify. Moreover, it is problematic to suggest that the formation and forging of a new Egyptian nationhood in Tahrir Square with the aim of toppling Mubarak’s regime represented the same values for people who were not in Tahrir Square but did support the aim of removing Mubarak and his regime. For example, Engy Ghozlan makes a crucial point on sexual harassment in Egypt in January and February 2011 where she notes, “The moment you left Tahrir, you would get harassed again. So just because Tahrir was good doesn’t mean Egypt on the whole was in a good place during those days” (Ghozlan, Interview with author, 2013). This is an important consideration because while there is ample evidence demonstrating that plain-clothed police officers and
baltigaya [thugs] were hired by mechanisms of the state to infiltrate Tahrir Square, as shown by the attack on CNN’s Anderson Cooper, it cannot be argued that all forms of sexual harassment were state-sponsored. Furthermore, it is problematic to suggest that individuals who sexually harassed women in January and February 2011 were supporting the state. Rather, it is entirely possible that individuals who did sexually harass could also have been in favour of the protests, suggesting that gender equality and non-gender-based violence was not a principle that was associated for everyone with the removal of Mubarak’s state. In essence, while Tahrir Square was the main source of the protests, the principles and actions in Tahrir Square did not represent the principles and actions of the rest of the population who also wanted to remove Mubarak. Another consideration in light of this are the events that followed Mubarak’s resignation in February 2011 where if Tahrir Square exemplified unity to remove Mubarak, then his removal highlighted the different aims and political views of those who sought Mubarak’s removal. Specifically, Ziad Elmarsafy (2015) reads Jacques Derrida notion that revolution will always breed more calls for more revolution and steps towards more political change, and the nature of such calls are always riddled with complexities, perhaps represented by the many diverse objectives of political movements. This is an important consideration in light of the unity that was on display in Tahrir Square because such unity was arguably based on the removal of someone rather than a clear plan on what would replace him. It is noted that there were calls for bread, freedom, and social justice, but that such terms were never quantified, and can be defined and seen to be represented in many forms that can be subjective. This view can then be applied to the apparent gender equality and lack of sexual harassment in Tahrir Square, where it can then be seen as dangerous
and presumptuous to suppose that such changes will continue to exist after the removal of Mubarak.

Much of the research interviewees’ awareness of the planned 25 January protests appeared to stem from social networking, particularly Facebook, with all but two of the participants indicating they had first been made aware of the planned protests by the ‘We Are All Khaled Said’ Facebook page (Preston 2011). This is supported by approximations that up to “five million Facebook users in Egypt were in some way encouraged to attend the protests through floating information on the social media” (Kamal 83). State-sponsored media did not cover any of the coverage in the lead-up to the protests and continuously exercised a state-bias as the number of protestors grew by the end of January and early February. As a result, for the research participants who did not attend the protests from the very first day, they often cited an element of confusion and uncertainty about whether to join the protests because of conflicting information from the media and orders from family members. One interviewee notes:

A lot of people were very confused. The woman who came on TV and was pretending she was part of the January 25 recruits and that she had training and then she broke down crying and started apologising to Mubarak. And she was a big hit but no one knew what to believe. (Nagaty, Interview with author, 2013)

Yara el Razaz, a recent graduate from the American University in Cairo who co-founded a student organisation that raises awareness of women’s rights and gender equality goes further, explaining:
I was aware of the Facebook page [We Are All Khaled Said] and the first time I heard the word ‘revolution’ I sort of giggled a little… I was very confused. The first time I heard the word it was a few days prior to January 25 but I didn’t take it very seriously. (El Razaz, Interview with author, 2013)

It is evident that confusion was prevalent for those who were not intimately involved in the lead-up to the protests which is the majority of the population that does not have regular access to the internet and thus social networking websites such as Facebook (Aggour, “Only two in 100 in Egypt have access to broadband internet”). In light of this, coupled with state-media bias either belittling the protest numbers or demonising the protestors themselves, makes it clear why confusion was a recurring theme in the experiences of many of the interviewees who were not involved in the protests from the beginning and therefore lacked first-hand information. It is because of this very confusion that the contestation between the protestors and the state for the support of the rest of the population became integral to the outcome of the protests. 

*Hizb el kanaba* (The Sofa Party), meaning those Egyptians who literally watched the revolution unfold from their living rooms, became a popular term for those who did not participate in removing Mubarak. However, as the research interviews have revealed, there were a number of variables that prevented many from participating in the protests even if they supported their aims. One key consideration was the threat of sexual violence at a protest. While Tahrir Square may have appeared as a utopian gender equal space for those who were there, this did not necessarily reach those who had not yet visited Tahrir Square for themselves, and so pre-existing experiences and taboos for women such as not going to a public place like Tahrir Square on their own would have been retained. Furthermore, elements of fear were expressed in interviews, including that the state would soon release the police on protestors to carry
out violence of which the police had a known history. This association of the police with violence is perhaps most evident in the case of Khaled Said who was brutally murdered by police officers in Alexandria on 6 June 2010 (“Khaled Said: The face that launched a revolution”), where the pictures of his mutilated body went ‘viral’ and evolved into the aforementioned ‘We are all Khaled Said’ Facebook page which interviewees referenced as their primary source of information on the planned 25 January protests. Paradoxically, interviewees who were continuously present in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011 from the very beginning cite the enmity towards the police and their threat of violence as a unifying thread for the protestors. On the other hand, the threat of police brutality appears to have also acted as a deterrent for would-be protestors who supported the call for the fall of Mubarak. This threat of violence, notably, had gendered elements, specifically through sexual violence, where women were seemingly targeted by state police. Hoda Elhadary, an English teacher at the British University in Cairo and a political activist who defied her mother’s demands not to go to Tahrir Square for fear of the violence she could suffer, explains this targeted violence:

The majority [of sexual assaults] were planned; no one believed it happened out of luck. And they [Mubarak’s regime] had benefits of this happening. Women in the streets were forming the majority, women going everywhere [to protest], and this was something they didn’t like…women on the streets instead of staying at home and being afraid, because if a woman is afraid, she’s automatically going to transfer her fear to the male members in the family. (Elhadary, Interview with author, 2014)

The protests in 2011 against Mubarak would not be the first time that state police specifically targeted female protestors through the mode of sexual violence.
Hala Kamal, an English Literature professor at Cairo University who is also engaged in a variety of political and gender rights activities, including being a founding member of an NGO focusing on women’s voices, frequently attended protests in Cairo in the years preceding the 2011 protests and notes the evolution of state-sponsored attacks on women:

I remember when I went to protests in the early 2000s. We would only be a couple of hundred or so, and we the women would stand on the outer ring so that the police could not touch us or the other male protestors. In fact, we could push the police back a bit and they would go back because they would not want to have physical contact with us because we were women. This happened until 2005, where government hired thugs would attack men, not women, and we would try to stand in front of men. But on 25 May 2005, the State realised that women’s presence was threatening their ability to exercise force, and for the first time there were hired sexual harassers who would sexual harass and grab women straight away and sexually assault them at a protest. In Tahrir in 2011, I was thinking in those terms. Who is the hired thug here? (Kamal, Interview with author, 2013)

In support of Kamal’s assertions of the targeting of women by hired thugs, known in colloquial Egyptian Arabic as balitgaya [thugs], Paul Amar describes what he calls “the baltagi-effect” (Amar 308), where the advent of the new millennium saw Mubarak’s state use hired thugs to infiltrate and distort the protests, including shouting “extremist slogans in order to make the activists look like ‘terrorists’; or, alternately, to wreak havoc, beating civilians and doing property damage in the area of the protest, while, of course, brutalizing the protesters themselves” (308). It is evident that this strategy was reemployed in the January and February 2011 protests against
Mubarak, most notably through the exercise of sexual violence as a deterrent to female protestors already in Tahrir Square so that they may not return, and as a deterrent to women at home who supported the fall of Mubarak but were also acutely aware of the history and capability of sexual violence by the state should they decide to protest. Sally Zohney recalls her own initial fear and her eventual overcoming of it. Interestingly, she also notes the response by some protestors who were acutely aware of the state’s pattern of targeted sexual violence on women and in turn, sought to encourage women to attend protests despite the threat of sexual violence. Zohney recalls that in the days leading to 25 January:

There were very serious blogs and notes online telling you if you’re a woman, be careful, you have to wear a swim suit under your clothes because they [the police or hired thugs] will tear them off you…and if you have big hair be careful, don’t let it loose because they might drag you from your hair.

(Zohney, Interview with author, 2013)

It could be argued that such advice may act as even more of a deterrent because it underscores the very real threat of sexual violence against women at the hands of the state’s agents. However, this remains important because it highlights that despite such threats, many women continued to descend upon Tahrir Square and other protest locations across the country en masse, which highlights just how determined many women were to see Mubarak’s state fall. Despite the very real threats of sexual violence that Mubarak’s state offered, it was not sufficient to succeed in curtailing the efforts of many women, and in this way, the state’s tactic of targeted sexual violence towards women was directly addressed and overcome. On a practical level, as many people descended upon Tahrir Square as a result of the calls for million-man marches where the fear of reprisals by the state were seemingly overcome out of a desire to be
rid of Mubarak’s regime, this mass volume of protestors severely restricted the state’s attempt and capabilities at achieving the baltagi-effect to limited instances.

As a consequence, the mass volume of protestors hindered the state’s intended goals of discouraging women from attending protests and failed to distort the spirit and image of a ‘new’ gender equal nation that was being presented in Tahrir Square. It is within this mass volume of protestors that Mubarak’s state perhaps realised that traditional modes of crushing protests would not work. As a result, Mubarak’s three speeches to the nation during the eighteen day protests, particularly the second speech, appeared to present a new strategy for deterrence, namely an attempt to (re) include himself and the state into the concept of Egyptian nationhood of which he and his state were being presented as the antithesis to by protestors in Tahrir Square. On 1 February 2011, in a televised speech addressing the outbreak of protests and consequent violent clashes between protestors and Mubarak’s state police force in the days prior, Mubarak evoked the concept of al watan [the nation] on several occasions, as well as the duties he had carried out in the name of the nation such as his military service and his service to the nation as president. In addition, he also attempted to place himself and instruments of his state within the collective of the protest population, stating “I charge the police apparatus to carry out its duty in serving the people, protecting the citizens with integrity and honour with complete respect for their rights, freedom and dignity” (The Guardian: “Hosni Mubarak’s speech: full text”). In light of this, Mubarak’s initial strategy of a violent response to the protests that took place in the immediate days following 25 January through the police and hired baltigaya appeared to have changed, where he no longer physically attacked the protestors but rather now sought to include himself and his state within the protestors’
rhetoric and imagination of Egyptian nationhood encompassed by slogans of dignity and honour, which saw Mubarak’s state as its antithesis. His final lines of this speech are perhaps the most obvious example of his evocation of the concept nation, through its history, its people, and most importantly, his place within this framework rather than outside of it. He concluded:

This dear nation is my country, it is the country of all Egyptians, here I have lived and fought for its sake and I defended its land, its sovereignty and interests and on this land I will die and history will judge me and others for our merits and faults. The nation remains. Visitors come and go but ancient Egypt will remain eternal, its banner and safekeeping will pass from one generation to the next. It is up to us to ensure this in pride and dignity. (The Guardian: “Hosni Mubarak’s speech: full text”)

Mubarak and his state’s final attempts would prove to be futile as it sought to combine the concept of the nation and the state together, which Butler and Spivak convincingly argue can be separated both by people opposed to the state as well as by the state excluding those from the nation who they deem undesirable. This final effort by Mubarak in trying to bridge the gap between the state and the nation represented a shift in strategy by Mubarak’s state during the eighteen day protests; however, it would have limited impact. Mubarak’s state’s threats and actions of violence towards the new formation of Egyptian nationhood in Tahrir Square that was being formed along notions of honour, economic, social and gender equality, ultimately failed, as illustrated through the state’s failure to eliminate women from protests through threats and attacks of sexual violence. The momentum of the protests continued as enmity towards Mubarak and his regime grew, where women were ever present. The purpose of this section was to highlight how the eighteen days in January and February 2011
were not just a political contestation between Mubarak, his state, and protestors. Rather, that these eighteen days transcended the political arena and passed into the realms of framing Egyptian nationhood and competing imaginations, as Anderson would frame it, over the image of the Egyptian nation. This contestation and competing imaginations presents itself as a practical and real life example to answering Butler and Spivak’s question: who sings the nation-state? At the heart of this contestation, and imagination of the nation, was the framing of Egyptian manhood and womanhood and the expectations and model for each, evident in Asmaa Mahfouz’s gendered call to protest on 25 January, as well as Mubarak’s state’s attempt to discredit male and female protestors through labelling and sexual harassment attacks. In light of this, one possible answer to Butler and Spivak’s question could be that attempts can be made by anyone to speak on behalf of the nation, but arguably one image or imagination of the nation ultimately prevails at different moments. In this case, it could be argued that Mubarak’s resignation on 11 February 2011 served as a moment of victory for the protestors’ image and framing of the Egyptian nation. However, where Mubarak and his state failed to effectively combat their exclusion from the Egyptian nationhood framed by protestors, the following section addresses how the post-Mubarak state, namely the Egyptian military, offered more challenges along gendered lines over the narrative and depiction of Egyptian nationhood.
2.3 After Mubarak: The Egyptian Military, Virginity Testing, and Regaining Control over Egyptian bodies

From Asmaa Mahfouz to the protestors in Tahrir Square and across the country in January and February 2011, they were successful in placing Mubarak’s state outside of the realms of their newly forged nationhood because they were able to position Mubarak and his state as the antithesis to their principles of dignity, social justice, and gender equality. However, where Mubarak was unsuccessful in bridging this divide between his state and the now popular demands for the Egyptian nation by protestors, the transitional government that succeeded him, namely the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), immediately sought to amalgamate the notions of the state and the nation, whereby the state could once again reclaim the authority to define and speak on behalf of the nation. Just as sexual harassment and violence became a terrain on which Mubarak’s state attempted to regain control and authority by targeting women, a similar pattern of control over women’s bodies emerged almost immediately with the governance of the SCAF. In March 2011, less than a month removed from Mubarak’s resignation, eighteen women who were demonstrating in Tahrir Square were arrested by military personnel and subjected to virginity tests at the hands of a military doctor. While the medical test itself can be criticised for violating international law and “constitute cruel and inhuman treatment” (Human Rights Watch: “Egypt: A year after virginity tests”) a question remained as to why such tests had been performed in the first place. The case came to light when one of these women, the then 25 year old Samira Ibrahim, filed two complaints over the virginity tests. In her testimony on what happened during her detention by the military, Samira Ibrahim describes:
Two men in military uniform came into the cell. They asked us which of us was unmarried and then told the seven of us that they were going to examine us to see if we were really virgins. They took us out one by one. When it was my turn they took me to a bed in a passageway in front of the cell. There were lots of soldiers around and they could see me. I asked if the soldiers could move away and the officer escorting me tasered me. The woman prison guard in plain clothes stood at my head and then a man in military uniform examined me with his hand for several minutes. It was painful. He took his time. It was clear he was doing it on purpose to humiliate me. (Human Rights Watch: “Egypt: Military Virginity Test Investigation a Sham”)

Rather than deny the tests ever occurred, justifications behind the test were offered by senior personnel from the SCAF. One senior military general under the cover of anonymity explained to CNN:

The girls who were detained were not like your daughter or mine. These were girls who had camped out in tents with male protesters in Tahrir Square, and we found in the tents Molotov cocktails and drugs. We didn’t want them to say we had sexually assaulted or raped them, so we wanted to prove that they weren’t virgins in the first place. None of them were [virgins]. (Borkan 2011)

Furthermore, as the then Head of Military Intelligence, Abdel Fattah el Sisi defended the practice of virginity testing as a precaution to protect the army against allegations of rape. As a result, it was evident that women’s bodies, specifically virginity, became a platform in which the SCAF would decide who would be afforded their rights or not, as well as demonstrating that concepts of masculinity, femininity,
and overall gender peformativity, would be a key criteria in the SCAF’s attempt to define and appropriate the image of Egyptian nationhood, manhood, and womanhood. This can be seen where the unnamed military general draws a distinction between Egyptian women who do and do not conform to certain behaviour. Rather, women who do not conform but deviate, in this case deviation meaning occupying Tahrir Square alongside men, consuming drugs and not being virgins, were no longer deemed Egyptian women, or “daughters” as he describes, and consequently, virginity testing and a violation of their rights was justified. Moreover, Sisi’s logic that non-virgin women have less of a claim to rape follows a similar alarming logic. This criterion of defining Egyptian womanhood by homogeneous voices in the Egyptian military is far removed from the hopes that many women had only a month prior in Tahrir Square during the protests against Mubarak’s state (Naib 2011), and where the monopoly of the state to define the Egyptian nation and the behaviour of its men and women was broken by protestors. In contrast, the virginity tests and their subsequent justification revealed the SCAF’s state’s first move in regaining this monopoly. It is important to note that such justifications by the military to perform virginity tests reinforce the association of virginity and a woman’s honour. A woman’s preservation of her virginity prior to her marriage has a long history in Egypt and the wider Middle East (Ghannam 8). For example, the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Egypt according to most statistics is placed at above 90% (UNFPA: “FGM in Egypt: Prevalence Rate and Prospects”). In her research on the prevalence of the practice in Egypt, Aida Seif El Dawla provides two reasons why it appears engrained in the familial and social fabric in Egypt. El Dawla reveals:

The first is that the practice reduces a woman’s sexual desire, thus preserving her virginity until she gets married. The second is that circumcision works as a
catalyst to speed up a woman’s full achievement of her femininity. Most women agree that the process of FGM itself is extremely painful; however, they regard it as the rite of passage to femininity. Other reasons given include that it is beautifying for women, and that it prevents the clitoris from growing to the size of a male organ. (129)

It is consequently evident that the notion of virginity is pivotal in Egyptian society, as seen through the wide practice of FGM where women are inflicting a painful operation on their daughters year after year in order to carry out what they see as a measure in protecting their daughters and preserving their honour. It is therefore no surprise that both the unnamed general and Abdel Fattah el Sisi had no qualms in justifying the performance of virginity tests on unmarried women as virginity appears to be an existing benchmark for judging a woman’s honour and dignity. In her compelling analysis in *Women, Honour, and the State: Evidence From Egypt* (2006), Beth Baron notes the importance of virginity and women’s honour in Egypt and wider Arab world, where families police and judge their own families on the conduct of their women. Baron describes:

> According to Arab customary law, immodest actions dishonoured the family, metaphorically tainting the family blood, which could only be 'cleansed' or redeemed by loss of life. An agnatic relative of the woman - her father, brother, father's brother or his son (who might also be her husband in a region where cousins on the paternal side frequently married) - was charged with killing her to redeem the family honour. The spilling of blood supposedly washed away the shame or dishonour. Women are occasionally killed by mistake (the rumoured activity never occurred) or, conversely, escaped
punishment when the initial deed had been kept a secret: they were locked up, sent away, or quickly married off. Honour in the Arab world is thus a collective affair and helped define the parameters of the collective. The entire family's honour - and here family meant those related by blood through the male line - resides in the conduct of its women. (1)

As a result, both the unnamed general and el Sisi may have had great confidence that their opinions on the importance of virginity would have been agreed on by their audience. However, this framework of virginity in this instance is extended beyond familial and societal dimensions to the political field, where Samira Ibrahim and the female protestors did not have their political objections challenged or addressed, but rather their politics was subverted because they were excluded from an image of the nation by these two military men that only classify married women or unmarried women who have maintained their virginity as women who can retain their human and political rights. Rather, these women now appeared depoliticised and viewed and judged solely as women, not as political actors. Consequently, this demonstrated the first overt attempt by the SCAF state to claw back control over defining nationhood, via the proxy of women’s bodies, that was lost by the Mubarak state during the January and February protests. In doing so, they were able to control political opposition by placing them outside the realms of the Egyptian nation and familiarity and thus alienating them and subverting their opposition, as was done to Samira Ibrahim and the other detained women whose political protest was completely ignored in the debate over their virginity. The following year, in March 2012, the military doctor who performed the virginity tests was acquitted of any wrong-doing in a military court.
The Egyptian military were now the *de facto* governing body of Egypt who sought control over dissident protestors against their governance. As illustrated through the case of virginity testing, such control and power was often exercised around contours of sexuality. This dynamic is perhaps not surprising when the Egyptian military has traditionally retained an identity that projects itself as a pillar and symbol of nationhood that is built upon notions of manhood and protecting the (female) nation, namely Egypt (Baron 2007). Scholar Ramy Aly notes, “Where it remains compulsory, military service in a diverse range of national contexts is a rite of passage into citizenship and in most cases, manhood … for most Egyptians, the army remains *masna’ rigala* (a factory producing men)” (Aly 149). Furthermore, the virginity testing was in tandem with the character of the Egyptian police state under Mubarak where virginity testing has been documented in cases against suspected homosexuals, including anal cavity searches to determine if one is a “top” or “bottom” actor in homosexuality (Human Rights Watch, “In a Time of Torture” 41). Importantly, cases centered on homosexuality, itself not explicitly named a crime in Egypt but placed under the category and vague concept of ‘debauchery’ (13), have been cases that have transcended the legal system and become a trial based on morality carried out in the public eye. Such cases became less about whether men had broken the legal law, but whether they had broken moral and religious principles where the public, via the medium of the media, became the jury. Moreover, in such cases, those suspected of homosexuality and thus deemed immoral human beings become wholesale targets by the police because their immorality, namely their homosexuality, negated their citizenship and legal rights. In its research of abuse towards homosexuals in Egypt, most notably the ‘Queen Boat’ case of 2001, Human Rights Watch explained that, “police and prosecutors assume men who have sex with
men to be capable of, and culpable for, any other criminality. Police may thus see an act of violence against a gay man not as an occasion for investigation but as a pretext for further injustice” (Human Rights Watch, “In a Time of Torture” 88). It is therefore evident that sexual behaviour transcends across familial, societal and political realms in Egypt, and therefore not surprising that the SCAF in the beginning of its governance in 2011 sought to weaken opposition to their state by targeting aspects of the opposition’s sexuality, in this case virginity. Bruce Dunne’s paper on Power and Sexuality in the Middle East (1998) comments on this role of the state that frames cases around sexual morality and he notes that “regimes link their legitimacy to the defense of morality and the licit sexual order” (Dunne 11), of which he argues current social hierarchies in the Middle East remain gendered, a hierarchy he places historically. He explains:

Muslim male elites, adopting the cultural practices of conquered Byzantine and Sasanian lands, construed that message to promote the segregation and seclusion of women and to reserve public and political life for men. Social segregation was legitimized in part by constructing "male" and "female" as opposites: men as rational and capable of self-control; women as emotional and lacking self-control, particularly of sexual drives. Female sexuality, if unsatisfied or uncontrolled, could result in social chaos (fitna) and social order thus required male control of women's bodies. The domain of licit sexuality was placed in service to the patriarchal order. (Dunne 9)

As a result, this control over women’s bodies and sexuality, specifically in the realms of virginity in the case of Samira Ibrahim and the other detained women, can be seen to be used by the military regime as a defence against political dissidents to
their newly formed governance after Mubarak. The social and political motivations for dissidents is not heard or addressed, but rather ignored in favour of the moral outrage they have caused along sexual and gendered contours. This is evident in the way Samira Ibrahim’s original reasons to protest were completely ignored, and where the point of reference on Samira Ibrahim for public discourse was on her virginity and the subsequent virginity tests with which her name has become synonymous.

Moreover, as Dunne alludes, the state connects their legitimacy to govern with their patrol and maintenance of morality, including sexual morality. This is an important observation for at least two reasons. First, it alludes to hegemony over what constitutes morality, not allowing for any deviance, sexual or otherwise, away from accepted thought and practices. In essence, where the military defended the practice of virginity testing, this only reinforces the importance of virginity in society rather than offering alternatives to this train of thought, such as the lack of importance of virginity for unmarried women. Second, and following on from this point, it makes it difficult, if not problematic, for political opposition to compete against this hegemonic voice on morality for fear that they may lose wider support from society who do adhere and believe in these long-standing modes of thought on morality.

Paradoxically, rather than seek to challenge this hegemonic voice propagated by the state, opposition forces may reinforce it in two ways: they may remain silent, thus offering no alternatives, or they may highlight deviant moral behaviour as criticism towards the state’s failings towards society of which deviant moral behaviour is the result. In both instances, the hegemonic voice remains unchallenged, and in the case of Samira Ibrahim, her virginity rather than her political discourse became the benchmark on which she was presented and judged.
This discussion leads to another important avenue on how politics, gender, and sexuality, have been contested in the post-Mubarak era. While seemingly gender-equal paradigms were witnessed in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011, it is far more difficult to ascertain whether long-standing thoughts and opinions towards gender and sexuality began to change as a result of this gender-equal nature of the protests. In the immediate aftermath of Mubarak’s resignation, a number of new political parties were formed (Abdul-Majid 17), and in March 2011, the same month that Samira Ibrahim was detained and subjected to a virginity test, Egypt was already having its first post-Mubarak vote in the form of a constitutional referendum. It is important to highlight this speed in which formal political processes began after Mubarak because it underpins much of the complexity, and frustration, felt by gender rights activists in the post-revolutionary period. If it is accepted that the protests against Mubarak manifested themselves as a formation of the Egyptian nation re-emerging and saving itself, or a new concept of the nation surfacing for the very first time, this manifestation of the nation at one specific time, namely January and February 2011, will not necessarily produce new concepts of gender and sexuality beyond this period. On the contrary, Tessler and Warriner argue that the very opposite may be true, where:

Feminist aims may have no link to nationalist agendas or may even be explicitly denounced as contrary to the collective good. For example, efforts to forge a coherent communal identity may involve an emphasis on conservative traditional values. In this situation, nationalism is not associated with reform but may rather seek the reaffirmation of a patriarchal status quo. Indeed, nationalism's antipathy toward feminist goals may be particularly intense; since women are often considered to be the guardians of culture and tradition-
wardens of the community's sacred heritage and authenticity, as it were-
reforms relating to women may be judged injurious to nationalist efforts to
protect or unify the community”. (Tessler and Warriner 256)

There is evidence that despite the supposed new spaces that were created for
women that were noted earlier in this chapter, this failed to continue beyond the
protests against Mubarak for a number of reasons. Mervat Hatem highlights a number
of historical obstacles and patterns that have emerged in the Middle East in the 20th
century, particularly in relation to anti-colonial struggles of Middle Eastern countries
where nationalism was often the centre piece for the quest for independence. She
notes that British and French colonial policies in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon,
contained a lack of interest in the education of young girls, and as a result, “the
education of women became a centrepiece of the anticolonial nationalist agenda”
(Hatem, “In the Shadow of the State” 21). However, in the case of Syria and Lebanon,
Hatem explains that the achievement of independence did not translate into greater
gender equality or a progression for women’s rights because women were not united
in their demands, nor were women’s rights groups able to form key alliances with
other political or social movements (22). The premise of Hatem’s argument lays in the
power of states in Arab societies which has directly limited the opportunity for
women’s rights groups to effect change in law and attitudes towards gender and
sexuality. This mode of thinking parallels the struggles that women’s rights activists
faced and continue to face in the aftermath of Mubarak’s resignation. Continuing
Hatem’s argument that women’s rights groups in the post-independence period in
Syria and Lebanon struggled to make alliances with political parties, the same could
be argued for in Egypt since the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Mozn Hassan, Executive
Director for Nazra for Feminist Studies, a prominent gender rights NGO that has had vast contact with political parties since 2011 details her experience in getting women’s rights on the political agenda. She argues that:

Even our so called male progressive friends [at political parties] play down sexual harassment and violence – that this is not a priority and that we are middle class women who are obsessed over our bodies and that this is a class issue because you do not accept harassment if it comes from lower class men but say nothing if it comes from men of your class. That we are afraid of lower class men so we demonise them and they say that sexual harassment is not a phenomenon as we make it out to be. (Hassan, Interview with author, 2013)

Hassan describes a struggle to convince political parties to accept that sexual harassment, as one example of an issue directly affecting women’s daily lives, is a prevalent and crippling nationwide problem for women. Moreover, Sherine Hafez’s reflects on a pattern she identifies in women’s bodies becoming part of political discourse in post-revolutionary Tunisia and Egypt. Hafez highlights the immediate exclusion of women from all the major political actors after Mubarak’s resignation, including the military, Islamist groups, and secular parties. She notes:

Women soon discovered that they were not to be a part of those chosen to represent this revolutionary effort. Women were excluded from rewriting the Egyptian constitutional referendum, coined in strictly masculine terms, and they were not represented in any of the committees chosen to negotiate with the military forces after the president stepped down. Repeated harassment and gang rapes take place in Tahrir Square targeting women and threatening their participation in protests. In general, there was a concerted effort on behalf of
pro-Islamist groups in Egypt to curtail women’s participation in politics.

Secular and self-proclaimed liberal groups as well have taken what they have described as a pragmatic stance towards gender relations by limiting their female candidates in Parliamentary elections, claiming that the competition necessitated a men only election. (Hafez 172)

As a result, if all major political factions and ideologies failed to acknowledge the importance of women’s rights, and thus ensuring protections to safeguard them, the scope and possibilities for Egyptian women’s lives to improve remained extremely limited. Moreover, Hassan explains what happens when political parties do acknowledge an issue directly pertaining to the lives of women, such as sexual harassment. She notes that “the problem is that people use women’s issues. Like in sexual violence with some parties using it to sound progressive for their overall political persona, but do nothing to help prevent it or even talk about it unless it’s a hot topic at a particular time” (Hassan). Nihal Zaghloul, a founding member of the gender rights group, Basma (See Appendix: Basma), highlights another obstacle that has arisen for women’s rights activists in the political upheaval since Mubarak’s resignation. As someone who attended the protests in Tahrir Square almost every day against Mubarak, she recalls what happened after he finally resigned:

After the fall of Mubarak everyone’s agenda started to come out. A lot of people did not forget those goals, but focused on their own interests. And most of the people in the regime didn’t leave. We didn’t ask them to leave, that it was only Mubarak who had to leave. And thirdly, the youth who did the revolution who were on the streets and died were politically inexperienced and didn’t know what to do. Mubarak was gone, we celebrated, now what do we
do? Instead of uniting and having one person who represents the youth, we scattered along different parties and candidates. (Zaghloul)

What all these struggles highlight is the complexity and difficulty in highlighting and convincing political parties of the need to protect and further the lives of women. As will be discussed later in the thesis, this is a struggle that continues today. However, in this current focus on the immediate aftermath of Mubarak’s resignation in 2011, these struggles highlight the nature in which the SCAF government, or state, was left unchallenged in their hegemonic discourse and practices against women, as illustrated by the case of virginity testing. Referring back to Tessler and Warriner’s observation that feminist goals may contradict a nationalist movement in the context of opposing colonialism and its representation of foreign influence (Tessler and Warriner 256), it is also possible to argue that the political climate in Egypt after Mubarak was still centered on articulating a politics that was opposed to all what Mubarak stood for. In the case of women’s rights, Hoda Elsadda has argued that progressive laws pertaining to women’s rights that were passed under Mubarak’s tenure and specifically pushed forward by his wife, Suzanne, were called to be revoked after Mubarak stepped down because of their association with Mubarak’s corrupt governance (Elsadda, ‘Women’s Rights Activism in Post-January 25 Egypt’ 64). Specifically, Elsadda highlights the khul’ law passed in 2000 which provided the legal mechanism for women to divorce their husbands (67). In the aftermath of Mubarak’s resignation, “Suzanne’s Laws”, a reference to the khul’ law, became another symbol of Mubarak’s corruption, and soon a discourse in the aftermath of his resignation was articulated that sought to remove all signs of his corruption, including such laws that were perceived as against Islam (62). As a result, it is no surprise that the women’s rights activists that were interviewed often cited that
changing mentalities towards women’s rights remains the largest obstacle before women’s political representation increases and legal change can be sought pertaining to women’s rights. Where the unnamed general and el Sisi defended the practice of virginity testing, they did so with the confidence that they were evoking a notion of women’s morality that cut across familial and societal contours that in turn defended their own political position. Where Mubarak had failed in his attempt to provide his state with the authority to speak on behalf of the nation, it can be argued that the SCAF, through women’s bodies, reclaimed this authority without a significant challenge, with feminist and gender rights groups, many of which had just been formed, still not strong enough to challenge the SCAF on their own. In turn, and returning back to Anderson’s concept of the imagined nation and Butler and Spivak’s question of who sings the nation-state, the SCAF’s attempt to claim the authority to frame Egyptian nationhood from protestors such as Samira Ibrahim, who had only just claimed this authority in the protests against Mubarak, once again demonstrates the fluidity and ever-changing dynamic over how the image of the nation is fought for. Moreover, it highlights how this contestation to frame the nation is frequently fought along gendered contours and attempts to frame expectations of manhood and womanhood that make up an integral part of the image of the nation by whoever ‘speaks’ of the nation.
Chapter Three

The Women’s Movement Amidst Political Upheaval

3.1 Considerations Between a Women’s and Feminist Movement in Egypt

Arguably the biggest consideration at the beginning of the research for the thesis was to understand and decide on the terminology to use when referring to women’s rights activists and feminists in Egypt. I eventually decided upon ‘the women’s movement’. This follows Ray and Korteweg’s logic in their essay on women’s movements in the third world (1999), where they adopt the following definition: “By ‘women's movements’ we mean the range of activities in which women engage to better the circumstances of their lives. We do not ourselves use the term feminist unless the authors or activists under discussion self-identify as such” (48). This definition is reminiscent of the discussion in chapter one, where feminism’s link to colonialism remains a primary cause for the reluctance of some women’s rights activists in Egypt to label themselves as feminists (Ahmed 167; Hatem, Gender and Islamism in the 1990’s, 45). That is not to discard the notion of feminism and a feminist movement in Egypt, but rather to highlight important nuances in language, and this approach also provides an opportunity to analyse whether any differences can be ascertained between a women’s rights activist and a feminist, and a women’s rights movement and a feminist movement. For example, in discussions with interviewees, almost all used the word *haraqa* (movement) at some stage in conjunction with either *mar’a* (woman) and *naswyya* (feminism), but never both by the same interviewee, which correlated with whether they adopted the label of feminist or not. This in turn may suggest different possibilities. On the one hand it may suggest that this
distinction begins and ends with a preference of a label and terminology, where it can be argued that feminism has become an internationalised term but still retains intrinsic Western connotations (Bulbeck, 70; Kim 56), and thus may be rejected by activists in Egypt who wish to remain distinct from any Western links for reasons related to colonialism’s legacy as discussed in chapter one. On the other hand, there was also evidence from the interviews that feminism is seen as distinct from women’s rights, where feminism is viewed beyond a perspective of gaining rights but rather something internalised and applicable beyond the sphere of women’s rights protection before the law, but also a perspective that desires equality in less tangible and more abstract spheres such as personal relationships. On the subject of marriage, for example, Salma El-Naqqash, Director for the Women’s Participation Academy at Nazra for Feminist Studies, who calls herself a feminist and identifies her feminism as one of her primary identity traits, explains:

The person I’m dating right now is a really great guy, he was raised by his sister who is a feminist figure, and she raised him to at least be gender sensitive if not feminist conscious. So being with someone who appreciates and shares the same values as me would make marriage less of a horrible institution. (El-Naqqash, Interview with the author, 2014)

El-Naqqash’s negative view towards marriage may connect with another important dimension in discussing the differences between feminism and women’s rights in the context of Egypt, namely the presence of Islam as a guide to social and familial direction. Feminism’s link with the West is itself not an issue, but becomes an issue when this Western heritage of feminism is viewed as contradictory and a threat to Egyptian values and customs which are often linked to Islam. This is despite the amalgamation, and confusion, between what is ‘Islamic’ practice and what is cultural
practice (El-Safty 2004). Moreover, Lila Abu-Lughod cites a compelling paradox in the way in which feminism is viewed in relation to Islam where she argues:

Islamists stigmatise sexual independence and public freedoms as Western but much more gingerly challenge women’s rights to work, barely question women’s education… yet [these] are elements of the turn-of-the-century modernist projects that might well carry the label ‘feminist’ and whose origins are just as entangled with the West as are the sexual mores singled out in horror. (Abu-Lughod 243)

This correlates with Hala Kamal’s experience referred to in Chapter One where her demands surprised the deputy speaker of Parliament because he expected her and the other activists to want to “wear bikinis and drink beer”. However, what is perhaps most important and relevant to the discussion on the difference between women who explore change in every sphere of life, whom we may call feminists as many of them do, to women who seek only change in public life such as employment and political participation, is that the latter may not wish to challenge any realms that they believe to be enshrined by Islam, even if such realms can be more accurately described as cultural rather than Islamic practice. For example, Ramy Raouf, also of Nazra for Feminist Studies and one of its Executive Directors, explains that it is a frequent occurrence for women to enter the office of Nazra wanting to further women’s rights before the law, but that when there is a workshop that he or someone else from Nazra is leading, and a discussion moves beyond legal spheres and starts to analyse and critique gender roles and dynamics in elements of everyday life such as marriage and other family dynamics, some women leave. Raouf states:
I think it’s not an easy decision to start questioning your identity and your religion, and questioning your father and your mother, questioning how you were raised and questioning the music you listen to, and your grandparents. It’s a very threatening process and it is not easy to rethink all these things and there are many good and bad consequences depending on how brave you are in exploring and going through the taboos and breaking them up and shaping opinions by yourself. (Raouf, Interview with the author, 2013)

This suggests that there are important differences and nuances to consider when discussing what is meant by a women’s rights activist and movement with that of a feminist and feminist movement beyond the sphere of labels. The implications could be that more than one haraqa (movement) can exist at any given time, namely a women’s rights movement that is focused on public and legal change, and a feminist movement that is geared towards change on every level, including legal, social, and private spheres such as familial paradigms. This position is supported by Doaa Abdelaal, a board member of the NGO Women Living Under Muslim Laws and who sees herself as a member of the women’s movement for more than two decades. She describes her desire to see a more unified women’s movement in Egypt that speaks to both society and the state in a unitary voice. She explains:

To build a movement we need a discourse to present to the society and to work on the agenda and the tools we will use. And one of the criticisms I have of the movement is that we don’t have a set of unified values. It doesn’t have to be unified completely, but at least the values of freedom and equality. This to me is the very basic start. And we are still not very sure of our positions with some institutions, like the military, and who communicates with them. We have the National Council for Women presenting something, and then some
NGOs together presenting something, and then other NGOs presenting something else. (Abdelaal, Interview with author, 2013)

Throughout the interview, Abdelaal stresses the paramount importance of building a women’s movement that shares and uses the same language that could be communicated effectively and in unison, while acknowledging that this voice did not need to agree on every detail, but at the very least shared the same overall objectives and articulated these objectives in the same language, by what she terms as “discourse”. Moreover, Abdelaal describes her criticism of the women’s movement through the example of sexual harassment. Where she acknowledges that since 2011, the previous taboo of talking about sexual harassment has been broken, she highlights a distinct problem that has arisen with this new opportunity to now speak freely about sexual harassment. She explains:

We have found it very safe to talk about sexual harassment. And as a movement we know that when we talk of sexual harassment, we know internally that this sexual violence also includes marital rape and domestic violence, but the rest of society doesn’t understand it this way, they only know about sexual harassment in terms of a male harassing a woman on the street calling her names. We’re not being bold enough to stop talking about sexual harassment and expand it to other spheres of gender-based violence. Many internally prefer not to talk about these things because they say society isn’t

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28 See (Kadry 7; Skalli 244, and Tadros, January 2014) who have highlighted that restrictions and taboos on talking about sexual harassment have been broken since the 2011 Revolution, primarily due to activists who have rallied together to combat the issue of sexual harassment and the subsequent anti-sexual harassment groups that have been formed. This in turn has led to more media attention on the issue, which in turn has further broken down previous taboos on discussing the issue. Tadros (July 2013) has specifically focused on men’s involvement in the movement towards combating sexual violence, which subsequently also plays a crucial role in removing taboos on discussing and combating sexual harassment.
Abdelaal’s concerns raise important considerations about the formation and articulation of what is understood by a women’s movement and how such a movement ensures that it remains representative of its members as well as representative of the concerns of the members of society it represents, namely women. For example, Abdelaal calls herself a feminist and a member of the movement. However, she clearly has concerns over how other members within the movement articulate sexual harassment by not including wider elements of gender-based violence in their language. Similarly, she highlights earlier the varying objectives that have been presented to state actors and institutions by different members and arms of the movement, such as the National Council for Women, and how such variations dilute and weaken the strength of the movement. In addition to these concerns, Heba Hesham, Co-founder of Heyya (She), a student-run women’s rights group at the American University in Cairo founded in the autumn of 2012, explains:

Public discourse has become so interested in women’s issues that it’s almost treating it like a novelty, like something that is hip and cool, rather than a real genuine issue, and as a result, a lot of women’s movements have sprung up who are very short-sighted and shallow and are not very critical, and who try to fix things without trying to find the root of the problem. (Hesham, Interview with author, 2013)

Consequently, both Abdelaal and Hesham highlight concerns of the movement. This raises key questions. For example, can more than one women’s movement exist at a given time in the same country or city, and if so, what are the implications? Can a woman’s movement retain equality internally when levels of
funding and access differ from one women’s rights activist and group to another? In addition, where Abdelaal for example highlights her desire to see a more unified voice by the women’s movement in Egypt, does such a desire hinder scope for diversity within the movement that should want to cater to the diverse nature and desires of the women it is intended to represent? These questions will be attempted to be answered in the next section. However, it is consequently viewed in this thesis that the harraqa can be viewed as one movement but with elements of diversity that should be viewed positively and as beneficial rather than divisive, and henceforth ‘women’s movement’ will be used in this chapter.
3.2 Who Speaks for Egyptian Women? The 2013 Constitutional Drafting Process

The aim of this section is to understand how such a movement operates, the challenges they have faced, and crucially, whether they are a collective and do they speak in one voice or several? This question will be addressed in this section using the example of the 2013 constitutional drafting process and what this process revealed in the way in which the women’s movement functions and its capacity to be inclusive and representative of its members.

Butler and Spivak’s question of *Who Sings The Nation-State?* (2010) becomes important again just as it was in chapter two where it provided a framework to ascertain who speaks on behalf of the Egyptian nation, where it was argued that the eighteen-day protests in January and February 2011 saw protestors and Mubarak’s state contest against one another to frame and speak on behalf of the Egyptian nation. So too can Butler and Spivak’s platform of highlighting varying different voices on the same subject be used in consideration of how a women’s movement can remain a representative, cohesive, and united movement at such a politically fragile and contentious period. On the subject of nationalism and its tendency to both include and exclude members of a population based on its image and criteria for the nation, and using the example of nationalists only wanting a national anthem to be sung in the language of their choosing, Butler and Spivak posed the question: “Does this make the anthem any less sing-able in any other language?” (60). The essence of this question can also be posed in consideration of a women’s movement, where it can be asked who speaks for Egyptian women and do they speak for all, and if they do not, does this render those not within the movement voiceless? This draws upon Spivak’s *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (2006), but where Spivak addressed this question from the context of those in power (government), and those powerless (marginalised citizens),
here this question is addressed to ascertain whether a ‘subaltern’ such as a women’s movement also contains its own power and representative dynamics within itself that have implications on how we understand a women’s movement and how it ‘speaks’.

Perhaps the best example to answer this question and critically analyse the process in which the women’s movement speaks on behalf of the whole female population is the 2013 constitutional drafting process that led to the 2014 constitution. The process of drafting the 2014 constitution does not stand in isolation but is intrinsically linked to the drafting process in September 2012 which yielded the 2012 Egyptian Constitution, and it is consequently important to contextualise the political climate. *France 24* were one among several news outlets, both domestic and international, to report that the one hundred member constitutional panel in 2012 that was to draft the constitution that was elected by parliament was dominated by Islamist elected members (France 24:“Islamists dominate panel tasked with drafting Egypt’s constitution”). As a result, this assembly was fraught with walkouts by predominantly non-Islamist members, as reported by *Al Jazeera* and several others.

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29 See also *The Guardian*’s report, “Egypt’s draft constitution approved by Islamist-dominated assembly” and the BBC’s report, “Egypt power struggle: Assembly backs draft constitution”.

30 The mention of *Al Jazeera* is purposeful here because the Qatari owned news agency’s role in Egyptian political affairs must be noted. *Al Jazeera*’s position in covering events in Egypt in 2011 and 2012, for example the drafting of the 2012 constitution which is referred to above, was not noteworthy or unique. It is for that reason that *Al Jazeera* can be used as a source for events in 2011 and 2012, as is done in this instance. However, in July 2013 where senior Muslim Brotherhood member and president, Mohamed Morsi, were removed from office by the Egyptian military, three *Al Jazeera* journalists were arrested and detained in December 2013 for over a year on charges of conspiring with the Muslim Brotherhood who had since been banned by the Egyptian judiciary backed by new Egyptian government. The link between *Al Jazeera* and the Muslim Brotherhood was made by the Egyptian state and judiciary through the Qatari government’s support of the Muslim Brotherhood during its one year in office from June 2012 to July 2013, most notably in the form of financial aid. In turn, the trial of these three journalists was highly politicised, with *Al Jazeera* seemingly placed in the middle of this dispute between the Egyptian and Qatari governments. It is for that reason that *Al Jazeera* has not been used as a source from July 2013 onwards in awareness that their reporting could be compromised and biased due to this dispute. The trial of two of the three journalists is ongoing at the time of writing. For more on *Al Jazeera*’s position between the Qatari and post-July 3 Egyptian government, see Robert Fisk’s analysis in The Independent, where he quotes Mohamed Fahmy, one of the jailed journalists as saying, “We have been imprisoned by the Egyptians to teach Qatar a lesson” (“*Al Jazeera* journalists imprisoned by Egypt to ‘teach Qatar a lesson’ for supporting the Muslim Brotherhood”). See also
(“Egypt’s liberals stage walkout”), and despite the final draft of the constitution being passed by referendum on 26 December 2012, the process highlighted the growing tensions in society and the rift over the future political identity of the country, as noted by *The Independent* (“Egyptians vote on divisive Islamist-backed constitution”), and several others. However, this constitution was suspended in the events on 3 July 2013, where the then president, Mohamed Morsi, was removed from office by the head of the military, and now president himself, Abdel Fattah el Sisi, as reported by *The New York Times* (“Army Ousts Egypt’s President”).

Parliament was also dissolved in this process. As a result of the constitution being suspended, in September 2013, two months after Morsi’s removal, a new fifty-member constitutional assembly was formed in order to amend the 2012 constitution. On the relationship between the 2012 constitution and the 2013 drafting process, Hoda Elsadda, an academic and activist, who was one of five women in the 2013 assembly, explained, “We were amending the constitution of 2012 so the comparison was always there” (Elsadda, Interview with the author, 2014). This is an important consideration because activists explained that the 2013 constitutional process was an easier process than that of 2012 for at least two important reasons. The first reason is that the 2013 constitutional assembly was more representative of society than that of the heavily Islamist dominated assembly of 2012. Elsadda notes:

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*Foreign Policy’s* “Why Egypt hates Al Jazeera” for a summary of the tension between Egypt, Qatar, and Al Jazeera.

31 *The New York Times* report chose to describe Morsi’s removal as an ‘oust’, as did *The BBC and The Wall Street Journal*. The debate over events on 30 June and 3 July 2013 remains heated. In the immediate days and weeks after Morsi’s removal, a contestation began over what to label Morsi’s removal, with supporters of his removal, including the Egyptian state, calling it a ‘revolution’, while those against Morsi’s removal, primarily but not limited to supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, maintain it was a military coup. It is not the author’s intention to engage in this debate, merely to highlight its existence for the purpose of discussing and analysing the politically sensitive position of the women’s movement later in this chapter.
The way I see it, and I think this is reflected in the constitution, you have three primary forces that are on the ground right now. You have the military, you have the Islamists, and their voice is represented in this constitution despite everything, but they are represented, and you have what I would describe as the revolutionary street, the voices for change. (Elsadda)

This in turn meant that activists across a number of platforms, including that of gender equality, and who held secular or non-Islamist ideologies, found more room to manoeuvre in the 2013 process than the heavily Islamist-dominated process of 2012. The second important point is that the 2012 process provided activists with experience in constitutional articles and knowledge of constitutions, meaning that when another opportunity arose in 2013 to amend the constitution, they already had a foundation of knowledge and experience that they were able to draw upon. Elsadda explains that “all these interest groups, we all worked on the 2012 constitution, so there has been an accumulation of knowledge since 2012” (Elsadda). In the case of women’s rights, this accumulation goes even further back than 2012. At the Women and Memory Forum, a research centre that Hoda Elsadda co-founded, Hala Kamal explains the process that began in 2011 when it became clear that a new constitution would be written:

In March 2011 we at the Women and Memory Forum started studying other constitutions, particularly the Egyptian constitutions of 1923, 1954 and so on, and at the same time a group of us formed from WMF, Nazra for Feminist Studies, and individual researchers started studying foreign constitutions as well. But we decided in the end strategically to focus on our Egyptian constitutions because it would look better to provide our recommendations in relation to our own historical past as opposed to saying ‘we have copied or
worked from the constitution of South Africa.’ We then created a text which was then adopted by a coalition of women’s rights groups, and the coalition tested some of those items and two of the groups conducted surveys, one structured and one semi-structured, and they came back with findings which we adopted in our final document. We then hired a lawyer to phrase our document in a legal framework and constitutional language. (Kamal, Interview with the author, 2013)

This coalition that Kamal references was formed in the immediate aftermath of Hosni Mubarak’s resignation in February 2011, called the Coalition of Egyptian Feminist Organisations. Probing further into this process of drawing up constitutional recommendations pertaining to women’s rights and ensuring that these recommendations were reached by a consensus in the coalition, Kamal continued on from her previous statements:

When we drafted our fourteen demands, they were to a great extent either what was said in the surveys [conducted by the coalition] or what we recognised as their needs, and they were not very far apart. Also, before sending any documents to the constitutional assembly [of 2012], it was sent out to all the groups in the coalition for women and we also had a workshop on it as well to make sure we were all on the same page. We also kept in touch and had meetings with other groups outside of women’s rights who were

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32 The coalition is comprised of the following groups: New Woman Foundation; Women and Memory Forum; Centre of Egyptian Women Legal Aid; El Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Violence; Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development; Women’s Forum for Development; Alliance of Arab Women; Egyptian Association for Family Development; Nazra for Feminist Studies; Omni Association for Rights and Development; Heya Foundation.
focusing on the drafting of the constitution. In that way, overall, I believe we were very inclusive. (Kamal)

Salma El-Naqqash of Nazra for Feminist Studies, who was part of the constitutional committee at the Women and Memory Forum, confirmed this process outlined by Kamal, stating, “We came up with fourteen articles that we proposed and we discussed them with other women’s rights NGOs who added their thoughts and propositions on them, and then we sat with a human rights lawyer who helped us draft it in a constitutional manner and legal terms” (El-Naqqash, Interview with the author, 2013).

It can consequently be argued that there was a conscious effort by this constitutional committee at the Women and Memory Forum to ensure that the constitutional recommendations they were sending to the 2012 constitutional assembly were representative of the needs of the entire coalition. Furthermore, Kamal explains that in the 1990s, a group of women’s NGOs co-organised the annual celebration of international women’s day, and that a meeting was scheduled in February 2011 in order to organise the celebration in March. However, due to the outbreak of the revolution in January that continued into February, this meeting was cancelled. With the removal of Mubarak and the forming of coalitions such as the Coalition of Young Revolutionaries that sought to continue pressing for the demands of the revolution, Kamal explains how this inspired women’s rights groups that were already in constant contact with one another to officially form a partnership within a coalition. One of the first acts of the Coalition of Feminist Organisations was to release a statement on 20 February 2011, nine days after Mubarak’s resignation, denouncing the National Council for Women that was co-signed by every member in the coalition. It stated: “We refuse the illegitimate National Council of Women or its
representation of Egyptian women and the feminist efforts in Egypt and confirm the illegitimacy of its representation in international events” (“Statement from the Coalition of Women’s NGOs in Egypt”: Taken from openDemocracy). This is a significant statement because it highlights the contestation over who speaks on behalf of Egyptian women which in turn highlights the considerations that must be taken when thinking about a women’s movement. For example, it is clear from the statement that the Coalition of Women’s NGOs in Egypt saw the National Council for Women as non-representative of the needs and demands of Egyptian women due to their ties with Mubarak’s state and history of colluding with the state. As a result of being aware of the importance of being inclusive, the coalition appears to have been as inclusive as possible in representing the needs of women in the 2012 and 2013 constitutional drafting processes. As one of five women in the constitutional assembly in 2013, Hoda Elsadda’s name was mentioned favourably by many of the interviewees for her efforts in ensuring that the constitution was gender sensitive and protected women’s rights. Directly addressing Elsadda on this point and asking why she believed she had managed to gain this favour by a number of different women’s rights groups without any criticism, she answered:

We all come from a particular background but personally, for example, and it’s not just about gender, I think I gave a lot of support to articles for workers’ rights and the Freedoms and Rights Committee [which Elsadda headed] held several meetings with workers’ groups, trying to make sure to include their voices and make sure what they think is important is included in the constitution, so in that respect, I don’t think I was representing a category of

33 Nicola Pratt of Warwick University illustrates this point in an article for openDemocracy (2015) entitled “Gendered Paradoxes of Egypt's Transition”. The history of state-sponsored feminism in Egypt was also discussed in Chapter One.
women who were coming from a particular background because of this effort to hold consultations with wider groups in general. The other thing is that there was a series of consultations, I mean I did not write any articles and neither did anyone in the assembly really. I think these articles were written by specific interest groups. Hala [Kamal] would have told you about our constitutional committee at the Women and Memory Forum, that was 2011. So the process of writing the constitution [concerning women’s rights] started early on. So when we started in September 2013, we already had a lot of material and knowledge and very specific suggested articles; we didn’t start from scratch. So the process would be as such: the assembly starts with a meeting looking at an article, say article 37 and we read the suggested article by the committee of ten [legal experts] or the way it existed in 2012. And I would go to this meeting already with suggestions with me from specific groups on this article. So we had people sending us suggested articles and I would show these suggestions on the screen, saying this is the article we are looking at and these are the suggestions. And this is how we would come up with the final phrasing of the article. I’m saying this because, for instance, the key participants in this process were women’s groups, human rights groups, groups for lawyers, and also NGOs working with farmers and workers, so we had various groups and experts contributing to the phrasing and direction of articles. So in terms of representation I would argue that the representation is much wider than the assembly of fifty members. (Elsadda, Interview with the author, 2014)

Consequently, when revisiting the original question of who speaks for Egyptian women, and thinking about the considerations that Butler and Spivak raised
in whether and how representations of a nation and people can be non-hegemonic and inclusive, there is enough evidence within the Egyptian women’s movement after 2011 that suggests they are aware of this pitfall and have made provisions to ensure that a women’s movement does not seek to represent one image of Egyptian womanhood, perhaps exemplified by the example of the 2012, and in particular, 2013 constitutional drafting processes. This is in regards to both the women’s movement itself where it appears that different groups were given the opportunity to contribute to the process, as well externally as those outside of the women’s movement but who are directly affected by their actions, namely women themselves. This is seen through the surveys that were taken by the Coalition of Feminist Organisations in order to afford women the opportunity to express their needs and demands. As a result, this process went far in avoiding some of the issues that can arise within any movement, namely becoming isolated from the very people they are meant to represent, as well as internal power dynamics that are based on, among other things, levels of funding and access. This is possibly best exemplified by the National Council for Women (NCW) that was founded and headed by the wife of Hosni Mubarak: Suzanne. The Coalition of Feminist Organisations denounced the NCW because of the very exclusive nature of the NCW that relied on its relationship with Mubarak’s state and did not make the significant efforts to include other groups within women’s rights that have been demonstrated in the constitutional processes of 2012 and 2013. As Sally Zohney of the United Nations Women’s Project explains, “If there is a woman’s rights law that would pass it had to pass through her [Suzanne Mubarak]. A million campaigns would not change that. And if she was convinced, she would fight for it. If she wasn’t convinced, it would end there” (Zohney, Interview with the author, 2013). In light of this, and despite the nuanced differences that exist within the women’s movement,
their conscious awareness and desire to fully represent women has ensured that the movement has not become insular, hegemonic, and non-varied. However, as shall now be seen, the challenges for the women’s movement in Egypt are not limited to ensuring their internal agreement and inclusivity amongst itself and its members, but extends to the challenge by the Egyptian state in 2014 to the authority of the women’s movement to speak on behalf of Egyptian women.
3.3 The State, Women, and Patriarchal Bargaining

Chapter One detailed the history of state feminism in Egypt under the presidencies of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. Citing gender studies scholars such as Nadjie Al-Ali, Margot Badran, Laura Bier, Selma Botman, and Mervat Hatem, it was noted how the Egyptian state, represented through the president, came to frame and dominate the expectations of women’s roles and position within society as mothers, wives, and daughters. Moreover, any granting or taking away of women’s rights was also led by the state. This fusion between the state and women’s rights has come to be labeled as ‘state feminism’, where Wang Zheng notes that the term was conceived to “refer to feminists employed as bureaucrats in positions of power or women politicians who promoted gender equality practices” (Zheng 519). Moreover, state feminism can often blur the clarity of women’s participation and representation in politics if such participation and representation can only be achieved through the consent of the state. This definition of state feminism is clearly upheld in the political landscape of Egypt, beginning with the tenure of Gamal Abdel Nasser through to Hosni Mubarak, who did not allow for alternative political voices and dissent, and thus to be a female politician or political figure advocating feminist pursuits could only be achieved through the consent of the state or through the state itself. This is seen in the examples presented in Chapter One where Jehan Sadat and Suzanne Mubarak, the wives of each respective president, were only able to establish laws enhancing women’s rights because of their close proximity to the state. As a result of this power by the state to appropriate feminist pursuits where it saw fit, it was argued in chapter one that a rupture of this state feminist dynamic occurred once the state and its president, Hosni Mubarak, were challenged and removed from
office in January and February 2011. In turn, the period immediately after this allowed for spaces to emerge for non-state aligned feminists and women’s rights advocates to operate beyond the shadow of the state. However, the purpose of this section is to discuss the implications of the emergence of the post-July 3 2013 Egyptian state, and its leader, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, and whether their emergence represent a return to a state feminism dynamic, and if so, how has the women’s movement reacted and adapted to this power of the state? In addition, another important aim of this section will be to highlight and analyse how the women’s movement has managed to survive and continue in pursuing its objectives at a time of vast political turmoil and violence in Egypt, which shall be examined through Deniz Kandiyoti’s framework of patriarchal bargaining and Maxine Molyneux’s notion of practical and strategic gender interests.

Sullivan notes in his work on the role of women in public life in Egypt that the role of the president extends beyond political responsibilities and duties. He describes:

One of the most poignant dilemmas faced by leaders of developing countries is that they are often called upon to symbolize the nation’s traditional values and to bring about political, economic, and social transformations which challenge those values. Leaders who attempt to alter the roles and status of women are confronted with this problem. Unless they are to be resisted because they are no longer considered honorable men, they must adhere to convention while attempting to change it. While the presidency is a centre of power and discretionary authority and the president is the main recipient of the hopes of the nation, he is also the embodiment of its virtues, and the target for blame when things go wrong. (Sullivan 79)
Sullivan’s assessment argues the importance of the role of the president that is not limited to political spheres but extends to upholding values and principles that are seen as integral to the fabric of the nation. This assessment acts as starting point for assessing the way in which Abdel Fattah el Sisi, as Egypt’s elected president as of June 2014, has sought changes towards particular attitudes and roles of women that seemingly challenge previous norms, while simultaneously not challenging the framework within which this norms are held in place. Furthermore, it acts as a starting point in assessing whether what is called ‘Sisi’s state’, has taken steps towards restoring a state feminism dynamic that resembles the state feminist pattern of the Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak states. For example, in May 2014, in his first television interview in his bid to become Egypt’s next president, Sisi stated: “I am talking about the Egyptian woman who maintains her household, turns off the heater and the stove. I am asking you now to preserve our bigger house: Egypt” (“Sisi and his women”: Speech transcript taken from Egyptian publication, Mada Masr). As was noted in chapter one, in Beth Baron’s Egypt as a Woman (1997), there has been a continuous evocation by Egyptian leaders, beginning with the early nationalist period in the late 19th and early 20th century, to depict Egyptian women as symbols of the nation, specifically as its mothers and daughters that must be protected, and where the head of state acts and leads the way as the father figure towards this protection (Baron 5).

As a result of this historical pattern, Sisi’s continuation of this tradition is not unique. However, Sisi’s focus on women continued, where on 8 June 2014, a

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34 This is the author’s term and refers to the post-3 July 2013 political landscape where Sisi, while still technically a member of the military and not a politician, was nevertheless the ‘face’ of the post-3 July Egyptian state, and while he was only elected president in June 2014, his power was asserted soon after July 2013.

35 For more on this dynamic of the head of state as a father figure, also see Badran 1995, Bibars 2001, and in particular Ghannam 2013 who highlights the roots of the formation of manhood and patriarchy in Egypt that translates to the head of state.
YouTube video went viral showing a woman being sexually assaulted by a mob in Tahrir Square where many gathered to celebrate Sisi’s presidential victory (Video shown by *Al Arabiya*: “Video: disturbing sexual harassment scene in Cairo’s Tahrir Square”). The woman’s body, naked and bloodied, made its way into news broadcasts across Egypt and sparked numerous debates as to why this happened, and very worryingly, whether the men who perpetrated the assault were actually to blame for their actions, as reported by *Mada Masr* (“Trading blame over sexual assaults”). Four days later, Sisi made the unprecedented move of visiting the woman in hospital and offered an apology to her, and “all Egyptian women [for this] “unacceptable conduct [that is] alien to the Egyptian temperament” (“Sisi visits victim of Tahrir sexual assault in hospital”: Transcript taken from *Asharq Al-Awsat*). The move was unprecedented because it marked the first time an Egyptian president publicly acknowledged the epidemic problem of daily sexual harassment and violence in Egypt.³⁶ In addition, Sisi more than just acknowledged the existence of sexual harassment, but also condemned it. As a result, it could be argued that on the one hand Sisi appears to be upholding traditional depictions of Egyptian women as mothers and daughters of the nation that support its men, which could be interpreted as a form of patriarchal hierarchy where male figures (of the family) hold seniority over the women. On the other hand and simultaneously, Sisi also condemns sexual violence which in itself can be traced back to patriarchal entitlements that enables men to commit sexual violence against women because of the gendered hierarchy. An example of this was seen in chapter two in the case of virginity testing. This raises the question as to why Sisi took the decision to speak out against sexual violence? One possibility is that the era of

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³⁶ Sexual harassment and violence has been the subject of widespread reporting by both international and domestic media and NGOs, particularly in the aftermath of the 2011 Revolution. See the report by Human Rights Watch, “Egypt: Epidemic of Sexual Violence” for a comprehensive analysis and examples of sexual violence in Egypt.
technology and social networking that saw this video of the woman being sexually assaulted and then spreading across social networking websites and finding its way onto television news broadcasts, as well as this assault happening in Tahrir Square at a celebration for his presidential victory, meant that Sisi was obliged to address what had occurred. This is coupled with the widespread reporting and coverage on sexual violence in Egypt since 2011 that has already been noted, suggesting that Sisi could not ignore this specific act of sexual violence at a presidential celebration. Salma El-Naqqash, however, offers a different and compelling explanation when asked why she believed Sisi spoke out against sexual violence. She notes:

I think it’s just because it started off his reign, it was his first day as president, and he saw himself responsible for this. I would think that now that he is head of state and it’s official, he sees it as his responsibility to protect the women, again, a very patriarchal idea. I also know that a lot of people have said that he’s using women’s rights basically for his own use and to give him a better image, but I honestly think that because he has such a patriarchal background and the military is so patriarchal, they really do believe it’s their job to bring about protection and security, and the other thing they believe is that it’s their job only and they wouldn’t leave much room or space for youth initiatives like Tahrir Bodyguard or Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment that are not state actors. They would solely believe it’s their job and the security apparatus’ job. Honestly I don’t see ulterior motives for it other than the patriarchal notion of protecting their own women. We have also seen different initiatives holding police officers responsible for their acts and crimes of sexual

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37 These are just two of the many groups that have come together since 2011 to stop sexual harassment in ‘real time’ at protests or known public areas where sexual harassment and violence take place.
harassment, whether against foreigners or Egyptian women. Another thing is that in both Eids this year, the presence of the police, especially the unit of fighting violence against women, the Ministry of Interior were heavily present on the street trying to limit the levels of sexual harassment. (El-Naqqash, Interview with the author, 2014)

El-Naqqash’s view reinforces the problematic dimensions of state feminism, where on the one hand women, and their rights, are seemingly being protected, however they are being protected by patriarchal intentions and an infrastructure that reinforces women’s dependence, not independence, from men. However, Sisi’s comments on sexual violence provide an opportunity to test the assertion made by Sullivan on the role of the president beyond political spheres but extended towards protecting the nation’s principles and values. For example, on the same evening on when the woman was sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square and the video went viral, one female TV presenter, Maha Bahnassy of the Tahrir Satellite Channel remarked on it after it was shown in the broadcast: “The people are happy, they are having fun” (“TV presenter suspended over sexual assault comments”: Reported by Ahram English and several others). Bahnassy was subsequently suspended. However, Bahnassy was not suspended that same evening or the following two days after, but rather suspended after Sisi visited the sexual assault victim in hospital and apologised for what happened to her. As a result, it could be argued that despite the possible patriarchal motivations behind Sisi’s visit to the victim in hospital that El-Naqqash described, his position as head of state and the power this position holds means that he is able to direct the debate on sexual violence in a direction of his choosing, much like Sullivan infers in the role of the president as a moral guide for his people. This is most notable in the case of Bahnassy’s suspension where she was only suspended by Tahrir
Satellite Channel after, rather than before, Sisi’s condemnation of the assault. However, this intervention by Sisi as the head of the state and the possible reemergence of state feminism adds another dynamic, and problem area, to the question of who speaks for Egyptian women, as well as requiring further consideration of the framing of Egyptian womanhood within the formation and articulations of the image and notion of the Egyptian nation.

This requirement for further discussion and consideration of how the voices of women, and voices for women, are articulated, and claimed, is evident in the aftermath of the sexual assault in Tahrir Square and Sisi’s visit to the victim in hospital. It was clear that the subject of women and their protection became a platform for political contestation and maneuvering as shall be shown below. Importantly, the subject of women as a platform for political contestation resembles the contestation that was highlighted in chapter two in the eighteen day protests against Hosni Mubarak, where visible gender equality and a lack of harassment and violence towards women amongst the protestors was used to legitimise their protest, and where previous harassment and violence in the country was firmly blamed on Mubarak and his state’s governance. Similarly in this case, where Sisi condemned the specific attack on the woman and sexual violence on the whole, other political actors fused their condemnation of sexual violence with their political agendas. For instance, in the aftermath of the assault in Tahrir Square, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and the same group that was ousted from political office by Sisi in July 2013, wrote on their website, FJP-P.com, immediately after the video of the assault went viral stating: “This group rape scandal shows the lack of moral values the supporters of Sisi have” (“Video: Rape Scandal in Tahrir Square”). What is most notable and problematic about this statement is that it could be
convincingly argued that the condemnation of the assault clearly contains an ulterior motive of condemning the political stance of those who support Sisi. In light of this, their condemnation of the assault is diluted and fused with a political stance, leaving us to question whether the outrage of the FJP is at the sexual assault itself or an opportunity to criticise a political enemy. Moreover, the condemnation is problematic because it comes from the Muslim Brotherhood and their political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party. This becomes important in consideration of the recent history of the Muslim Brotherhood’s stance towards women, the 2012 constitution being a prime example, where among other things, they “rejected an antidiscrimination provision and instead inserted vague stipulations regarding the state’s role in ‘balancing the responsibility of women toward family and their work in society’” (Guirguis, “Sexual Assault and the Fall of Morsi”).

Furthermore, and specifically on sexual violence, in February 2013, when Muslim Brotherhood MPs in the Shura Council, which served as the acting parliament after parliament was dissolved in July 2012, were asked about the incidents of sexual assault against women in Tahrir Square on the 25 January 2013, Daily News Egypt reported that Reda Al-Hefnawy, a Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) member, blamed women protestors for the sexual violence they experienced, stating, “Women should not mingle with men during protests. How can the Ministry of Interior be tasked with protecting a lady who stands among a group of men?” (“Shura Council Members

38 When the Muslim Brotherhood were in political power under Mohamed Morsi between June 2012 and June 2013, there were a number of instances where their commitment to gender equality was in question. In addition to their failure to provide provisions for gender equality in the 2012, constitution, there were other examples that caused controversy, including their rejection of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2013. The Muslim Brotherhood website, Ikhwanweb.com, stated, among other gender insensitive statements, that if the CSW were implemented in Egypt it would: “Give wives full rights to file legal complaints against husbands accusing them of rape or sexual harassment, obliging competent authorities to deal husbands punishments similar to those prescribed for raping or sexually harassing a stranger” (“Egypt’s Islamists warn giving women some rights could destroy society”: Taken from Reuters).
Blame Women for Harassment”). As a result, the Freedom and Justice Party’s condemnation of the sexual assault on the woman in Tahrir Square in June 2014 becomes suspicious, coupled with their condemning and blaming of the attack specifically on Sisi supporters rather than condemning the action for itself. However, the Muslim Brotherhood were not alone in amalgamating their condemnation of sexual assault with an apparent political motivation. The National Council for Women (NCW), founded in 2000 by presidential decree and formerly headed by Suzanne Mubarak, wife of Hosni Mubarak, until the 2011 Revolution, came to symbolise state-sponsored feminism that was discussed in chapter one. However, while the 2011 Revolution saw a break between the Mubarak family and the NCW, this severing of ties did not include a rupture between the NCW acting as a mouthpiece for the Egyptian Sisi-led state on the subject of women after Sisi assumed power. This can be seen in the instance of the sexual assault of the woman in Tahrir Square in June 2014 where many gathered to celebrate Sisi’s presidential victory, and where Sisi and the Muslim Brotherhood had already entered the debate, so too did the NCW. In response to the assault, they released a statement, stating: “These immoral acts cannot be perpetrated by honourable Egyptians who were behind the January 25 and June 30 revolutions, where the squares of Egypt were filled with millions of people for a long time and there wasn't one case of rape” (“Trading blame over sexual assaults”: Statement reported by Mada Masr).

What immediately strikes one as crucial in understanding this statement by the NCW and ascertaining their motivations are the references to the “January 25 and June 30 Revolutions”. The reference mirrors the language of the post-3 July 2013 Egyptian state which began with the removal of Mohammed Morsi from the presidency and the overall removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power. This Sisi-
led Egyptian state after the removal of Morsi immediately began referring to the 30 June protests in 2013 which pre-empted the removal of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood four days later, as a revolution, and amalgamated this one-day protest with the 25 January 2011 Revolution that removed Hosni Mubarak from power. This was most evident in the media campaign by the Egyptian state to seek approval for the 2014 constitution that was put to referendum in January 2014. Campaign posters were seen across the country with a clear message: “A ‘Yes’ vote for the constitution is a ‘Yes’ to the 25 January and 30 June Revolutions”, and this same message was also articulated by members of government, including the Prime Minister at that time, Hazem Beblawi (“A final push for ‘yes’ vote on referendum”: Reported by *Mada Masr*). As a result, the NCW’s adoption of this amalgamation suggests their allegiance to the state remains unchanged. Furthermore, the NCW’s statement appears problematic because it seemingly removes any blame of the sexual assault on those celebrating in Tahrir Square, who they refer to as “honourable Egyptians”, suggesting that the sexual assault was perpetrated by those wishing to disturb the celebrations, a possible subtle allusion to the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, it could be argued that the NCW’s statement reduced the problem of sexual harassment and assault to exceptional circumstances rather than as a constant daily issue for women in Egypt. Where they boldly claim that “there wasn’t one case of rape” during the 2011 Revolution and the 30 June protests, as was discussed in chapter two, this is a problematic statement if compared with the eye-witness testimonies by interviewees who did experience and witness sexual harassment and assault in Tahrir Square in

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39 These posters were seen by the author during fieldwork in Cairo in December 2013 and January 2014.
40 Further support of the government’s push for a ‘Yes’ vote on the 2013 constitution: “The governor of Wadi-al-Gedid, an army general himself, declared that anyone caught putting up posters encouraging people to vote ‘No’ would be subject to legal punishment” (Mohamed El-Dahshan of Harvard University writes in “The War of Attrition”: Featured in the Atlantic Council).
January and February 2011. Moreover, a number of surveys and reports have highlighted the daily endemic problem of sexual harassment in Egypt (Sorbera 69; Skalli 244; Tadros, 2014, 10). Consequently, rather than outright condemnation of sexual violence, the NCW appear to have dismissed the debate over sexual violence entirely and instead focused on a political agenda of further entrenching and entraining their loyalty to the state by removing any blame from the state, Sisi, and his supporters who had gathered in Tahrir Square on 8 June. This fusing of political agendas with issues pertaining to gender and sexual violence by political actors and the NCW consequently presents an additional crucial question in considering how women’s voices, and voices speaking on their behalf, are articulated and competed against. Namely, can non-state aligned women’s rights groups and activists, what was earlier termed ‘the women’s movement’, stay apolitical\textsuperscript{41} amidst such political turbulence, and in turn, still maintain a voice that is heard amidst the political turbulence and contestations? Moreover, what strategies has the women’s movement taken to avoid being persecuted at a time when political arrests and crackdowns have been common-place?\textsuperscript{42}

Dareen Khalifa, formerly of \textit{Amnesty International} and an independent activist, explains that political factions and governments have taken to weighing in on the subject of women in order to further their own political agendas. She notes:

Every government that took power in Egypt in the last three years has had a different approach towards women’s rights. Like women are more in the

\textsuperscript{41} ‘Apolitical’ here refers specifically to not aligning oneself with a political party or political movement.

\textsuperscript{42} In July 2014, one year after Morsi’s removal, Amnesty International cited a report stating that more than 40,000 people were “detained or indicted between July 2013 and mid-May 2014” (Amnesty International: “Egypt: Rampant Torture”).
public sphere and being more involved more in the political discourse. But that hasn’t manifested itself into law yet. Women’s rights initiatives have increased and become more visible and active in the political sphere. From a social perspective, there are changes every few months because of the political situation. It’s a very sentimental society that can be swayed by the ruling government and media very easily and that has changed many times in the last three years, and so society becomes driven by the politics. Like at protests, if the people are with the government and there’s an anti-government protest and women get hurt, the discourse can be ‘why was she there in the first place’? (Khalifa, Interview with author, 2014)

This description closely resembles what was seen in the aftermath of the 8 June sexual assault in Tahrir Square. On the one hand, where the Muslim Brotherhood failed to condemn sexual violence while in power, they did condemn it in this instance and placed the blame on their political opponents, namely Sisi and his government. Similarly, Sisi’s condemnation of the assault stands in stark contrast to his justifications of virginity testing in March 2011 that was highlighted in Chapter Two. As a result, it could be argued that it becomes increasingly difficult for the women’s movement to stand apolitically within their women’s rights advocacy because political motivations and agendas are clearly present within the discourse on women. On the women’s movement position within politics since January 2011, Doaa Abdelaal of the NGO Women Living Under Muslim Laws, states: “I see the women’s movement as part of the pro-democracy movement” (Abdelaal, Interview with author, 2013). This is echoed by Hoda Elsadda who explains: “The women’s movement is part of the voices for change; it’s a part of the revolutionary street” (Elsadda, Interview with author, 2014).
However, within this framework of the women’s movement as a voice for change and part of the push towards revolution and democracy, there is an underlying problematic area within this thinking that has arisen since the removal of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013. Specifically, it is difficult to argue that the removal of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood was realised through a democratic process. If this is accepted, it suggests a paradox of the women’s movement engaging with the Egyptian state that came to power through non-democratic means. For example, in the 2014 constitutional process, as was highlighted earlier in this chapter, members from the women’s movement, specifically the Coalition of Feminist Organisations, took part, while on the other hand, this non-democratic state represents the political opposite of the women’s movement support for democracy. Moreover, the post-3 July state can be described as more than non-democratic, but repressive. Most notably, on 14 August 2013, one month after Morsi’s removal, Muslim Brotherhood supporters who had staged a sit-in at Raba’ in the Cairo district of Nasr City since Morsi’s ousting, were forcibly removed from the sit-in by Egyptian security forces, resulting in the death of at least 817 people according to Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, ‘All According to Plan’ 6). In addition, no member of the Egyptian security forces was held accountable for the massacre, but rather it was justified on the basis that the people at the sit-in were ‘terrorists’, and the following month in September, the Muslim Brotherhood would once again be banned and labelled a terrorist organisation in Egypt (The Guardian: “Egypt declares Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group”). This in turn led high profile pro-democracy figures in Egypt to remove their support for the post-3 July Egyptian state, including Dr. Mohamed Elbaradei, who resigned from his position as Vice President in the immediate aftermath of the Raba’ massacre. As a result, it could be argued that the
women’s movement’s alignment with the pro-democracy movement sits uneasily with its dealings with the seemingly non-democratic and non-revolutionary Egyptian state. However, this paradox may be explained through Deniz Kandiyoti’s notion of patriarchal bargaining where she argues:

Women strategise within a set of concrete constraints that reveal and define the blueprint of what I will term the patriarchal bargain…[and patriarchal bargains] also influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression. (Kandiyoti 275)

Using examples from North Africa and the Muslim Middle East, Kandiyoti underscores her theory of patriarchal bargaining by first highlighting what she understands as “classical patriarchy” (278), which on many levels mirrors the example of Egypt, and as a result, this may in turn shed light on the women’s movement’s patriarchal bargaining with the Egyptian state since July 2013. Kandiyoti describes classical patriarchy, which she expands through examples in North Africa and the Muslim Middle East:

The key to the reproduction of classic patriarchy lies in the operations of the patrilocally extended household… [and] it is plausible that the emergence of the patriarchal extended family, which gives the senior man authority over everyone else, including younger men, is bound up in the incorporation and control of the family by the state. (278)

This heavily resonates with the paradigms discussed in the introductory chapter and presented by Beth Baron (2007), Selma Botman (1999), Farha Ghannam (2013), and others, who have highlighted that the Egyptian’s state’s control stems from its replication of patriarchal codes of conduct that are formed and exist in
Egyptian family households. Kandiyoti alludes to this same paradigm, which she terms classical patriarchy, where an organisational structure within the family exists according to both gender and seniority, and where this structure is extended to society and the state where the state, specifically the head of state, enjoys the position of being the most senior man in the country. Within this concept of classical patriarchy, however, Kandiyoti argues that women are not merely passive in this patriarchal construct, but rather are able to negotiate their rights and agency within it. Specifically, Kandiyoti highlights how within a classical patriarchal home, a woman still holds forms of power, for example, in the loyalty of a mother’s sons who grow up to be more senior in the household and ensure their mothers are protected. Kandiyoti explains the cycle of attaining power for women through a patriarchal bargain, stating:

The cyclical nature of women's power in the household and their anticipation of inheriting the authority of senior women encourages a thorough internalization of this form of patriarchy by the women themselves. In classic patriarchy, subordination to men is offset by the control older women attain over younger women. However, women have access to the only type of labor power they can control, and to old-age security, through their married sons. Since sons are a woman's most critical resource, ensuring their life-long loyalty is an enduring preoccupation. (279)

How then does the framework of patriarchal bargaining, where women simultaneously accept a patriarchal construction that reinforces their subordination while also seeking power within this construct, lend itself to understanding the women’s movement’s interaction with the evidently non-democratic and patriarchal Egyptian state while also maintaining their belief in democracy and gender equality? One possible explanation is that just as Kandiyoti highlights that the motivations for
accepting a patriarchal bargain at home stems from the hope that such a bargain will both protect women in the short term and provide a long-term possibility of attaining more power in the future, for example the growing up of their sons, so too it is possible that a similar patriarchal bargain has taken place with the women’s movement’s decision to interact with the Egyptian state. Much like the patriarchal bargain that takes place at home that Kandiyoti highlights, so too does this political patriarchal bargain have short term and long-term objectives. In the short term, the reward for not going against the Egyptian state may be protection from physical punishment and prison which was a very real possibility, evident in the Rab’a massacre. In the long term, this patriarchal bargain, much like the mother who awaits her son’s growing up and attaining more power, and eventually affording his mother more power because of his affinity with her, so too could this patriarchal bargain for the women’s movement serve as a platform to build allegiances and favour within the patriarchal realms of Egyptian politics that may, in the future, serve their interests. In other words, interaction and acceptance provides a more suitable alternative to insubordination and possible imprisonment This patriarchal bargain, however, could also lead to an increased entrenchment of state feminism, where the women’s movement’s pursuits could be limited to, and dependent on, working with the state.

The concept of patriarchal bargaining coincides with Maxine Molyneux’s attempt to understand the interests of women, which she delineates and identifies as “women’s interests, strategic gender interests, and practical gender interests” (Molyneux 232). Molyneux immediately discards the concept of ‘women’s interests’, “because women are positioned within their societies through a variety of different means – among them, class, ethnicity, and gender – the interests they have as a group are similarly shaped in complex and sometimes conflicting ways…it is therefore difficult, if not
impossible, to generalize about the interests of women” (232). However, Molyneux does concede that women will have interests that are in common, which is what she calls “strategic gender interests”, “which differentiate from the false homogeneity imposed by the notion of women’s interests” (232). She goes on to explain that strategic gender interests (applicable to both men and women) are interests that are formulated in order to eliminate forms of gender discrimination within specific domains, “such as the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare…[and] the attainment of political equality (233). These strategic gender interests, Molyneux notes, are demands that are often understood as ‘feminist’ because of the level of consciousness needed to be aware of such issues and the resolve to correct them. These strategic gender interests differ from what Molyneux calls “practical gender interests [which are] usually a response to an immediate perceived need” (233). It is strategic gender interests that may provide one possible lens to understand why women’s rights groups and activists, what is labelled in this chapter as ‘the women’s movement’, are pro-democracy but have also engaged with the non-democratic Egyptian state after July 2013. What was evident in the period immediately after the removal of Mohamed Morsi in July and the Rab’a massacre in August, was that there would no reversal in the events, with the forming of a new constitution being the first stage of the political roadmap set out by the post-3 July Egyptian state (“Egypt military unveils transitional roadmap”: Reported by Al Ahram Online). In light of this, and in consideration of Molyneux’s theory of practical gender interests, it suggests there would have been no advantage or benefit for the women’s movement to not participate in the process and advocate their strategic gender interests so that they may be implemented and applied. In this way, practical gender interests must first be considered before strategic gender interests can
be addressed because practical considerations must first be taken into account. In the case of the women’s movement in Egypt, this practical consideration was the decision to participate in the constitutional assembly in the autumn of 2013 or otherwise be a bystander as the constitution would have been formed in any event, except without the advocacy of the women’s movement which would have been a detriment to one of their objectives which is to enshrine gender equality in legislation. Moreover, if members of the women’s movement refused to participate, this would have solely left state political actors such as the National Council for Women to advocate on behalf of women, and as was highlighted earlier in this chapter, the NCW’s advocacy on behalf of women has often been compromised by its political allegiances to the state. An understanding of the difference between strategic and practical gender interests, which in this case in Egypt can be seen as a patriarchal bargain, does not render direct criticism at those women accepting the bargain, but rather contextualises any contradictions that may be seen, for example in the decision to participate in politics with non-democratic actors. Hoda Elsadda, for example, who was one of the five women on the fifty-member constitutional assembly and who sees herself as part of the movement wanting democracy, explains her decision to accept her appointment in the assembly:

The way I talk about the constitution is this. We all started this process wanting to do our best, but I also started out with the knowledge that constitutions reflect the balance of power on the ground in society. That is how it is with constitutions around the world, with no exceptions I would say. Therefore I knew that some of my aims would not be realised because we were writing it at a very difficult time, many divisions in society, and people dying on the streets. (Elsadda, Interview with author, 2014).
It is evident that Elsadda displays a practicality towards her involvement in the constitutional assembly that does not contradict or compromise her hopes for democracy. Rather, she was aware from the beginning of the process that she would not succeed in fulfilling all her aims, but from a practical perspective, could attain at least some of them, which would be unlikely if she decided not take participate at all. This possibly represents Kandiyoti’s notion of patriarchal bargain in action, for the patriarchal nature of the post-3 July Egyptian state is exemplified but not limited to its militarisation, where Mohamed Morsi was removed from power by the military, specifically its head, Abdel Fattah el Sisi. The military, which can be described as inherently patriarchal where almost no women are present, stands in stark contrast and seemingly the opposite end of the feminist spectrum. Mozn Hassan illustrates this very point when she explains Sisi’s popularity in the country:

People love Sisi now because he is a strong man who can protect the people – and that is why I hate militarization. It is completely patriarchal at its core roots in protecting people, or actually preventing people, from getting their rights. (Hassan, Interview with author, 2013)

As a result, the patriarchal bargain comes in the form of accepting the patriarchal nature of the post-3 July Egyptian state, personified by the Egyptian military and its leader, Abdel Fattah el Sisi, who in June 2014 became president. However, this acceptance is not without reward, where the positive element of the bargain afforded women’s rights actors such as Elsadda and non-politically aligned women’s rights groups an opportunity to advocate their objectives for gender equality and protection in the 2013 constitutional assembly, and this is visible in some of the positive articles in the 2014 constitution pertaining to gender equality that arose due to the advocacy of members of the women’s movement. In light of this, both Kandiyoti’s
theory of patriarchal bargaining and Molyneux’s highlighting of practical gender interests aid us in our understanding of the predicament that faced the women’s movement after events on 3 July and how they have addressed this issue. This predicament, focused primarily on the political arena, will lend itself to the following chapter on the more personal elements of women’s rights activists and feminists and how they encounter and deal with seemingly contradictory spheres in their daily lives.
Chapter Four
The Personal is Political: The Shaping of Feminists

4.1 The Personal and the Political

Thus far in this thesis, the aims and themes have been centred on what may loosely be termed as ‘political’ events, namely the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath. However, the focus in this chapter seeks to move beyond so called political events, and instead focus on the ‘personal’ lives of feminist activists and what their personal lives and challenges may in turn reveal about their political struggles. That is to say, one of the central questions that will be addressed in this chapter is whether feminist activists related their political struggles to their personal struggles and vice versa, and if so, what have been the implications for these activists in their personal lives. Before this question can be addressed, this chapter will home in on the literature and discussions on what exactly is meant by the terms and paradigms of ‘personal’ and ‘political’.

Much has already been written and debated in academic circles on what constitutes the realms of the ‘public’ and the ‘private, and in turn, gender studies scholars have sought to address whether such distinctions apply when viewed through a gendered lens (Gavison 1). Furthermore, Gavison notes that of all theoretical paradigms, it is feminism above any other that seeks to do away with distinctions

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43 Political events such as elections and constitutional drafting.
between the realms of the public and private. This notion is supported by Catherine MacKinnon who states, “The private is public for those for whom the personal is political. In this sense, for women, there is no private, either normatively or empirically” (MacKinnon 191). Moreover, Carol Pateman goes even further, arguing that “the dichotomy between the private and the public is central to almost two centuries of feminist writing and political struggle” (Pateman 281). In turn, this rejection of a public and private binary from a feminist perspective resonates with Carol Hanisch’s seminal work, “The Personal is Political” (2006). Hanisch underscored the idea that any understanding of, and improvement to, the lives and rights of women must not be considered personal or private struggles for women, but must be considered and understood in a wider framework beyond the personal but also the political. She notes her experiences in meeting with other feminists:

The reason I participate in these meetings is not to solve any personal problem. One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution. I went, and I continue to go to these meetings because I have gotten a political understanding which all my reading, all my ‘political discussions’, all my ‘political action’, all my four odd years in the movement never gave me. I’ve been forced to take off the rose coloured glasses and face the awful truth about how grim my life really is as a woman. (Hanisch 4)

Furthermore, in her Introduction to her essay in 2006, more than thirty years after it was first published, Hanisch explains the motivations behind this new approach, describing a common misconception, stating:
[Feminists were] belittled no end for trying to bring our so-called “personal problems” into the public arena—especially ‘all those body issues’ like sex, appearance, and abortion. Our demands that men share the housework and childcare were likewise deemed a personal problem between a woman and her individual man. The opposition claimed if women would just “stand up for themselves” and take more responsibility for their own lives, they wouldn’t need to have an independent movement for women’s liberation. What personal initiative wouldn’t solve, they said, “the revolution” would take care of if we would just shut up and do our part. Heaven forbid that we should point out that men benefit from oppressing women. (Hanisch 1)

Consequently, a critical feminist approach seeks to move away from distinctions between the private and the public to avoid any suggestions that these two realms are mutually exclusive, and that each is not reflective of, or a result of the other. That is to say, it is Hanisch’s position and other critical feminist scholars that the private and public are interrelated, and that any attempts to change or impact one realm is an automatic challenge to the other. Hanisch also expands on this theoretical approach, explaining that ‘political’ does not simply allude to electoral politics, but is a label to refer to power relationships and unchanged power dynamics of men over women that are present in all spheres of life. Consequently, any so called ‘personal’ problem a woman may have at home is indicative of wider power imbalances that are prevalent in public and political spheres as well, and it is for that reason that she argues that the personal is also political. In light of this, Hanisch’s position lends itself as a theoretical framework in order to understand how Egyptian feminists’ activism has been shaped by personal experiences, which in turn have led to realisations that gender imbalances of power and inequality in political spaces reflect and feed these
power imbalances in personal spheres, meaning that personal and political problems are not mutually solvable but must be addressed as a collective. This becomes an even more suitable framework in the context of Egyptian feminists’ personal lives and struggles amidst widespread political turbulence since January 2011. In addition, it is possible to extend Hanisch’s theory of the personal being political by inverting it, suggesting that the political is also personal. This is to suggest that the process of awareness, knowledge, and enacting change does not simply flow from the personal to the political, but from the political to the personal, where political experiences inform personal decisions as well as personal decisions informing the political.

Crucially, this approach continues the feminist scholarly tradition of breaking down any barriers between the personal and the political. As a result, where Chapters Two and Three focused on political and public elements of gender rights activism in Egypt since January 2011, this chapter will afford an opportunity to adopt and adapt Hanisch’s theory and highlight how personal experiences, and struggles of activists, are reflective of their gender rights activism in what we call political and public spheres, and vice versa. This not only provides insight into their lives and activism, but also reminds us that activists are not exclusively activists but human beings with human experiences and struggles that are often left out of their portrayal and depiction as ‘activists’. In light of this, the foundation of this chapter will be centred on extracts from the qualitative fieldwork interviewees with activists who consented to speaking on both their personal stories and their political activism. One of the aims is to identify patterns of what is called in this chapter, ‘feminist awakenings’, referring to the moment or moments of both men and women who began to become aware, and place importance on, their awareness of gender inequalities and power imbalances,
and make attempts to address these imbalances. Moreover, this chapter will also highlight patterns within their self-development journeys and where their personal lives and political activism merge and diverge.

44 See Tuttle (90) on different stages of feminist awakenings that she highlights, for example, in the awakenings that may happen upon entry into womanhood that is different from that of an awakening that can occur in motherhood. See also Efrati (153) who offers compelling insight into feminist awakenings in Iraq in the first half of the twentieth century which can potentially be used as a comparison to the ‘feminist awakening stories’ that will be presented in this chapter in the case of Egypt.
4.2 ‘Revolutions’ at Home

Reflecting on the fieldwork interviews, it was evident that feminist activists themselves related their personal lives with their political activism, where confrontations and challenges to home and familial dynamics have become just as important, and intrinsically linked to their political and public activism, what is called here ‘revolutions at home’. In particular, there appears to be a pattern where the activists’ decision to pursue their activism in their careers, most commonly in the form of either working for an NGO or starting an activist organisation, was challenged by one or both of their parents because this chosen career falls out of the scope of approved primary career choices such as engineering, medicine, or working in the corporate sector. More generally, any behaviour by a feminist activist that was challenged by one or both parents or other family members was indicative to the activist of wider political problems and dynamics, reinforcing the notion that no such binary between the political and the private exists through a gendered lens. For example, one interviewee, Noha Hanafy, twenty-six, and born and raised in Cairo, reflects in the extract below on the transformation process she underwent as she began reading for her degree in English Literature at Ain Shams University in Cairo. Moreover, this entry into university and meeting new people, including her professors, also sees her reflect on her own upbringing by her family. She reflects:
Well first of all I grew up in a very conservative family and we had an idea of how people in the West are living and it was very stereotypical. Like, we are conservative and religious, and they are not. And my family had this idea of imperialism being connected to the West and so we shouldn’t be interested in their culture. But when I started to read English literature, I got more information beyond stereotypes of their society. And I realised they have a lot of things that we don’t have and have things that I didn’t think they had. But most all I think my perspective changed because of the people and professors I got to meet and know in the department. I was uncomfortable in the beginning because I didn’t know how to deal with them, but in time, I got to understand how the world goes, and whatever ideas my family have, it doesn’t mean it’s true. (Hanafy, Interview with author, 2014)

It is possibly evident in this short extract that Hanisch’s notion of the personal being intrinsically political is inverted, where for Hanafy, seeing different embodiments of power relationships and structures at university made her aware that her family’s view and family structure of hierarchy was not the only possibility available to her. In turn, these realisations in realms outside of her family home provided her with the tools to then critically analyse her own family home dynamic. However, while Hanafy admits it was her father who she saw as the head of the household, it was her mother who contested her decisions as she grew up. Specifically, Hanafy remembers her mother wanting to dress in a certain way, and be “tall, skinny and blonde” (Hanafy, Interview with author, 2014), while always comparing her with her cousins. This role of the matriarch in Hanafy’s household resembles the matriarchal role and responsibilities of mothers that Farha Ghannam highlights in urban Egypt (2013). Ghannam specifically looked at households with
absent fathers, where “the wife becomes a key agent in running the daily affairs of the family and the production of gendered identities” (Ghannam 41). Similarly in Hanafy’s household, her mother, despite the presence of Hanafy’s father, took the most interest in trying to guide her daughter to a specific gendered identity, and she suggests her father takes more interest in the lives of her two older brothers because they are male. In addition, Hanafy also recalls the problems that arose with her parents in her career choices, specifically her decision to pursue a PhD and teach at a university far from the family home. She notes her response to them:

I kept telling them that I am doing this for a reason and that I’m not doing this for money or to get a better position at work, or to get married for that matter, but that I’m doing this for myself. So yeah, I think they have this […] I don’t know if it’s westernised per se, but an image of a woman and that a woman has to be at home. That she has to be high maintenance with her looks, she can’t spend her time reading all the time, she can’t have a successful career if it affects other things. (Hanafy, Interview with author, 2014)

This last point is compelling because it appears to negate the binary that was noted in chapter one, where feminism was seen in Egypt, and continues to be seen in some cases, negatively due to its colonial shadow imparted by British attempts to ‘liberate’ Egyptian women.45 For example, where Hanafy’s mother wanted her daughter to be “high maintenance with her looks…[and] tall, blonde and skinny”, she was also concerned with her daughter spending too much time focusing on her education and undertaking a PhD because it may “affect other things”, possibly

45 Abu-Lughod (Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving, 784) notes that Lord Cromer, consul-general of Egypt between 1883-1907, engaged in what Leila Ahmed has called ‘colonial feminism’, where paradoxically, Cromer rejected women’s suffrage back in Britain.
alluding to marriage and having children. This suggests that in reality there is far more fusion between the two spheres of East and West in Hanafy’s mother’s desires for her daughter, where she hoped her daughter would reflect a ‘Western’ image of physical beauty, while also then being critical of her daughter’s decision to work rather than focus on starting a family of her own. This paradox is perhaps representative of the move beyond the objectives of the post-colonial state, where the dichotomies of East and West are no longer as prevalent as the immediate years following colonialism. In Egypt’s case, Gamal Abdel Nasser’s rhetoric as leader of Egypt in its infancy years after independence was based on placing Egypt in direct opposition to its previous western colonisers in the British.\textsuperscript{46} However, sixty years after this period, such tensions exist in much smaller and subtler forms, as well as globalisation meaning access to other cultures is easily attained. As a result, it is perhaps not surprising to find a fusion in the hopes by Hanafy’s mother for her daughter to be “skinny, tall and blonde”, while also wanting her to adhere to Egyptian social norms, such as comparing Hanafy to her cousins, and wanting her daughter to place her desire for a family above her desire to work and further education. In light of this, it is not surprising that Hanafy’s sees her relationship with her mother, rather than her father, as having the most tension and frustration. It also highlights Hanafy’s coping mechanisms towards her mother’s pressure, where she continues to strive towards carving out her own identity, as well as leading her to critically analyse her mother’s experiences and decisions.

\textsuperscript{46} See the Youtube video “Abdel Nasser Speech After The War of 1956” where Nasser delivers a speech, stating: “When the British came out and said Gamal Abdel Nasser is a dog, we come back and call you [the British] the sons of sixty dogs”. It exemplifies the point that Egypt’s future would be framed, at least in part, in opposition to its colonial past.
Moreover, feminist activists revealed that family expectations are not just limited to career choices and monetary concerns. Gender rights activists must also contend with trying to contest familial expectations in other matters as well, including personal relationships and marriage. Sally Zohney provides a compelling example of this as a feminist and gender rights activist who also recently got engaged at the time of interview. On being asked more about her engagement process and impending marriage, she described the numerous challenges she faced in going against engagement and marital customs that saw her pitted against both her own family and the family of her fiancé. Zohney first explained these marital customs:

Marriage in our society, I think it's kind of a business deal more or less than a human based relationship. Sometimes the basis in which we choose a husband and wife is based on a material check list. He has a house, he has a car, he has a job, he has a good family, he can provide for a family blah blah blah. So many decisions are left only and solely on the hands of the husband with the consent of the entire family. Marriage is all about money. Did he buy you...can he afford...did he get you the jewellery? And it falls under so many social constructs. (Zohney, Interview with author, Dec 2013)

Zohney specifically highlighted the practice of the fiancé giving his fiancée a shabka, a gift of jewellery for his intended bride, where the cost of the shabka itself has come to represent another social class marker, where the more expensive the cost of the shabka, the more value is seen in both the groom’s family, and in that of the bride and her family for being ‘worth’ such a gift.47 As a result, the cost of the shabka, rather than its design, has become equally important, in that the two families may

47 See Rashad (2) and Singerman (17) who detail the customs and costs of marriage in Egypt.
agree on the price of the *shabka*, and the fiancée must then pick out the jewellery that matches this sum. The concept behind the *shabka* in contemporary Egyptian practice appears to have replaced the Islamic *mahar* (dowry), where the *mahar* in the marriage contract stipulates how much is to be given to the wife upon marriage and divorce. However, the *mahar* is now often set at a symbolic nominal price, such as 10 L.E. because it has been replaced by the *shabka*, which is often gold and diamond jewellery, on the basis that these commodities rise in value year on year as the wife keeps hold of them, whereas a *mahar*, which is a cash sum, can decrease in value over time due to inflation. In some cases, particularly of families within the upper middle class, a groom may be expected to provide a significant *mahar* and *shabka*. Zohney explains what happened when the subject of the *shabka* was raised in her own engagement:

> So many fights. This is my *shabka* [points to her hand]. It's a pearl ring and I don't think it cost more than two and a half thousand Egyptian pounds [approximately £200]. And a gold ring. My fiancé told me it's your choice, it's your present, and we will get what you want. His family wanted to get me the standard *shabka* which costs thousands of pounds just because it shows that we are a family...we should give you a proper gift. And my family thought that that's definitely right and that he should get me a proper *shabka* because it shows that you are worth something. Both families were in agreement. They said that I am young, and ignorant, at this age and that when I grow old, I will realise that I need the *shabka* and it shows a lot and it's something for life and that I will be using it more and now I can wear whatever ring I want but the *shabka* has to be there. So it was me against both families. (Zohney)
This pressure that Zohney experienced in dealing with both her own family’s expectations and those of her fiancé’ are extended towards friendships as well, where peer pressure to adhere to conformity also presents another obstacle. Zohney recalls some of the reactions of her friends when she told them about her desire to bypass the *shabka* and about not being insistent on living in specific neighbourhoods in Cairo: “They were like, ‘you’re not getting a *shabka*? You’re not living in Tagamo? [an upper class district in Cairo]. You’re going to rent a flat and rent furniture?’ Even for my fiancé’s friends they were the same, telling him ‘no man, you can’t do this’” (Zohney).

These personal challenges that cut across personal relationships and career choices were not just limited to female activists. Omar Ahmed, twenty-four, provides a compelling analysis of the challenges an activist faces in their desire to pursue their activism full-time. In his formative teenage years, Ahmed remembers being aware of gender differences and power imbalances. Already aware of such treatment differences accorded and determined by gender, Ahmed explained how a documentary on television on Qasim Amin raised even further questions in his mind on why many aspects of society were determined according to gender. However, the most significant turning point, he reflected, was becoming aware of Nawal El Saadawi’s seminal work *Women and Sex* (1969), where “I realised many facts about how women suffer in society” (Ahmed, Interview with author, 2013). This led to Ahmed seeking out Saadawi on numerous occasions, eventually doing so and forming a strong bond with her, and in her advanced age, he offered to carry out her errands and help her organise her public-speaking engagements. In the aftermath of Hosni Mubarak’s resignation in February 2011, El Saadawi and Ahmed decided to revive the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), which Hoda Sha’rawi began in 1923 in the
aftermath of Egyptian independence but which was subsequently disbanded in the 1950s under Gamal Abdel Nasser. Ahmed recalls, “Nawaal and I were in Tahrir and we decided then to revive the Egyptian Women’s Union, and I wasn’t sure what my role would be but I was just there. We made our first statement on Facebook on 1 March 2011 while political parties and coalitions were being made, but not many were talking about women’s rights” (Ahmed). Ahmed became the president of the EFU, which at the time of interview was still seeking funding and exploring registration options as an NGO. Ahmed decided to boldly leave his own full-time job to devote all his attention towards building the EFU, and while awaiting external funding, found an office space in the same building as his and his parents’ home, for which at the time of interview he had to source funding from his family without them realising. He explains:

My family does not support me being a feminist. The first time I met Nawaal in 2010 and soon after that I basically became her assistant. My family did not like her or her reputation. They said she’s an atheist and that I can get arrested by being around her. When my dad first saw me reading *Women and Sex*, he thought it was pornography. I told him ‘Dad, if I wanted porn, I would go online. This isn’t like 1975 in your day where pornography is in magazines. This is a book.’ After the revolution I started to go on television and my parents were proud of it. They don’t even support what I am saying, but the

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48 Registering as an NGO in Egypt is neither easy, nor a path many activist organisations wish to take because by registering, it places the organisation under the scrutiny of the state (See Human Rights Watch July 2014: Egypt draft law threatens independent organisations). By the same token, operating without any type of registration can also be a risk if the state at some stage deems the work of the organisation as a threat to the country, with a lack of registration a possible argument by the state that the organisation was operating beyond the limits. However, there have been many instances where registered NGOs have also been raided by security forces and brought to trial. Since 2011, the most high profile case has been the conviction of forty three NGO staff members, guilty of receiving ‘foreign funding’. See “Egypt convicts US NGO workers”, reported by *The Guardian*. 

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fact that I am on television is enough for them. They call the extended family and boast about my exposure, while not listening or supporting the content I speak of. (Ahmed, Interview with author, 2013)

This vividly highlights the challenges that Ahmed has faced in pursuit of his activism, choosing it as his chosen full-time path at a monetary expense rather than profit, as well as the expense of having to withhold information from his family. In light of this, it reveals the commitment that is needed by activists who want to devote their time towards their activism, even in the face of personal adversary and sacrifice, where pursuing activism must first mean challenging rules at home. This echoes with the story of Ayman Nagy, twenty six, who left his home city of Alexandria to continue his career in the corporate sector in Cairo. However, having been deeply inspired by the 2011 Revolution and being in Tahrir Square for many of the eighteen day protests against Hosni Mubarak where he became more gender sensitive, and inspired by seeing women alongside men fighting for the same cause, he too, just like Omar Ahmed, wanted to dedicate all his efforts toward make his activism full-time. He left his job and began volunteering for HarassMap, before going on to set up his own group in 2012, Dudd Taharrush (Against Harassment). Nagy explains his decisions:

When I worked in corporate I got paid like three times more than what I get paid right now. But my life was so sad when I look back it; going out with friends and spending money but only ever waiting and living for the weekend and this is not a life. What I have is a smaller amount of money but a bigger amount of life. What I am doing now is what I need to do in my life which can change things. (Nagy, Interview with author, 2013)
Just like Noha Hanafy, Sally Zoheny, and Omar Ahmed, Nagy has had to contend with criticism from his family for his decisions as well as adversely being compared by his family to other members of his extended family who have stayed within the limits of family expectations. He recalls how his mother used to be proud and boasted about his television appearances to friends and family, but that she now “says things like ‘why don’t you go to the Gulf like your cousin and make a lot of money and finish your apartment and then come back and then you can do whatever you want?’” (Nagy, Interview with author, 2013). In turn, this once again reflects an extension of Hanisch’s assertion of the personal being political, where in the case of Nagy, the reverse is true, where political events influenced the personal, where witnessing women at the forefront of protests that led to what is known as the 2011 Egyptian Revolution led him to challenge previous gender dynamics that he took for granted, and as a result, start his own anti-sexual harassment group. This understanding is crucial because it also goes some way to negating views that the 2011 Revolution has ‘failed’ due to the apparent return of state aggression and control in 2013, 2014, and at the time of writing in 2015, that echoes that of the Mubarak regime and undermine the goals of the 2011 Revolution, namely democracy and social justice.49 While the political climate may seem despondent for those who called for radical political and social transformations in Egypt, a case such as Nagy’s illustrates that the long lasting impact of the 2011 Revolution may be seen in the effect and change it has had on the personal lives and personal views of feminist activists. Deena Mohamed’s experiences echo this same model. Author of the popular

49 To deem a revolution a success or failure is contentious, particularly when the revolution in question is less than five years old. Importantly, the opinion for one view or another appears to be connected to political affiliations and political agendas. The BBC’s report “Egypt’s voices: Protestors see failed revolution” compiles interviews of protestors who view the 2011 Revolution as a failure. However, it is important to note that there are many alternative voices who support president Sisi and his state and see both as a natural progression, and success story of the 2011 Revolution.
online comic ‘Qahera’, a female superhero who also wears the hijab (headscarf), Mohamed recalls that it was the real life actions of Egyptian women in 2011 that provided the inspiration for her to create the character which has provided her with her own outlet to express her feelings and opinions. She notes that “When I talk about superheroes, I think Egyptian women are superheroes. They know the risks and the kind of society they're in but regardless they're doing what they want to do” (Mohamed, Interview with author, 2014). As a result, while it continues to be difficult, or indeed, a continued contestation over the ‘result’ of the 2011 Revolution, where such contestations are argued along political contours of what it means to have had a ‘successful’ revolution, digging into the personal lives of activists may reveal subtle but compelling and nuanced understandings that move beyond ‘real politics’ of what it means to have had a successful or failed revolution.

In addition, there is further evidence that the political upheaval in January and February 2011 appears to have become a platform for feminist activists challenging gender norms and customs at home. Returning to Noha Hanafy, just as Carol Hanisch describes in her own realisation that the personal is political, Hanafy also makes this connection, which is vividly clear when she reflects:

The point about my mum is that I always tell her that I wish I could go back forty years ago and make her make different choices in her life, and she asks why, and I tell her because my mum had always been dependent on people, from my grandma to my father, and you can also clearly see that her politics views are also dependent on others. I mean I remember one time we had a fight over the constitution and I was telling her that I was going to vote ‘No’ [to the constitutional referendum of January 2014] and she was saying that she was going to vote ‘Yes’. And I asked her if she had read it [the constitution]
and she said no but your father told me that it was good and that became a fact to her right away. (Hanafy, Interview with author, 2014)

This reveals how one power dynamic, in this case the power dynamic of the father and husband over his wife and children at home, can be transferable to other spheres, in this case, the decision on how to vote on a political constitution. However, the opposite is also true, where Hanafy does not allow her father, who does hold a power dynamic over her at home, to influence her decision on how to vote on the constitution. This does not invalidate the notion that the personal is political and vice versa, but highlights that power dynamics can only be challenged if one has the awareness and tools to critically self-analyse; and in the case of Hanafy, her awakening which began at university through meeting different people outside of her familial sphere has provided her with the awareness and tools to challenge her familial spheres which does not appear to be the case with her own mother. This can further be seen when Hanafy describes her desire to join protestors in January 2011 as news broke out that many people were marching towards Tahrir Square. She remembers:

I cried on 28 [January] and I was telling him [her father] that I have to go, that everyone is down there and that we have to do something, and he was afraid, and my brothers really fought with him. And I told him I can do this, I can open the door and go and you can’t do anything about it, and so I said you either let me go with my brothers or you come with me…so he went with me. (Hanafy)

This further mirrors the notion of the personal being political because Hanafy can only claim her public and political space by first claiming an authority within her own home, in this case the authority to tell her father that she can “open the door and
go and you can’t do anything about it”. As a result, it becomes important to appreciate the breaking down of binaries of women’s political and personal rights because neither can be achieved in isolation; both are targeted towards breaking down gendered power structures that are present on familial levels and operate on wider, national levels as well. This is seen in the way in which state rhetoric in Egypt in the past and present has evoked familial themes such as presidential fatherhood, Egypt symbolically presented as a woman, and Egyptian women as wives and daughters that must be protected.\textsuperscript{50} Nihal Zaghloul echoes this parallel between the political and the familial when she comments on the importance of leadership in Egyptian politics that is expected to be replicated at home and in the form of the father figure, stating:

You can also see this in families. I didn’t have this because my father wasn’t there, but whenever you are in a household that has a father, he always tells the girls to go or not to go, where to go, when to go, what to dress, how to dress and there is always a father figure so when people ask ‘Oh my god we are going to work together?’ They get scared and say ‘someone should lead all of this’. (Zaghloul, Interview with author, 2014)

In turn, this places even more important emphasis on investigating the personal lives of activists if their political activism is to be fully understood. In the case of Hanafy, she makes the connection between the 2011 Revolution and her life when she states “I do feel more empowered after the revolution”, and therefore such a strong sentiment cannot be ignored and its implications on the personal and political lives of activists. This sentiment is further echoed by Hoda Elhadary, for whom protesting in Tahrir Square in February 2011 and throughout 2012 was not just a

\textsuperscript{50} As discussed in the Introduction.
political struggle, but a contestation between her and her mother, who did not want her daughter to be on the streets for fear of what family members and friends may think of her daughter’s reputation. Elhadary recalls one incident at the end of January 2011:

That day she [her mother] wasn’t at home and I had made up my mind that I will go to Tahrir and whatever happens, happens, so I went there, spent the whole day, and when I got home, it was like a huge fight, and I basically made it clear that I will disobey you and whatever you say I am going to do what I want. And of course she was angry at me, until March she didn’t talk to me. (Elhadary, Interview with author, 2014)

In light of all this, Hanisch’s point that “personal problems are political problems” (Hanisch 4) is exemplified, and in the case of Hanafy, Zaghloul and Elhadary, challenges to familial power dynamics can lead to challenging the same power dynamic present within political realms, and vice versa. This same pattern of personal and familial barriers being broken prior to entry into public and political spaces is also seen with the story of Sara Aziz, who is the founder of Safe Kids, an organisation focused on preventing the sexual abuse of children. Once Aziz’s initiative began to get noticed by the media, she knew she would be confronted with the question of what made her decide to start this organisation. The truth was Aziz’s own sexual abuse as a child, of which her parents were not aware, leaving her to first confront this personal challenge before she could publicly reveal her motivations. She explained: “I told them [parents] a couple of months ago. I never thought of telling my dad but I’ve told him. That was harder than telling the media” (Aziz, Interview with author, 2013). This example further exemplifies Hanisch’s breaking of exclusivity between the personal and political, which is an important assertion when
understanding how personal and political realms inform each other in the case of Egyptian activists, and whereby public and political action and advocacy cannot be understood in isolation, but in conjunction with personal experiences and struggles.

In light of this, these extracts underscore that feminist activists, male or female, do not just address and restrict their activism to public and political realms because their personal struggles and challenges are reflective of their political struggles, and vice versa. Much like the notion that the personal is political, so too are they unable to separate their beliefs between the private and the public, resulting in challenges and confrontations within their households. This highlights a crucial point made by many of the interviewees concerning their feminism, which Maissan Hassan of the Women and Memory Forum surmises well: “I’m a feminist twenty-four seven. I’m not just a feminist when I’m at work” (Hassan, Interview with author, 2013). This is a crucial nuance in order to understand that feminism and feminist activism is a package of beliefs that extends beyond the limits of the political and public, but rather transcends social, political, and familial spheres. As a result, it is no surprise to find many of the interviewees who have experienced challenges across all these spheres have highlighted their exhaustion, while also emphasising that their feminism cannot be limited to just political objectives, underlining that feminist activists may consequently face challenges on a daily basis. This is often an isolated road where many of the interviewees revealed their decision to no longer try to win every discussion but rather opt for silence. Doaa Abdelaal acutely surmises this sentiment when she notes, “I don’t want to attack people or make it my responsibility to make them understand. It’s the same with friends my age who don’t understand and I have learnt that I can’t change them either” (Abdelaal, Interview with author, 2013).
4.3 The Making of Gender Awareness and Performativity

While so far this chapter has highlighted the intrinsic connection between personal and political challenges for feminist activists insofar as political and public feminist struggles are reflective of feminist personal struggles, and vice versa, the aim of this section is to highlight and investigate how this process of gender awareness, or ‘feminist awakening’, came to pass, and how it conforms or challenges normative expectations in Egypt of what Judith Butler has coined gender performativity. On gender performativity, Butler stated, “Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (Butler, Gender Trouble, xv). Consequently, and with gender performativity in mind, the aim of this section, among others, is to highlight how expected gender performativity has been subverted by gender activists, how they have achieved this, and what challenges they have faced as a result of this subversion that by proxy reveals more on expected gender peformativity for both men and women in Egypt as a whole. Moreover, it became clear in analysing the fieldwork interview transcripts that any understanding of male and female gender performativity in Egypt could only be
understood in relation to each other rather than in isolation, where a lack of ‘male performance’ had a profound impact on the ‘female performance’. Furthermore, where a male’s ‘performance’ has not lived up to the expectations of expected male performativity, the labels and insults they have received reveal perceptions and expectations of both male and female genders. This in turn provides greater clarity in identifying what exactly are gender performance expectations in Egypt, and in turn, what are the consequences if these expectations are not met.

For example, Ahmed Awadalla, a feminist activist who works for an NGO in Cairo that focuses on attaining rights for refugees, recalls the implications for his sisters when their father died while they were still young:

A good reputation means people cannot gossip about you and if you want that you should stick to the social rules. Bad reputation means immorality, specifically, the women are ‘loose’. For my household, because my mum didn’t have my father around and was raising children without a father, there is this idea that the children or the family is a certain way because there is no father and that ‘certain way’ is a negative connotation. (Awadalla, Interview with author, 2013)

This reveals that a lack of one ‘performance’, namely the presence of the father, has profound implications on the female performance, in this case the daughters, whereby the presence of the father figure facilitates the performance of the female household, and in contrast, the absence of the father figure renders it impossible for the female members of the household to meet and perform gendered expectations. Tarek Zakaria adds further support to these prominent gendered expectations in Egypt. Zakaria is in his twenties and works for a gender rights NGO in
Egypt and is also openly homosexual to friends and some family members. He recalls what happens when one parent does not conform to expectations: in this case, his mother’s position within his family household as he grew up and where she refused her husband’s demands to stop working. He states:

> My mum used to twist patriarchy so that she could get what she wanted. When she got married she told my father clearly that she was not going to stop working for the children. We were only two sons and my family is communist, my dad believes in family planning and raising a few children well rather than having lots of children. My mother was the only woman who kept working until now, even if she’s a cancer survivor. She says “for a woman, her education and her work are like her food and air”. (Zakaria, Interview with author, 2013)

Zakaria goes on to say that he believes it was his mother’s personality and the way she brought up him and his brother that shaped his own sexuality and gender awareness, causing him to ‘fail’ to live up to gender expectations of manhood in Egypt. He recalls a common comment as he grew up that already implies an expected different outcome for men and women: “People used to say to my mum ‘your boys are very polite, like girls’”. This stereotype is further echoed by Shady Abdullah, who has volunteered with several feminist and gender rights groups, as well as acting in the BuSSy Monologues. He notes that, “People do bring it up a lot and ask why I am

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51 The BuSSy Monologues began in 2010 and is an ongoing theatrical performance where the story, or monologue, is written anonymously by people who send their stories to the project. In this way, the monologues are always different, and are based on real events. On their website they note: “We wanted to let people write for themselves instead of being written about. And here we are, five years and five thousand stories later, sharing a selection with you every year in the BuSSy project” (Take from “BuSSY blog”). One of the key themes that constantly appears in the performances are gender related issues, including domestic violence, rape, and abortion. The author saw two BuSSY monologue performances in Cairo in December 2013.
interested in women’s rights, and of course the usual comments of are you gay, what’s wrong with you?” (Abdullah, Interview with author, 2013). This is compelling because it reveals an indication as to what is expected from an Egyptian man and the implications if such expectations are not met. In this case, it is Abdullah’s own sexuality that is challenged, where one possible interpretation of the accusation of homosexuality is to imply a lack of masculinity due to a possible ‘femininity’ in supporting women’s rights. In light of this, this connection between a lack of masculinity due to supporting women’s rights immediately reveals more on what is expected from male gender performance in Egypt, which appears to be intrinsically connected to heterosexuality, or at the very least, very distant from the stereotypes associated with homosexuality. Zakaria supports this concept when he reveals what happened when he wrote a collection of short stories based on Cairo’s streets and gave a copy to his father: “He actually gave it to a friend to read before he read it himself, so his friend called him up and said ‘didn’t your son find anything to write about other than faggots’? So my dad was shocked and he called me and he was angry” (Zakaria). Another example of an apparent expected male gender performance that appears to be placed opposite to homosexuality and supporting women’s rights is evident from Hussein El Shafei who works for HarassMap as a Community Mobilisation Unit Head.\(^\text{52}\) He reveals his feelings towards his own masculinity being challenged due to his work, and how and why this may be done to him and other men:

I am not aspiring to the hegemonic version of Egyptian masculinity, so it doesn’t bother me if I am challenged on that. And if my masculinity is challenged, I respond calmly like it doesn’t bother me. We hear it more from

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\(^\text{52}\) El Shafei described this as a role where he organises and trains HarassMap volunteers on how to talk to residents of local communities on sexual harassment and encourage residents to stop it if they see it taking place.
people of authority, like the police, who will say we are prostitutes who go onto the streets talking about sex. And that’s because the police and the army really embody masculinity in a blunt way, so anyone who doesn’t fall in line with that is a sissy. And I’m thirty years old, so I’m older, and there’s nothing threatening about me or different except my words. Like I don’t have any piercings and I dress pretty normally, but volunteers with piercings and things like that, I’ve seen people say to them, ‘before you talk about sexual harassment, why don’t you go be a man first.’ (El Shafei, Interview with author, 2014)

This message of “go be a man first” highlights a common theme that is evident in the stories of Zakaria, Abdullah, and El Shafei. For three men who advocate gender rights equality and women’s protection, such beliefs appear to place them outside the expectations and scope of Egyptian masculinity and gender performative expectations, and as a result, they have received insults and rebukes that are intended to symbolically emasculate them, such as calling them homosexuals or effeminate with derogatory intentions and connotations. Butler theorises why such binaries between masculinity and femininity are created, explaining:

The pro-sexuality movement within feminist theory and practice has effectively argued that sexuality is always constructed within the terms of discourse and power, where power is partially understood in terms of heterosexual and phallic cultural conventions…[and] in the place of a ‘male-identified’ sexuality in which ‘male’ serves as the cause and irreducible meaning of that sexuality, we might develop a notion of sexuality constructed in terms of phallic relations of power that replay and redistribute the
possibilities of that phallicism precisely through the subversive operation of ‘identifications’. (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 40)

What Butler is highlighting is that an ideal of masculinity is formed on the foundations of a heterosexuality that not only stands in contrast to homosexuality, but stands as its opposite, and as more superior and powerful than women and femininity. As a result, this may shed light on why these three men at different stages have been told to stop ‘acting like women’ or accused of being homosexuals, as these two accusations have come to signify the opposite of the ideal of masculinity, and where to fail to live up to this ideal renders one either a woman or a homosexual male. Moreover, such binaries, Butler argues, are reflective of power structures, where the ideal of masculinity, if fulfilled, stands as more powerful and entitled than that of its opposites, namely women or homosexuals. If this view is taken on board, it is crucial to understand how such constructs are created and upheld. Wilson Chacko Jacob offers some historical possibilities for the origins of the ideal of masculinity, where he explains:

Attempts to free a distinctively modern and Egyptian self from the colonial gaze were manifested explicitly in discourses of gender and sexuality during the British colonial period (1882-1936), and the product of these efforts, which entail a complex set of pedagogic and performative acts, was the ambivalent subject of what I call effendi masculinity…[where] effendi masculinity is conceived here as a performance or, more accurately, a set of performances that spans history and the everyday and that makes legible otherwise overlooked discursive formations that were both important objects of struggle and means by which power was normalised. (Jacob 4)
This resonates with Butler’s view, where she suggests that masculinity is an intrinsic part of power structures whereby masculinity assumes power against its opposites. This is illustrated in the way in which Zakaria, Abdullah, and El Shafei, have been stripped of their masculinity by being referred to as either women or homosexuals, where the supposed embodiment of this masculine ideal does the stripping, in this case, the police, army, or male family members. Jacob is useful because he provides another example, where he proposes that this ideal masculinity in some parts was historically constructed out of a desire to differentiate and stand opposed to the British colonial government. In this case, masculinity, much like Butler infers, is linked to a claim to power, where an ideal of masculinity is specifically constructed to symbolise strength, in the case of Egypt, strength to oppose British rule. As a result, this understanding of the meaning and purpose of masculinity in its ideal form aids our understanding of why anything that falls outside of this ideal, namely men who fail to be live up to it, and women, are viewed as weaker and inferior. This notion of inclusion and exclusion resonates with the discussion in chapter two on Butler and Spivak’s work on the nation-state, where in this case, gender performativity acts as another criteria to whether one fulfils or fails to live up to a constructed ideal of the Egyptian man and woman, that in turn forms the construction of the notion of an Egyptian nation. This historical understanding of the creation and purpose of male performativity in Egypt provides validation to those who argue that the 2011 Egyptian Revolution in and of itself has not altered the structures of gender performativity and expectations in Egypt.53 Rather, as highlighted in chapter

53 See Nicola Pratt’s essay in Jadaliyya on the state of women and gender changes since 2011 (“Egyptian Women: Between revolution, counter-revolution, Orientalism, and ‘authenticity’”). The BBC and The Independent have also both reported women’s voices in Egypt expressing their disappointment that little has changed for women since 2011. See The BBC’s “Egyptian revolution ‘failing to deliver for women’”, and The Independent’s “Those who played such a pivotal role in Egypt’s revolution have been badly let down”.

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two, gender performativity and expectations may have been temporarily suspended for the greater cause of removing Hosni Mubarak rather than gendered structures being permanently altered. However, viewing the 2011 Egyptian Revolution through a gendered lens and only relying on two possible outcomes is limited, and it may be more accurate to relay that while it would be difficult to argue that wholesale changes have occurred within gender performative realms in Egypt since 2011, the fieldwork material in this thesis has presented evidence that enough change has occurred in some individuals that may one day grow to be a more substantial collective that may result in more obvious changes in gender expectations.\footnote{One obvious outcome from the 2011 Egyptian Revolution from a gendered perspective is the growing discourse on sexual harassment that marks a significant improvement in the way in which sexual harassment has been discussed since 2011. Prior to 2011, sexual harassment was a sensitive topic, and victim blaming ever-present. Victim blaming remains salient, however a number of anti-sexual harassment groups and campaigns have been launched since 2011 which has seen the topic become more frequently discussed in Egyptian media. In light of this, more awareness has been raised about sexual harassment, and it can be argued that the way in which the ‘performance’ of sexual harassment is viewed has changed to some extent. As discussed in chapter three, this is perhaps most evident in the example of President Sisi condemning sexual harassment and men who carry it out. This condemnation by an Egyptian president had never occurred before, and can be argued his condemnation came as a result of the growing conversation that has taken place on sexual harassment since 2011.\footnote{201} }

Where thus far the examples provided by interviewees have stemmed from personal stories, this dynamic of power and masculinity on the one hand and femininity and homosexuality on the other is also evident on a much larger and political scale. Chapter Two provided the example of the Queen Boat case of 2001 where the public prosecution of homosexuals was noted by Human Rights Watch as a tool by the Mubarak state to induce a moral outrage towards the defendants and to in turn provide the Mubarak state further legitimacy as the upholders of moral and social stability (Amar, \textit{The Security Archipelago}, 71). However, this tactic appears to once again be evident in what may be referred to as Sisi’s state, which can be seen to have begun after Mohamed Morsi’s removal in July 2013, but was solidified in June 2014.
when Sisi was elected president. Specifically, the dynamic of masculinity versus that of its supposed opposites has appeared to become a favoured strategy by Sisi’s state, where on 7 December 2014, at least twenty-five men were arrested in a raid at a public bathhouse in Cairo in what can be described as a collaboration between the media and the state, where the security forces allowed the private news channel, *Al Qahera Wal Nas* (Cairo and the People) to film the live raid. The video footage and pictures of the arrest were then aired by the channel, with the faces of the men not blurred to ensure their complete exposure, and the lead journalist during the raid, Mona Iraqi, posted pictures of the raid on her Facebook page, once again with pictures of the arrested men, some of them with only a bath towel covering their bodies, with captions including:

> With pictures, we reveal the biggest den of group perversion the heart of Cairo…[and] in the bath, there are spaces for group perversion… [and] males of different ages and different nationalities come…[and] the cameras managed to do a filmed investigation to prove incidents of group perversion and record the confessions of the owners of this den. (Taken from Scott Long’s blog on human and gender rights in Egypt: “Dozens arrested for ‘perversion’ in a huge raid in Cairo”)

The question remains, why would such a raid and its very much intended public nature, be deemed necessary by Sisi’s state? One possible answer is provided by Amr, a thirty year old gay man, who explained to one journalist in a report on the December 2014 arrests: “It feels like a game between the Islamists and the military, and we are somehow stuck in the middle. The government is trying to arrest our people to prove to the public that even though the Islamists are out of power, the new regime is not letting go of public morals, it is not less Islamic” (Medium.com:}
“If my family knew any of this, they would kill me”). This suggests that the military persona of the Sisi state is being combined with the possible intention by the Sisi state to also claim moral power and authority through the proxy of supposedly upholding ‘Islamic’ values. Specifically, as former head of the military himself, on which was his first entry into public life, Sisi enjoyed, and now as a civilian president, still enjoys the associations with the characteristics of the Egyptian military, seen as protectors of the Egyptian people, in modern history stemming from the leadership and rhetoric of Gamal Abdel Nasser. This same notion of protection was a rhetoric employed during the Sisi-led removal of Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, where he consistently justified his actions by arguing that he had responded to the will of the people and saved them from Muslim Brotherhood rule *(The Financial Times*：“Sisi calls for mass protests in Egypt to confront terrorism”). What this possibly suggests is that Sisi and his state are able to base their authority and power on its military persona that exemplifies masculinity and strength, while also being seen as upholders of Islamic virtue, while by proxy, demonising what appears to stand in contrast and alien to this model, namely homosexuality and femininity which becomes subject to the power embodied through masculinity. As Mozn Hassan explained earlier in this thesis, “People say we love Sisi because ‘he wears trousers’, which means he’s not feminine or gay, he’s not soft” (Hassan, Interview with author, Sept 2013). As a result of this hegemonic image of masculinity conjured up by the state, Egyptian men failing to live up to the model of the masculine state may find themselves excluded and demonised from the concept of the Egyptian nation, whereby, as seen through the public humiliation and prosecution of gay men in Cairo in December 2014, their rights are obstructed precisely because they are no longer viewed as valid and accepted citizens.
If this formulation of masculinity provides a model for Egyptian men to follow, where their failure to fulfil this model results in their subjugation by other men, how does such a model affect the lives of Egyptian women? Moreover, what are the possible strategies for women to subvert the power afforded to men through their adherence to this ideal of masculinity which by proxy women cannot attain due to their gender? One possible avenue in testing these questions is within the sphere of education, specifically at university where the interactions between young men and women with each other, as well with lecturers and professors, reveals more on gender power dynamics and gender expectations. Professor Faten Morsy of Ain Shams University in Cairo, Department of English, revealed over a number of conversations and interviews what she has witnessed and experienced as both an observer of student interaction with one another, as well as the consequences of being a female teacher with colleagues and students. Morsy also notes that the political turbulence in Egypt since 2011 has had a profound impact on both teachers and students, both positively and negatively (openDemocracy: “Throw away your textbooks: education via revolution”). For example, in a recent module she taught in 2013, a module which focused on media and cultural representations where as a class they encountered gendered themes, there were only two male students. Morsy revealed that this in itself was not surprising as she notes that the majority of the student body in her department are female. However, she notes a different dynamic that occurred within this class that she has intrinsically linked to the political upheaval, particularly in July 2013 and the removal and subsequent ban of the Muslim Brotherhood She notes:

The boys were threatened by the girls. The fact that they were befriending the unveiled girls which is strange in a way [...] If these very smart and very well read girls [who were veiled], were members of any religious or political group,
it would have been easy to categorise them [i.e. if these veiled girls belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood because at the time of interview the Muslim Brotherhood were at the height of being demonised by the state and media]. But I think now this is the area in Egypt where people cannot deal with or find it very hard to stereotype and categorise. Now if they were belonging to the Muslim brotherhood or whatever, it would have been easy for them [male students] to deal with them because they could put them in a category and then forget about them, or even attack them directly. But they were very confused on how to deal with them, so other times they'd just be speechless. To the extent where once, I would ask some of these guys to photocopy material and then they wouldn't share the material. Then the girls complained to them and the boys said ‘well we couldn't get through to you’. They selected who they wanted to give the material to, and they didn’t give it to the opinionated [veiled] girls. (Morsy, Interview with author, 2014)

This behaviour by the young male students is compelling because it reveals several key indicators that contributed to their attitude and behaviour. It firstly underscores the point that gender expectations do exist, in this case where the male students felt threatened by the behaviour of the outspoken veiled female students. This is possibly because these young women did not conform to what the young men would have expected from a veiled woman, in that the outspoken women were clearly not members or supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, and so they could not dismiss them, or categorise them, as they would have wanted to, as Morsy noted. In turn, the men attempted to almost punish these women for their lack of conformity which threatened them, which is a possible example of the power afforded through masculinity attempting to reassert itself when challenged. Interestingly, the decision
by the male students to not photocopy the material for the outspoken veiled women but to give the material to the less outspoken women (who were not veiled) can possibly be interpreted as a reward to the less outspoken women for their conformity. In other words, this apparent power through masculinity is reflected in its ability to both punish and reward those who contradict or adhere to gender expectations set out by the more dominant masculinity. Moreover, this anecdote also reveals that this power and supposed entitlement is flexible in its decision on who to reward and punish, as well as revealing that physical appearance, in this case the veil, becomes less important than opinions and behaviour because the unveiled and less outspoken women were seemingly favoured by the young male students to the veiled and opinionated girls. What are we to understand from this exercise of masculine power, and how is it reinforced? Noora Flinkman of HarassMap provides one compelling explanation. Flinkman works on compiling reports and analysis on sexual harassment and gender based violence in Egypt. She has spent much of her professional and personal life trying to understand the intent and motivations behind the male entitlement of sexual harassment of which she sees as intrinsically linked to gender expectations and gender power dynamics in Egypt. However, she also notes that female gender expectations of men provide a platform for men to exercise their power, where she explains:

Egyptian men are supposed to have a wife, bring money and responsibilities. But then this is not reality, this is more the ideal. For many people, there is this confusion and disconnect between the idea and the real. And a lot of my [female] friends say that men should be jealous and controlling. They say that the best thing about the Egyptian man is that he is jealous. And I'm like, ‘What?’ this is the worst thing for me!’ They say that this is what they should
be like, so that the woman knows the man loves her. It's a sign that he cares for you. (Flinkman, Interview with author, 2013)

This suggests that male and female gender performativity reinforce and feed one another, even in the case where masculine power is encouraged to exercise itself by women who are recipient of this power. However, in the case of Morsy’s university class, it is important to highlight that contestations to these gender expectations are being challenged, where the outspoken female students continued in their unrestricted approach despite the obvious disapproval of some of the male students. This once again reflects the importance of viewing the political turbulence that Egypt has experienced over the past four years through a gendered lens, where gender performativity, expectations, and challenges to these expectations by both men and women in both political and personal spheres, underscores that Egypt’s 2011 Revolution can be seen as an ongoing duel over the image of the Egyptian nation. This image is symbolic and metaphorical, intended to represent the ideal of Egyptian nationhood and citizenship, where gender performativity plays a crucial role in understanding how this symbol and representation of the nation is formed. In light of this, and much like Hanisch’s infers, the divide between political and personal spheres is false, particularly through a gendered lens, because any challenges or conformity to gender expectations in either personal or political spheres automatically informs the other. As a result, and in the case of the gender rights activists and feminists whose stories have been presented in this chapter, any challenge to gender conformity is both a political and personal act, and serves to challenge any hegemonic notions of Egyptian manhood or womanhood that is presented and upheld not only by state and political actors, but family and friends as well. In turn, this means that should
someone seek to challenge these hegemonic gender structures, their contestation should not be considered either personal or political, but both.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

History Repeating Itself?

5.1 Considerations on Concluding the Unconcluded

The purpose of this conclusion may differ from that of other conclusions of academic works and academic subjects of interest because the author accepts that due to the ongoing nature, events, and stages, that is commonly termed as the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its post-revolutionary period, any attempt to conclude on a theory or body of work in direct relation to events in Egypt since 2011 presents various challenges. For example, how does one classify a ‘post-revolutionary period’? Presumably, a period is defined by its beginning and end, and while it may be possible to suggest that Egypt’s post-revolutionary period began the day after Hosni Mubarak’s resignation on 11 February 2011\textsuperscript{55}, how can the end of the post-

\textsuperscript{55} Even this start date could be argued against. For example, Egypt’s post-revolutionary period could be seen to have started after the military transitional government after Mubarak’s resignation, headed by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), handed over power to a civilian president, namely Mohamed Morsi, after his presidential electoral victory in June 2012. However, this too could be disputed. What is important to highlight is the difficulty in choosing a fixed period that represents Egypt’s post-revolutionary beginning and end.
revolutionary period be equally and confidently ascertained? The root issue with such a question is that the term and meaning of ‘revolution’ itself remains hotly disputed in Egypt today, and therefore any attempts to define what came after it is equally disputed. These concerns were raised in Chapter Three, where rival political factions in Egypt have attempted to claim ownership of the term ‘revolution’ for their own political advancement. Specifically, this was most evident at the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014, where the post-3 July government sought to equate the removal of Mohamed Morsi on 3 July 2013 with the removal of Mubarak in February 2011, skewing the meaning and symbolism of Egypt’s revolution in 2011. As was also highlighted in Chapter Three, the summer of 2013 that saw the removal of Morsi from office led to both a domestic and international contestation in academic circles and the media as to whether Morsi’s removal should be looked upon as a military coup or a revolution. While such a debate may on the surface appear limited to an academic sphere and political theory, the implications as to how a political event is received, and labelled, also retains a practical element as well. In the case of Morsi’s removal in July 2013, for example, the United States congress had to cease all military aid to a country that has just experienced a military coup. As a result, in the months after Morsi’s removal by the military, some parts of the US military aid package to Egypt was suspended by the Barack Obama administration.56

56 In October 2013, the Obama administration halted the delivery of some large military systems to the Egyptian government until it saw steps towards democracy. This ‘freeze’ on military aid was lifted in March 2015, a White House statement explaining: “The president explained that these and other steps will help refine our military assistance relationship so that it is better positioned to address the shared challenges to US and Egyptian interests in an unstable region, consistent with the longstanding strategic partnership between our two countries.” (The BBC: US lifts military aid freeze against Egypt). While the ‘freeze’ may not have been unilateral to all military aid to Egypt, and the freeze only lasted eighteen months, it highlights the concerns by the international community that events on 3 July 2013 and on wards could not unequivocally be considered a revolution, but rather a military takeover, or coup. This reaction is in stark contrast to the messages of encouragement towards Egypt that the Obama administration, and other international leaders, expressed at the resignation of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.
While the purpose of this thesis is not to definitively conclude or argue without doubt on any elements of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its post-revolutionary period, the thesis still serves various useful purposes both academically and for levels of practicality, and has presented several outcomes. The first important outcome of the thesis is that its author has attempted to stay as up-to-date as possible as events have unfolded in Egypt, and as a result, the thesis provides a timeline and a document of key events for which future scholars can use in their own research in the future. Secondly, much of the fieldwork has centered on eye-witness accounts of events and their feelings in reaction to them, and these have been presented in this thesis, a task that will not be possible to do in the future once these eye-witnesses, and others, have perished. In this way, this thesis serves as a practical body of work that can be referenced by academics and historians both today and in the future. Thirdly, while writing on a subject and event while it is still ongoing has presented numerous challenges that have been outlined above as well as in the methodology in the introductory chapter, many benefits of writing this thesis while events and changes have unfolded. For instance, the thesis has been able to capture the discussions and hotly disputed debates that have raged on in the present both domestically within Egypt and internationally on the subject of Egypt, which may not have otherwise been possible to present as clearly if this thesis was written many years from now. Fourthly, as events and changes have unfolded in Egypt since 2011 at a rapid pace, academics have naturally struggled to keep up. However, what is possible is that as the years pass, scholars can produce their own work on specific subjects or events which will in turn, and over time, form the overall literature on what we currently refer to as the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. As a result, another outcome is that the thesis seeks to be part of such a body of work, specifically within the way in
which gender roles and political representations pertaining to gender have become caught up within political rivalries and claims by political leaders and factions to frame nuances within gender so that it may fit in with their visions and claims to represent the Egyptian nation and its people. Importantly, the thesis has not been researched and written with the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution in isolation, but rather acutely aware of Egypt’s history of revolution and the literature on the marriage between politics, nationhood, and gender in Egypt’s past. Consequently, this work, while seeking to serve as a platform for future study and research, is in itself a building block on an already large structure of work which was highlighted in the literature review in the Introduction.

Arguably the most important contribution of the thesis is that it has attempted to break down, discuss, and analyse, through a gendered lens, the array of events and discourses that overwhelmed Egypt’s current events in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. Using theories on nationalism and gender, this thesis has underlined both the similarities and differences in the way in which differing Egyptian governments and political factions since February 2011 have competed for, and claim to speak on behalf of, the Egyptian nation through a discourse that evokes masculine and feminine qualities and expectations of such qualities. In turn, these patterns serve as evidence that a gendered lens can be extremely useful when trying to understand what may appear to be strictly political events and changes unrelated to gender. In other words, a gendered perspective may provide reasons for what we are seeing happen in the sphere of the political world. Moreover, such a detailed breakdown moves us forward away from generic stereotypes of how military leaders and political Islamic leaders speak about gender in Egypt, but rather provides concrete examples for both that help us understand their similarities and differences. Finally, from a theoretical
perspective, this thesis has looked at the past and asked whether history is repeating itself in Egypt in relation to state feminism and the relationship between the state, nationalism, and gender. This question will be attempted to be answered in the remainder of this chapter, with the understanding of this conclusion being both challenged and built upon as this thesis comes to an end while events continue to unfold in Egypt.

5.2 Understanding the Reemergence of State Feminism in 2014

In Chapter One, the thesis highlighted a history of state feminism in Egypt in the second half of the 20th century and first decade of the 21st century, first under the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser and then continued by Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak after him. It was argued that this notion of state feminism took shape in the form of state-sponsored policies that affected legal and policy change pertaining to the rights of Egyptian women, with this ‘state sponsorship’ most evident in the prominent roles the wives of Sadat and Mubarak, Gehan and Suzanne respectively, took in putting forward and endorsing such changes. Importantly, it was highlighted that many of the laws and initiatives that were put forward through this mechanism of state feminism can, from a feminism perspective, be deemed an enhancement to the protection of women’s rights in Egypt. For example, the 2000 khul’ law under the supervision of Suzanne Mubarak provided women with a legal mechanism to divorce their husbands. However, it was also noted that this dominance by the state over the realm of granting and taking away civil rights, including that of women, even positively as in the case of the khul’ law, had an adverse effect. As was highlighted through a number of voices from the fieldwork in Chapter Three, such state
dominance in the form of state feminism meant that only initiatives supported by the state would be endorsed and pursued, and where the state disagreed with an initiative or deemed it not as important as other issues, it would not get very far. It was argued that this monopoly by the state over ‘feminist’ policies mirrored the all-encompassing control and power of the state across a number of other areas within Egypt, most evident in its control of the political landscape where the same ruling party, the National Democratic Party, and its leader, Hosni Mubarak, appeared to never be in danger of losing power. Chapters One and Two highlighted a possible rupture in this mechanism of state feminism that was only able to occur due to a rupture in the overall power of the state that commenced at the onset of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution where the state’s control, and its leader, Hosni Mubarak, were directly challenged. With Mubarak’s resignation, it was argued in chapter one that this left a vacuum for non-state-aligned feminist activists and organisations to group and operate without the casting shadow of the state. However, Chapter Three argued that while this may have been the case over the course of 2011, 2012, and 2013, the emergence and strengthening of the Egyptian state under the presidency of Abdel Fattah el Sisi in 2014 saw a possible return to an era of state feminism in that Sisi has taken an active role in policies apparently favourable to women, including a discourse that often speaks on his positive expectations of Egyptian women and a commitment to combat sexual violence in order to protect them. The question remains, if it is argued that state feminism has reemerged in Egypt in 2014 that reflects the power and seemingly dominant control by Sisi’s state over societal and political spheres, where does this leave non-state-aligned feminists and feminist organisations with regards to their influence to enact change without compromising their position of being non-state-aligned? Moreover, can this reemergence of state feminism be paralleled to the state
sponsored feminism of the Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak eras? At the time of writing this conclusion, these questions act as a starting point for future scholarship on Egypt in 2011 and beyond. These concrete questions can be addressed as we as academics and researchers try to understand the mechanisms and structure of Sisi’s state as it grows, from both a gendered perspective as well as numerous other perspectives.

Reflecting thus far on these questions, it is evident that despite this reemergence of state feminism, what was termed the women’s movement in Egypt in chapter three that had the opportunity to grow with the weakening of Mubarak and his state between 2011 and 2013, will not so easily disappear or disband. It is argued here that there are underlying differences between the power of state feminism in the past under Sadat and Mubarak from that of under Sisi at the time of writing this conclusion, for several reasons. Firstly, the presidential tenures of Sadat and Mubarak are far removed in their beginnings and their respective social and political landscapes from that of Sisi. Neither Sadat nor Mubarak began their terms off the back of the momentum of ‘revolution’. While it was noted earlier in this chapter that we may continue to argue whether the events in January and February 2011 can be deemed a revolution or not, it cannot be denied that these events were hugely popular among the greater Egyptian populace. It was evident, for example, from the number of people assembled in Tahrir Square and other locations across Egypt that Mubarak’s resignation was largely welcomed by Egyptians and vast amounts of hope placed in what would come after him. The same cannot be said of Sadat’s and Mubarak’s appointments as presidents in 1970 and 1981 respectively, where Sadat succeeded perhaps the most popular man in Egypt’s modern history, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who suffered an unexpected heart attack and died, while Mubarak did not begin his term in office off the back of a revolution or popular movement, but due to Sadat’s
assassination. These are important facts to highlight because the presidential terms of Sadat and Mubarak did not come through revolution or popular demands for social and political change like that seen in 2011, meaning that the continuation of state feminism that begun under Nasser had no reason to change under the tenures of Sadat and Mubarak. However, the same cannot be said of what was expected after Mubarak’s resignation in February 2011. While it can be discussed at length what the exact objectives of the 25 January 2011 Revolution were, at the very least it can be agreed that its objectives began on the principle of departing from the dominance and practices of Mubarak’s state. Moreover, unlike the accession to the presidency by Sadat and Mubarak, there was no smooth handover of power from one president to another because the demands by the Egyptian people to see Mubarak step down did not specify exactly what, or who, was to succeed him. That is not criticism of the protestors in January and February 2011 but simply highlighting that this is one of the characteristics of revolution. As a result, this meant that for the first time in many decades, a window of opportunity arose for Egyptians to shape their own political future without a natural successor waiting in the wings as was the case with Sadat succeeding Nasser and Mubarak succeeding Sadat.

As was highlighted and discussed at length in Chapter Three, one of the results of this window of opportunity was that it was not just new political parties that began to form, but also women’s rights advocates and feminists were able to capitalise on this unique moment in Egypt’s history by collaborating and coming together on many issues that made them far more visible to the rest of the political and social landscape. This was made possible by the status-quo of state control being interrupted, visible in many ways, including the removal of the national figurehead, Hosni Mubarak, and the clashes between protestors and the police who were, and are, a symbol and apparatus
of the state and who were overrun by protestors in January and February 2011 and as a result, there was a significant reduction in police presence on the streets. In turn, this removal of the status quo led to not only new political parties being formed with the possibility of providing alternative politics to Egypt’s authoritarian modern history, but new possibilities for thought, initiatives, and new social constructs. As was noted through their voices in Chapter Four, this included women’s rights advocates and feminists who saw the political vacuum left by Mubarak as an opportunity to change Egypt beyond the spheres of formal politics and elections, but to have their voices heard at a time when people were most receptive to hearing new ideas. This period of hope, beginning in the protest squares in Egypt in January and February 2011, continued while the vacuum left by the power of the state remained. However, as it was highlighted in chapter three, while it can be argued that the military transitional government between February 2011 to May 2012, and the Morsi presidency between July 2012 to July 2013, never established themselves as states in control of both political and social landscapes such as that of Mubarak’s state, it is difficult to argue the same for the emergence of Sisi and his state since July 2013. Rather, the removal of Morsi by Sisi in July 2013 appears to be a watershed moment where trust and loyalty by the majority of Egyptians to one man appears to take shape. As a result of this trust and loyalty, this could have possibly signalled the closing of the window of opportunity that women’s rights advocates and feminists had

57 In what was dubbed ‘the day of rage’ by protestors, protestors clashed with police across Egypt on 28 January 2011. The excess force used by the police on protestors, including the administering of tear gas and water canon on protestors, saw the police become a symbol of enmity by protestors and a representation of Hosni Mubarak’s corruption and brutality. The day of rage was reported in several international news outlets, including The BBC’s “Egypt protests escalate in Cairo, Suez and other cities” as well as the New York Times’ “Mubarak orders crackdown, with revolt sweeping Egypt”.

58 In July 2013, shortly after Sisi removed Morsi from office, he called for mass protests to support him in the fight against terrorism, where ‘terrorism’ was now being used as a synonym for the ousted Muslim Brotherhood (The Guardian: “Egyptian general calls for millions to protest against terrorism”). This call to protest was received well, and Sisi’s support across the country was hypervisible in the months after his removal of Morsi, which the author experienced and witnessed firsthand.
enjoyed up until that point and since February 2011. However, as was shown in Chapter Three through the process of writing the 2014 Egyptian constitution and understanding and applying the theory of patriarchal bargaining, they have nevertheless managed to stay relevant and affect state policy despite this return of state power. As was shown in Chapter Three, patriarchal bargaining is concerned with finding the balance between accepting levels of patriarchy in return for protecting or enhancing feminist interests. What this all means is that despite the apparent reemergence of state control led by Sisi, which in turn has also manifested itself in a return to what may be called ‘state feminism’ as discussed in Chapter Three, the strength of the women’s movement that expanded in 2011 after Mubarak’s resignation, coupled with their practical strategy for dealing with this state control that may be seen through patriarchal bargaining, means that this latest version of state feminism may not wholly monopolise feminist advocacy as it did under Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, unlike previous decades, the women’s movement has and can make use of technology and the internet, where communication and the spreading of ideas is much easier and attainable. This has enabled, and will continue to enable, women’s rights groups and feminists to make their presence felt to other Egyptians and continue their advocacy away from the shadow of the state, whereas in previous years, government owned television channels and newspapers may have been the only communication Egyptian citizens would have received, leaving non-state aligned activists with limited scope to spread their message. As a result, technology has provided an invaluable platform for the women’s movement to stay active, to recruit new members, and raise awareness of their important issues and objectives. This is perhaps most evident in the case of combating sexual harassment, where anti-sexual harassment groups and campaigns
such as HarassMap, *Dudd Taharrush* (Against Harassment), Tahrir Bodyguard, and others, have almost always started online, and in turn these campaigns have made their way onto television and become a public debate that even Sisi, as was shown in chapter three, engaged in. Consequently, while a complete return to a state ownership of feminist policies cannot be ruled out in the future, it certainly appears to be a much more difficult feat for any Egyptian state leader or government to achieve as the women’s movement has grown to a considerable size since 2011 and retains numerous opportunities to continue to grow and communicate their ideas which, as we have already seen with the 2014 Egyptian Constitution, has the ability to affect state policies. While it may be argued that there has been a return in 2014 to state-sponsored feminist tendencies, that is not to say that this has come at the expense of silencing non-state aligned feminist activists or that their advocacy is not influencing these state-sponsored policies.
5.3 Reflections on the Future of Feminist Activism in Egypt

Whereas the Introduction, Chapter One, Chapter Two, and Chapter Three were focused on what may be termed Egypt’s political past and present, and understanding and analysing Egypt’s January 2011 Revolution through a gendered lens, Chapter Four was concerned with humanising the objectives and struggles of women’s rights advocates and feminists within Egypt’s political turbulence and upheaval. Arguably the most important observation to come out of Chapter Four was to understand that political or personal struggles were not mutually exclusive, but rather interconnected and part of the same struggle. For example, the parallel between women as Egyptian citizens challenging the authority of the state leader and their challenging of their father’s authority. It is on this human, and personal aspect, that this thesis shall conclude because it highlights the burning questions and considerations that are currently being focused on in Egypt as the dust settles on what has been an unprecedented four and half years at the time of writing: what now?

Between January 2011 and June 2014, Egypt appeared to move seamlessly from one significant, and often tragic, event to another. These included, but are not
limited to, Mubarak’s resignation, the violent period of governance by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the constant turbulence of Mohamed Morsi’s incumbency of the presidency, the bloodshed at Raba’ after his removal from office, and finally Sisi’s presidential victory in June 2014. During those tumultuous three and a half years, activism, including feminist activism, could be seen as a non-stop endeavor. Naturally, in a country where so many events and incidents were unfolding almost daily, if one considered oneself politically engaged, there was almost always something requiring one’s attention. However, at the time of writing in August 2015, while Egypt is by no means stable, it does appear on the surface at least to be less in transition than in the previous four years. Most notably, Sisi’s position as president appears solidified, the 2014 Egyptian Constitution has been written and implemented into law, there are very few anti-government protests outside the Muslim Brotherhood who have been largely silenced since July 2013 through mass arrests and killings, and Egypt and Sisi are once again receiving the good favour of international leaders. However, while this may appear to present the closing of one chapter in Egypt’s history, can such a line be drawn on the lives of people, namely activists, who have been at the centre of this period in Egypt’s history? In other words, what role do they play now that Egypt appears to have moved on?

For example, despite Mohamed Morsi being handed a death sentence in June 2015, the following day, British Prime Minister David Cameron invited Sisi to a meeting in London (The Telegraph: “David Cameron invites Egypt’s Sisi to London after Morsi death sentence”), with no ramifications or warnings over Morsi’s sentence. Rather, the meeting appeared to represent ‘business as usual’ that continued Britain and Egypt’s international relations with no mention over Morsi’s removal from office in July 2013 where countless deaths occurred in the aftermath that was highlighted in Chapter Three, or Morsi’s subsequent death sentence. In November 2015, Sisi again met David Cameron in London where they appeared working together on investigating a plane crash in Egypt that led to many British citizens holidaying in Egypt unable to return home. Moreover, as was noted earlier in this chapter, full US military aid has been restored to Egypt as of March 2015. In short, while the situation in Egypt remains largely unchanged where political activists find themselves under the continuous pressure and threat of arrest by the Sisi-led government, Egypt’s international relationships continue unaffected.
One pattern that has been identified is that feminist activists have highlighted the importance of documenting their experiences over the past four and a half years. For example, The Women and Memory Forum, a women’s rights organisation that featured heavily in this thesis, have a number of projects on going at the moment that centre on members of the group documenting not just events that took place in Egypt over the past four and a half years, but their experiences and feelings towards them. This has provided a unique opportunity for The Women and Memory Forum which was established in 1993 with the purpose of documenting oral histories of Egyptian women from time gone by, such as the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, in order to provide an alternative history that seeks to capture the voices and memories of women who may have otherwise been sidelined in favour of the voices of men. As a result, the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution and all that followed it has provided the organisation the opportunity to carry on with its work, doing so with a historic period that is taking place in the present and of which they themselves were a part of. For example, several of the members who were part of The Women and Memory Forum constitutional committee in both 2012 and 2013 have begun to document their own experiences with the 2013 and 2014 constitutional drafting processes. Other initiatives are also taking place that mirror the importance of documenting experiences. The Ikhtyar (Choice) project is one such example. Founded by experienced women’s rights advocates, Ikhtyar began in January 2014 and can be described as a small school that invited young men and women interested in the subject of gender to discuss their feelings as Egyptian men and women and what they believe to be root causes and issues in Egypt today concerning gender. Each week, an academic on gender would be invited to give a talk on a topic within gender studies with the aim of expanding the horizons of the young men and women. Importantly, these talks were given in Arabic and not
English, with the aim of developing a vocabulary in Arabic that is able to address nuances within gender studies that are arguably currently not available and have been limited to using the existing word in English within an Arabic sentence. In April 2014, Ikhtyar published its first periodical which was a collection of essays written by members and students of the school, and it serves as an excellent example of the type of work gender rights activists can continue to do outside of street protesting or political lobbying. In other words, while Egypt may now be calming down in comparison to the previous years, the work of the gender rights activist seeking to enhance the lives of men and women does not cease.60

The continued question that remains elusive concerning the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution is: was it a success or failure? Both possible answers have their supporters and advocates, with this question almost always seemingly centred on high politics, on who is the president, on their policies, on the structure and decisions of the judiciary, and the actions of the police. What is just as difficult to gauge is the effect of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution on Egyptians themselves. Importantly, such a focal point makes it impossible to decide something along the boundaries of ‘success’ and ‘failure’. What can be ascertained, however, and what this thesis has attempted to do, is highlight the fact that a change has occurred with regards to attitudes towards gender roles and expectations, and what is meant by being masculine and feminine. That is not to say a complete wholesale change nor a change that has occurred across the entire populace, but enough of a change to register as significant. The women’s movement is perhaps at its largest and strongest, and this

60 In the email that Ikhtyar sent announcing its first periodical, they released the following statement that supports this notion of continuing gender rights activism in the face of political adversity: “It is our belief that we cannot be feminists and accept discrimination based on class, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation; nor can we be feminists accepting repressive or totalitarian regimes and their crimes stemming or justifying and self-celebrating patriarchal social systems.”
was made possible by the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution that brought with it a window of opportunity to promote both political and social change, coupled with the era of technology and the internet that has facilitated the women’s movement’s growth. Most importantly, alternative views towards gender are now available which more and more young Egyptians have access to and are exploring. While it may be natural, over time, that many of these young men and women conform to previous social norms and expectations towards gender due to pre-existing social and familial pressures, it is perhaps enough that by the same token, many now will also resist, paving the way for future generations of Egyptians to have more options and less restrictions concerning what is expected of them because of their gender assignment, and this opportunity, and future, was born out of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. In turn, while it is tempting for the sake of focus to look at the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution in isolation or in a vacuum, this thesis has shown that this period in Egypt’s history, and the reaction and development of the women’s movement within this period, can be seen as a continuation, or evolution, of Egypt’s feminist past. By taking a historical approach and understanding the struggles of women’s rights activists in Egypt in the 20th century in the context of the 1919 and 1952 Egyptian Revolutions, light is shed on why women’s rights activists in Egypt today face the struggles they have faced, and achieved what they have achieved. This building of the future by understanding the past parallels much in the way this thesis was researched and written, becoming only possible because of the previous scholarship by academics on Egypt’s intrinsic dynamic between politics, family, and gender, helping us understand this continued dynamic through the prism of the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, and all that has followed since.
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Appendix

List and mission statement of women’s rights and feminist organisations the author notes in the thesis and spent the most time with during the fieldwork research in Cairo.

Feminist and Women’s Rights Organisations:

_Basma (Imprint Movement):_

“Imprint Movement is a voluntary social movement that strives for radically changing all that distorts the society of ignorance and backwardness and to support and help develop all that serve society in every field possible. Our Vision: Creating a safe space for everyone without discrimination or exclusion of anyone Our Mission: we work on changing the misconception and the customs that discriminates against people based on their gender, culture, or race through spreading the culture of diversity and rejecting all forms of violence.” Taken from https://www.facebook.com/Imprint.Movement.eg/info?tab=page_info

_BuSSy Project:_

“Many years ago, two AUC students began directing a performance of monologues based on stories of women and their memories and experiences of womanhood. The monologues exposed real women’s stories and provided a space for free expression on controversial issues. The AUC performance provoked a variety of
positive and negative reactions including excitement, shock, and anger. In an article written about the performance one cast member noted that ‘there is plenty that is relevant and interesting for Egyptians, but I would love to see it adapted into something more culturally relevant.’ We wanted a performance that felt close to home, something that was undeniably relevant to the greater community.

We also wanted to continue letting people write for themselves instead of being written about. And so, an idea turned into a flyer. “If you have a story about yourself or a woman you know, please pick up a submission form and share it.” And here we are, five years and five hundred stories later, sharing a selection with you every year in the BuSSy Project. Why theatre? Because we felt that this would be the best way to reach a large body of people while providing the story tellers – women and men – with a direct opportunity to publicly reclaim the truth as they experienced it.” Taken from https://bussyblog.wordpress.com/about/

_Dudd Taharrush (Against Harassment):_

“It started in 2012. I was concerned with harassment but it wasn’t a big deal to me. It was like ‘yeah it’s a problem’ but I didn’t think it was that big. But then I went to an open mic night arranged by HarassMap and one girl took the stage with her back to the audience and she started talking about how she was raped by her uncle. And even when she left the stage she didn’t face the audience but kept her back to everyone. This one woman’s talk had a big effect on the way I looked at harassment and sexual violence. At the time I was working with a band but I contacted HarassMap and I basically told them I need to help. I started reading and reading and
reading and then Eid came and there were mass amounts of sexual harassment which I heard about. I contacted a friend and asked him to create a logo and I started the Facebook page (for Dudd Taharrush). I had no idea what I was doing but I contacted other people involved in sexual harassment and I started planning for the next Eid in downtown Cairo. And it was very successful because we promised to secure the downtown squares which are the main scenes for sexual harassment, especially during Eid, so we said ‘these places will be secure 100%.’” Interview with Ayman Nagy, founder of Dudd Taharrush, conducted by the author, 1 October 2013.

**HarassMap:**

“We are working to engage all of Egyptian society to create an environment that does not tolerate sexual harassment. All our activities are geared towards encouraging bystanders – normal people like you and me everywhere around Egypt – to speak up against harassers and have a zero-tolerance attitude towards sexual harassment. We believe that sexual harassment will stop only when harassers stop harassing. This will only happen when we all stop ignoring harassment, making excuses for harassers, and tolerating their behaviour. Not so long ago standing up to sexual harassment and assault was the norm in Egyptian society and we Egyptians were proud of the safety and dignity of our neighborhoods. We all remember hearing stories of bystanders standing up to harassers, chasing them and shaving their heads as a mark of shame. By re-establishing social consequences for harassers – and making role models of people who stand up to them – we believe that harassers can be deterred from harassing again.
Our work is based on the idea that an integrated approach that combines online and mobile technology and mass media and communications campaigns can help support on-the-ground community mobilization to activate the public to be watchful against sexual harassment and to take action by speaking up against it. We crowdsourc SMS and online reports of sexual harassment and assault and map them on our ‘HarassMap.’ We use these reports to show people the scale of the problem and to dispel myths about, and excuses for, sexual harassment – like for example that ‘how women dress’ or ‘sexual frustration’ are reasons and excuses for sexual harassment and/or assault.” Taken from http://harassmap.org/en/what-we-do/

The Women and Memory Forum (WMF):

“Founded in 1995, the Women and Memory Forum (WMF) is composed of a group of women academics, researchers and activists concerned about the negative representations and perceptions of Arab women in the cultural sphere. Dominant cultural views and images of Arab women constitute a major stumbling block in the course of women’s development and attainment of their rights. We believe that one of the main obstacles facing Arab women now is the scarcity of alternative cultural information and knowledge about the role of women in history and in contemporary society. The group decided to attain a formal status in order to advocate and promote the integration of gender as a category of analysis in the study and interpretation of Arab history and the social sciences in general. The long-term objective of WMF’s specialised research is to produce and make available alternative cultural information about Arab women that can be used for raising awareness and empowering women.”

Taken from http://www.wmf.org.eg/en/about-us/
Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUM):

“Women Living Under Muslim Laws is an international solidarity network that provides information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam. For more than two decades WLUM has linked individual women and organisations. It now extends to more than 70 countries ranging from South Africa to Uzbekistan, Senegal to Indonesia and Brazil to France. It links:

- women living in countries or states where Islam is the state religion, secular states with Muslim majorities as well as those from Muslim communities governed by minority religious laws;
- women in secular states where political groups are demanding religious laws;
- women in migrant Muslim communities in Europe, the Americas, and around the world;
- non-Muslim women who may have Muslim laws applied to them directly or through their children;
- women born into Muslim communities/families who are automatically categorized as Muslim but may not define themselves as such, either because they are not believers or because they choose not to identify themselves in religious terms, preferring to prioritise other aspects of their identity such as political ideology, profession, sexual orientation or others.

Our name challenges the myth of one, homogeneous ‘Muslim world’. This deliberately created myth fails to reflect that: a) laws said to be Muslim vary from one context to another and, b) the laws that determine our lives are from diverse sources: religious, customary, colonial and secular. We are governed simultaneously by many
different laws: laws recognised by the state (codified and uncodified) and informal laws such as customary practices which vary according to the cultural, social and political context.” Taken from http://www.wluml.org/node/5408

**Nazra for Feminist Studies:**

“Nazra for Feminist Studies is a group that aims to build an Egyptian feminist movement, believing that feminism and gender are political and social issues affecting freedom and development in all societies. Nazra aims to mainstream these values in both public and private spheres. Nazra’s team, which includes both women and men, believes that integrating gender and feminism will be achieved through the efforts of believers in the validity of these values and in the necessity of their implementation in both spheres. Nazra believes that the youth, in their diversity, struggle to integrate their issues, which include gender-related issues, in their societies. And so Nazra generally works to provide all actors who strive to achieve gender related causes with all forms of support needed; and focuses, specifically, on supporting youth groups who strive to achieve those causes.

In achieving these aims, Nazra employs different programs, initiatives and activities such as:

1. Working on production of knowledge based on research, documentation, monitoring and analysis of methodologies.
2. Producing and developing Arabic terminologies, to form a glossary of the issues we work on.
4. Supporting women in the political arena.

5. Strategic litigation for gender legal cases locally, regionally, and internationally.

6. Advocacy to integrate gender issues in the political, legal, social and cultural context.

7. Networking with movements and stakeholders to build a strong feminist movement.

Fieldwork Interview Questions

Questions on the eighteen day protests in January and February 2011:

1. Were you aware of the planned protests on 25 January 2011?
2. What were your political views prior to the 2011 Revolution?
3. How did you participate in the January 2011 Revolution? How often did you go to protests or other forms of participation (e.g. online activism)?
4. Did you participate in an affiliated or non-affiliated capacity? Friends, university or work colleagues?
5. As a woman, were there any extra considerations or precautions you took before you went to street protests? If so, where did these considerations stem from?
6. Were you ever told by anyone not to go to protests because of your gender?
7. Once at a street protest, were there any differentiations in the way men and women protested?
8. Were there any specific “gender related” chants or activities at protests?
9. Do you feel customary gender expectations/rules in Egypt were suspended during the Revolution?
10. Do you feel more “political” after the Revolution? If so, how has this manifested itself?
Questions on gender definitions and gender roles in Egypt:

1. How would you define “feminism”?
2. Do you believe it has a different definition in Egypt or is it a universal concept and definition?
3. Do you consider yourself a feminist?
4. Are there any consequences or stigmas attached to being labelled a feminist in Egypt?
5. Do you consider feminism as more a part of identity or an activity?
6. Do you look back to previous well-known feminists in Egypt and try to replicate their actions or philosophy, or do you see distinct differences between Egypt’s past and present feminist movement?
7. Do you think it is important for feminists in Egypt today to know about past feminists and what their demands and activities were?
8. As a woman, do you feel restricted to certain social or familial roles?
9. Have you or do you try to combat certain social expectations of women? If so, how?
10. Has age played a key role in how women see themselves after the 2011 Revolution? Have you noticed any distinct generational differences in relation to feminism or advocating the progression of women’s rights and equality?
Questions on women’s rights after the 2011 Revolution:

1. In your opinion, what have been some of the major success stories for women’s rights since the 2011?
2. What has not changed for women after the 2011 Revolution?
3. Overall, do you consider the almost three years that have passed since the 2011 Revolution a success thus far, a disappointment, or exactly the same, with regards to women’s rights and gender equality?
4. Do you feel that the progression of women’s rights is a ‘movement’ that should be driven alone, or alongside a political movement?
5. How would you define and describe Mohamed Morsi’s one year in office in relation to women’s rights?
6. How did his rhetoric and policies on women’s rights compare to that of Hosni Mubarak’s presidency?
7. What do you consider to be the most important aspects of women’s rights that need to be addressed after the 2011 Revolution? And how would you like to see them addressed?
8. Do you think there has been a resurgence in Egypt’s women’s movement since the 2011 Revolution? If yes, how and why?
9. Sexual harassment has been extensively covered in domestic and international media over the past three years. In your opinion, why is sexual harassment rife in Egypt?
10. In your opinion, has awareness of women’s rights been raised since the 2011 Revolution? For example, have you noticed any change in attitude by Egyptian men towards women?