

Islamist Women and Political Rights

*A Case Study of Islamist Women's Increasing Political Participation
in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.*

Ragna Lillevik



Masteroppgave i statsvitenskap
Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultetet
Institutt for statsvitenskap

UNIVERSITETET I
OSLO

Islamist Women and Political Rights

*A Case Study of Islamist Women's Increasing Political Participation
in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.*

Ragna Lillevik 2012

© Ragna Lillevik

2012

Islamist Women and Political Rights: A Case Study of Islamist Women's Increased Political Participation in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.

Ragna Lillevik

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

Islamist women have become increasingly visible in politics in Egypt over the last decade. What can explain their increased political participation? This thesis examines women's participation in a case study of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. I do so by the use of qualitative interviews with Islamist women in Cairo as well as an extensive review of previous research. In doing so, the relationship between Islamism and the development of women's political rights is explored. The empirical evidence is considered in a democratization perspective and assessed by the use of three different theoretical approaches to democratization. This assessment suggests that the integrating, bottom-up means by which the Muslim Brotherhood has contested political power in Egypt has been the main cause of women's increased political participation in the movement.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my informants in Cairo, who provided the most invaluable help for my thesis. I am very grateful for their willingness to contribute their knowledge and opinions, and for their patience with my many questions.

My kind interpreters also deserve a big thank-you; Abdelrahman Ayyash, Amr Tawfeek and Laith Rafid, without your assistance my fieldwork would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank the Freedom of Expression Foundation, Oslo (Fritt Ord) for granting me a scholarship to conduct my fieldwork in Egypt.

Finally, professor Olle Törnquist at the University of Oslo deserves credit as an inspiring mentor for this thesis. Thank you for your help and encouragement.

Oslo, May 2012

Ragna Lillevik

Table of content

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of content.....	v
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research question: Stating the puzzle.....	1
1.2 Why is this worth investigating?.....	2
1.3 Promoting women's rights?.....	4
2 The Dependent Variable.....	7
2.1 Participation and representation.....	7
2.2 Participation in a democratization perspective.....	8
2.3 Participation in a gender perspective.....	11
2.4 Descriptive vs. substantial representation.....	12
2.5 What is Islamism?.....	13
2.6 Summary.....	16
3 Research Design.....	17
3.1 A case study approach.....	17
3.2 Case selection.....	17
3.3 Cases in the case?.....	19
4 Theory.....	21
4.1 The democratization debate.....	22
4.1.1 Sequencing theory.....	22
4.1.2 Transition or Agency theory.....	26
4.1.3 Gradualism theory.....	28
4.2 Assessment framework.....	30
4.2.1 Intrinsic democratic institutions.....	31
4.2.2 Actors, capacity and strategies.....	35
5 Research Methods.....	40
5.1 Qualitative interviewing and use of secondary sources.....	40

5.2	Data collection.....	42
5.3	Internal and external validity.....	45
5.4	Reliability.....	45
6	Previous Research.....	47
6.1	What promotes women's rights in Egypt?.....	47
6.1.1	Secular feminism in Egypt.....	48
6.1.2	Islamic Feminism.....	50
6.1.3	Conventional Islamic activism.....	51
6.1.4	A failed elite project?.....	53
6.2	Why do women engage in Islamic activism?.....	55
6.2.1	Understanding the rise of Islamism.....	55
6.2.2	Women's Islamic activism.....	58
6.3	Summary.....	62
7	The Main Case: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.....	64
7.1	The Brotherhood and the state.....	64
7.2	The Brotherhood and the women.....	70
7.3	Findings from the field study.....	73
7.3.1	Recruitment.....	74
7.3.2	Women's Activism.....	78
7.3.3	Changes in political repression.....	82
7.3.4	Ideology and gender roles.....	87
7.3.5	Summarizing the findings.....	89
8	Analysis.....	91
8.1	First dimension: Strength of democratic institutions.....	91
8.1.1	Full universal human rights to ensure that all can “function as politically equal human beings.”.....	91
8.1.2	“Democratic political representation in central and local government through parties and elections.”.....	93
8.1.3	Supplementary democratic channels for interest- and issue-based democracy.....	96
8.1.4	Democratic control of instruments of coercion.....	97

8.1.5	Guaranteeing citizens' democratic self-organizing on the basis of their right to free organization, and as training grounds for democracy.....	99
8.1.6	Summary.....	100
8.2	Second dimension: Democratic adherence of major actors.....	100
8.2.1	Summary.....	106
8.3	Third dimension: Political capacity of the actors.....	106
8.3.1	Summary.....	109
8.4	Fourth dimension: The democratization process.....	109
8.4.1	Summary.....	113
8.5	Comparing theoretical perspectives.....	114
9	Conclusion.....	120
	Literature List.....	123

1 Introduction

1.1 Research question: Stating the puzzle

There is an apparent paradox that embodies itself in Islamist women who participate in politics in Egypt. They support and represent movements which are often claimed to oppress women with their Islamic ideology. Even under threat of violent repression by the formerly authoritarian regimes, at election times they throw in their weight in numbers that secular parties can only dream of. And the movements, which are so often called a threat to women's rights, have increasingly acknowledged women as political actors by fielding them as candidates for national elections. Meanwhile decision-making remains a male prerogative within the selfsame movements that women represent politically. How do we understand this? *What can explain women's increasing political participation in Islamist movements in Egypt?* That is the research question I aim to investigate in this thesis.

Islamist women's increased political participation is an observable pattern when we look at how Islamist women have increasingly been involved in election campaigns and political demonstrations in Egypt and other Arab countries over the last decade, and how some have even ran as candidates representing Islamist movements in elections (see Abdellatif and Ottaway 2007). Yet Islamist women's political participation is a phenomenon that has largely gone overlooked. I believe this is because of persistent stereotypes about Muslim women in general and Islamism as a movement in particular. At worst, their participation has been recognized but not acknowledged. By this I mean that women's activism has been observed but an acknowledgement of their agency denied them, as their activism has been explained in terms of structures and the strategies of the Islamist movements or the regimes they oppose, which are all invariably led by men. Islamist women's political activism has been seen as serving an essentially male project, and therefore they have been considered co-opted or deceived, because of the apparent mismatch between their activism and what others deem to be in their best interests. There is also a tendency to think that structural oppression (be it political, economic, religious or cultural) limits

not only women's choices but also their agency. I believe that Islamist women are rational actors who make informed choices about how they wish to live their lives and participate in society, and I wish to challenge these perceptions as I examine why they increasingly participate in politics.

1.2 Why is this worth investigating?

This thesis is essentially about Islamism and women's rights in Egypt, a country which is undergoing dramatic political changes. I see Islamist women's realization of their right to political participation as a case within a larger debate on how democracy and democratic rights can or should be developed in Egypt, and what role Islamism plays in this. It is a timely issue to address considering the circumstances of the Arab Spring. As the language of democratization is dominating the political discourse in Egypt today, my hope is that this thesis will be conducive towards an ongoing debate about Islamism and the role of women in the context of democratization.

What is democratization? It can be defined as a process, a demand, a set of changes, an utopia, and the list goes on (Grugel 2002: 4). As I understand it in this paper, the people in Egypt demanded democracy with the January 25 revolution in 2011. After the fall of Mubarak, ensuring the people's right to political participation and self-determination is the primary goal of the continuing popular revolution. This is the “freedom” of “freedom, justice and bread” which protesters started chanting for on January 25 2011 when the so-called revolution started. The successful overthrow of Mubarak sparked a process of political change that can thus be described as an attempt at democratization, which I define as a process of changing a political system to better meet the aim of democracy. What is this aim of democracy? According to Beetham, most people today agree that it is “popular control of public affairs based on political equality” (quoted in Törnquist 2004: 201). Importantly to this thesis, this means that there should be political equality also between the genders.

While women had been on the front lines of the January 25 revolution in Egypt, their presence was not guaranteed in political decision-making afterward, where old and new actors are still competing for power. The parliamentary elections held at the

turn of the year in 2011/2012 resulted in an exceptionally low number of women being elected into parliament. Although the elections were largely deemed free and fair, obviously the women of Egypt do not yet have the possibility or capacity to be represented through this important democratic institution on the same basis as men. It may feel problematic to single out women's rights as an area of focus in a process of political transformation where the rights of the whole population are at stake. Indeed, women in Egypt have been told explicitly to put the fate of their nation first and voice their gender-specific concerns later. As one male informant phrased it to me during my fieldwork in Cairo, what is the point of being empowered if the military is still running the country? However, the same informant had the insight to see what many others are missing; that this argument goes both ways. How can we fight authoritarian rule, whether civilian or military, without also promoting the political rights of all citizens based on the principle of equality?

I have chosen to focus on the Islamist women for two reasons; the first is the dominant position the Islamists enjoy in Egyptian politics after the 2011 uprising, and the second is the particularly contentious relationship Islamists are claimed to have with women's rights. In a way this makes Islamist women's political participation the "least likely case" of women's rights promoters in the sense that if Islamists are able to promote women's political participation, other groups should be able to do the same.

Free and fair elections that result in an almost all-male parliament is a warning sign of insubstantial democratization because women are not represented. It may well be expected and understandable due to the particular historical, cultural and social context; all the same, it is a warning that needs to be taken seriously if one indeed aims at achieving true democracy. Women's rights is an issue over which the West and the East often lock horns and get stuck in debates over means – usually prescribed by the West as universally valid and rejected by the East as conflicting with local traditions and culture. While we may disagree on the means by which this aim should be achieved – and the West in particular could well assume a less normative stance on these means – we should be able to assess them fairly by examining how they contribute towards the aim of democracy.

By looking at Islamist women's political participation in this paper I also

investigate means towards fulfilling women's right to political participation, which is crucial to ensure the political equality which democracy should be based on. My approach is not to compare how Islamist movements may promote women's political participation compared to an ideal of “how it should be done”, but rather measuring to which degree the means they apply promote the aim of democracy; popular control of public affairs based on political equality – also between the genders. To focus on the promotion of this right is different from simply assessing whether women's rights in Egypt are fulfilled. This is less interesting as the democratization process is in such early stages. It is more interesting to examine whether these measures actually bring us closer to a democracy based on political equality between the genders in Egypt.

1.3 Promoting women's rights?

The phenomenon of Islamist women's growing political activism in Egypt raises new debates within Islamist movements and can potentially have a strong influence on how women's rights are understood and promoted in the Muslim world. It is a phenomenon which has not received due recognition, also because it contradicts the Western (and indeed secular Arab) idea of who the true supporters of women's rights are.

Women have long been important in Islamist organizations because they provide a huge resource for mobilization purposes. Organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt put a lot of effort into building large and strong organizations that have a very wide outreach potential in the population, including a network of charitable organizations providing services such as education, health care as well as financial support to those in need. Their female members have been crucial contributors to these projects. Understanding this helps us understand how women have become important contributors in the political sphere as well. These Islamist organizations have oriented themselves towards participation in political elections where women as well as men are allowed to vote. Winning the women's votes requires women's activism, and some organizations have even gone as far as running female candidates to win support from this half of the population. This sheds light on how women's political activism is now translating into a greater internal pressure to include women in decision-making within the Islamist movements. As

women become aware of and receive recognition for their own importance in these organizations, they have increasingly demanded a larger role and representation at higher levels of the organizations (Abdellatif and Ottaway 2007). In addition, there is the external (and indeed international) pressure to include women as part of the Islamist movements having to prove their commitment to democracy and political freedoms for everyone.

At the same time, Islamist movements continue to reject what they call “Western” gender equality and maintain that while men and women are equal citizens, the two sexes are complimentary. Thus they are given roles accordingly, in society as well as in politics. Often this means that women’s roles and responsibilities as mothers and caretakers are stressed. While Islamist movements in Egypt have demonstrated great flexibility and will to adopt “modernizing” or “Western” ideas such as democracy and liberal economics, some still claim that gender seems to remain the impossible compromise. By those who see Islamism as a threat to women's progress in the Muslim world, “women's engagement in Islamic movements is perceived as the product of non-liberal religious practices and beliefs and therefore further contributes to the detriment of women in the Islamic world” (Hafez 2011: 58). At the same time, looking at Egypt the Islamist movements appear to be the most successful in mobilizing women. It seems a paradox that women could be drawn in great numbers to a movement which contributes to their detriment, as it is claimed. This thesis examines how this phenomenon could best be explained, while also engaging women's own voices and considering their capacity to influence and reshape their roles in Egypt and in Islamism. Islamist women are not only targets or billboards of Islamist ideologies, but through their activism they also reconstitute them. The results may include new roles for women that draw on modern and secular ideas as well as tradition and religion.

Women's political activism in Islamist movements has received rather shallow attention; usually a study of Islamist mobilization will include a paragraph about women's activism contributing to vote mobilization and the Islamist organizations' networks of social services. As part of understanding how Islamist organizations mobilize, recognizing and studying Islamist women's activism is important. But there

is another reason to study women's activism in Islamist movements, which Omayma Abdellatif and Marina Ottaway have pointed out in their preliminary study of women in Islamist movements, and that is the importance of Islamist women's activism for the realization of women's rights (2007: 3):

«If it spawns a full-fledged Islamist movement for women's rights – and there are indicators that it may – such a movement has the potential for reaching a large number of women. Secular women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) led by educated women have only limited outreach outside the urban upper class they come from. Islamist movements, in contrast, have proven themselves adept at building a broad following across social classes. If women activists become more influential, Islamist movements could become important instruments – possibly the most important instruments – for promoting the rights of Arab women» (Ibid).

Indeed this vision remains far from manifest and can be thwarted by a number of factors yet. However, it highlights the potential that Islamist women's activism and political participation has for promoting the rights of women in Egypt and other Muslim-majority countries. This potential should be explored considering the current transformations which are ongoing in Egypt after the January 25 revolution of 2011.

2 The Dependent Variable

In this chapter I will attempt to define the dependent variable of this analysis. My research question, *“What can explain women’s increasing political participation in Islamist movements in Egypt?”* logically produces the dependent variable of “Islamist women's political participation”. First I will define what I mean by “political participation”, and look critically at how participation should be understood in a gendered perspective. Then I will decide on a definition of “Islamist” and “Islamism”. Finally I will discuss how I will use my definition of the dependent variable in my analysis.

2.1 Participation and representation

Participation and representation in democratic systems are two concepts that need to be defined in order to investigate Islamist women's increased political participation. I will first decide on a definition of political participation that I can use to measure the participation of Islamist women against. Then I will discuss the relationship between participation and representation, and present some arguments as to why women's participation and representation are important issues to investigate.

In a democracy, every adult individual has the right to political participation. In this paper, I will use the following definition of the right to political participation presented by Neera Chandhoke: “the right to participate in institutions that make public decisions or in deliberations on and around these decisions” (2009: 27-28). Chandhoke argues that every individual’s equal right to political participation is an embodiment of what gives democracy its intrinsic value, namely the presumption that “human beings possess equal moral status in a given polity” (Ibid). The most obvious, but not the only manifestation of this equal moral status and right to political participation is the principle of universal franchise, the universal right to vote for all adult citizens.

The right of political participation is a root right in a democracy, argues Chandhoke, because it “paves the way for the struggle for and the grant of other rights” in four

ways:

- by validating the equal moral status of each person;
- by contributing to the making of informed public opinion and thus to the constitution of democratically aware citizens;
- by serving to limit the power of the state and to hold it accountable;
- by empowering citizens to demand that the state realise their right to social and economic goods (Chandhoke 2009: 28).

However, Chandhoke continues, in modern democratic states it is not possible to have a direct political relationship between the citizen and the state only. Our societies are too large and complex for direct democracy and citizens' lives are full of other demands which restrict their political involvement. The demands and interests raised in a modern democratic state are also too varied and conflicting for direct democracy to be practical. Instead there needs to be an intermediating agent who can process these demands and interests and re-represent them in a manner and a forum where public policy can be decided. Chandhoke also argues that modern legislation and administration is by nature so specialized and inscrutable that ordinary citizens cannot participate in lawmaking (Ibid.). It follows from this that for people's right to political participation to be realized one must include a third agent in the political relationship between citizen and state, namely the representative.

2.2 Participation in a democratization perspective

Why do I bother to study the development of women's political rights specifically in a democratization process, in other words democratization in a gendered perspective? Am I as a Western feminist acting more keen on the women of Arab societies than the Arabs themselves are (an accusation towards Western feminists in general which one of my female informants proposed to me during my fieldwork in Cairo)? Or is it because we share some fundamental concerns about the state of political participation in large parts of the world, not exclusive to the Arab region at all, but critically visible in the Arab states nonetheless?

In essence, substantial democratization requires that gender inequalities are addressed. "Empowering women" or, more specifically, fulfilling women's political rights is not about women as a group asking for gender-defined rights, but a gender-defined group demanding the realization of equal rights. That the achievement of these rights requires special attention is a consequence of the complex political, socioeconomic and cultural obstacles that women are especially, but not exclusively oppressed by. It is not due to any specificity in the nature of the rights they aspire to achieve; those are exactly the same as the aspirations of men. Learning from the Arab Spring, we may ask ourselves; Which group other than the Arab women could not achieve their political rights under authoritarian leaders? The Arab men. Thus, in light of the Arab spring, we may argue that political rights must be claimed by all, for all, in order for substantial democratic rights to be achieved.

We need a perspective on developing political participation that differentiates between the aims, means and benefits of realizing this right. Today most scholars and advocates of democracy agree with Valentine M. Moghadam, self-declared feminist and leading social scientist on the Middle East, that women's political rights need to be realized because "a polity is not fully democratic when there is not adequate representation of women" (Moghadam 2010: 280). Achieving a fully democratic polity, in other words realizing the aim of democracy, is the aim of realizing women and men's political rights. However, far from every promoter of women's political rights limits herself to such a simple statement.

Lines of argumentation regarding women's rights differ according to which perspective is employed on gender and on democracy. Thus our argumentation, which states our motivations for promoting women's political rights, matters - especially to those who are the center of our attention. Conservative feminists use argumentation based on the different experiences of life that women and men have, promoting political equality by emphasizing gender differences. Social movements often stress the difference in women's interests from men's, but not inherent gender differences. Political theorist Ann Phillips, for example, argues that women must be represented by women because women have different interests, experiences, values and expertise than men do, mainly because of their different social positions (Phillips 1995). Neo-liberals

focus on the output of political equality, arguing that society cannot afford to ignore the resources of half their populations. To simply assert the democratic need for women's political participation can be described as a liberal line of argumentation, concerned primarily with the realization of the right itself, not the means or benefits of exercising it.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, developed in 1995 and adopted by the UN in 1996, called on the international community to empower women and realize their human rights. This important document states the following on women in power and decision-making:

“Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government policy-making is feasible. In this respect, women’s equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women’s equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved” (UN 1995: 79).

As exemplified by this declaration, women’s political participation has become a policy goal not just for the sake of gender equality in itself. Women have a right to political participation, but importantly, it is also recognized that their participation is of great value and benefits society in several domains. Equal or increased participation by women in decision-making and policy shaping is considered to have democratic, developmental and even peace-building benefits for society at large. The issue of realizing women’s right to political participation thus draws its importance from both

their equal moral status, which is a fundamental principle of democracy, and from the impact on society it is expected to bring.

Should we fall for the temptation of promoting women's political participation for the sake of economic rewards, peace-building benefits and other trending lines of argumentation? These are windfall fruits to be recognized and celebrated, indeed, but they must not be allowed to overshadow our primary aim of building democracies founded on political equality between all citizens, women and men. We should recognize that this focus on the fruits of democratic principles, rather than the moral value of the principles themselves, are symptomatic of an attitude to democratization which is highly problematic, with its focus on and contentment with (quick) results rather than fundamentally rooted changes.

2.3 Participation in a gender perspective

Heba Raouf Ezzat, lecturer of political theory at Cairo University and the American University in Cairo, argues that the dominant conceptions of political participation which form the basis for indicators on women's political empowerment must be revisited (Ezzat 2007: 184). By doing so she challenges what she considers to be the dominant modernist paradigm on the social and the political (Ibid). This paradigm, in Ezzat's understanding, produces narrow and simplistic answers to why women are not politically active and how they can be activated.

“If democracy is the end goal and women's liberation from injustice and discrimination is the means, then women's “empowerment” should start by developing a notion of power and politics that befits women in its logic and its structure (...)” (Ezzat 2007: 184-185)

She proposes that a new definition of political participation should be developed to

“bridge the conceptual gap between the public and the private, and engage in re-defining the “Political” in terms of power relations rather than power structures, understanding that the engagement of citizens and the management of power relations on a day-to-day basis (are) mainly located outside official political bodies and structures especially when political

participation is obstructed by despotism” (Ezzat 2007: 187).

Historically, women have been excluded from arenas of decision making across cultures and societies, in domains such as government, political parties, civil society, the judiciary, media, academia and others. This does not mean that they have not made important contributions in society, and even in the political domain – usually the last bastion for women to conquer – women have contributed extensively in “extra-parliamentary politics” (Moghadam 2010: 280). It is important, especially in early stages of a democratization process, to also understand how women participate in politics outside of the formal institutions, for example as grass root supporters and vote mobilizers. Through these activities, women increase their knowledge of politics and develop both skills and credibility as political actors. This can be one step towards developing pro-democratic rights for women in a democratization process that extends beyond creating the right formal institutions. But as we can derive from Chandhoke's definition of political participation and its challenges in modern societies, where citizens cannot deal directly with the state, participation without representation is not enough to realize women's political rights.

2.4 Descriptive vs. substantial representation

Without female representation, as I have noted, women’s right to political participation is not realized. But when women are elected as representatives, do they automatically represent women's interests and values?

Hanna Pitkin, in her 1967 study *The Concept of Representation*, distinguishes between representation as “standing for” another and representation as “acting for” another. Being represented by someone alike you, such as women being represented by women, is a type of descriptive representation where the representative is “standing for” women. Quotas that designate a number of seats for women assure this kind of representation. Symbolic representation, as is exercised by kings and queens, is also a kind of descriptive representation. But the fact that the representatives are women does not guarantee that they are “acting for” women by representing their interests and

ideas, what Pitkin calls substantive representation (1967). This type of representation depends less on who the representatives are, but more on what they do. You don't even have to be a woman to represent women's interests, at least in theory. In practice, however, the two kinds of representation are connected. It has been found that a certain percentage of the political representatives need to be women before the elected bodies make decisions based on women's interests and ideas. This suggests that women need to be descriptively represented in order to be substantially represented.

In this thesis, I am interested in how women in Egypt may be both descriptively and substantially represented, and how these two concepts relate to each other. Through my fieldwork I have tried to get an impression of Islamist women's experiences and perspectives on this.

2.5 What is Islamism?

As I have singled out “Islamist women” in my research question, this begs a definition of what I mean by “Islamist” and its mother term, “Islamism”. Islamism is a movement which is called by many names, each with an array of definitions. Here I will present three terms used to describe this movement; Islamism, political Islam and Islamic activism, and how they relate to each other. While the three terms are quite similar as they are defined below, there are some key distinctions that I will elaborate on. In the end I will present the definition of “Islamism” and “Islamist” I have chosen to use for this thesis.

Definitions of Islamism range from the narrow, political definition to wider definitions that encompass other modes of action than the political. An example of the first kind is Olivier Roy’s definition, which states simply that Islamism is “the contemporary movement that conceives of Islam as a political ideology” (Roy 1994: ix). The focus of the Islamic movement is understood to be the building of an Islamic state, and this understanding of Islamism is synonymous with the term political Islam. “Islamic” is to Roy not to be confused with “Muslim”; while the term “Muslim” simply refers to something or someone associated with the religion Islam, the term “Islamic” refers to ideas, actions or agents of Islamism (Ibid). The strength of Roy's definition is

that it defines the movement by its ideology and not by its choice of methods. This allows us to compare Islamism to other kinds of religious fundamentalism and, as Jeff Haynes discusses in the following quote, include in the movement different followers of this ideology who adopt a range of means:

”A defining character of religious fundamentalism is that it is always socially but not necessarily politically conservative. Thus some Islamic fundamentalist (Islamist) groups seek to overthrow the existing socio-economic and political order by various means, including violence or terrorism, incremental reform of existing political regimes, or winning elections through the mobilization of a political party” (Haynes 2008: 135-136).

However, understanding Islamism as a strictly political project can make it hard to understand the movement under the authoritarian political conditions that the Islamists have been dealing with in the Middle East and North Africa region. Sometimes self-declared Islamic fundamentalists do not pursue their goals by political means, either because they don't want to or because they are not able to, such as Salafi¹ Muslims who have long refused to engage in “un-Islamic” politics.

In *The Spectrum of Islamist Movements* (2007) edited by Diaa Rashwan, three analysts at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Egypt attempt to redefine what is meant by “Islamist movements”. In their definition they too focus on the intellectual underpinnings of the movements themselves, specifically their belief that their enterprise is related to Islam (which is a wider definition of their belief than Roy's); “By Islamist movements, we mean those groups that take some aspect of Islam or its interpretation as the frame of reference for their existence or objectives” (Rashwan 2007: 15). They argue that it is the influence of their intellectual foundation, extending to all aspects of Islamist movements including their names, symbols, organizational structures, strategies and operational tactics, which distinguishes them from other social and political movements (Ibid: 15-16). They stress that the various Islamist groups and movements should also be differentiated according to their

¹ Muslim fundamentalists who seek to recreate the age of the first Muslims, the *salaf*.

intellectual foundation, rather than their social origins, political ideas or operational tactics (Ibid).

Similarly, social movement-based definitions of Islamism are intentionally made very general to embrace also reformist Islamic movements and Islamic movements that focus on missionary or social work, perhaps because the current political climate does not allow for political participation. In this understanding of Islamism the aim and means of the movement are not limited to the political project of building an Islamic state, as exemplified by Janine Clark's definition:

“An “Islamist” is a Muslim who attempts to re-Islamize society by encouraging individuals to practice Islam in daily life and bridge the gap between religious discourse and practical realities. In other words, he or she is a Muslim who seeks to actively extend and apply Islam beyond what is commonly regarded as the private realm to affect the public realm. In doing so, Islamism promotes the idea that Islam is a complete system or body of values, beliefs, and practices encompassing all spheres of life” (Clark 2004: 168).

Another social movement scholar, Asef Bayat, prefers to speak of Islamism as one kind of Islamic activism, which he defines as “extra-ordinary religious activism”. By extra-ordinary he means that the Islamic activists are seeking to preach and not only practice Islam. This definition is extremely wide and includes activism by any means, even the type that does not aim at changing the society but rather at individual change. He distinguishes one type of Islamic activism as Islamism: “It may be involved explicitly in politics, which I would call 'Islamism', or restricted to 'apolitical' but active piety, as exemplified in trends and movements which centre on individual self-enhancement and identity” (Bayat 2005: 894).

In this thesis I will use the term Islamism understood through Bayat's definition as a movement which seeks to preach Islam through extra-ordinary religious activism and which is explicitly involved in politics, and belonging to the greater family of Islamic activism. I prefer this definition to Roy's because it does not restrict the movement's ideological understanding of Islam to a political one. Also, because

political activism is not the only way to practice what Bayat calls Islamic activism, this allows us to more easily include in our understanding of Islamism the Islamic groups which go from being apolitical to political, such as Salafi groups in Egypt who only recently accepted participation in democracy as a mode of action.

2.6 Summary

In summary, Islamist women's political participation is in this thesis defined as:

- a) participating in institutions that make public decisions or in deliberations on and around these decisions, by
- b) women identifying with a movement which seeks to preach Islam through extraordinary religious activism and which is explicitly involved in politics.

It is also understood that an important element of political participation is representation, which can be either descriptive, symbolic or substantial.

For this thesis, I will use point b of this definition to select candidates for interviewing, as I will elaborate on in the following chapter, and discuss with them which factors may explain their participation as defined by point a.

3 Research Design

As stated, the research question for this analysis is “What can explain women’s increasing political participation in Islamist movements in Egypt?” In chapter 1 I have discussed briefly the puzzle that inspired this research question, and on which grounds I consider it to be an important issue worthy of investigation. In chapter 2 I have defined the various components of the puzzling phenomenon or “dependent variable” that this research question seeks to explain the increase of, namely Islamist women's political participation. A clearly defined research question and dependent variable lets us decide on which research design and methods to employ in order to answer this question, and what kinds of data this research needs to be based on. Here I wish to elaborate on how this research question will be answered, in other words the research design of this thesis.

3.1 A case study approach

Obviously, my research question aims at a causal explanation which is concerned with the “how” and “why” of Islamist women's political participation in Egypt. To produce causal inferences about a complex social phenomenon, “thick” or qualitative data is needed. A case study is a common research design to produce qualitative data and causal inferences with. Case studies are intensive studies of a single case conducted to shed light on a larger number of cases of similar nature, a population of cases. However, it is implicit in this definition of a case study that the single case is not perfectly similar to the other cases; in other words the case is not perfectly representative of the population (Gerring 2009: 20). Therefore, the selection of a case or cases to study matters to which inferences one can make about the research question. In the following section, I will explain the case selection for this thesis.

3.2 Case selection

I will not be able to research the full specter of women's political participation in Islamist movements in Egypt. In this study I therefore seek to try a number of arguments and explanatory factors in the best possible case, but which case should that

be? I have selected the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest and most organized Islamist movement in Egypt, as a suitable case to study women's political participation. They have for decades been a strong organization, indeed influential across the Muslim world, and they are one of the most dominant political force in post-revolution Egypt. In the following I will elaborate on the reasons for this choice.

First of all, the Brotherhood is the best case to study if we wish to know how the influence of Islamism will affect women's political participation in Egypt because they are the most influential actor in this matter. This is due to their size, history and position as the largest party in the Egyptian government. In the post-revolution elections for the People's Assembly in 2011/2012, the Muslim Brotherhood's political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, won 43% of the seats (Carnegie Endowment, A nd). As this thesis is being written they are competing for the presidency, with their official candidate Mohammed Morsi being one of the front-runners of the elections. To understand how women can participate in politics and decision-making as members of one of the strongest political groups in Egypt today is important to exploring how Egypt's women may find their place in politics.

Secondly, I have chosen to study the Brotherhood because their long history of activism and political participation in Egypt allows us to trace changes in Islamist women's participation over time. The Brotherhood has had a women's section almost since its creation and it has been training and fielding female candidates for elections since 2000. They have been the most successful in having female candidates elected after the revolution, as four of the nine women who were elected to the People's Assembly in the 2011/2012 elections represent the Freedom and Justice Party (Carnegie Endowment, A nd). Thus a case study of the Muslim Brotherhood provides the most observable evidence of Islamist women's participation and allows for a longer perspective than simply changes after the 2011 revolution. Comparatively, the Salafi movements in Egypt have only organized politically since the revolution, and as such there is less evidence to study their women's political participation, although it would make for an interesting study in the future.

Thirdly, I have chosen the Brotherhood as the best possible case because their

strong and widespread organization produces some of the most potent participation in the country. If individuals are to have political influence, it helps to be affiliated with such a powerful organization. It is interesting to see whether women are able to tap into the capital of the Brotherhood in their political activism, as it has potential to produce some of the most powerful female representatives in politics.

And finally, a case study of the Brotherhood makes a good contribution to the literature on Islamism and women's political participation. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood is probably one of the most-studied Islamic movements, but Islamist women's participation remains under-explored. This study can thus draw on much previous scholarship and suggest improvements to our accumulative knowledge about the movement and Islamist women's activism.

I will note that while the Muslim Brotherhood is the best possible choice for a case study of women's political participation in Islamist movements in Egypt, any conclusions based on this case study cannot be generalized across the variety of Islamist movements in Egypt. We can expect few similarities between the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology on women's participation and that of the Egyptian Salafis, for example. These more conservative Islamists may potentially be a strong obstacle to women's rights even within an Islamic framework, as they form a viable competition for the Islamic vote in Egypt.

3.3 Cases in the case?

Ideally there should be a “case in the case”, a specific event to look into where women have been active politically, and which I could try to explain. However, the number of politically active women is still low and women's push for participation in decision-making within the Brotherhood is still relatively fragmented. The revolution of 2011 was a special case where women participated much more openly in politics and in larger numbers than had been seen before, but this participation was not sustained at the same level and in the same shape after the revolution. Women's participation in the revolution was more of an exceptional case, which does not make for a good case to base our understanding of Islamist women's participation on. That is not to say that the

revolution was not immensely important for the political participation of all Egyptians, and that it may not have had a special effect on the participation of Islamist women. I still feel that it is necessary to have a wider perspective; looking at women's participation over a longer time span which includes the situation both before, during and after the revolution, and looking at various forms their participation may take which you could not observe in one single event. I am interested in looking at processes of participation and discussing why women join or leave the Muslim Brotherhood and their experiences of activism and political participation over time. I think a wider perspective will give a better understanding of the strategies and rational reasonings behind women's participation than exceptional or fragmented cases in the case could provide.

4 Theory

In this thesis, I am attempting to explain the rise of Islamist women's political participation in Egypt. As I have stated in the introduction, I see this exercise both as an examination of alternative ways to promote women's rights as well as a contribution to the debate on the relationship between Islamism and democratization in the MENA region. In this debate, women's rights play a crucial dual role. Firstly, I see women's political rights as a marker of democratization, a strong indicator of whether the political process is contributing towards a system of governance based on political equality. Secondly, women's rights is a high-priority policy interest for the political actors of the region including the Islamist groups, the secular regimes, secular parties and organizations on the national level, as well as foreign nations and international bodies which try to influence the development of political and social affairs. It may seem a long leap, but I would like to propose that democratization theories are appropriate tools to explain the increase of Islamist women's political participation.

I prefer this theoretical perspective mainly because I am attempting to explain an increase in how Islamist women exercise a fundamental democratic right. Part of this exercise is to examine whether and how Islamism and Islamist movements promote women's political participation, and democratization theories seek to explain precisely what it is that produces such democratic rights. Because the movement the women belong to has a contested political ambition which may or may not contribute to the aim of democracy, it is helpful to use theories which may explain the role and democratic nature of actors in a democratization process.

Such a complex social phenomenon as Islamist women's political participation in Egypt is a challenge to explain because of the multitude of relevant factors, even as my focus on a single case allows an in-depth study of these. How should the empirical evidence be interpreted? In the lack of theoretical consensus on democratization, I wish to draw on three different perspectives on democratization in my analysis. My purpose is to compare their explanatory powers and see which perspective better explains the empirical evidence in the case studied here. I do not aim to settle any theoretical debate, but primarily discuss which theoretical perspective better explains

different developments and relationships in the data as well as what is left unexplained, in order to achieve objectivity in my interpretation of the evidence. I follow a framework for assessing democratization which allows me to choose which actors, institutions and processes to evaluate independently of the respective theoretical perspectives. In this chapter, let me present the theories I draw on for my analysis, and the framework that structures the analysis in which they will be compared.

4.1 *The democratization debate*

The literature on democratization theory has a dual focus; mainly it tries to explain the causation of democratization (what makes countries democratize), and increasingly it is also paying attention to the consolidation of democracy (what makes emerging democracies survive and gain substance). Different perspectives on democratization have evolved from different definitions of democracy as well as differences in emphasis on explanatory factors. Here, three theoretical perspectives which represent three different approaches to democracy are presented; the conservative approach represented by Mansfield and Snyder's sequencing theory (2002, 2005 and 2007), the liberal democracy approach represented by transition theory, and the substantial democracy approach represented by Carothers' gradualism theory (2002, 2007a, 2007b). My presentation of these approaches to democratization is especially informed by two debates published in *Journal of Democracy*, in 2002 and 2007, which included criticisms and defenses of the "transition paradigm" and the sequencing theory respectively, and of gradualism as an alternative to these two approaches.

4.1.1 Sequencing theory

The conservative approach to democracy is primarily concerned with its ability to produce stable and peaceful political societies that are mutually compatible with a liberal economic system. In its definition of democracy it is influenced by the experiences of Western democracy, setting out standards for democracy which are procedural rather than normative (such as the holding of free and fair elections and the alternation of power).

Different “waves” of democratization have produced different theoretical explanations of what makes countries become democratic, and more recently, what made some of them survive the transition phase to become consolidated democracies as well as what caused some to revert to authoritarianism. One early and long-lived explanation is found in modernization theory. This theoretical perspective grew out of the experiences of the first wave of democratization taking place in the Western world, in which democratization was closely linked to the expansion of capitalism. Modernization theory looks to underlying transformations in society and the economy to explain why countries embark on a process of democratization. This focus turned into the idea that certain structures such as a critical level of economic development are preconditions without which democratization will not take place or be successful. The basic idea of modernization theory was that if a country introduced the right (capitalist) economic structures and developed economically, democratization would follow and produce stable, democratic political societies - regardless of the historic or cultural specifics of the societies in question.

In his 1968 book *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Samuel P. Huntington criticized the modernization theory's emphasis on economic structures as prerequisites for democratization. Huntington warned that states should also establish a certain “politics of order” before democracy is introduced (1968). Processes of modernization such as urbanization, social mobilization and economic growth are not necessarily conducive to stability, argues Huntington, but can in actuality be a cause for instability as expectations rise and new groups are rapidly mobilized into politics (Ibid). Political institutions must be developed to handle the stress of these processes because to Huntington order, regardless of which political system it is produced by, is an important aim in itself in developing societies (Ibid).

Building on the Huntingtonian idea that political order is an important aim in developing societies, Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder have suggested that democratization should take place in a certain sequence. In various articles and the 2005 book *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* they have contested the popular idea in international relations that democracies are inherently peaceful. They argue that states which are going through the transition to democracy

are actually more likely to fight wars than both consolidated democracies and authoritarian states are.

«We find that the heightened danger of war grows primarily out of the transition from an autocratic regime to one that is partly democratic. The specter of war during this phase of democratization looms especially large when governmental institutions, including those regulating political participation, are especially weak. Under these conditions, elites commonly employ nationalist rhetoric to mobilize mass support but then become drawn into the belligerent foreign policies unleashed by this process. We find, in contrast, that transitions that quickly culminate in a fully coherent democracy are much less perilous» (Mansfield and Snyder 2002: 298).

In short, Mansfield and Snyder fear that greater political freedoms can easily be abused if proper institutions such as political parties and the rule of law are not established first, echoing Huntington's call for a "politics of order". They contend "that it is dangerous to push states to democratize before the necessary preconditions are in place and that prudent democracy-promotion efforts should pay special attention to fostering those preconditions", warning against what they call out-of-sequence democratization (Mansfield and Snyder 2007: 5).

This line of argumentation has been employed to excuse the continued authoritarian rule in many states of the Middle East and North Africa which are deemed "not ready for democracy", including Egypt. In an opinion piece for *The New York Times*, Thomas L. Friedman recently lamented that the post-revolution transitions in the Arab states are difficult because they had "squandered their dictatorship moments", instead of building democratic preconditions top-down through authoritarianism like the East Asian dictatorships of South Korea and Taiwan had (Friedman May 5 2012). Mixed with a post-September 11 fear of Islamic terror and a perception of Islamism that lacks nuance, this perspective on democratization has had a strong influence on Western policies regarding democracy promotion in the Muslim and Arab world. The following is an example of how one influential American think tank has evaluated the progress and prospects for democratization in the Muslim world in a manner which echoes this thinking:

In a 2002 article in *Journal of Democracy*, Freedom House president Adrian Karatnycky discusses what he terms the “democracy gap” between Muslim-majority countries (and especially the Arab states) and the rest of the world. Based on Freedom House's 2001 “Freedom in the World” survey of political rights and civil liberties worldwide, he first remarks that there are no free or democratic countries in the Arab world and few among Muslim-majority states (23% of which have democratically elected governments, according to the survey) (Karatnycky 2002: 102-103). Later, he attempts to explain this “weakness of democracy and freedom in large parts of the Muslim world” by factors such as lack of development, “the cultural burden imposed by an interpretation of Islam that relegates women to second-class status”, a “longstanding Islamic tradition” of merging the religious and the political, the rentier effect, and the historic legacies of either rigid, unequal monarchies or statist autocracies derived from totalitarian models (Ibid: 105-106).

Karatnycky pays considerable attention to Islamism in his article. He describes the experiences of Muslim states with Islamist groups in two ways; pointing out where repressive regimes have “successfully suppressed Islamist political movements” and states where “the Islamist threat has proved real” (Ibid: 104, 106). Reading between the lines, such descriptions suggest that an authoritarian oppression of the political opposition² are preferred over a political opening which may be exploited by the Islamists, as Algeria experienced (Ibid). Finally, Karatnycky contends that there is still reasonable hope connected to the “project of promoting the expansion of democracy in the face of the terrorist and Islamist threat”, but that it is inappropriate to see democratic elections as the answer to the problems of these “struggling societies” (Ibid: 111). Thus, the means by which he proposes that democracy should be promoted is a list devoid of political openings. Instead he suggests increasing access to information on democracy, supporting liberal economic reforms, and expanded commitment to civil society as “mechanisms by which reliable allies of the democratic world and committed opponents of terrorism and ideological extremism are empowered” (Ibid: 112).

2 Karatnycky himself notes that in countries like Egypt, democrats suffer from this repression as much as the Islamist.

4.1.2 Transition or Agency theory

The third wave of democratization broke with the assumptions that certain structural preconditions were needed in order for democratization to take place. How should we understand the democratization in countries in Eastern Europe or sub-Saharan Africa that experienced democratization without a developed liberal economy or a strengthened middle class? Scholars of democratization responded to this challenge by shifting focus from structures to agency and looking to the role played by elites in negotiating transitions from autocracy to democracy. This “agency approach” to democratization, which gave importance to the role of conscious, committed actors and emphasized the political over the socioeconomic, also highlighted the room for external influence. Democratization, thus understood, could be fostered in the form of international support for reform-minded political elites willing to build the *institutional* preconditions for democracy. The underlying assumption is that if a minimum of liberal institutions are crafted, actors will adjust their behavior to these institutions and democracy will follow. The democratization process or “transition” to democracy was considered to consist of several stages; first a period of democratic opening, then a break-through, and finally consolidation of democracy.

This approach to democratization builds on a liberal definition of democracy that is quite minimalist. If democracy is understood to be a set of liberal democratic institutions such as free and fair elections and the rule of law, then it becomes possible to build democracy “from above” through elite negotiations. Coupled with a belief that actors adapt their behavior to these institutions, it becomes possible to see the construction of such institutions as the beginning of a transition which will grow stronger by the commitment of pro-democracy actors, among which civil society plays an important role. The third wave of democratization brought great optimism that democracy could be introduced in very different contexts; liberal democracy, with its formal and minimalist model of democracy, seemed to demand fewer preconditions than modernization theory had presumed. Critics argue that this led to formal democratic institutions being introduced without much regard for context and existing power relations. In the 1990s the world actually experienced a democratic rollback as the number of democracies not only stopped growing, but receded, with some

“democratizing” countries taking an authoritarian turn again. Many countries also seemed to be “lost in transition” as they had adopted some democratic institutions and reforms, but retained entrenched illiberal features. In response, the liberal democratization theory struggled to explain what could consolidate liberal democracy.

The liberal democratization approach emphasizes institutional design, support for civil society and economic reform and development as important means to reach the aim of democracy. As previously mentioned, political elites such as party officials and prominent politicians, bureaucrats and public office-holders are seen as key agents. This focus on elites puts off the inclusion of the masses into political decision-making, the same way that the focus on supporting and developing civil society draws focus and efforts away from developing political society. The liberal democratization approach also encouraged “depoliticized” democratization by for example producing a technocratic government and giving greater roles to market actors and civil society through privatization. At the same time, it struggles to ensure real equality before the law, produce social equality, or combat corruption, all of which disempowers citizens and especially the poor. Meanwhile transitionists such as Kenneth Wollack with a minimalist approach to democracy define issues such as encouraging the political participation of women, youth and minorities as “next-generation” issues which are “necessary to reduce apathy and disaffection among voters” (Wollack 2002: 21). In other words, it is not a prioritized means of democratization.

This approach to democratization has been criticized heavily by Thomas Carothers on a number of what he calls key assumptions of a “transition paradigm”³ (Carothers 2002: 6). These assumptions of the theory are, according to Carothers:

- 1) If a country is moving away from authoritarianism, it is necessarily moving towards democracy.
- 2) Democratization tends to happen in consecutive stages of a democratic opening, followed by a breakthrough and then a consolidation of democracy.
- 3) Elections are especially important to produce democracy.
- 4) The importance of structural preconditions is underestimated or ignored; it is

³ The article in which Carothers presented this critique sparked a debate in which several scholars contested his interpretations of the theory; see *Journal of Democracy* vol. 13 no. 1, January 2002.

presumed that democratization may happen anywhere at any time. Emphasis is placed on agency rather than structure, according to the belief that democracy may be produced by elite negotiations.

- 5) It is assumed that state-building is not an issue to be dealt with in the process of constructing a democracy; a functioning state is taken for granted. (2002: 6-8)

These assumptions are false and create a misguided approach to democratization, according to Carothers. His alternative approach is introduced next.

4.1.3 Gradualism theory.

This theory is fronted especially by Thomas Carothers, who has been a vocal critic of both sequencing theory and the “transition paradigm”. It is based on an idea of democracy that emphasizes its participatory aspect and principle of equal political participation, and as such promotes democratization processes that include the larger masses to the largest possible degree.

Carothers looks to encouraging cases of successful democratization such as Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan and notes that their political evolutions were defined by an extremely gradual, incremental process of liberalization pushed forward by an organized political opposition across successive elections, and not by the reforms of soft-liners in the regimes (2007b). While Carothers recognizes that there are preconditions for democratization that, if in place, increase the chances of successful and peaceful democratization, he does not accept the argument that in the lack of these, authoritarian rule is the best and safest approach to political development. In countries like Egypt, he argues, authoritarianism is not the way to establish rule of law but indeed the main obstacle to this democratic institution (Carothers 2007a: 17). Mubarak and his government maintained the emergency law through all his decades as president, thus limiting the basic rights of citizens and preserving “wide discretionary legal authority” for himself, and in the lack of genuine democratization he was unchallenged in doing so (Ibid). Indeed, Carothers sees an inherent conflict between authoritarianism and genuine rule of law, which ought to limit the power of the sovereign and thus threatens authoritarian rule (Ibid: 16). Democratic reforms introduced by authoritarian rules will by necessity be shaped by the regime's

reluctance to have its own powers substantially challenged or limited, argues Carothers.

Carothers also puts little hope in the democratizing effect of institutions such as popular elections, as he regards these to be easily manipulated or undercut if a strong commitment to democracy is not already in place. Similarly, he does not believe democratization can be created by elites alone, through negotiations or otherwise. Instead Carothers proposes that for it to be possible to develop truly democratic institutions, the process of developing them must also be democratic and political, as it was in Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan where power over decision-making was contested by democratic means. He argues that in dominant-power systems, what really promotes democracy is to develop alternative centers of power (Carothers 2002: 19). Especially, political parties should be developed in order to “improve the variety and quality of the main political actors” and to “bridge the gulf between the citizenry and the formal political system” (Ibid). In addition, Carothers argues that any over-concentration of economic power should be reduced, and clear lines drawn between the ruling party and the state (Ibid).

John Harriss has studied patterns of citizen problem solving in urban cities of Mexico, Brazil and India, which are all developing democracies. He found that while the poor are more politically active than the wealthy people (at least in India's global cities), they are not much involved in associations (2006). Therefore the “old politics” of political participation through parties is still important to the poor, despite the bad reputation political parties and mass movements have amassed globally as being corrupted and unable to solve many social problems. The “new politics” of civil society, which is often fronted as the better alternative to dirty party politics, is more focused on problem-solving than on exercising democratic practices and usually exclude the poor as active agents, addressing them as users and receivers of programs and services. Old and new politics also differ in their tactics. Harriss found that in India, the movements that mobilize masses of poor people focus on staging protests and getting political representation as means of achieving their goals, while the more elitist organizations of civil society engage in partnerships with the government (2006).

Even if developing political society is essential to the gradual democratization approach, the importance of civil society is still recognized and especially in the early stages. Marcus Mietzner argues that it is mostly because of the pushback from the civil sector that Indonesia has not been part of the democratic recession which has been a trend of the last decade, but merely suffered democratic stagnation as conservative elites have attempted to reverse democratic reforms to recapture old privileges (2012: 211). He warns against redirecting democratization assistance from civil society to the government apparatus too early in the transition to democracy, lest the aid should strengthen anti-reformist elites still dominating the government apparatus. If so, the state could get stuck in “incomplete” transition without the continued push to democratize from civil society, as Mietzner finds has been a risk factor in Indonesia's recent developments (Mietzner 2012: 224). Especially in young post-authoritarian nations, such re-channeling of aid may make government more effective but can halter the consolidation of democracy and instead create a strong state in “continued democratic stagnation”, argues Mietzner (Ibid).

4.2 Assessment framework

As I aim to compare how well these perspectives explain my puzzle, what aspects of that puzzle shall I focus on and discuss whether and how the perspectives can make sense of? The criteria by which I choose these should not stem from one of the theoretical perspectives, which would make for a biased, circular analysis. Rather I would like to study factors they all agree are important, regardless of which perspective you employ. Furthermore, the framework for this analysis should allow for an analysis that is, as far as possible, contextually sensitive and not based on a “blue print” idea of democracy taken from formalized Western democracies.

In his forthcoming book *Assessing Democratisation*, Törnquist argues that this is possible by identifying the essence of democracy, which we will understand as the aim of a democratization process, and analyze how the actors, institutions and dynamics of the democratisation process contribute towards this aim. As previously discussed, I am using Beetham's definition of the essence of democracy, which is “popular control of public affairs based on political equality” (quoted in Törnquist

2004: 201). Törnquist (forthcoming) further argues that an assessment of democratisation should be based on a substantive rather than a procedural definition of democracy. An assessment of the substance of democracy, according to Törnquist, must go beyond assessing institutions to also consider whether the rules and regulations of a democracy cover all vital aspects; whether they are not just formalities but actually work; whether democratically made decisions are in fact implemented; and whether “the content of the decisions do not undermine but foster the aim of democracy” (Ibid: 16). To assess democratisation in this way, Törnquist argues that four dimensions must be included in an analysis; 1) the institutions that are supposed to promote democracy, 2) the major actors' adherence to these rules and regulations, 3) the same actors' political capacity to use and promote the institutions of democracy, and 4) how the critical factors combine and change in the process of democratisation (Ibid: 80).

4.2.1 Intrinsic democratic institutions

What are the institutions needed to promote Islamist women's political participation? It is not my intention in this thesis to assess the democratization process in Egypt in general, so this framework may be slimmed down and adjusted to the topic of interest here. First, Islamist women's political participation, or any women's political participation in Egypt, is clearly a phenomenon which needs to be assessed especially against the aim of “political equality” which is part of our essential definition of democracy. Therefore, in this analysis I will limit the institutions to those needed to make this principle real and the actors to those important to this issue, and ask questions of these that seem relevant to answering my research question.

Which intrinsic institutions of democracy are most important for Islamist women to participate in politics in Egypt, and are they in place? Also, are these rules and regulations formal or informal? Are they substantial or just formalities? Törnquist has developed a list of 13 “clusters” of rules and regulations (presented below) deemed intrinsic institutional means of democracy, which he has selected based on the criteria that “the institutions are both logically necessary to foster the aim and principles of democracy and have been proven empirically to be crucial in processes of

democratisation”(Törnquist (forthcoming): 54). The clusters are meant to be universal, but should be detailed in each context. Because of the limited scope of this thesis, I have selected to focus on the following (in bold) which I expect to be logically necessary to foster Islamist women's political participation in Egypt:

“The intrinsic institutional means of democracy

- ^ Equal and inclusive citizenship in relation to well defined public affairs
- ^ Rule of law and governance in line with International law and UN-conventions
- ^ Equal justice
- ^ **Full universal human rights**
- ^ **Democratic political representation through parties and elections**
- ^ Legal rights based citizen participation
- ^ **Institutionalised channels for interest- and issue based representation**
- ^ Local democracy made real in combination with relevant influence on other levels
- ^ **Democratic control of instruments of coercion (including private forces)**
- ^ Transparent, impartial and accountable governance
- ^ Government’s independence and capacity to take decisions and implement them
- ^ Freedom of and equal access to public discourse, culture and academia within the

framework of human rights

- ^ **Citizens’ democratic self-organising”**

(Törnquist (forthcoming): 57)

The complete list will naturally be conducive towards political equality in various ways, but I can only include the most important institutions for my topic here. My selection is based on previous research and logical inference, but as part of my analysis I will also compare my selection of vital institutions to the ones emphasized by my informants in Egypt.

Let me elaborate on why I have chosen to focus on these five clusters and what they include. As I have clarified in the second chapter of this thesis, I am interested in explaining variation in how women exercise their right to political participation, which I have identified as a root right in a democracy. Democratic rules and regulations as

the ones listed above are based on this right, but they also influence to which degree it has substance. While the right to participate in politics empowers citizens to demand other democratic rights, the fulfillment of other rights equally empowers citizens to realize their political rights in a cyclic relationship. However there are some functions of a democracy, such as citizens holding government accountable and checking the powers of the state, which first require substantial political rights to be at least partially fulfilled, and which are less interesting in this analysis as explanations of why Islamist women participate in politics. Therefore I am leaving out for example the clusters regarding good governance, dissolution of democracy, and government capacity. On the other hand, there are some prerequisite elements of democracy which are taken for granted and not discussed in this assessment, such as the constitution of demos and public affairs. My review of relevant literature does not suggest that these are contested issues in relation to Islamist women's political participation. I will not include especially the law-related clusters because of time and space constraints, but comment on legal issues where they relate to the selected clusters. That leaves me with these five clusters of democratic means, which I deem especially relevant for the following reasons:

“Full universal human rights” include both political, civil, social and economic rights. That political and civil rights are intrinsic democratic means is conventionally accepted, but the inclusion of social and economic rights may be more controversial. Törnquist argues that these must be added because “it cannot be taken for granted that all are citizens, that men and women are equal and that even all of those who are citizens can survive and have the chance to function as politically equal human beings” (Törnquist (forthcoming): 55). Women are indeed socially and economically disadvantaged in Egypt in ways that undermine their political equality, thus an assessment of broad-specter human rights is an essential part in an assessment of women's political participation. The word “full” here emphasizes that political equality is bred not simply by equal rights but by equal chances to exercise them. To this end, it is especially important that basic needs are covered and that people have the social capacity to engage in politics, including the necessary knowledge about their rights and the democratic system.

The importance of “democratic political representation through parties and elections” in this study has been emphasized previously in the definition of the dependent variable. Here, I will add that to ensure that political representation through parties and elections contributes towards the aim of democracy, principles such as transparency, responsiveness and authorization from a democratic mandate are important (Törnquist (forthcoming): 55)

“Institutionalized channels for interest- and issue-based participation” is interesting more for the lack of such channels in Egypt and the consequent limited opportunities for women's political participation. Törnquist writes:

“The ninth cluster of rules and regulation relate to the social democratic oriented tradition of providing democratic channels for interest- and issue based representation in local and central government and implementation of government decisions. These arrangements are thus in addition to the system of individual citizens’ legally guaranteed participatory rights and may be seen as supplementary parts of the political system.”

It may be interesting to contextualize this form of participation in the Egyptian setting and examine whether there may exist alternative channels for women's interests and issues, or how the lack of these plays out in relation to traditional participation.

“Democratic control of instruments of coercion”, or lack of such, is of almost self-evident importance to achieving democracy in a repressive regime such as Egypt under Mubarak and in a revolutionary process. It is also a cluster of rules and regulations which is especially important for women's political participation in Egypt as security threats impact the participation of women and men differently in a patriarchal society.

Finally, “citizens' democratic self-organising” is both a human right and an important building block of democracy, so that rules and regulations guaranteeing this principle have special importance in a democratization process. When it comes to the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization which has been outlawed in Egypt for half a decade, it is obvious that this principle is important to their members. Moreover, it is especially important to female members of the Brotherhood who are missing out on

the important democratic training that such organizations provide, as they are blocked from leadership positions under the explanation that illegal activism is too dangerous for women.

4.2.2 Actors, capacity and strategies

Next, the framework suggests that an assessment should identify important actors and consider how they relate to the institutions, as well as how these actors in turn are shaped by them. Who are the most important actors regarding Islamist women's political participation? Törnquist argues that our identification of important actors, in order to be as objective as possible, should not be informed by a single theory's emphasis on a certain type of actors, such as the middle classes or moderate elites (Törnquist (forthcoming): 62). "On the contrary, we need to compare and discuss all the vital actors, and their relations to the institutions, which are considered in competing explanatory frameworks for the study of democratisation" (Ibid).

In the three perspectives on democratization I am using to explain Islamist women's increased political participation, different actors are emphasized and their relationship to institutions are explained with different and competing arguments. Sequencing theory emphasizes the state as the constructor of democratic institutions and sees Islamist opposition groups as potential threats to these. It does not expect miracles in terms of undemocratic actors adapting their behavior to democratic institutions; rather it is fearful that actors with self-serving strategies may abuse weak institutions if there is no "politics of order". Liberal democratization theory emphasizes the role of moderate elites and regime soft-liners in introducing liberal democratic institutions through negotiated reforms, especially those serving the development of a capitalism-friendly environment, and often with international support. Actors are expected to adapt their behavior to these institutions. Gradualism theory is more skeptical about the democratizing influence of introducing the "right" institutions from above. It emphasizes the need to include the masses in the democratizing process and warns against authoritarian-led construction of democratic institutions, which is seen as institutionalizing democratic deficits.

According to Törnquist' review of the general literature on democracy, relevant

actors to include in an assessment could be the following:

“(...) actors related to the business sector, the middle- and working classes, the primary sectors (including big and small farmers and fishermen) as well as social categories like politicians and political executives, bureaucrats and military, journalists, intellectuals and students and religious and ethnic leaders in addition to social movements, civil society organisations, and a general categorisation to consider gender division” (Törnquist (forthcoming): 62).

To find explanatory factors for this thesis, I have already made a review of previous research on Islamic activism and women's political rights in Egypt, in Chapter 3. This literature includes actors such as the authoritarian state (previously under president Mubarak, now under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), the Islamist opposition (the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups, most notably the Salafi groups), religious leaders (both loyal to the state and independent), female intellectuals (some representing Islamic feminism, others secular feminism), women's NGOs (both secular and Islamic NGOs, which form no coherent women's movement), the UN (and related bodies) and recently the popular masses which claimed a role for themselves in the revolution (especially the youth as a highly active and previously underrepresented group, but also women, workers and others).

This list may be narrowed down further to focus on the most important actors. To explain Islamist women's political participation under Mubarak's authoritarian rule, obviously the regime is the most influential actor – but, as it was overthrown, the revolution proved the political capacity of other actors which must be included in an assessment of more recent events. The loosely defined “revolutionary youth groups” which led the demonstrations that toppled Mubarak were indeed important for this critical chain of events, but seem to have lost much of their political influence since. The revolution was a critical turning point for universal political participation in Egypt, but in the longer perspective of this study, the revolutionary youth groups themselves have ephemeral relevance. External forces such as the UN have had little direct influence, especially in the revolution and the following transition process, and will be left out of the analysis except where other actors relate to them. However I will

include women's rights organizations, because their influence or lack of such is important to understanding why women choose to participate in politics in the Islamist movement.

The Egyptian military, in the shape of the currently ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has appeared as a powerful political force in the post-revolution transition period. As they lay much of the premises for the democratization process (Brown 2012), they are necessary to include. The Muslim Brotherhood is a given actor in this case study that focuses on its women, but as previous research on Islamist organizations have shown, such an organization should not simply be taken as one actor. Instead one should pay attention to internal variations between the leadership, possible reformists, the youth section and the women's section etcetera, as these may often have conflicting views and opinions, and sometimes even different strategies. I will return to this in the analysis. Other Islamist groups will not receive special attention in this study as the Brotherhood is the best case of women's participation.

After identifying the vital actors, the framework proposes some questions to ask about how they relate to the institutions of our interest. To assess whether the actors accept that democracy is “the only game in town” one can ask whether they produce, consume or destroy (avoid or abuse) the institutions of democracy (Törnquist (forthcoming): 62). In this study, focus will primarily be on how the identified actors relate to the six clusters of rules and regulations previously selected. Probably, some relations between actors and institutions will call for closer attention. What are the politics and policies of the actors regarding institutions that are especially important or problematic? Also, how have the institutions affected the behavior of the actors? Törnquist proposes that “one may identify specific institutional arrangements that have been crafted to alter actors' behavior, and then use them as a point of departure for finding out whether and how the projected positive effects have materialized” (Ibid: 63).

Next, it is necessary to look at the political capacity of the actors included because “power matters for what actors can do and how institutions are shaped and perform” (Törnquist (forthcoming): 67). Political capacity has implications for the

dynamics of democratization which we will turn to later, and a certain level of political capacity must be in place to enable people to act as citizens and promote as well as use the democratic institutions (Ibid). After reviewing broad-scope analyzes of democratization, Törnquist has narrowed down the variables used to explain political capacity to five main arguments (Ibid). Here I will briefly present the five arguments, which could also be called categories of capacities, and the questions outlined in the framework that may be asked of vital actors regarding these capacities:

1) **Political inclusion/exclusion.** Democratization presupposes that “people shall not be excluded from politics and the vital parts of society that effect politics” (Törnquist (forthcoming): 67). What capacity do the actors have to be included and to fight exclusion? Are the vital actors present or excluded in the political terrain, and how? Are some actors or groups marginalized?

2) **Authority and legitimacy.** To have political power, actors must be able to transform various forms of capital (for example social capital, economic power, knowledge or intellectual influence, religious authority, military power, or “people power” of demonstrations etc.) into authority and legitimacy. Which types of capital do the actors draw their power from? How do the actors transform, or fail to transform this capital into authority (what Bourdieu calls symbolic capital) and legitimacy, and ultimately political power (Ibid: 68)?

3) **Politicization and agenda-setting.** Democratization requires that citizens have some capacity to set the political agenda by turning their non-private concerns into public political matters (Ibid: 69). What matters do the actors deem to be public matters ? To what extent and how have they been able to put them on the political agenda?

4) **Mobilization and organization.** To gain political capacity, actors must be able to mobilize and organize support (incorporated by way of elite populism and clientelism, or integrated by way of organizing from below) for their demands and policies (Ibid: 70). Which of these mobilization strategies do the actors employ to gain support?

5) **Participation and representation.** Democratization also requires that existing means of participation and representation can be used, reformed or developed in order to influence governance institutions, especially as these are often underdeveloped in

democratizing societies (Ibid: 70). Where do the major actors who dominate or foster change turn with their matters of concern, and how (Ibid: 74)? What about ordinary people?

In my case study I will focus mainly on the actors' capacity in terms of political inclusion/exclusion, transformation of capital into authority or legitimacy, and mobilization and organization capacities. Previous studies have shown that women are not able to set the political agenda until they reach a critical mass of representation which Egypt is far from achieving, therefore this would be less relevant to study at an early stage of the democratization process. The question of where actors and citizens could or should turn with matters of concern is a matter of much confusion at this stage in the post-revolution transition process, therefore this kind of capacity would also best be addressed at a later stage.

Finally, the framework calls for increased attention to the dynamics of democratization. As the framework is built to assess the substance and not only the formalities of democracy, a critical aspect is to capture how the critical factors of democratization interact and change. How do the strategies and government policies of the vital actors affect critical aspects of democratization, and vice versa (Ibid: 86)? To narrow this part of the analysis down, I will focus on the most relevant problems of democratization identified earlier in the analysis, and especially deficits related to popular democratic representation, as political participation and representation (by extension) is the phenomenon in question in this thesis.

5 Research Methods

To compare the explanatory power my three theoretical perspectives hold over my puzzle, I need observations to explain, in other words data material to analyze. How can I collect and analyze data to find answers to my puzzle, and which kinds of inferences can I make? Studies of Islamic activism are growing in number, but little attention is dedicated to women's roles as activists and especially in politics, and few empirical studies have been conducted on this. Because I wish to have more empirical data about my puzzle, I have chosen to conduct a field study in Cairo and use qualitative interviewing to produce the kind of “thick” data that can produce some of the inferences I want, as described below. Then I will rely on this thick data and extensive use of secondary literature as evidence about Islamist women's political participation which I can analyze.

The secondary literature readily available to me consists of a small number of papers or studies focusing especially on Islamism and women's activism, a larger number of books and studies focusing on Islamic movements, the relationship between Islam and democracy or between Islam and women's rights, and no quantitative studies or available data sets with information on Islamist women's participation that I have been able to find. In chapter 6 I have included the most relevant studies for this thesis in my review of previous research, and suggested how it may inform the analysis. In the following I will describe how the empirical material has been collected and discuss how it can be used to make inferences.

5.1 Qualitative interviewing and use of secondary sources

Interviewing is especially relevant when little empirical material exists, as is the case regarding women's political participation in the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore I have conducted a field study in Cairo during the month of February 2012, where I met and interviewed 15 informants, of which 10 were women associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. This interview material is the basis of the “thick description” of Islamist women's experiences with and opinions about political participation and related issues which I present in chapter 7, contextualized in a more general presentation of the

Brotherhood's history, relationship to the state and changes in women's roles. In chapter 7 I also elaborate on which questions I asked in the interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews, allowing the informants time to elaborate on their answers and me the chance to ask follow-up questions or rephrase answers to double-check my interpretations.

The interview material lets me explore why Islamist women participate in politics and other kinds of activism, from their own perspective. This presentation lays the foundations for my understanding of the puzzle which I seek to explain by my analysis in chapter 8. For this explanation I including more data about context, structural factors and other actors than the Brotherhood, and compare the explanatory power of the three theoretical approaches to democratization presented in chapter 4. Because qualitative interviews cannot produce all the data I need for this analysis, I will draw extensively on information from secondary sources. I have also used secondary literature to find arguments or factors which I can look for support for in my interviews and analysis, and I will look for support in the literature for my own inferences based on the interview material as part of the analysis. Preferably, I would have included some statistical data in the analysis pertaining to the percentage of women members in the Muslim Brotherhood and in the movement's political activities, but this information is not available due to the movement's history as an outlawed organization.

To explain women's increasing political participation in Islamist movements in Egypt it is clearly necessary to look qualitatively at the complex relationship between individual factors such as the mobilizing mechanisms of the Islamist movement as well as cultural, economic, social and political structures that have produced and shaped Islamist women's participation. Qualitative methods allow us to trace processes between X and Y and explain the mechanisms that produce an observed outcome rather than just measure their correlations statistically. The kind of inferences that these research methods allow for are fitting for my research question. Based on my interview material I may be able to say something about the experiences of my interviewees concerning their association with the organization which can produce hypothetical explanations to the research question. I can trace processes of how my

informants have come to join, leave or advance within the movement. From their ideas, opinions and reasoning, I might better understand which ideas and kinds of argumentation motivate them and others like them to political activism. By considering which factors the interviewees themselves give importance to, which are downplayed and which perhaps might be omitted, I can suggest which explanations of women's increased political participation seem more credible. And through a contextualized assessment of how the Muslim Brotherhood interacts with other major actors, influences democratic institutions and is shaped by them in turn, in my analysis I may suggest why its women are increasingly more involved in politics and whether this contributes to democratization and the promotion of women's political rights.

5.2 Data collection

Here I will describe briefly how the interview material was collected during my fieldwork in Cairo in February 2012, starting with my sampling procedure.

Because the Muslim Brotherhood lacks a membership register or a similar pool to draw or select my informants from, I used the snowballing method to reach the informants I wanted to interview for this thesis. I was primarily interested in interviewing women associated with the Muslim Brotherhood who had experience from political activities, which could be anything from participating in demonstrations or student politics to running for elections. I started out by interviewing young female activists who were or had recently been members of the Muslim Brotherhood, whom I found through newspaper articles, social media and connections in Cairo. I met and interviewed five of these young women, who were in their late teens or in their twenties. Through these informants, e-mail contact with the Brotherhood organization and other connections in Cairo I was also able to reach two women in their thirties who were co-founders of and committee members in the the Freedom and Justice Party, one older woman who had been active in the Brotherhood for more than a generation, and one female member of parliament representing the Freedom and Justice Party. Altogether I interviewed ten women, three of whom were youths who had left the Brotherhood after the revolution.

I also interviewed four men associated with the Brotherhood. One of them was a young previous member who had left the movement since the revolution, two were youths who were still active members and supporters of the Brotherhood, and one was a middle-generation member with leadership responsibility. All these men worked or had worked with the Ikwaweb.com website which is the Muslim Brotherhood's official English website, and as such were experienced with representing the Brotherhood. In addition I interviewed a scholar at the American University in Cairo who teaches gender and social activism, who has studied women's organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and who has a critical perspective on the Islamist movements. These last five interviews were conducted to increase my own knowledge about the topic of the thesis and not to produce data about women's political participation.

The snowballing method I used for sampling did not provide me with the broadest specter possible of experiences and opinions on women's political participation in the Muslim Brotherhood. Every time I asked informants to help me contact other members that they knew, it is expectable that this introduced some selection bias because the new informant was likely to hold similar opinions to the informant that led me to her. Some informants were also selected by the Brotherhood organization to avail themselves for interviewing at my request, and it is likely that they were selected because they are considered to be good representatives to a Western audience, which may also introduce some bias in the available observations of experiences and opinions. Also, my sample has an age imbalance with more youth being represented than married or older women. I suspect that because of these biases, my informants may be more liberal in sum than the average Brotherhood member. However, some bias is unavoidable with this sampling method. There is also considerable variation in the experiences and opinions presented to me by these informants, including opinions that may be categorized as conservative, and the material is by no means invalid because of some selection bias.

The best way to amend for selection bias when random sampling is impractical (because the universe is unknown, or because the sample size is too small, both of which reasons are present here) is to select strategically. In my sampling I sought to

select so that I had some variety across age and experience among my informants, which I achieved. Underway in the interviewing process I also realized that it would strengthen the sample to include former members who had left due to disagreement with the movement, because it would provide more variety in the observations available to me, and therefore the three former members I have mentioned were included.

All of the interviews were conducted in Cairo, sometimes in the home of the interviewee but most often in a public place such as a cafe. Many of the interviews were conducted with the help of an Arabic-English interpreter, while some were conducted in English. I did not make sound recordings of the interviews, as it was impractical in the settings where most of the interviews were conducted, but took detailed notes on a laptop while interviewing. I attempted to write down the informant's answers word-by-word and in as much detail as possible, but naturally I can not guarantee that every word of my interview notes are correct without sound recordings. I will make little use of direct quotations and be careful to not put special emphasis on word choice in analyzing my interview notes, since these may be distorted both by interpretation or the informant speaking in a language that is foreign to her, and by my simultaneous interviewing and taking notes. Instead I will look for and analyze the ideas and abstract concept represented by the answers I have recorded.

To analyze these interview notes, I borrow the process of coding as a tool for data analysis from grounded theory, although I don't follow the grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis whole-scale. My analysis is indeed more informed by theory and less iterative than the grounded theory ideal. The very limited time I had to conduct interviews for my data collection did not allow me to simultaneously analyze this data. Instead I have attempted to use coding as a tool to organize and analyze the information gathered in my interview notes after the interviewing process was over. The coding and analysis of my interview material will be further discussed as the findings from this material is presented in chapter 7.

5.3 Internal and external validity

In qualitative interviewing, people's experiences and attitudes are explored in depth, which allows us to conclude more confidently about the meaning behind the data we produce. This means that in this study I can be quite confident about the internal validity of the inferences I make based on my interview material. When I am asking my interviewees about their experiences with political participation as women, or their opinions on women's participation, this produces a “thick”, in-depth description of the topics discussed. Interviewees can elaborate on the issues of special concern to them, and I can use interview techniques such as rephrasing information given by the interviewees to double-check whether my interpretations are correct.

A large part of my analysis will also be based on secondary sources, which I combine in a qualitative in-depth study of one single case. This lets me contextualize the various factors I include into explanations and consider how the factors influence each other and relate, which enhances the internal validity of my study and reduces the uncertainty of my causal inferences.

External validity is not the strength of qualitative research and generalization across cases is not the primary aim of this study; I am more interested in developing a deep, contextualized understanding of the case I consider to be the best possible to base an explanation for my research question on. Hopefully, this case study will contribute some increased knowledge about the factors which might explain Islamist women's political participation and how they interact.

5.4 Reliability

While I have stated that the strength of this study will be its internal rather than external validity, one other important aspect will determine whether the result will be a useful contribution to the scholarly literature. That is the issue of reliability, which can very simply be defined as the replicability of my study. It is an important principle of accumulative science that for a study to be reliable, it should be possible to conduct the same study twice with the same results. While this is rarely done, the principle is important because it demands a high degree of transparency when it comes to

methodological choices and a commitment to sharing the data material on which the analysis is conducted. In comparative politics this is especially important because scholars are often limited to studying one or a few cases at a time, but their inferences can be compared to those of other scholars who have conducted similar studies if these principles have been observed. I have aimed to follow the ideals of comparative politics so that the findings in this thesis may be comparable. In short, this means that I have attempted to be explicit about the logic of my research design and the basis of the findings in my study.

However there is an obvious limitation to reliability when a study is based on qualitative interviews which naturally cannot be replicated with the same results. I can make the notes from my interviews available for others to analyze, but if someone wished to replicate the interviews themselves they would be hard pressed to even reach the same people I have interviewed, and the conversations would naturally run differently the second time around even if the same questions were asked. The best I can do is to share with the reader all relevant information about how the data material has been collected as well as what the interviewees have been asked and said, before I present my analysis, so that it is possible to follow, challenge or replicate the process of data collection and analysis. Therefore, I have shared detailed information about how the interview material has been collected in this chapter.

6 Previous Research

What does previous research have to tell us about the phenomenon I here aim to study, Islamist women's political participation? In this chapter I present the most relevant explanations provided by previous research, as well as some points of dispute that may be examined further. Later, I will draw on these elements in my analysis.

6.1 What promotes women's rights in Egypt?

This question is subject for great dispute in the literature. Broadly speaking, three strategies for promoting women's rights in Egypt are recognized; secular feminism, Islamic feminism, and conventional Islamic activism. The first strategy is followed by an array of organizations and individual activists, but does not amount to a popular movement for lack of unification and grass root support. The second strategy is more of a theoretical exercise which mostly female scholars of Islam engage in. Only the third is a social movement, which unites various organizations and actors in a sense of common purpose. Here I will elaborate briefly on the distinctions between the three, before each is presented with some questions regarding its potential for empowering women.

The gender agenda of Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood is challenged not only by Western feminists but also by secular feminists of the Muslim world. These dismiss the particularism of Islamic feminism and argue that women's human rights should not be derived from religion, but rather from a set of rights that are universal and apply to Muslim and non-Muslim women all over the world. Barlow and Akbarzadeh remind us that Islamic and secular Muslim feminism have been competing movements over the last four decades, noting that "Muslim feminism is not necessarily bound by Islam, or by what Islamists proclaim to be Islam," (2006: 1482). The main divide between the two strategies, in other words, is over whether women's rights can be based on and advanced by a particular religion, or whether they must be based on universal human rights. But even on the pro-Islamic side, there is at least one other dividing factor. What is it that separates the Islamic feminists from the "conventional" Islamic activists? Amina Wadud, an Islamic feminist herself, provides

a description of what she believes Islamic feminism can do for women:

“By going back to primary sources and interpreting them afresh, women scholars are endeavoring to remove the fetters imposed by centuries of patriarchal interpretation and practice. By questioning underlying presumptions and conclusions they are creating a space in which to think about gender. Drawing upon enduring principles of human rights, enshrined in the text, they extract meanings that can interact with the changing moral and intellectual circumstances of the reader” (Wadud 2006: 204).

This feminist challenge towards patriarchy by re-interpretation of Islamic principles is not so popular with the Islamists. Although Islamic feminists do it to varying degrees and effects – and some even reject the “Islamic feminist” title altogether – this gender-sensitive re-interpretation remains mostly the domain of scholars, while the Islamist movements interpret the Islamic principles more in conformity with the cultural context in which they are embedded. However this divide is not categorical but rather more of a sliding scale, and some liberal Islamists may well be inclined to accept re-interpretation of Islamic principles in gender issues.

6.1.1 Secular feminism in Egypt

Iranian scholar and feminist Valentine M. Moghadam describes how the context in which women try to defend their rights in Egypt, as in other Middle Eastern and Muslim countries, is marked by a perceived struggle (if not conflict) between the Muslim world and the West. Especially so, argues Moghadam, in countries where Islamist movements are strong (2003: 185). This means that when women are defending their rights, they are "frequently accused of being Westernized" and "importing a foreign ideology", as Moghadam notes (Ibid). Thus, she sees secular feminism as a tough strategy to pursue in the promotion of women's rights in Egypt, while strategies of Islamic feminism or conventional Islamic activism are more easily accepted by the society (Ibid).

Is this strategy indeed too hard to follow? Egyptian researcher Aliaa Dawoud has looked at three well-known secular women's rights organizations in Egypt and the

discourse they use to promote women's rights concerning two important legal revisions concerning women's rights in Egypt in recent years. These are the issues of women's right to transfer their nationality to their children and husband (nationality law) and women's right to unilateral divorce (*khula* law). She argues that “Egyptian feminists have abandoned women's rights discourse because it either gets them nowhere or backfires. They have replaced it with de-gendered and paternalistic discourses” (Dawoud 2011).

The organizations Dawoud studies are quite different in their aim and make-up. Therefore, one could expect that their discourse and favored arguments for promoting women's rights would vary, however Dawoud argues that they all display the same discursive pattern (Ibid). The first organization, the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW), primarily aims to empower women who are heads of their households, but does not focus on political empowerment especially. The second, the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR), is an independent NGO that aims to realize all of Egyptian women's rights based on the Egyptian constitution and international conventions about women, and specifically focus on empowering women politically and legally.

Finally, Dawoud also looks at the National Council for Women (NCW) which was a government organization established by Presidential decree in 2000, in response to the UN Beijing Platform for Action (Dawoud 2011). Highly unpopular after the revolution for its close links to Mubarak, it closed down in 2011 after a fire in the headquarters. This organization distinguished itself from the other two by being closely linked to the presidency and consisting mainly of members from the former regime or the previously ruling National Democratic Party. The NCW had a mandate to suggest as well as comment on, follow up and evaluate government policies and law proposals pertaining to women's issues (Ibid).

While the political nature of the organizations were different, Dawoud found the same pattern of discourse change away from women's rights. She warns that although these discourses have produced some gains (in terms of legal reforms) “they are largely short-term and/or incomplete ones. More importantly, in the long-run, they will actually make it more difficult for Egyptian women to obtain their rights” (Ibid).

If these secular organizations have abandoned the discourse of women's rights, is that a sign that the secular strategy of empowering women based on universal rights is weakened relative to other strategies?

6.1.2 Islamic Feminism

Omaima Abou-Bakr is a scholar of English and comparative literature in Egypt, and a proponent of Islamic feminism. While Islamic feminism is a label which is often rejected by Islamic women because they do not view themselves as “feminists”, a word evoking ideas of Western-style gender ideas, she embraces it. Abou-Bakr provides an example of someone who advocates for a reinterpretation of the Quranic text and prophetic tradition in order to establish women’s rights within an Islamic framework. She argues that women have a right in Islam to raise their concerns, as validated by two episodes described in the prophetic tradition where God himself has responded to concerns and questions raised by women (Hatem 2006). “If God himself and the Prophet (pbuh) gave ear to Muslim women’s queries, then why should not any particular Muslim community if the need arises at another point of our history?”, Abou-Bakr asks rhetorically (quoted in Hatem 2006: 33).

What she seeks to prove is that questioning gender issues is not a Western idea but one that existed and was accepted even in the early years of Islam, the time period which Islamists strive to replicate the ideals of in today’s society. Abou-Bakr indeed represents a moderate interpretation of Islam, but her way of developing her ideology is the same as that of the Muslim Brotherhood's; reinterpretation of Islamic principles according to the context of the current society. Although her interpretations of Islam do not have the same following as the Brotherhood's, they expand the Islamic debate and may contribute to an increased room for reinterpretation and variations in interpretation within larger Islamic movements. Have the women who have become more politically active in the Brotherhood engaged in or been empowered by such reinterpretations?

Another well-known if controversial Islamic feminist, scholar Amina Wadud, claims that women's political participation and representation are among the issues that need to be revisited today (Kamrava 2006: 201). In Wadud's opinion, the

conceptualizations of gender and gender relations found in the Quran are liberating for both men and women, when contextualized and understood properly (Ibid). Wadud argues that the male scholars and thinkers of Islam who later laid the foundations of the religion, without the benefit of having known the Prophet directly or experienced Revelation first-hand, “moved away from the Qur'an's ethical codes for female autonomy to advocate instead women's subservience, silence, and seclusion” (Wadud 2006: 203). To her, this is something women can and need to challenge today by reinterpreting the correct meaning of Islam. Is this what the women of the Muslim Brotherhood have done? Islamic feminists are controversial among Islamists because they try, as exemplified by Wadud, to separate patriarchal fundamentalism from the ideals they believe are truly Islamic, thus reaching interpretations that appear quite radical to the conservative Islamist movements and their patriarchal, traditional societies. Is it possible that the women of the Muslim Brotherhood have advanced into politics without challenging this patriarchy?

6.1.3 Conventional Islamic activism

If secular feminism is under pressure and Islamic feminism is too radical to engage the people, what may be a viable alternative to empowering women in Egypt and the Arab world? Can Islamic activism empower women?

Valentine Moghadam asks of women who join what she calls fundamentalist Islamic movements whether they are patriarchal women or Islamic feminist (2003: 185). She is suspicious that this strategy of promoting women's rights entails “internalizing the notion that Islam or the community is in danger”, which results in “an ordering of priorities established by the male leadership and an indefinite postponement of issues of equality and empowerment” (Ibid). Her description of this strategy to promoting women's rights is a good example of the qualms many have about believing that women are actually committed to this strategy, rather than lured in:

"This strategy avoids challenging identity and frees women from the fear of betrayal; moreover, fundamentalist groups have both the will and the funds to offer their members various gratifications and advantages, such as grants

to study, free medical care, and loans without interest. Women followers also benefit from social and parental recognition and the ability to choose a husband within the group instead of going through an arranged marriage. In this context, hijab makes possible women's entry into and activity within the public spaces dominated by men" (Moghadam 2003: 185).

Is this view of the conventional Islamic strategy justified by what we can observe of women's empowerment in Islamic movements? While the literature is aflood with legal and theological discussions of the gender roles in Islamism, assessing the empowering capacity of the Islamist movements is difficult because of the lack of literature that have an empirical focus on how Islamist movements develop and practice their gender ideologies. Important exceptions of relevance to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood include Omayma Abdel-Latif's article «In the Shadow of the Brothers: The Women of the Muslim Brotherhood» (2008) and «Women in Islamist Movements: Towards an Islamist Model of Women's Activism» (2007) co-authored with Marina Ottaway.

Comparatively to Moghadam, Omayma Abdellatif and Marina Ottaway (2007) believe in an emerging women's agenda within the Islamist movement which has potential for empowerment, as female members are raising a debate about women's roles, rights and issues of particular interest to them. Essentially their concerns are similar to those of women elsewhere across history and different societies, but their answers are different, as they are re-framing women's rights in the Islamic frame of restoring the original, ideal Islam and deriving their answers from the Islamic tradition (Abdellatif and Ottaway 2007: 6). Such an Islamic paradigm for women's issues has great potential, but is far from a coherent, viable reality, as Abdellatif and Ottaway point out. Indeed, the existing discourse is full of disagreements and self-contradictions. If a paradigm will manifest itself in the future, it is highly unclear what it will look like, except that it will be different from Western feminism. Islamist women view Western feminism as «a movement to free women from all social constraints and obligations to family and community, leading to excessive individualism and even licentiousness» (Abdellatif and Ottaway 2007: 7).

Many Islamist women recognize that women's roles in their societies do not correspond to the rights and opportunities that they envision for women. Naturally they do not hold Islam responsible for this; instead they argue that if women are oppressed, this goes against the true ideals of Islam and is caused by human factors such as politically oppressive settings, conservative traditions, lack of education and enlightenment. Men's interpretations of Islam have not been immune to these factors; therefore they can explain less empowering interpretations of Islam as corrupted by pre-Islamic influences, cultural conservatism etcetera. Abdellatif and Ottaway find that women in Islamist movements are not very critical of their own organizations (2007: 10). They found that women of the Muslim Brotherhood firstly blame political oppression for their inferior positions relative to men, while Hisbollah women blame social and cultural norms (Ibid). There does exist an internal pressure to better represent women in these movements, but Abdellatif and Ottaway find that very few women are willing to put themselves in opposition to their movements on account of this issue. To their understanding, the female Islamists feel that their movements have enabled their empowerment more than they have restricted it:

«It is clear from these interviews that women are pushing for change within the Islamist movements. However, it is also clear that they feel the movements, probably more inadvertently than by design, have offered a space where they have started organizing, analyzing and challenging the social norms and cultural values that undermine their position, and, more tentatively, demanding changes within the movements themselves»

(Abdellatif and Ottaway 2007: 11).

Is this the case in the Muslim Brotherhood, that women have inadvertently had their roles developed into political participation? If these are the processes that have promoted women into politics, what does it mean for the Brotherhood's commitment to women's political rights?

6.1.4 A failed elite project?

Hania Sholkamy, in an article discussing feminist empowerment programs in the Arab

world, argues that feminism in this region has been unsuccessful and elite biased in promoting women's rights (2010). “Women’s rights advocates may have educated the revolutionaries and the rulers. But they have not by themselves been able to affect history or the polity. The quantum leaps in realizing rights were initiated by social and national movements”, she claims (Ibid: 257). Her verdict of the Arab women’s rights movement is that while Egypt and other Arab countries have seen feminist movements, feminism has a very limited audience, few results to show for itself and a troublesome, popularly perceived connection to the West (Ibid: 256). In Sholkamy's perspective women are empowered by engaging in larger projects and practices that have real potential to transform society, rather than by being the receivers of gender-targeted development initiatives (Ibid). This is a perspective it is easy to agree with, and it adds weight to the idea that Islamism, as a movement with great capacity to transform society, also can improve women's rights in a bottom-up way by engaging them in this project. But does this not depend on what kind of a society the Islamists aim at? Can their aims and ideals be simultaneously promoted with women's democratic rights?

Empowerment by feminist movements has not only been an activity of the elite, but has mostly benefited the elite, according to Sholkamy's broad-brush verdict. She argues that development initiatives have failed Arab women because they have not been able to alter the patriarchal contexts in which their lives and choices are embedded (Ibid). This failure has highly differentiated impacts on women of the lower and higher socio-economic classes. While middle-class women may be able to benefit from policies based on assumptions about family solidarity and patriarchal obligations, it leaves few options for women whose families cannot guarantee them opportunities for work, education and access to assets (Ibid: 256). With unemployment on the rise, social security systems compromised by economic reforms and increased demand, and increased informalization of markets, many poor Arab women (and men) are left with little income, family support and security (Ibid). In other words, what may be empowering to a few is not necessarily empowering to the masses.

Indeed, the Islamist movements are not about to challenge the patriarchy wholesale, the way Islamic feminists may be doing in a scholarly fashion. However,

the Islamist movements have shown a strong commitment to realizing social justice, as proven by their extensive charity work and community programs. As Sholkamy points out, realizing women's rights is also about improving the conditions in which they are able to exercise them. As such, the Islamic strategy may empower and inspire more women than a failed elite project of feminism.

6.2 Why do women engage in Islamic activism?

To examine women's participation in the Islamist movement, it is first useful to look at some of the existing literature that explains the rise of Islamism in the Muslim world and pick up some arguments from the theories applied. Why do people join this movement in the first place? What made Islamism appeal as an ideology and what helped Islamist movements to gain a growing following in the Muslim world?

6.2.1 Understanding the rise of Islamism

Here I will present some traditional explanations to the rise of Islamism, before I point out some weaknesses with these explanations. Islamism is widely understood as a reaction against the social, political and economic expansion of the West into the Muslim world, especially motivated by the failure of modernization projects in the Muslim world as prescribed by the West. Two types of grievance-based models of explanation dominate the literature; cultural identity models, and political economy models. They are not mutually exclusive in their explanations, but emphasize different structural strains. I will describe their main arguments briefly, beginning with the cultural identity model of explanation.

At the heels of decolonization in the mid-20th century, many leaders in Muslim countries adopted the Western project of modernization with liberalization of the economy, downgrading of local traditions and customs, and importation of Western technology and culture. However, they largely failed to deliver on their promises of progress and prosperity for the masses. Proponents of cultural identity models of explanation stress that the Western cultural domination of the Muslim world alienated the Muslim masses and led to a collective protest, the rise of Islamism, in which they sought to reclaim their Islamic heritage as a source of identity and value to build

society on. Nazih Ayubi is one scholar who argues, along these lines, that the rise of Islamism can be understood as a reaction towards alienation and a quest for authenticity (Høigilt og Selvik 2008: 10). This cultural identity model of explanation suggests that Islamism today is driven by a desire for identity and morality; as a positive reorientation towards the local culture and religion, which had long been considered an obstacle to be overcome in the modernization process, and as a counter-balance to rapid social change, which many perceived as a threat to moral order (Utvik 2011: 28).

Political economy models, on the other hand, explain the rise of Islamism as a reaction to political mismanagement, widespread corruption, lack of economic growth, social inequality and lack of political rights affecting the vast majority of people in the Middle East and North Africa region. In short, people's worldly grievances are the base units for this model of explanation. Arguably, women as a group suffer from such socioeconomic factors at least as much as men, and are often disproportionately affected by them.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim exemplifies this model of explanation by arguing that since independence, Egypt has unsuccessfully "experimented" with several secular alternative solutions to these pressing socioeconomic issues. First a liberal experiment from 1922 to 1952, then a national-socialist experiment from 1952 to 1970, and since a quasi-autocratic experiment starting in 1970 and continuing under Mubarak (Ibrahim 2002: 27). In general, Ibrahim argues that the Muslim world has responded to Western domination through emulating the West (liberalism), attempting to reconcile Western civilization with Muslim heritage (nationalism), or by rejection of the West altogether - that would be, through Islamism (Ibid: 66). Since the secular alternatives have failed, the "Islamic solution" - although untried except in Iran after the revolution, at the time when Ibrahim was writing - has an increasing appeal as a response to people's socioeconomic grievances, according to this model. Ibrahim thus understands the resurgence of Islamism in the 1980s as a third wave of "politicized Islam as an idiom for expressing profound worldly grievances" (Ibid: 76). Political models of explanation also often stress that the lack of credible opposition groups in undemocratic political systems leaves a political vacuum that the Islamists have been

able to exploit.

Are women participating in Islamist movements as a way of alleviating their socioeconomic grievances, as this model suggests? If so, what about the overwhelmingly middle-class demography of the Islamist movements? The rise of Islamism cannot be understood simply as a product of structural strains that paved the ground for a new, untried ideology. To understand the rise of Islamism as a popular movement we should be able to say something about how the structural or contextual factors that facilitated this rise were made use of by those who believed that «Islam is the solution». These two models of explanations include many grievances which undoubtedly have motivated Islamic activism in the MENA region, but they still do not suffice to explain why or how this movement has mobilized. The two models are too focused on either ideological or structural dimensions, and therefore they miss the strategic or mobilizing dimension of Islamism as a social movement. This is made apparent in a striking paradox which these models do not explain, namely that Islamism is at the same time a reaction to and a product of modernization. Islamist movements have been formed by the growing middle classes, and took long to develop a membership base among the poor, whose grievances are more dire. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, although popular today with the poorer and rural parts of the population, was started by and is still led by the educated, urban middle class. They found their strength in public universities and professional syndicates. Moreover, their mobilization comes in the face of the serious risks associated with political opposition in autocracies, especially in times of violent confrontation with the state.

The grievance-based models do not sufficiently explain why Islamism attracted its followers in the face of such risks. The structural strains emphasized in explaining the rise of Islamism such as the failure of secular modernization, Western cultural imperialism, or lack of formal political access – or, increasingly, a combination of these strains, are very real. However, these explanations rest on a logic which has been heavily criticized. Structural strains exist in all societies and do not necessarily produce movements; especially not in poor countries with limited resources and restricted political freedoms. In fact, contentious social movements are much more prevalent in resourceful, democratic Western societies. “While grievances are

ubiquitous, movements are not”, notes Quintan Wiktorowicz, who has studied Islamist movements from a social movement perspective (2004: 10). Conventionally, social scientists have not addressed this flaw in the underlying logic of their models, but rather combined the different structural strains into more complex models of explanations. “The massive accumulation of different social problems makes mobilization seem virtually inevitable,” Wiktorowicz admits, but it does not explain why, for example, groups choose different intra-movement tactics within the same political context, or why Islamism was chosen over another ism, or how movements mobilize under repressive conditions (2004: 9). Therefore these grievance-based explanations, while undoubtedly part of the answer, are insufficient causal explanations of Islamic activism.

6.2.2 Women's Islamic activism

Why, then, do women or others join Islamist movements? And more specifically, why did women's Islamic activism in the political field rise over the recent years? In my literature review I have found three pieces to the puzzle that focus on and explain women's activism from a rational actor perspective, which I present here.

Omayma Abdellatif and Marina Ottaway (2008) present the most ready-made explanations to the puzzle, as they have studied the same phenomenon but on a regional scale. They argue that Islamist women have become more active and empowered because of three factors: 1) Islamist movements needed women for wider outreach, 2) educated women members of Islamist movements have become more aware of their own importance, 3) Islamist movements provided a safe space from which to press for women's rights without being dismissed as Western stooges (2007: 5). Indeed, Islamist movements have made efforts to make the most of women's activism, including «strengthening the organizational structures of women's branches as well as engaging women in crucial political tasks such as election campaigning and voting on election day» (Ibid).

In the eyes of Abdellatif and Ottaway, women's empowerment in Islamist movements was an unexpected outcome of their activism, a pattern which resembles that of Western social movements. «Like women in political movements elsewhere in

the world, they soon started asking whether activism only meant helping with the implementation of policies decided by male leaders or whether women had a right to be involved in making decisions» (Abdellatif and Ottaway 2007: 6). However, Abdellatif and Ottaway acknowledge that this has not immediately translated into women being represented in decision-making bodies in these movement; indeed the rate of change remains slow. Ironically, nominating women as candidates in elections for local or national government has been a less controversial move than changing internal structures to include women in decision-making within the movements. While the issue is being raised, the leadership in the Islamist movements don't necessarily see a need to challenge social and cultural norms to include women in decision-making (Abdellatif and Ottaway 2007: 6). Are the explanations suggested by Abdellatif and Ottaway reliable? The two other contributions in the literature presented below shed some more light on their explanatory power

Journalists and political commentators often refer to women's role in recruitment and grass root mobilization as one reason why Islamist movements are so numerous and popular. How exactly do women carry out this role, and is this the only function of their grass root activism? With a social movement theory approach, Janine A. Clark looks at how Islamist women in Yemen build and adapt social networks (2004). She finds that Islamists, including women doing Islamic activism, are not only recruiting those who for structural reasons are predisposed to Islamism; more importantly they are creating these predispositions (Ibid).

An Islamist, as I have defined the term in chapter 2, is someone who seeks, through extra-ordinary religious activism, to apply Islamic values, beliefs, and practices in all areas of life, based on the idea that Islam is an all-encompassing “way of life” to be applied both in the private realm and the public realm. An important concept related to this idea and mission is the the act of *da'wa*, which roughly translates as “inviting” someone to Islam, but takes many shapes in practice. This concept intimately connects activism with the religious conviction that Islamists share. Da'wa activities, in contrast to Christian missionary work, are usually directed at other Muslims rather than unbelievers, with the aim of increasing their knowledge about Islam and encouraging them to be more pious in all aspects of their lives. Clark

explains that *da'wa* can be practiced in different ways, for example by hosting a Quran study circle, joining a political party or doing charity work (2004: 168). She notes that “for Islamist women in Yemen, therefore, there exists a seamless web between religion, politics, charity, and all forms of activism. (...) The act of *da'wa* itself promotes an environment in which Islam and Muslims can flourish.” (Clark 2004: 168-169).

Clark goes on to detail the usefulness of a specific form of *da'wa*, namely study circles for studying the Quran and Islam, to Islamist social movement organizations and their members, specifically in reaching women and recruiting under unfavorable political circumstances. Both Clark and Wickham find that Islamist networks build upon existing social relations, making them easy to access (especially for women, whose options for public participation are more limited) or expand in a nonthreatening manner, and at the same time offer great personal rewards to the women who participate in them, which gives them their appeal and contributes to their success (Clark 2004, Wickham 2004). These study circles are especially important, argues Clark, because they provide a socially legitimate reason for women to go out of their homes and participate in the public sphere (2004: 179). Through these circles, women may in turn be introduced to or recruited into other forms of activism, or they may simply be socialized into an expanded network of shared meaning which lays the foundations for social change.

It is widely recognized in social movement theory that social networks foster mobilization for social movement organizations, but Clark argues that the kind of networking that Islamist women in Yemen carry out also furthers the Islamist cause in other ways than through recruitment and institution-building (Ibid: 165). She finds that the social movement organizations have a strong impact on the social networks, which they actively target and utilize to “access larger numbers of women with different degrees of commitment, including those women normally found outside of the counterculture or mobilization potential” (Ibid: 180). The role of social networks thus also helps us understand how middle-class women can be mobilized, for example, as unexplained by the structural strain models of explanation. Indeed, effective *da'wa* can influence the political environment in which the Islamist parties vie for power but are

often excluded from formal politics, as Clark explains:

“As *da'wa* activities reconfigure social networks, Islamist women are creating and reinforcing a worldview that ultimately envisions dramatic social change. The potential for grassroots social change is all the more powerful given that many of the women targeted by SMO members may participate in SMO activities without consciously acknowledging that they are, in essence, working on behalf of a political party or ideology by supporting its interests. As the Islamist “invention of tradition” slowly takes root through social networks, political parties, regardless of ideological persuasion, will have to take note of the groundswell of support for an Islamist-inspired, conservative social and political agenda” (Ibid: 180).

This contribution to the literature helps us understand how Islamist women, who most often exercise *da'wa* in the shape of charity work or religious activism rather than political activism, also have contributed to the political project of the Islamist movement by these activities. If the women themselves make this connection, it may lend support to Abdellatif and Ottaway's argument that Islamist women's political empowerment is a result of their activism in other fields. This is a notion to follow in the closer examination of my puzzle.

While Clarke examines how women's Islamic activism create the preconditions for recruitment and the spread of Islamism, Carrie Rosefsky Wickham looks at how the preconditioned are drawn into the movement. In a contribution to Quintan Wiktorowicz's 2004 compilation of social movement perspectives on Islamic activism, she tries to explain how Islamism could attract so many university-educated young supporters in Egypt (Wickham 2004). Based on fieldwork in lower-middle-class neighborhoods in Cairo, she concludes that the youth engage in Islamic activism both because of incentives and because of ideas. Rational actor models of mobilization theories explain mobilization by incentives, or the various social, psychological, and emotional benefits of participation, but Wickham finds that these incentives can only explain participation in low-risk activism. To engage youth in high-risk activism such as political participation, Wickham finds that the Islamists successfully frame this kind

of activism as a moral obligation. This framing is successful not because of some intrinsic appeal of Islamism, argues Wickham, but because the message fits with the life experiences and beliefs of the youths who are the target of mobilization, because the Islamists and their modes of transmitting their message are credible and effective, and because the framing of activism as a religious obligation is reinforced through what Wickham calls “intensive, small-group solidarity at the grassroots level” (Ibid: 232). Wickham includes both men and women in her study, and we can assume that the same factors apply to both genders.

Wickham, like Clark, highlights the “critical importance of the Islamist da’wa, or project of ideological outreach, in generating motives for the higher-risk forms of Islamic activism associated with the movement’s bid for political power” (Wickham 2004: 247). She also argues that the Islamists in general have been most successful on the plane of ideas, unable to actually alter the political landscape but still able to “provide Egyptians with a radically different vantage point from which to view the political system and their role within it” (Ibid: 245). Wickham compares this to Vaclav Havel’s notion that “ruling elites [implicate] citizens in their own domination by sapping them of the capacity to challenge dominant beliefs and norms” (Ibid: 246). Only through a change of consciousness, citizens can liberate themselves from oppression (Ibid). Is Islamist women’s increased political representation a product of a similar change of consciousness regarding women’s role? If so, what has brought about this change? These are also questions that deserve attention as the puzzle is investigated.

6.3 Summary

A review of critical literature on women’s rights and empowerment in Egypt and the Arab world suggests that the project of promoting women’s rights is in something of a crisis. The secular strategy has not lived up to the expectations and its own followers are abandoning the discourse of universal rights. Islamic feminism remains an academic strategy removed from women’s realities. The Islamist gender agenda is viewed with suspicion, but some contend that by engaging in Islamic activism, women have gained capacity to claim their rights. Is it indeed a credible strategy by which

women's rights can be realized?

While the rise of Islamism was first explained by models emphasizing the structural strain Muslim individuals were put under and which they sought to alleviate, Islamism is increasingly understood from a rational actor-perspective. Studies employing this perspective suggest that Islamist movements recruit members both by incentives and by the power of ideas. Moreover, these studies have shown us how women's activism contributes to "Islamizing" society in a way that makes this recruitment easier and changes the political context. These studies lend support to the idea that through activism aimed at spreading Islam and creating a just Islamic society, women's roles in Islamic movements and the Arab world have grown beyond what the movements initially envisioned. Thus, women's Islamic activism seems potent to both empower women and change their roles within both their societies and their movements. These ideas will be explored further in the close examination of women in the Muslim Brotherhood in the following chapter.

7 The Main Case: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood

In this chapter I will first give an introduction to the Muslim Brotherhood, the case I have chosen to study, in which I sketch out two factors of its organization and history which are of special importance to understanding how women come to participate in politics through this movement. One is the contentious relationship between the movement and the Egyptian state, which has had a special impact on women's activism. The other is the role of women in the movement and its ideology, which have gone through considerable changes.

Then, for the remainder of the chapter I will present my qualitative data about women's participation in the Brotherhood collected during my fieldwork in Cairo. By presenting the findings from my interview material I aim to give a "thick" description of the women's attitudes and experiences regarding political participation. This in-depth examination of the puzzle serves up some suggestions for explanations about Islamist women's increasing political participation. I will draw on these for my analysis in the next chapter.

7.1 The Brotherhood and the state

The Muslim Brotherhood was established in Egypt in 1928 by the charismatic Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), in the city of Ismailiyya. Today, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is a sociopolitical movement based on an Islamist platform which favors peaceful means in the struggle for political power (Rashwan 2007: 10). Because of its renunciation of violence and because of its rather moderate interpretations of Islamism, it is largely counted among the moderate Islamist movements. It is also the oldest and most influential of all the Islamist movements in the region, as today there are offshoots or likeminded groups existing in Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Bahrain, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia and other countries.

Ideologically, the Brotherhood was based on a revivalist, fundamentalist understanding of Islam which borrowed from 19th century thinkers such as Jamal al-Din Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. These thinkers recognized that the Muslim world

had been overtaken and overrun by the West, and sought to find a solution in Islam. Their answer was to reform Islam in order to make it compatible with science and rationality, so that the Muslim world could develop and progress like the West had. From the beginning, the Brotherhood focused on strengthening the individual Muslim's faith and give guidance for how Islam should be practiced correctly on an individual level. This idea of reforming the individual as the way of changing society remains a central element of the Brotherhood's ideology to this day (Utvik 2011: 93).

It is estimated that by 1948, the Brotherhood had amassed 500 000 members divided into 2000 branches (Utvik 2011: 95). In each branch members were organized in “families” (*usra* in Egyptian Arabic), the lowest units of organization, which received their instructions from the higher links (Ibid). After the second world war, the Brotherhood had become more directly involved in politics, seeking to build a society based on Islam. They also engaged in social work, creating an alternative welfare system consisting of schools, hospitals and health clinics which picked up where the state failed to deliver. The Brotherhood which al-Banna built was a hierarchic structure with four ranks of membership (from helper to fighter), a leading council of elders with 12 members and a larger council of 150 advisers. This organizational structure remains to this day. Al-Banna himself, while he was alive, served as the undisputed center of authority with his charisma.

In the early 1940s the Brotherhood was involved in guerrilla attacks on the British forces in Egypt and also in political murders, and in 1948 a member of this groups assassinated prime minister Mahmud al-Nuqrashi. Al-Banna denied any responsibility for his assassination, but the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed. In 1949 al-Banna himself was assassinated by a police agent. Despite these blows, the Brotherhood remained intact and was able to participate in the 1952 revolution in Egypt, where the Brotherhood supported the Free Officers Corps which performed a military coup on July 23 1952. For their close association and political agreement with the Free Officers, the Brotherhood was spared when the officers banned all political parties in 1953. However the relationship turned into a power struggle and the Brotherhood turned against what they saw as an increasingly authoritarian regime led by Nasser. In 1954, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to assassinate

Nasser and the regime cracked down brutally on the Brotherhood. Six of its most prominent leaders were executed, thousands arrested, many fled into exile, its headquarters were burned and the organization was outlawed, effectively crushing their ability to operate actively well into the 1970s, when Nasser was followed by Anwar al-Sadat.

After the death of al-Banna, the writer and prominent Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) inspired an ideological radicalization of the Islamist movement in Egypt which worsened the Brotherhood's confrontation with the state. According to Qutb one could declare as infidels those who through their actions betrayed that they did not adhere to the correct faith, particularly rulers of Muslim majority states, which justified the use of violence against them. Qutb was executed in 1966 for his activism and flammable radicalism, accused with attempting to overthrow the regime. His ideology inspired the formation of radical and violent Islamist groups in the 1970s which engaged in violent *jihad* against the state in Egypt and performed terrorist attacks in Egypt until the 1990s. The Brotherhood leaders did not accept and agree with Qutb's radical ideas, particularly disagreeing with the idea of declaring a “misbehaving” Muslim an infidel. They upheld that only God could judge what was in a person's heart and that He would administer punishment or heavenly rewards on the day of judgment. When the Brotherhood reemerged in the 1970s, this view formed an important ideological contribution to their reformist policy.

Besides banning opposition groups such as the Brotherhood, Nasser laid the sites these groups had used to reach out to the masses under state control, such as universities, schools, media and mosques (Wickham 2002: 21-23). But how did Nasser control the targets of mobilization against opposition groups? Wickham looks at why the educated youth, which had been the main targets of Islamist mobilization in the early years of the Brotherhood's history, not only were deterred from participating in activism under Nasser but indeed supported the Nasser regime in large numbers. She argues that Nasser succeeded in this by granting the educated middle-class and lower-middle-class youth a material and symbolic stake in his state project, singling them out for extra entitlements and extra indoctrination because they were seen as strategically important to manage for the stability of the regime (Ibid: 23).

However, Nasser depended on a “social contract” with his people – providing economic and social benefits in return for political support, such as expanded access to free education, employment in the state sector and subsidies for food, energy, health and housing. These benefits were, as Wickham stresses, not distributed equally, but rather aimed at these important targets of mobilization that the Islamists had previously recruited from. Precisely these educated middle-class and lower-middle-class youths would again support the Islamist resurgence as economic re-entrenchment, military defeat in the war with Israel and political crisis in Egypt wore away at Nasser's ability to co-opt them, starting at the end of the 1960s. Social activism grew again in Egypt beginning with the defeat by Israel in 1967, which sparked protest demonstrations started by industrial workers and soon joined by the students and university graduates. Students took to the streets to “hold the regime responsible for failing to deliver on its revolutionary promises” (Wickham 2002: 31). The military defeat against Israel unleashed a list of grievances which were now raised by precisely the students which Nasser had cultivated politically and given opportunities to organize in the universities, no longer loyal when the regime could not perform (Ibid). Important ideological reformists came into the Brotherhood from the student movement in the 70s, including figures such as Abdel-Monem Abul-Fotouh.

Unable to sustain the social contract based on expensive social and economic benefits, Nasser's regime in the mid-1970s attempted to instead buy its legitimacy with increased political and economic liberalization, offering its citizens increased but limited rights to participation. However, this only increased the divide between regime and people. At first it was the leftists that attracted the youths that Nasser could no longer control, as they did in many other countries at the time, because they were ideologically similar to the regime and thus better able to use the opportunity structures that emerged after the 1967 war (Wickham 2002: 34). However these educated youths started to orient themselves towards Islamism already in the mid-1970s, and especially in the 1980s and early 1990s the reformist Islamists became the leading oppositional force in Egypt.

Following the sudden death of Nasser, Anwar Sadat became the new president of Egypt. From 1971 Sadat increased the freedoms of the political opposition. While

the Brotherhood officially remained illegal, he also released many members of the Muslim Brotherhood from prison, thus indirectly helping to bring the Brotherhood back as a vital opposition movement. This was a strategic move by Sadat in an attempt to weaken the socialist opposition. During the 1970s, as the Brotherhood regained its strength it focused its policy on pragmatic issues and renounced the use of violence, thus seeking to minimize its confrontation with the regime. The Brotherhood increased its presence especially in student unions at universities and in professional syndicates, and in 1979 members of the Brotherhood again participated in parliamentary elections. However Sadat's opening up of the political system was only partial. Opposition parties were still not allowed, and Wickham argues that this political reform paradoxically undermined the legitimacy of Egypt's formal political institutions and elites (2002: 64). Meanwhile, the Islamists had the advantage of being able to mobilize their supporters at the periphery through the religious institutions, primarily the mosques, outside the sphere of party politics. From this position, the Islamists were able to reach out to the alienated and disillusioned urban, educated youths through the 1980s and 1990s.

Since 1979, the Brotherhood has contested representation in parliament by running their candidates as independents or allying with oppositional parties (Carnegie Endowment C nd). Hosni Mubarak, who became president when Sadat was assassinated in 1981, tolerated this, but the organization remained officially outlawed. In 1995, the Brotherhood declared its acceptance of multiparty politics in a statement which marked a major departure from the teachings of Hasan al-Banna (Norton 2005: 140). While al-Banna was against what he considered to be a divisive political system, the 1995 leadership “embraced parties as instruments of *shura* (consultation)”, an Islamic principle of leadership, “while reiterating that power may not be taken by the sword”, thus reinforcing their commitment to peaceful means of advancing their agenda (Ibid). The Brotherhood sought to signal its willingness to abide by democratic rules, and in the mid-1990s made many efforts to find entrée into the political system while the Mubarak regime moved to tighten its control of it (Ibid). The Mubark regime made no response to the statement (Ibid). In 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood accomplished an unprecedented feat and won 20% of the seats in parliament in a

reasonably free political climate where the opposition was allowed to campaign. However, the regime came down on the organization after this victory and from 2006 on, hundreds of members were arrested, senior leaders taken to military courts (as Mubarak never lifted the emergency law since Sadat was murdered) and their finances attacked (Carnegie Endowment C nd). In the next parliamentary elections in 2010, Mubarak's National Democratic Party won 95% of the votes and used considerable repressive means against Brotherhood members who participated in the elections (Ibid). The Brotherhood as well as other opposition groups vocally accused the regime of voter fraud and rigging, which increased the popular resentment against the regime.

The January 25 revolution in 2011 was initiated by secular groups, most notably the 6th of April Youth Movement and using the “We Are All Khaled Saeed” Facebook page to mobilize support. Although many of its younger members participated in the demonstrations from the first day, the Muslim Brotherhood did not officially support the revolution until Friday January 28, the day it gained its critical momentum. Since this day, the Brotherhood has been one of the strongest groups on the side of the revolution, often engaging in dialogues with the military council which has ruled Egypt since Mubarak was forced to step down on February 11 2011, and contesting its power. The Brotherhood formed its first political party, The Freedom and Justice Party (*Al-Hurriyya wa al-‘Adala*) in April 2011. Its vice-president, Rafiq Habib, is a Coptic Christian. The Freedom and Justice Party won 45,2% of the seats in the People's Assembly in the Egyptian parliament (lower house)(Carnegie Endowment, A nd), and 58,3% in the Shura council (upper house)(Carnegie Endowment, B nd), which gives it the largest number of seats among all parties in both houses.

In its political program for the 2011 elections, The Freedom and Justice Party envisions a state which is a “national constitutional Islamic modern democracy, based on Sharia (Islamic law) as a frame of reference” (Freedom and Justice Party 2011: 10). An excerpt from this program illustrates the seemingly contradicting, yet fundamental ideas this vision seeks to merge and which inspires doubts about how this vision of democracy would work out in practice. Within the first two paragraphs concerning the structure of this state, the platform first notes that Sharia “regulates various aspects of life for Muslims and their non-Muslim partners in the homeland” either directly or

through general principles, but that non-Muslims “have the right to refer to their own rules and laws in the fields of family and religious affairs” (Ibid: 10-11). Then it lays out the following as the first principle of the state: “The State is based on the principle of citizenship, where all citizens enjoy equal rights and duties guaranteed by law in accordance with the principles of equality and equal opportunities without discrimination because of religion or race” (Ibid: 11).

7.2 The Brotherhood and the women

In the early years of the Brotherhood and while Egyptian feminists began to demand emancipation, Hasan al-Banna set up the Brotherhood's first women's division in 1932. It was called The Muslim Sisters Group (*ferqat al-akhawaat al-muslimaat*), and its members were mainly the daughters, wives, and other relatives of the Brothers (Abdel-Latif 2008: 2). An internal statute released in April 1932 defined the aims of the Muslim Sisters group as upholding the Islamic ethos and spreading virtue through lectures and women-only gatherings (Ibid: 3). It also defined the hierarchy of the women’s organization, which was not to have its own head but be under the authority of the Brotherhood’s Supreme Guide (Ibid). Today the Sisters' division remains separated from the Brothers' activities and affairs, as it has been from the beginning. Women are subjected to a leadership they cannot choose or participate in, as they are excluded from the two decision-making bodies of the Brotherhood, the Shura Council (the legislative body) and the Guidance Bureau (the executive body) and not allowed to vote in elections for these bodies.

As recruitment of women proved difficult, al-Banna approached the well-known Islamic activist Zainab al-Ghazali, who had established her own Islamic women's organization. He proposed a merger of the two organizations, but al-Ghazali refused, preferring to retain the autonomy of her work and organization. However she came to alliance herself with al-Banna and the Brotherhood later and was instrumental to its revival in the 60s. The Muslim Sisters division was revived by internal efforts instead in 1943, at the initiative of 120 young women who attended al-Banna's sermons (Abdel-Latif 2008: 3). Omayma Abdel-Latif notes on the history of women's activism in the Brotherhood that although women's efforts were crucial to the

movement's survival in times of confrontation with the state during the 1950s and 60s, the women's division also suffered in these periods of confrontation and was not prioritized in times of restructuring during the rule of Sadat (Ibid: 7). Therefore, women's efforts to help the movement survive did not translate into added influence within the Brotherhood (Ibid). Abdel-Latif claims that while the Brother's section was rebuilt under Sadat, the roles and rights of women in the Brotherhood were barely even debated, noting that “apart from the release of a few documents during these long and lean years, which contained only thin and repetitive sections on the movement’s vision of women’s roles in politics, there was hardly any debate at the time about the roles and rights of women” (Ibid: 8).

Not until the 2000s did women's role as political actors in the movement become visible (Abdel-Latif 2008: 8). 2000 saw the nomination of the Muslim Brotherhood's first female candidate for elections, Johan al-Halafawi. The Brotherhood has continued to fielded female candidates in all parliamentary and municipal elections in Egypt in all elections during the last decade. Because the Brotherhood was not allowed to form a political party under Mubarak's regime, this means that the women ran for elections as independent candidates with the expressed support of the Brotherhood. This situation changed after the 2011 revolution which toppled President Mubarak on February 11 2011, collapsed the ruling National Democratic Party and eventually allowed oppositional groups to legally establish political parties in April the same year. The Muslim Brotherhood promptly established their political front, the Freedom and Justice Party. During the 2000s, female Islamists have also actively engaged in demonstrations and "street politics" despite the high risks involved, defying the argument that the Sisters should be spared the dangers of political activities. This became especially true during the 2011 revolution and ongoing protests.

Islamist women candidates for elections in 2000, 2005, 2007 and 2010 have reported being threatened and harassed by the state apparatus. While women were considered a “red line” which the state security could not cross in their confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood, the regime sometimes sidestepped this by arresting their husbands instead. Women activists have also been detained or arrested for participating

in student politics and campaigning for Muslim Brotherhood candidates. In a way, the use of such tactics against the "Sisters" can be read as a confirmation that their activities are, in fact, seen as potent. Islamist women's political participation and activism is indeed taken seriously by the regime when it decides to use such force to repress it. Ironically, women's participation may invite such political oppression not because the ideas they promote are so radical, but because their very participation enhances the political credibility of the movement they belong to.

Women within the movement, especially from the younger generation, have begun to ask for integration and equal rights within the movement itself in response to this increase in women's political participation. Women's rights to political participation both as voters and nominees have been stated repeatedly in Brotherhood party platforms and documents on the role of women. The first such statement came in 1994 and discussed the various rights of women within Islam including their political rights. It stated that women had the right to participate in elections as voters and candidates, but that women could not hold the post of *al-Imaama al-kubra* (equivalent to the caliphate), which is an argument against women's right to be head of state (Abdel-Latif 2008: 8). The document also stressed the need to educate women on their political rights and encourage them to run in elections (Ibid). These views were repeated in a document called "The Muslim Brotherhood Initiative for Political Reform in Egypt" which was issued in 2004 (Ibid). The Brotherhood's electoral platform of 2005 and party platform of 2007 also emphasized women's right to vote and candidate themselves in elections, but balanced with their differentiated social roles (Ibid: 8-9). The political platform of the Freedom and Justice Party released in 2011 declares that its representatives are dedicated to "guarantee non-discrimination among citizens in rights and duties on the basis of religion, sex or colour" and also to "ensure women's access to all their rights, consistent with the values of Islamic law, maintaining the balance between their duties and rights" (Freedom and Justice Party 2011).

These documents reveal some contradictions and an element of traditionalist sentiment concerning women's status and roles inside the Brotherhood. This has also been visible in a continuing debate on whether a woman can run for president, which

the Muslim Brotherhood still officially opposes, and the lack of female members at the top level of the organization. Critics are asking if the nomination of a few women for national and local elections is simply a PR-move by the Brotherhood. Why are women allowed to run as candidates for the Brotherhood in external elections, but not participate in the movement's internal elections? Women seem to have a greater role in the newly-established Freedom and Justice Party, where there are allegedly 1000 women among the 7000 co-founders. However, the authority of the party is questionable in its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood; important decisions regarding the politics of the party, selection of candidates etc. seem to be made in the decision-making bodies of the Brotherhood rather than in the party itself.

7.3 Findings from the field study

As described in chapter 5 I have conducted a field study in Cairo in order to explore my puzzle in detail. Here I wish to present the findings from my interviews with 10 women who are or were associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. What does the interview material consist of? What have I talked with my informants about? In my interviews I have generally started off by explaining the purpose of my field work, then asking about my informants' personal experiences with activism in the Brotherhood and the roles they have filled, as well as their perspective on why women from the Muslim Brotherhood have become more active participants in politics. Then I have continued to ask follow-up questions either based on what the informant has told me or from a prepared set of questions.

If the informants did not bring up the revolution in their answers, I have asked them about changes in women's participation after the revolution. I have also asked about their general ideas and perspectives on women, gender equality and political participation. For example, I have asked if they believe that gender equality is an Islamic idea, which always prompted elaborate answers. I have also asked their opinions on specific controversial topics regarding women's political participation in Egypt, such as what they thought of the abolished gender quota in parliament or how they feel about a woman running for president. Much of the interviews have also focused on discussing women's roles and rights inside the Brotherhood, which in

general have produced the most diverse answers.

To analyze my interview material I have adopted some tools from Strauss and Corbin's approach to grounded theory (1998). Their approach is one that begins with the researcher identifying an area of interest, followed by focused gathering of data around this area and leading up to the development of concepts, hypotheses and theory. In this thesis I do not aim to develop theory, but I have used grounded theory analysis to break down my interview material into the concepts that are embodied in the data in the initial coding. As these concepts are re-arranged into central categories or themes in the material, I can compare my observations across informants and suggest some causal links between important concepts. I have looked at how the larger categories of concepts relate to each other to form explanations about the phenomena described in the material. Categories link to each other as conditions, actions/interactions or consequences and these links explain the what, why, where, and how of a phenomenon (Ibid: 135). I have tried to identify how Islamist women themselves understand the actors, structures and processes that enable or limit their political participation, and their interrelationship.

For this presentation I have only made use of the material from interviews with the 10 informants who were women associated with the Brotherhood. The perspectives of the men I interviewed were informative for the data collection process and have familiarized me with a greater plurality of voices in the Brotherhood, thus influencing my approach to this thesis and my interpretation of data. However, in this part of the thesis I primarily want to explore women's political participation from their own perspective. Below I present the main findings from this interview material organized according to the most central categories of concepts I have identified in the material; recruitment, women's activism, political repression, and ideology and gender roles. Concepts, which are my abstractions of the answers, are written in *italic*, and phrases used by the informants in the interviews are sometimes given in quotation marks to illustrate the concepts.

7.3.1 Recruitment

All the informants discussed to some degree how and why she joined the Brotherhood.

Thus recruitment is an obvious category of concepts in the interview material. Examining this material, why and how did each women join or let herself be recruited? Which concepts relate to their recruitment and how?

Informant A claims she sought an organization to join on her own initiative. In her case *seeking activism opportunity* can be described as a strategic action leading to *recruitment* into the Brotherhood, motivated by her *desire to help* which enabled her to be recruited. She was attracted to the Brotherhood for its religious nature, thus *religious identification* was also an incentive for activism (as Wickham calls it) or a motivational condition (as Strauss and Corbin refers to such subconcepts leading to action) for recruitment. But before she made her final decision, she also had an *introduction to MB activities*, and made her final decision based on her *connection with members*. This process of recruitment is stereotypical of most movements or organizations, also secular ones.

Informant B started to orient herself towards the Brotherhood after her father, a leader in the Brotherhood, was detained and sentenced to prison by military court in the 1995 regime crack-down on Islamist movements in Egypt. Through her father she had a family connection to the Brotherhood, but the trigger event that primed her for self-recruitment was *experiencing repression*. She describes how she *sought answers* about why her father had been arrested and started reading about the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is noteworthy that this informant had experienced first-hand the risks associated with this activism when she decided to join. As Wickham's study discussed in the literature review has pointed out, incentives are not strong enough to recruit members into dangerous forms of activism. In these cases, the success of the recruitment relies on whether the recruited accepts and identifies with the frame of ideas that the movement justifies its activism by. In the interview, informant B actually continued to elaborate on what she calls *the basic idea of the Brotherhood* and what most convinced her as she was reading about it. She emphasized three things; that the Brotherhood sought to "implement the right Islam", that they could do so in a way that was sensitive to the context of the country yet universally valid (even respecting minorities like other religions), and that they understood Islam in a moderate way (vs.

extremist). This informant then became engaged in political activism in student union elections and in demonstrations, exactly the type of activism which puts her at risk.

Informant C, now a grandmother, joined the Muslim Brotherhood after first attending lessons on Islam at the mosque and reading about Hasan al-Banna. She had *social ties* to the Brotherhood because the father of her friend was a member. After joining she married a Brotherhood member, and she has raised her children "in the way of Muslim Brother thinking". The time when she became active in the Muslim Sisters was a time of repression against Islamism in Egypt, after the murder of Sadat. So she became active under and despite dangerous conditions, and she speaks about experiencing *harassment* because of her activism in the university.

Informant D (daughter of informant C) was *born into the movement* as both her parents were members. However she claims that it was her personal choice to join actively and that she compared the Brotherhood to other movements before she made her decision. Since college she has had an active role. She, as well as her mother, is focused on the religious aim and religious activism as the basis of Brotherhood activity. They are both engaged in *religious activism*, teaching others about Islam and how they can live their lives in accordance with the right interpretation of the religion.

Informant E was also *born into the movement*. She tells that her parents, both members, raised her among the *zaharat* (an Arabic word meaning flowers, used to describe young girls receiving Islamic education in the Brotherhood movement). As a youth she left briefly when she did not identify with the religious syllabus. When she started joining the weekly meetings (*usra*) this was a positive experience that *re-inforced her commitment* and gave her incentive to engage in religious activism aimed at spreading the faith (*da'wa*). She then started to educate herself on the Brotherhood by reading about Hasan al Banna, and in 2005 when she was 16 she participated in *political activism* for the elections. Thus *positive identification* with the religious nature of the group, *positive experiences* from religious activism and *inspiration* from the ideology of the Brotherhood led her to political participation.

Informant F explains simply that although her whole family were part of the Muslim Brotherhood, *born into the movement*, she considers herself a member since she joined actively as a teenager in university. She became familiar with the

Brotherhood through her family, a condition priming her for *recruitment*, but claims that it was her activism in the group that convinced her of its "idea". In other words, her *activism in university* was the activity that produced her *commitment* to the organization and led her to *identify* with its ideas.

Informant G was also brought up within the Muslim Brotherhood as both her parents were members, and in her own words she and her siblings "were Muslim Brothers since we were children". She started participating in *political activism* when she was in the secondary school, helping with election campaigning. Later, when she entered university, she started doing student activism because "students in the university are some of the important people in the Muslim Brotherhood". It seems that her *commitment* was given by her being *born into the movement* and that her *activism* was motivated by how she perceived the *needs of the movement*, where they needed her help.

Informant H is a rare case of *self-recruitment* because no one in her family were members of the Brotherhood when she decided to join based on her personal choice. After she became a member she found her future husband in the movement, and says that today she encourages him to "do his part in the party and the movement", because the party "needs qualifications". She explains "that's the role of the wife, how to encourage her husband to do his best." As many informants have described, *family dynamics* reinforce *commitment* to the movement, but this is an atypical pattern where the woman is the one who set these dynamics into motion.

Comparatively, **Informant I** was *born into the movement* and explains her membership simply by telling that her father was a very active member of the Brotherhood who "raised his children in his steps".

Informant J explains that she joined the movement at school as a youth over 30 years ago. She emphasizes two things that mobilized her to be an active member; *encouragement* from her husband, whom she met in the movement, and the *guidance* of the Brotherhood's "First Lady" Zeinab al-Ghazali. Again, encouraging *family dynamics* is important to re-inforcing *commitment* to activism in the Brotherhood. In addition, this informant has benefited from the *mentoring* and encouragement of the most prominent female leader figure in the Islamist movement. "My relationship with

*haga*⁴ Zeinab encouraged me to work harder and work more specifically with the Muslim Brotherhood for 30 years", she explains.

Summarizing the relationships between the key concepts of the category:

Many of the women were born into families where one or both of the parents were members of the Brotherhood, but few of them see a direct causal relationship between their upbringing and their activism. Instead, all but one of the informants speak about choosing to join the Brotherhood in some way. There is however a variety in the pattern of conditions, incentives and ideas that influenced them to make this choice. Many of the women explain that, quite naturally, religious identification with the movement's message was an incentive that made them interested to join. Experiences of activism are important in reinforcing women's commitment to the movement and leading them into more public roles. Family dynamics between husband and wife who both belong to the movement is emphasized as a positive contributor to women's activism. And it seems that experiencing repression conditions women for political activism, which may at the surface seem surprising, as these women have experienced the dangers of political activism.

7.3.2 Women's Activism

Much of the interviews centered around how women participate in activism in the Muslim Brotherhood, both politically and otherwise, and which factors either facilitate this activism or limit it. In relation to this, informants also discussed women's representation in representative politics and in internal decision-making within the Brotherhood.

Informant A discusses how the Muslim Brotherhood functions as a *learning ground*, giving members the *skills* they need to carry out *activism* aimed at *meeting needs in the community* of either a social or political nature. This activism is structured both by an *organizational hierarchy* and *gender segregation*, but as a young woman the informant still feels able to *take initiative* for activities. She also feels that the organization's *resources* and *support* is available to her. She believes that women's

4 “Haga” is a honorable title (in colloquial Egyptian Arabic) used for Muslim women who have performed the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca which is one of the five pillars in Islam.

political activism is limited by their *family obligations*, but that women should participate equally as men, also taking leadership positions in the Muslim Brotherhood but in a *separate women's structure*.

Informant B has personal experience with *political activism* on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood in demonstrations and in student politics. Here she was assigned *roles* in demonstrations, campaign etcetera according to her *skills* as a journalist, not restricted by her gender. In this activities she faced the threat of *regime repression*, which did not deter her, but after the revolution she left the Brotherhood because of *disagreements over strategy and internal representation* between the youth and the leadership. The informant was disappointed that youth requests about supporting the continued street protests after the revolution were dismissed by the leadership and not met with dialogue. Requests to *represent women in the Guidance Bureau* were also *not internalized* by the leadership, which added to the informant's doubts about the organization. However, she believes that for *internal change* to take place in the Brotherhood, the *external circumstances* must first become more stable. The informant differentiates between women as representatives internally and externally, arguing that female leaders in the Brotherhood would represent women's issues while female politicians would represent the communities they were elected from. She believes women's political representation should be promoted because women have *gender-special insight* into family matters which make them *important decision-makers*. She notes that the revolution has broken barriers and changed ideas about women's political participation, as they *gained respect* for their efforts to *claim people's rights*.

Informant C explains why participation in politics is important by recounting Hasan al-Banna gradual approach to Islamic reform of society. This approach starts with the individual reforming himself to be a better Muslim, then his family, his society through social activism, and finally the state. Until Islamism reaches the state level, she argues, it is not completed.

Informant D believes that *women's participation* has changed after the revolution, saying that "now we are participating in everything". She is proud that the Freedom and Justice party got more female representatives elected to the People's

Assembly than any other party. However, she considers that the *repressive conditions* before the revolution have a lasting, restricting effect on *women's representation* in that the Sisters today lack *experience* to participate publicly. In time she believes this condition will change and women's participation will increase. However, she does not see a need for women to take new *leadership positions* within the Muslim Brotherhood, claiming that they have “too much work already”.

Informant E has participated in election campaigning on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood and other kinds of Islamic activism before the revolution, but after the revolution she *left the movement*. She claims that she was “shocked” by the Brotherhood's hesitance to support the revolution and consequent *choice of strategy* as it kept out of many confrontations with the regime and the military council which the youth engaged in. She is adamant that women's role in society is equally important to men's or more, because women *connect the private and the public sphere*. If women were decision-makers, politics would therefore be “closer to society” she claims. She observes that women today do not have *substantial representation* in politics or in the Muslim Brotherhood, and that this needs to change.

Informant F explains that while women participate in all kinds of activism, they operate separately from the men in activities aimed specifically at women, especially proselytizing or *inviting other women to Islam*. She believes that the Muslim Brotherhood's practice of *consulting women* instead of including them directly in decision-making at the leadership level is sufficient. She believes women will have problems taking positions in the two decision-making councils of the Brotherhood because women *lack experience*, and because of *social norms* about women's roles. She notes that it is also hard for women to be elected to parliament, but believes this will change as women prove themselves based on their *connection to community*. This will give women more *legitimacy* than female representatives under Mubarak who were *elected by clientelism*. She also rejects empowerment by quota as introduced by Mubarak.

Informant G claims that women's roles in the Brotherhood are to be “soldiers, not leaders”, carrying out the tasks assigned to them. She is questioning the *continued*

lack of women in the leadership of the Brotherhood after the revolution, but at the same time believes there is a “big respect” for women in the movement. She describes a *patronizing of women* which denies them their full agency. With other youths she has called for a *reformation of the organization* to make use of *women's abilities*. In disappointment that this did not happen after the revolution, she left the Brotherhood and joined Al-Tayyar al-Masry, a new youth party. She believes women's *empowerment* is best achieved through *gender equal competition*, not by quotas, which she feels *diminishes women*.

Informant H feels that Islamist women were *excluded from participation* in politics by the former regimes in order to maintain an image of the Muslim Brotherhood as extremist and dangerous. In her experience, however, women were *encouraged by the Brotherhood* to take part in political activism such as demonstrations against the Mubarak regime and “make their voices heard”. She says that the Brotherhood's idea about *servicing the people* was an inspiration to not give up their attempts at *political representation* even when the regime rigged elections against them. Women are able to *represent the whole community* in politics because she is connected through the society by her *family roles*, she argues, and women in the Brotherhood have proved themselves through charity projects etcetera at the grass root level, which gives them legitimacy among voters. She contends that women's political activism is not new, but more visible after the revolution. As a committee member in the Freedom and Justice Party, the informant feels encouraged to be active and *represent* the Brotherhood, and has been selected to be the movement's sole representative in meetings abroad.

Informant I vehemently rejects that women can be empowered by an instrument such as Mubarak's quota. “Empowerment from law is artificial, it must come from within”, she claims, and women can prove themselves when the public field is open to them. She argues that society will not be convinced by a law, therefore women must go out and *prove themselves* by activism. According to her, it was because women in the Brotherhood proved themselves by contributing to election victories that the leadership came to support their representation in politics. She describes how women have a special capacity to *mobilize political support* at the grass

root level by talking to people and *connecting to their community*. She is also a member of the Freedom and Justice party and feels that the party today is trying to push women forward, as proven by its four female representatives in the People's Assembly.

Informant J is one of these four representatives, and she describes the election campaign as a rich experience. Because her campaign had conferences for both women and men separately, she had to work “twice the work of men”. However *winning the women's support* was important to her because, as she explains, women support you with their whole families, while men go alone to vote. She says that when the party *recognized the support* it got from female voters, it decided to focus more of its work on women and *develop the women's work* in the movement.

Summarizing the relationships between the key concepts of the category:

Many of the women see their activism as motivated by the needs in society. They also contend that there is a need for women's contributions in political decision-making, where they would serve to connect politics with the community level. All of the women I asked were negative to a political quota as a means of empowering women. There seems to be a general consensus that women must claim a role and prove themselves in society and politics, but considerable debate regarding how women's roles should be claimed and changed within the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood.

7.3.3 Changes in political repression

The revolution was an event, a collective action, which altered the security situation in Egypt for citizens in general and the Islamists in particular. It especially altered the conditions for women's political activism, and many of my informants emphasized the change in security as the main factor which changed women's political participation.

Exemplary of this, **informant A** contends that before the revolution, a woman taking a leadership position in the Muslim Brotherhood would provoke the regime to *repressive reactions* such as threats and harassment. This action was not allowed because of the reaction it would provoke. There is an enhancing condition to this excluding relationship of actions that is also recounted by many of the informants,

namely that the Brotherhood sought to *protect the women* especially due to cultural gender norms. Regime threats, imprisonment and violence towards male members was suffered for the sake of the cause, but women were "a red line", as many of the informants put it. The result is *male dominance* in leadership positions, or as Informant A puts it, that "99% of the important roles belonged to men". The security issue *redirected* women's activism into other fields than decision-making and politics. Informant A believes that the number of women in leadership roles in the Brotherhood will now *increase gradually*. She mentions that the Brotherhood had four women elected to parliament as a positive sign. However, she differentiates between *external representation* (in politics) and *internal representation* (in the Brotherhood), and notes that "there is [still] only one woman in the organization among the leaders, in the national office".

Informant B largely echoed these descriptions of how *lack of security* limited women's roles and involvement. She says that the change of conditions brought on by the revolution had led women to raise the issue of *women's representation* within the Guidance Bureau, to which the *morshid* (leader) had replied that he had no problem with Sister representatives (within the organization). However, a year later no change has taken place. Through her student activism, the informant experienced how the Muslim Brotherhood members who ran for student union elections "mostly got arrested". She recounts how one of her female friends was threatened by state security officers, who held a gun to her head when she was observing the counting of votes, and how the state security officers rigged the student union elections. She also describes how activists outside were threatened by thugs. Strikingly, the *dis-incentives* to participate in these kinds of elections are rather strong. It is dangerous for the candidates, who face the risk of imprisonment, and it is likely to fail as a political project, at least if the end goal is to gain political power in the student union, because the elections will be rigged against them. These are tough conditions for political participation, which the informant nevertheless engaged in, along with others.

Informant C recounts how she became active in the Sisters' division of the Brotherhood during a time of political repression just after the death of Sadat, under *dangerous conditions*, and how they were harassed in the university where she was

active, *suffering regime repression*. **Informant D** describes the security situation before the revolution as an *open conflict* with the regime, saying that "before, the Muslim Brotherhood was an enemy to the government". She echoes previous informants in that she sees this condition as the reason why before the revolution, "the Sisters used to do everything but they weren't leaders or held activities on their own, so they wouldn't be attacked".

Informant E, in comparison, is disappointed with what she considers to be a lack of reform in the Brotherhood's attitudes to women. To her, the attitudes of the leadership have lost *legitimacy* in the absence of *regime repression* since the revolution. In this new context, she has got a new perspective on their attitudes, which is that their ideas are "stale and can't be changed". She compares the leaders' attitudes to the youth, whom she considers to have good ideas about how to develop women's roles inside the Brotherhood and make them active. Because the Brotherhood did not accept these ideas, she left it in favor of a newly formed youth party, *Al Tayyar al Masry*.

Informant F also experienced the former regime's *political repression* personally. While she was politically active in the student union at her university, she was harassed by the regime because of her membership in the Brotherhood. She tells that she was harassed and searched every time she came to enter campus, and sometimes denied access. The regime also threatened her father to stop his daughter's activities in the Brotherhood. However, this did not stop her from being active. She echoes that women were not allowed to participate in politics before the revolution for "security reasons", with a few exceptions. The informant points out that the Brotherhood did however run female candidates in the 2000, 2005 and 2010 elections. Also, she tells that women were doing *grass root political activism*, holding conferences, workshops and outreach activities to raise awareness about politics in the community even before the revolution, but now they can do it more openly and in larger scale. She too sees a big change after the revolution in the conditions for political participation, and not only for women: "(after the revolution) all of us can participate politically, every Egyptian citizen can say his opinion now". The informant sees the high number of women who participated in the last parliamentary elections as

a sign that women are using this opportunity, and the victory of independent candidates as a sign that women's participation is *politically potent*.

Informant G also talks about how the youth raised the issue of women in leadership positions after the revolution, when they found that the justification of these roles being unsafe for women was no longer valid. Thus the revolution was the action or event that changed the conditions for thinking about women's role. She also talks about the lingering effects of a *repressive, unsafe environment* on the thinking of the organizations. "The leaders are too old, they have the old mind, they can't read our reality of our lives now. They can't believe that it's okay, it's secure", she says.

Informant H talks about how the regime through *political repression* excluded the Brotherhood from communicating through media and threatened men with imprisonment for their activism in the 2010 elections, and how this indirectly gave more importance to women's activism. Because of these difficult conditions, the Brotherhood made a decision to "prepare women to be a symbol and be among people everywhere", give women political training and let them talk to people directly at the grass root level. Informant H emphasizes the *non-violent forms of repression* that the former regime used against the Brotherhood, also when they tried to represent women, notably rigging elections. She feels that the regime rigged elections against Islamist women because "they tried to send a message to the West that Islamists are against women in politics, and if they let women succeed that image would disappear".

Informant I describes the previous political conditions under Mubarak as repressive for everyone, and the Brotherhood especially: "We didn't feel that we own Egypt. We were underground, we didn't feel like we could do things equally". Informant J contends that while women were not participating politically in large numbers before the revolution, they had a large role to play in the organization off the political radar. "Our role was bigger than that of the men before the revolution, because of the violence that was directed at the men and women of the Muslim Brotherhood before the revolution".

Informant J recounts how she participated in *political training* with other women in the Brotherhood since 2000, the first year the Brotherhood fielded a woman

candidate for parliamentary elections. The informant believes that in 2005 one woman from the Brotherhood won a seat but was cheated of her victory by *rigged elections*. This repeated itself in 2010, when the Brotherhood made a strong showing of representing women. "In 2010 we saw the result of all the political work. There were 13 members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the (women's) quota in 2010. And also (this election was) faulted by the regime, they didn't win. And two of us lost their husbands in detention because of that", she says. Informant J was one of these two who had her husband detained in 2010 because of her political participation, some of her assets seized by the regime and her son's career threatened. "When he asked them why they are doing this, they answered him, We detained your father and we are going to tear up your project so next time when your mother takes a decision to enter elections again, you will be stopping her". In 2011 she won a seat in the People's Assembly.

Summarizing the relationships between the key concepts of the category:

Many of the informants have been personally exposed to the political repression which Mubarak's regime used against the Islamists, both through rigged elections and attacks against political candidates or activists. This threat restricted the roles women were encouraged or allowed to take before the revolution; however many of the women did participate in high-risk political activism despite this insecurity. While women were officially not participating in politics, they also constituted a "secret force". They could keep the movement operating when the men were in prison or mobilize support on the ground when men risked detention, because they were flying below the political radar. But although the regime observed the cultural gender norms to some degree and treated female activists different from men, they did resort to repressive means against women when their activism was politically potent. The women emphasize the past regime's power abuse as the obstacle to women's political participation and democratic rights being respected. The duality of this struggle between the Brotherhood and the regime became the dominant narrative which justified women's roles. Now that the security threat is gone, women have begun to raise the issue for reconsideration and demand greater representation.

7.3.4 Ideology and gender roles

My informants find guidance and inspiration for gender roles and equality in the values of Islam, which they believe should be the guiding principles in all areas of life. However, they interpret this ideology differently.

Informant A suggests that *gender equality* can be found by the act of *reinterpretation* of Islam which reveals the real Islamic meaning of gender equality. To her, this produces *gender equality* in political participation but also *complimentary gender roles*. She uses *biological differences* as a reason to claim that a man, for example, would make a better president than an equally qualified woman. However, she maintains that she believes a woman could be “a leader like a president”.

Informant B sees the women who participated in elections from the Freedom and Justice Party as proof that *gender equality* is part of Brotherhood ideology. She also emphasizes that the revolution changed a lot of ideas about women's political participation.

Informant C contends that Islam is the *way of life*, and a guide to everything. She believes these principles should be implemented through an Islamic state and that it is therefore necessary for Islamists to contest political power so the people can choose Islamism. She has a religious degree and uses many examples from Quran and *sunna* to show that Islam has a *legacy of empowering women*, giving women the right to raise women's issues, educate themselves and participate alongside men even in wars. She claims that women have *equal rights* but *complimentary roles* which have equal value. Women have *gender-specific duties* to her family, which is valued as a seed for society. In this interpretation, gender equal rights means that women should have the right to perform her *gender-specific duties* in balance with her *participation in society*.

Informant D agrees with this perspective on rights and roles. She also describes the ideological goal of the Muslim Brotherhood as *spreading the correct interpretation of Islam* in Egypt. She sees *political activism* as a necessary action or means by which this goal can be achieved, and by this interpretation finds justification in her ideology for political participation. She believes a good Muslim should see that there is a *need in society* for women's activism and encourage his wife to activism, and

she believes women in the Muslim Brotherhood are more active than other women because many of the members share this attitude.

Informant E believes that the gender ideas in the Muslim Brotherhood ideology is distorted by *conforming to cultural values* of the society. She believes that even women believe in distorted gender roles, which is why few of them claim *leadership roles*. She claims that Islam gave women more rights than the Muslim Brotherhood does. She discusses various *interpretations of Islam* regarding women's *right to be president*, and gives her support to the interpretation that allows women to lead a civil state.

Informant F also states her commitment to Islam as a *way of life* guiding all her actions and relationships. She believes that Islam gives men and women *different roles*, but argues that the Muslim Brotherhood's *interpretation* is more empowering for women than other Islamic groups. The informant believes this interpretation seeks to *restore women's role in the community* as it was in the time of the Prophet, when women had a role in all aspects of life.

Informant G argues that the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood do not genuinely mean it when they claim that the genders are equal and complimentary, because they put more faith in men's capabilities. She, however, believes that women are men are *equal in rights and duties* and *compliment each other* in their abilities. One of the duties she ascribes to both genders is the duty to make society better. She argues that women must claim their right to fulfill this duty, in other words to *participate in society* in order to make it better. Thus she too finds support in her interpretation of Islam for claiming participation in the public sphere.

Informant H echoes this, as she describes how she feels that her ideology *empowers* her and gives her greater influence in her society and community because it pushes her to *work faithfully*. She feels that a *moderate interpretation* of Islam encourages *women's activism* and frames active participation as a religious duty.

Informant I also believes that when Islam came it gave women more *progressive roles* in the society. She argues that the needs, roles and responsibilities of the genders are different and that *complete gender equality* is not required in Islam. She claims that the most important value in Islam is justice, not equality.

Informant J also contends that women and men are equal in Islam, as “women are the sisters of men”. She echoes the perspective that Islam as a *way of life* which, as people aspire to be as equal as possible to the example of the Prophet and his companions, *inspires activism*. According to this informant, women are as important as men in Islam and should be equal to them in the community, but the Arab tradition give women lesser roles than Islam does.

Summarizing the relationships between the key concepts of the category:

Given the diversity of opinions regarding women's roles in the Brotherhood today, the women have surprisingly similar ideas about gender roles and gender equality in Islam. They contend that women and men have equal rights, but different or complimentary roles. Some emphasize biological differences and women's family obligations more than others. They all agree that the rights and roles of women in Islam are empowering, but a few feel that the Muslim Brotherhood's interpretations of these are not equally empowering because they conform to a conservative society.

7.3.5 Summarizing the findings

Now that I have discussed how the various concepts in the material relate to major categories debated in the interviews, it is time to see how these categories relate to each other.

The women I interviewed contend that a repressive regime willing to resort to violence and illegal action has been the main constraint on women's political participation. This excluding relationship is enhanced by the Brotherhood's policy that women should be protected, which the women have nevertheless experienced as legitimate. However, it appears that women's roles in the new, more secure environment after the revolution are subject to debate and reconsideration as there is much variety in opinions regarding this.

Surprisingly, political repression and security threats have not kept women from joining the Brotherhood (although it has kept them from advancing to leadership positions) nor even from engaging in high-risk political activities. On the contrary, the material gives many examples of how women have joined under conditions of repression or harassment, engaged in political activities despite being aware of the

high risks and even personally exposed to harassment and repression.

The women are surprisingly similar in their interpretation of gender roles and rights in Islam and maintain that they empower women. From the perspective of these women, it is insecurity and not the ideology of the Brotherhood that has limited their participation in the past. To the contrary, this ideology and experiences of women's activism in the Brotherhood seem the primary factors which have motivated their entrance into politics, even in the face of political oppression from the former regime. Notably, the young women I interviewed who had left the Brotherhood had done so over disagreements over strategy and lack of reform, not ideological disputes.

In short, the women I have interviewed understand the increase of women's political participation within the Muslim Brotherhood as a natural expansion of their roles as activists. Their sense of religious duty and identity is a strong motivational force for my informants to go out of the home and try to change their society for the better. They see politics as a means to achieve this goal, thus they find support for political activism in their interpretation of the "real Islam". In addition, they emphasize that the revolution has facilitated women's political participation by removing the repressive former regime and the security threat previously connected to political participation.

8 Analysis

Why do Islamist women increasingly participate in politics in Egypt? In chapter 4 I have identified the main institutions and actor to gather observations about in order to explain this puzzle. Here I will discuss them according to the framework of assessing democratization as presented in chapter 4, and informed by extensive use of secondary sources as well as the findings from the qualitative interviews presented in chapter 7. Then, I will compare which of the three theoretical perspectives on democratization presented in chapter 4 best explain this puzzle, and what may be left unexplained.

8.1 First dimension: Strength of democratic institutions

As detailed in my earlier discussion on the theoretical framework for my assessment, I have identified five “clusters” of democratic rules and regulations that are especially important to realizing women's right to political participation in Egypt. Here I will briefly discuss the existence, substance and spread of these institutions in Egypt, as they relate to Islamist women's political participation.

8.1.1 Full universal human rights to ensure that all can “function as politically equal human beings.”

According to the UN convention on human rights, a person should not be discriminated against on the basis of her sex. The Egyptian constitution guarantees all citizens equal rights, but the Egyptian legislative framework still institutionalizes considerable inequalities between women and men, especially under personal status law (also known as family law)⁵. Three general observations can be made in this regard.

Firstly, the consequences of a discriminatory family law extend well beyond the family. Egypt's gendered personal status laws (regulating marriage, divorce, child custody, nationality etc.) discriminate between women and men as well as between Muslims and Egyptians of other faiths (SIGI 2011). The Muslim family law

⁵ Other unequal laws include gendered inheritance laws, restrictions on women's freedom of movement, and laws prohibiting women from taking certain kinds of jobs considered harmful to them (SIGI 2011)

institutionalizes patriarchy in family and the family as the basic component of Egyptian society. Women's dependence on men is thus institutionalized as their rights are defined in relation to their husband and gender inequality is institutionalized by these gendered definitions of rights pertaining to either women or men. This has wide implications for women's economic, social and political rights.

Secondly, women as well as men have had their human rights and civil liberties compromised by Egypt's authoritarian regimes, especially their political rights and related liberties such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association (SIGI 2011). And finally, many rights are not recognized by the law (for example, women's right to protection from spousal rape) and laws on paper are often not realized (for example, female genital mutilation is illegal but widespread) (Ibid). This could be due to lack of implementation or because people don't have the capacity to exercise their rights. Women as a group are disproportionately affected by this.

All these factors collude against women's political participation. For example, women are underrepresented in formal labor and in 2007 the ratio of estimated female to male income was 27% in Egypt (Save the Children 2011). Only 24% of Egyptian women participate in the formal labour force, compared to 79% of the men (World Economic Forum 2011: 42). This means that the economic capacity of women as a group to participate as candidates in political elections is highly unequal to that of men, as the candidates need to spend huge sums on campaigns in order to win office. The underrepresentation of women in paid labor is institutionalized by personal status laws that stipulate the man as the provider of the family, granting the husband control of his wife's income and power to deny her the right to work. Mulki Al Sharmani argues that because of these gendered laws, women who seek paid labor out of necessity may actually experience this as disempowering, because their interests and needs are not recognized by the Egyptian legal model of marriage (Al Sharmani 2011: 8). Al Sharmani has studied the process and outcomes of family law reforms in Egypt. She concludes with the following:

“First, the lack of gender justice in family laws (both the theory and practice) is constitutive of multiple barriers which diminish women’s right

to full and equal citizenship rights on the one hand, and hinder their ability to claim these rights on the other hand. These barriers in turn re-enforce gender injustice in the family domain, perpetuating a vicious circle” (Al Sharmani 2011: 10).

8.1.2 “Democratic political representation in central and local government through parties and elections.”

The Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic groups (such as breakaway reformists from the Brotherhood) have long been prevented from forming political parties by the Mubarak regime's repressive control of the institutions by which parties may be legalized. This is a good example of how the authoritarian regime abused the law rather than ruled by it. After the revolution and the overthrow of Mubarak's regime, it was made possible for any group to form a party according the 2011 interim constitution proposed by SCAF and adopted by popular referendum. Article 4 of the Egyptian constitution now reads:

“Article 4: Citizens have the right to form associations, unions, syndicates, and parties, according to the law. It is forbidden to form associations whose activities are opposed to the order of society or secret or militaristic in nature. It is not permitted to directly engage in political activity or form political parties on the basis of religion, race or origin” (SCAF Constitutional Declaration nd).

The regulation about political parties based on religion proved no hindrance for the Muslim Brotherhood or other Islamist groups, who quickly formed parties in the spring of 2011. Because membership in these parties was not based on religion (the Muslim Brotherhood even alleges to have recruited 100 Copts as co-founders of their Freedom and Justice Party), they were licensed.

Women received the right to vote in Egypt in 1956, but their representation in politics has remained low both at the local and the national level. In 2010, they held 2% of the seats in parliament (amounting to 65 seats, 64 of which were reserved for women by a quota) and 9% of ministerial positions (Gender Gap Index 2011: 164).

Women hold only 11% of leadership positions in Egypt as operationalized in the Gender Gap Index as legislators, senior officials and managers (Ibid). According to the country profile on Egypt put together by the OECD for the Social Institutions and Gender Index, the lack of women in public leadership positions reflects a distrust in the idea of women leaders that prevails in the Egyptian society and which also limits social support for their political representation (SIGI 2011). If the general society is not used to or supportive of women's leadership and participation in decision-making, can this be compensated for by empowering party policies, election regulations and other rules and regulations concerning democratic political representation in Egypt?

A women's quota was introduced in the Egyptian parliament in 2009 by adding on and reserving 64 seats for women in the lower house of parliament, the People's Assembly, which already consisted of 454 seats. The quota was a result of activism by women's rights organizations, including the government-affiliated National Women's Council. The Council's leading figure First Lady Suzanne Mubarak praised it as an opportunity for women to prove their qualifications in parliament (Tadros 2010: 89). From its introduction, the quota was criticized by female politicians of the opposition such as Gameela Ismail of the liberal el Ghad party, who argued that the quota was likely to only empower affluent women able to climb within the existing power hierarchies and as such be counterproductive to women's rights (Ibid).

After president Mubarak was forced to step down in the 2011 revolution, the women's quota in parliament was scrapped when electoral laws were rewritten by the SCAF. The new laws instead required that all party lists for the People's Assembly include at least one woman (Carnegie Endowment A, nd). The election results proved that these new regulations on elections were weak as measures to ensure women's representation: only 9 women were elected (and three appointed by the SCAF) out of a total of 498 members of the People's Assembly. Four of the elected women represent the Freedom and Justice Party and five were elected by liberal parties (Al Wafd, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party and the Reform and Development Party). Two thirds of the seats in parliament were filled by popular representation while one third of the seats in were reserved for independent candidates elected on a first-past-the-post principle. No women were elected to the People's Assembly as independent

candidates.

Judging from these election results, women's political representation has been weakened after the revolution with the scrapping of the women's quota, at least in terms of numbers and descriptive representation. There are clearly less female representatives "standing for" Egypt's women in parliament today than there was in 2010. However, in 2010 the women who were elected to parliament were not seen as providing substantial representation by "acting for" Egypt's women. Their legitimacy was very low in the eyes of the population and politicians were perceived as primarily serving their own narrow interests with little accountability to the people. At least the nine women who were elected to the People's Assembly in 2011/2012 represent a potential for substantial representation which women in Egypt have never experienced before, now that they have been elected through free and fair elections and carry the legitimacy of the people's will.

Why did women fare so badly in the elections? Were they actually electable? It is not surprising that women did badly as independent candidates. With less economic resources, women are easily outdone by candidates who can spend more on advertising and campaign staff. Women suffered from this especially as the laws regulating the campaign spending of the candidates were not enforced, according to the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (2012). In order to succeed in elections, women are therefore more reliant than men on the backing of a political party. As mentioned, Egypt's post-revolution electoral legislation required that each party list include at least one woman, but it did not ensure that they would be in electable positions on these lists. The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights has monitored the elections for the People's Assembly and compared the number of female candidates on the top, middle and bottom of the electoral lists for 35 parties that participated (Ibid). Their figures show that the conservative Salafi Nour party was one out of nine parties that listed no women in the top of its list; it was also one of five parties that listed none in the middle (Ibid). All its 22 female candidates were listed at the bottom (Ibid). The Freedom and Justice Party listed seven of its women in the top of its lists and as such was matched or outdone by only five other parties. However they too put most of their women in the bottom, where 18 of their candidates were found, and 6 in the middle

(Ibid). The Egyptian Bloc (the main liberal alliance in the elections) and The Conservative had the highest number of women in the top of their lists; 10 each (Ibid).

All four parties that managed to have their female candidates elected had six women or more in the top of their lists. However, the seven parties other than the Freedom and Justice Party who ran six or more women in the top only won 19,8% or 99 of the seats in the People's Assembly, roughly half of the seats won by the Freedom and Justice Party. Therefore their high positioning of female candidates still did not bring more than five women into parliament. This emphasizes that for women to be represented, they must be given a real chance of being elected (high on the lists) and the political parties they represent must have capacity to win the seats they contest.

8.1.3 Supplementary democratic channels for interest- and issue-based democracy.

Who promotes women's interests in Egypt, and how are these interests channeled into the political decision-making process? We have seen from previous research that the popular strategies of promoting women's rights in Egypt are either through secular feminism or through the gender agenda of the Islamist movements.

As has been noted in the theory discussion, civil society organizations are the realm of the middle classes, and this is also true in Egypt. The Mubarak regime also put considerable efforts into controlling these organizations through laws and regulations, effectively banning the organizations that were deemed too radical, including some feminist organizations. Still, feminist organizations in Egypt have devoted considerable time and effort to promoting women's rights in a hostile, repressive political environment and managed to achieve small victories, but they have failed to produce a popular movement for women's rights. In my literature review I found much criticism of how the secular women's rights organizations in Egypt have engaged in compromises with the government both in terms of discourse and in terms of demands. Furthermore, Sholkamy has noted their incapacity to deliver empowerment as long as they are unable to reshape the larger structures which disempower women.

The way women's interests have been incorporated into the state through primarily the governmental organization of the National Women's Council, headed by the former First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, has served to “feminize authoritarianism” more than it has served to empower women. Suzanne Mubarak and her likes were unable to produce substantial representation and “act for” women, due to a lack of legitimacy with the people, or even descriptive representation by “standing for” women, as women did not identify with such a hated figure. Instead she became a disliked symbolic representative of women, resembling an unwanted monarch. This incorporation of women's interests has also served to delegitimize the feminist organizations who formed uncomfortable alliances with the regime to have their demands heard and claims for increased rights granted through compromises with the regime. The Islamists have not been invited into these processes controlled by the regime, but Islamic activism has had a strong, indirect impact by reshaping the values of the society at the local level to be more Islamic. Thus it has been able to force the regime to adopt more conservative politics or introduce only limited reforms about women’s rights in line with Islamic values, while being excluded from democratic channels.

8.1.4 Democratic control of instruments of coercion.

Democratic control of the police and state security forces has been absent under Mubarak; indeed they have been an arm of his regime. Under the continued use of emergency law since 1981, the Egyptian regime under Mubarak has given itself extensive room to violate the civil liberties of its citizens. It has used this ability to detain citizens without court order, try them before military courts which grant few rights to the defendant instead of before civilian courts, and effectively keep political prisoners. This abuse of emergency law has especially been directed towards the Islamists and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, as shown in the brief account of its contentious relationship with the Egyptian state in chapter 7. Women have generally been excluded from high-risk political activism, but also women have been detained and imprisoned, among them the iconic “godmother” of women’s Islamic activism, Zainab al-Ghazali.

The informants I have interviewed give considerable insight into how women experience the threat posed by state security forces acting on behalf of the repressive regime. To them, this is the major factor which has kept women from participating in politics, especially in highly visible roles as candidates for elections. As emphasized by Heba Raouf Ezzat (2007), insecurity is a political constraint which especially affects women's participation in the Arab world. Ezzat points to the futility of political awareness raising or programs to develop women's political skills as long as political participation is associated with violence, harassment, physical and psychological threats and a negative image of corrupt politicians (Ibid: 188). When Islamist women in Egypt have still entered into political activism and indeed political representation, it is in defiance of this insecurity. It is interesting that their participation was on the increase even before the revolution “cleaned up” the formal party politics by removing Mubarak, the National Democratic Party and abuse of the state’s instruments of coercion for violent and repressive means towards political competition in elections and formal politics.

Although the revolution toppled Mubarak, it did not immediately transfer power over the state into the hands of the people in a democratic process, and therefore it also failed to put the state’s instruments of coercion under democratic control. Alarming, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces currently ruling Egypt has not yet lifted the emergency law at the time of writing, 15 months after the revolution succeeded in overthrowing Mubarak. They claim that it should remain in place until a new president is elected and power is turned back into civilian hands. Meanwhile, the SCAF continues to use the state security forces in similar ways to the Mubarak regime, especially in confrontation with “informal” political contention in street demonstrations and protests. Thousands of civilians have been detained from these protests and tried before military courts only since the revolution began, and this practice continues to this day. Last year several female protesters were detained by the armed forces and subjected to forced “virginity checks”, which human rights organizations described as sexualized torture. It created a national outcry and highlighted how the military regime is able to violate the human rights of its citizens in lack of democratic control over the state and its coercive powers.

8.1.5 Guaranteeing citizens' democratic self-organizing on the basis of their right to free organization, and as training grounds for democracy.

The Mubarak regime violated citizens' right to democratic self-organizing blatantly by political repression of the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition groups, justified by a discourse that described Islamic fundamentalism as a security threat and the Muslim Brotherhood as an actor seeking to overtake the state. Has women's rights been served by the regime oppressing the opposition indiscriminately in the name of containing Islamism? Not if women's rights are understood in terms of equal rights to political participation, as in this thesis. Again, this democratic institution has been missing while Islamist women's participation has been on the rise.

Political parties were underdeveloped under the authoritarian regime, and equal representation was not a priority for the dominant actors, especially not gender equal representation. Mubarak's now-abolished National Democratic Party was described as an artificial structure that let people reach power to access resources, and many of its MPs (Members of Parliament) were businessmen. Women in the NDP often climbed to political positions through family ties, especially when their husbands were successful businessmen and thus important economic contributors to the party. Real opposition forces, notably from the popular Islamist movement, were not allowed to form parties, subjected to threats and harassment in formal politics when they ran candidates in elections for parliament or unions, and little tolerated in the street. Mubarak even undermined the democratic structure of his own party as he sought to consolidate power around his own person and office.

Despite the lack of institutional support for free organizations, both previous research and the informants in this thesis point to women's growing roles in the Muslim Brotherhood's activism as the main reason why its women are also entering politics. This suggests that the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization has been a catalyst for women's political participation without the support of democratic rules and regulations guaranteeing rights to free organization. Some informants feel that the previous regime used election rigging to exclude Islamist women specifically from

political participation because their presence in politics would contribute to moderate the Brotherhood's image. Women's presence would then undermine the discourse with which the regime repressed political opposition, in order to "protect" the country (and Egyptian women) from Islamic fundamentalism.

8.1.6 Summary

The lack of full universal human rights limit women's political participation in Egypt. Although the Egyptian constitution grants all citizens equal rights, women are not able to exercise them. Factors such as legal discrimination, institutionalized patriarchy and lack of economic participation collude to undermine women's capacity to exercise their political rights. This again diminishes their capacity to claim full and equal citizenship.

Women's political representation in Egypt has been consistently low, and the measures introduced by the Mubarak regime to improve their numbers in politics can best be understood as "feminizing authoritarianism". Democratic political representation has been underdeveloped and the Muslim Brotherhood has been subjected to violent political oppression as the Mubarak regime has abused the state's means of coercion. As shown in the findings from my fieldwork, the Islamist women themselves emphasize this as the main factor which has restricted their political participation.

After the revolution, democratic political representation has become safer and more accessible. However, election results show that women need the committed backing of a political party to be elected. The Muslim Brotherhood has been among the more progressive parties in terms of running women in electable positions on their electoral lists, and therefore succeeded in electing four women to the People's Assembly.

8.2 Second dimension: Democratic adherence of major actors

Are the main actors that influence women's political rights in Egypt adhering to democratic rules and regulations? Are they accepting and in their actions promoting

the principle of women's right to political participation, or are they either consuming or destroying the institutions that encourage women's participation?

As is already obvious from the previous section, the past authoritarian regime produced few rules and regulations benefiting women's political rights and abused or destroyed many. 30 years of Mubarak's rule has left essential democratic institutions undermined and underdeveloped. By ruling under emergency law, Mubarak put himself and his regime above the law which protects the rights and liberties of citizens. He abused party politics and elections to sustain his own power and kept the state's instruments of coercion out of democratic control in order to oppress his political opposition by them. He did not allow his citizens freedoms essential to developing a democratic culture such as freedom of organization, and his policies increased inequalities in the Egyptian society. In sum, Mubarak did not adhere to or contribute to these democratic rules and regulations studied here in any considerable way.

One effort which Mubarak seemingly made at improving women's political representation deserves closer attention; the introduction of the women's quota in parliament in 2010. Was this a genuine attempt at producing increased democratic rights by the former regime? In an article examining the potential of the Egyptian women's quota such as it was introduced, Madriz Tadros questions whether it was adopted to make politics more inclusive and democratic, or to give authoritarianism in Egypt a more "female face" (Tadros 2010: 90). Indeed, the top-down process by which it was introduced lends credit to the first suggestion.

What then about the Muslim Brotherhood, are they adhering to democratic rules and regulations? As described briefly in chapter 7, the Brotherhood has officially committed to democratic party politics several decades ago, yet they are still mistrusted. As mentioned in chapter 7, this is because the Brotherhood is perceived as incoherent and vague in its differentiation of state and religious authority. While the organization supports the rule of law and human rights, it also supports contradicting principles such as equal citizenship combined with differentiated rights for men and women or Muslims and Coptic Christians in Egypt.

The Brotherhood has chosen peaceful political contention as the means by

which it seeks to pursue its goals, and has become a strong supporter of pluralist electoral politics in Egypt. As such it has shown commitment to several of the institutions that benefit women's political participation, especially democratic political representation and the related right to self-organizing. After the revolution, however, the Brotherhood has been accused of pushing for early elections after Mubarak's fall for their own gain, rather than waiting for other parties to organize their forces and mobilize support.

The matter is complicated further by the realization that it is difficult to speak of one ideology for the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood experiences and allows for internal debate, engaging a multitude of Islamic interpretations and opinions that range from conservative Salafi-influenced thinking to liberal Islamists who embrace universal human rights. The field study I conducted for this thesis revealed a multitude of opinions about women's roles in the organization and in politics even in a small sample of mostly liberal women. Individual members may disagree with official movement ideology and policy. However the final decisions of the leaders are sometimes enforced with measures as drastic as expulsion, as happened to former Muslim Brother Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotoh who decided to run for presidency in violation of Brotherhood policy in 2011⁶.

Ashraf El Sherif, teaching specialist on political Islam at the American University in Cairo, has examined how the post-revolution behavior and discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood has failed to internalize criticism voiced by revolution-empowered reformists of the Brotherhood. This may be a warning sign in terms of Brotherhood strategy and the acceptance of and dedication to women's rights, as women's lack of representation inside the Brotherhood has been one of the contested issues. Already it has resulted in the up-spring of new break-away Islamist groups and parties such as the Egyptian Current Party (*al-Tayar al-Masry*), which is the largest and favored by the youth, as well as al-Nahda and al-Reyada which are smaller groups led by older reformists (El-Sherif January 12 2012). Among my informants, several of the young women had left the Brotherhood in favor of the Egyptian Current Party over this issue, as their considered the breakaway group to be more committed to

6 In 2011 the Brotherhood had announced they would not field a Muslim Brother as candidate for the presidential elections, to show their commitment to political plurality, and denied all their members to run.

empowering youth and women.

These reformist Islamists have been visible in the political debate in Egypt since 2004 as critics of the authoritarian nature of the Brotherhood's guidance bureau (Ibid). Their demands included “greater freedom of debate and accountability within the movement, greater participation for women and the young, and a set of transparent guidelines to decision-making”, and they advocated “more creative approaches to Islamic texts” and “the necessity of justifying the values of democracy and citizenship in Islamic terms” (Ibid). “Crucially, they advocate far-reaching doctrinal and organizational restructuring that would separate the party's networks of political participation from its mission of proselytization” (Ibid). El Sherif argues that the Brotherhood leadership refused to internalize these criticisms and calls for reforms in fear that it would alienate the more conservative constituency and drive these towards Salafi movements with which the Brotherhood competes for support (Ibid). This may be interpreted to suggest that the Brotherhood was not ready to risk its electoral base among conservative voters in order to fulfill women's rights.

However, it may also strengthen women's rights that Islamists are forming new groups based on greater emphasis on equality and political rights that can nuance the Islamic debate and potentially influence the Brotherhood to more liberal policies. Although the break-away groups failed to secure a single seat in the parliamentary elections, El Sherif argues that “Egypt's New Islamists” are still to be taken notice of:

“Though not yet apparent on the ballot, they have tapped into a generation of Islamist activists and young middle class professionals whose aspirations for socio-economic development is not fulfilled by the FJP's discourses, and they are in the process of reshaping a new Islamist discourse on good governance, democracy, and development. In doing so, the Reformists are undermining the polarization between Islamists and secularists that long inhibited the development of policy-oriented (rather than identity-based) party politics” (El Sherif January 12 2012).

Indeed the Brotherhood has made promises to also reform the roles of women inside

the organization and allow for their internal representation, but has not made it a priority. Many of the informants I interviewed did believe that it is only a matter of time before they are represented in the decision-making bodies of the Brotherhood now that the security threat posed by political oppression is gone. In the meantime, perhaps the Freedom and Justice Party represents a window of opportunity for women's participation and representation, especially if the party will gain more independence from the Muslim Brotherhood leadership in the future.

A recurring question in this thesis has been whether the Islamic empowerment of women is seriously challenged by a secular feminist alternative. The arguments of Hania Sholkamy presented in the review of previous research suggest that women's rights organizations have contributed somewhat to women's political participation by giving them training and organizational experience, but with an elite bias. Otherwise, they have failed to produce more democratic rights for women because they have failed to transform the structures of Arab societies that limit women's universal human rights and their democratic political participation. Sholkamy argues that women of lower socio-economic classes especially have been left on their own (Sholkamy 2010). Moreover, as Aliaa Dawoud has shown, the women's rights organizations that continue to address women's rights in Egypt do so with a discourse that has abandoned the terminology of women's rights and instead replaced it with de-gendered and paternalistic discourses (Dawoud 2011).

The organizations still aim to promote gender equality and women's equal rights, but the strategies and arguments they employ as their means potentially distort their ability to reach these long-term goals. Empowering women and promoting women's rights in a patriarchal discourse where the benefits (security, protection, peace, economic benefits) are used as motivations/arguments have short-term gains. In the long run, however, they may undermine the aim of democracy because important principles such as equality between the citizens are put aside. Heba Raouf Ezzat, writing on the future of women and politics in the Arab world, argues that many feminists across the Arab world have been co-opted by the authoritarian regime to achieve change by means that actually undermine democratic demands, thus contributing to a "feminization of authoritarianism" (Ezzat 2007: 186). "It is a strategy

abused by regimes to improve their image and at the same time delay the wider democratic transition” argues Ezzat (Ibid). The logic behind her argument is simple; women cannot be politically empowered by the same policies that empower an autocratic state. The two goals are mutually exclusive. The lingering effects of the undemocratic means by which women’s universal rights and political participation has been promoted is that both these initiatives and their supporters are put in a bad light. This is what Hoda Elsadda (2011) calls the “First Lady syndrome” because in Egypt as well as in many other Arab countries, women's rights have been introduced from above as part of a state modernization project, often in the name of the wife of the authoritarian leader. In turn, this makes the Islamist alternative to promoting women's rights all the more powerful and important.

Finally, the selective democratic adherence of the currently ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces deserves some remarks. Indeed, SCAF has provided Egypt with its first free and fair elections for both parliament and, at the time of writing, the presidency. These have been free of the violent political oppression of political opposition that marked elections under Mubarak’s rule. However, SCAF remains above the law, continuing to rule under emergency law, and has refused to let itself be controlled by the same democratic institutions it has introduced. SCAF has refused to turn its control of the government over to the parliament, holding on until the new president is elected by which time it has promised to step down. As a result, SCAF has been able to continue using violent means against protesters, as the instruments of coercion are still outside democratic control despite the election of a new parliament which vehemently opposes it. This continued use of emergency law and abuse of the state security forces has a disproportional effect on women’s political participation versus men’s, raising the costs of their political activism and limiting their space in the political sphere. SCAF has also been the main architect of a chaotic and confusing transition process with complicated election procedures which has largely excluded women from decision-making, such as in the drafting of a new constitution.

8.2.1 Summary

Mubarak's regime abused, consumed or destroyed most of the democratic institutions which contribute to women's political participation. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces have restrained some of this behavior. They abuse the state's means of coercion only to control street politics and not electoral politics, making the latter safer and more accessible for women while the first remains dangerous and destructive to women's mass participation.

The Muslim Brotherhood has been a supporter of democratic institutions in a power struggle with the previous regime as well as the current military regime, at least in actions. Their ideology still contains contradicting principles which raise doubts about the democratic results they would produce should the Brotherhood come in a position where they shape the content of these institutions. However, with regards to women's political participation they have produced the largest numbers and fostered bottom-up empowerment of Islamist women in politics.

Women's rights organizations, by allowing themselves to be co-opted into compromises with the former regime and in terms of discourse, have largely failed to introduce legitimate institutions that encourage women's political participation. Reforms such as the women's quota in parliament suffer from the “First Lady Syndrome” and are easily dismissed in the post-revolution chaos.

8.3 Third dimension: Political capacity of the actors

What is the political capacity of the main actors on this issue? As noted in the chapter on theory, this has important implications for the dynamics of how democratic rights are developed. In this assessment I focus mainly on the actors' capacity in terms of political inclusion/exclusion, transformation of capital into authority or legitimacy, and mobilization and organization capacities.

The Egyptian regime has for decades built much of its legitimacy on its role as protector of the nation from Islamic fundamentalism/extremism, while de-legitimizing the Islamists as political actors. Further, the state has misused its authority to define political inclusion as well as its coercive capital to exclude the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic actors from the political scene. In other words, the authoritarian state

has abused its political capacity in order to corrupt important democratic institutions such as citizens' right to democratic self-organizing and democratic political representation through parties and free and fair elections, not to mention avoided completely to observe the rule of democratic control of instruments of coercion. Ironically, this regime exclusion has led the Islamists to develop mobilization and organizational capacities in other arenas. In the words of Abdel-Moneim Abul-Fotouh, an Islamist presidential candidate and former middle-rank leader in the Brotherhood: "When you don't have a platform to express your political views you try to find another way. People had to use mosques, churches and professional syndicates as platforms for political expression. That was the regime's fault" (Al Jazeera 24 May 2012).

At the same time, the political capacity of the state has diminished, much because of macro-economic reforms to market-oriented liberalism. Coupled with economic stagnation and a population boom, this has left the state unable to answer to the needs of its citizens, indirectly increasing the room of operation for other actors. By not being able to provide for its citizens, the regime has also been unable to mobilize popular support by ways of integrating the masses into the state. Instead it has ruled by clientelism, and suffered losses of legitimacy. The Islamists have attempted to fill the void of the receding state by offering social services, networks and an alternative perspective on the organization of politics and the role of the citizen (Wickham 2002). Contrary to the state, they have tirelessly asserted their support for democratic institutions such as democratic control of instruments of coercion (naturally, since they have suffered most from the lack of it), citizens' right to self-organizing and increasingly also human rights in a universal language, and particularly the principle of democratic political representation through parties and elections, which they have committed to both in word and in action. However, they have had limited capacity to practice what they preach under aggressive exclusion and repression by the regime.

The Muslim Brotherhood was however the actor that suffered repression the best. While continuing to constantly contest the regime's power in elections and claiming political representation despite the risks and repercussions suffered by

Brotherhood members, the Brotherhood also took advantage of opportunities to influence and shape society at the local level which were left open by a weak and receding state. This included offering services to the poor where the state did not adequately care for its citizens, and encouraging its members to exercise da'wa. As such, they turned their religious capital into legitimacy by reshaping social values at the grass root level and challenged the religious authority of state institutions, as well as the political authority of the regime. This strategy is classic for the Islamist movements and similar to the one Janine Clark (2004) has described in Yemen. This dual strategy of grass root activism and political participation has proven unbeatable after the fall of Mubarak and most restrictions on party politics and elections. In terms of building trust, cooperation and legitimacy, the Muslim Brotherhood has achieved much of what the liberal democratization literature often ascribes to civil society. In addition, they have achieved the rarer feat of connecting on-the-ground work and demands for social justice with political participation and activism to make political inclusions more inclusive and based on equality.

How has the regime been able to counter the Islamist attempt to turn religious capital into political authority and legitimacy? Since Sadat, the Egyptian state has tried to sap into religion as a source of authority and legitimacy (Wickham 2002). Sadat presented himself as the “believer president” and tolerated the existence of the Islamist movement, notably releasing Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members from prison. However the Islamization of society in the 70s and 80s challenged the authority of the state in matters of religion and established religious organizations and leaders as vital, competing actors. Both the state and the Islamist have struggled over authority on religious interpretation, and the topics over which they clash are often related to women, family or morality.

However, because the regime lacks the mobilizing capacity of the Islamist movements, their attempts at using religion to gain authority can best be described as faith-based populism. Comparatively, Islamist movements have the capacity to engage large numbers in political work through their use of an Islamic frame, particularly among the urban middle- and lower-middle classes. As Wickham (2004) has demonstrated in her study of youth mobilization in Egypt, this is both because they

offer them appealing incentives (social, emotional or psychological incentives, such as shared community) from a rational actor perspective, and because they are able to frame political activism as a religious duty. As my interviews with Islamist women in Cairo confirmed, their political activism is motivated by the idea that it is a kind of religious service, a duty on those who are able to fulfill it, to pursue the aim of their ideology in the political field also. This explains how Islamist women's political activism was able to grow under authoritarian structures of insecurity also. Indeed, this way of integrating citizens from below in a political project is more democratic than the populist strategy pursued by the Egyptian state through decades.

As discussed before, the Egyptian regime as well as women's rights organizations failed to mobilized support for policies that may have had empowering potential for women, such as a political quota. The top-down construction of the National Council of Women and its practices is a clear example of incorporating support, which many women's rights organizations have accepted in lack of better options. Women's rights organizations are thus included at the formal level but excluded at the popular level; they have access to policy-making arenas, but they are mistrusted by the general public and cannot mobilize considerable grass root support.

8.3.1 Summary

The Muslim Brotherhood has built its political capacity by organizing at the outskirts of a receding state and restructuring the values of society through religious activism. Women have been central to these efforts of building bottom-up influence and legitimacy, which has also empowered them as political actors and integrated them into the political project of the Brotherhood as well. Comparatively, the state has only managed to use religion by populist incorporation and has failed to both contain the Islamist movements and truly empower women.

8.4 Fourth dimension: The democratization process

How does the strategy of the main actors affect the development of women's political participation in Egypt, and vice versa? Islamist women's political participation is still not influential enough to make a large impact on the political process in Egypt,

especially in representative politics. Because women's participation is not a prioritized issue by the most influential actors, it is also hard to trace the interrelationship between women's participation and their strategies. These are often indirect and uncommunicated. However, the following are some reflections on how authoritarian legacies and the dynamics of the democratization process may influence or explain Islamist women's political participation, and vice versa.

The transition process after the 2011 revolution in Egypt has been shaped primarily by the choices of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the military council which stepped in to rule Egypt as Mubarak stepped down. SCAF is formally accountable to no one although constantly challenged by “the power of the street” in various demonstrations and protests, by political parties and opposition movements, and most recently through the parliament. Although they have engaged in some dialogue with opposition forces, the process which they have designed has been decided without any kind of democratic consultation of the people's will based on equal participation. Nathan J. Brown, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment's Middle East program, describes Egypt's post-revolution transition process as a weakly designed and with so many legal and constitutional loopholes causing uncertainty and confusion that the term “process” is not a timely description of what is going on (Brown April 16 2012).

“Making things worse was the way in which critical administering, governing, and adjudicating bodies were (or have come to be seen) as deeply interested or partisan actors -- the parliament as the arm of Islamists, the SCAF as wedded to a set of political and material interests, the State Council as willing to seize any opportunity to pursue its ambitious understanding of its judicial role, and even the presidential election commission as a body headed by the constitutional court's chief justice, a figure seen as close to the military and security establishment” (Brown April 16 2012).

In simple terms, the transition process has been quite chaotic so far. Although the needs to rebuild important institutions by electing a new parliament and a new

president and rewriting the constitution have been acknowledged by all, the manner and order in which the SCAF has gone about it has received much criticism. Marina Ottaway, in a review of the transition process for the Carnegie Endowment's "Guide to Egypt's Transition" online project, compares it to the experience in neighboring Tunisia:

"Rather than addressing the chicken-and-egg problem faced in all transitions—that you cannot elect new institutions until there is a constitution, but that you cannot have a constitution without electing a body to discuss and approve it—Egypt decided to ignore the challenge, electing institutions for the long term while their powers are likely to be altered in the short term. By contrast, Tunisia addressed the same problem in the time-honored way of electing a constituent assembly with a one-year mandate, to be replaced at the end of the period by a parliament elected under the new constitution" (Ottaway 2012).

This choice of sequencing has seen the election of a parliament (and, as this is being written, of a president) whose powers are yet undecided and most likely to change during the period for which they are elected. The value of a democratic process of democratization is that it is self-enforcing, more so than democracy introduced from above (or worse yet, from outside). However, SCAF has not allowed the transition process in Egypt to benefit from natural self-enforcement of democratic principles. Rather these are something that the opposition is continually struggling with the SCAF for. This is much because the shaping of democratic institutions such as the elections of a new parliament has not been accompanied by substantial strengthening of these institutions, such as providing parliament with a mandate and powers laid down in a rewritten constitution. SCAF suspended the Egyptian constitution when they took power after Mubarak, and the writing of a new one is postponed. In the meantime, SCAF rules by a minimalist temporary constitution which leaves much undefined, including the powers of parliament and the president.

Quite naturally, the transition has then been shaped also by the power

struggle between the competing actors, the strongest of which are the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood, but which also include Salafi groups, revolutionary youth groups, and others. In a transition where the most powerful set the agenda and democratic means are promoted by undemocratic processes, women have lost much of the ability to influence that they were experiencing and hoping for during the revolution. This is because the inclusion of women in the transition process has not been a priority for the most powerful and influential of the actors, and because excluding practices are still continued. Most notable among these is the continued insecurity related to informal political activities such as street demonstrations in opposition to the ruling regime, due to the military's violent means of repressing protests.

The formal politics of elections, campaigning and representation has risen from the revolution as a safe sphere of public participation which is available also to women. But few women yet have access to formal political participation, being underrepresented in all political parties as well as in parliament, or the capacity to claim such representation. Meanwhile the “street politics” of demonstrations, sit-ins, marches and other kinds of activism outside the chain of representation, which is more easily accessible for women, remains a dangerous line of activity. This is especially true for women, who continue to suffer detention, brutality, torture and sexualized violence at the hands of the SCAF-controlled police and military, immune to democratic control and accountability. This challenges the ability of the masses and especially women to exercise “people pressure” and influence the decisions of SCAF.

The Muslim Brotherhood has pursued a cautious, gradual strategy since the revolution and frustrated many of its members by its resistance to swift change. Some of its most reformist figures have broken away, deluding their influence of the reformist trend as a catalyst for change in the movements they left behind. One notable example is Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh who is now running for president against the official candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood. Still, there remains an active youth division within the Brotherhood that continues to negotiate with the leadership about strategy and democratic

principles, in alliance with reformists who are still loyal to the Brotherhood. Like the people in Egypt have the newfound ability to influence top-down political decision by taking to the streets in protest, so do the young and reform-minded members of the Brotherhood have some ability to check the compromises it is able to make with their ideals of democratic freedom and equality.

The institutions most important to women's political participation are still weak in Egypt or subject to abuse by the military regime. It would appear that it is the capacity of the Muslim Brotherhood to challenge authoritarian powers by religious activism and develop new arenas for contention that initially promoted its women's activism to grow and developed into political participation. Islamist women's political participation in the Muslim Brotherhood has been further promoted by the importance the organization has attached to their contributions in different fields, increasingly acknowledging their capacity to advance their goals also in the political field. As the Brotherhood struggles for power in the open and shifting political landscape of post-revolution Egypt, women's political contributions to the movement are more important than ever. With the elimination of the security threat towards candidates in representative politics, the revolution has opened up the formal political field to women's participation. It has also sparked a debate about women's rights and roles within the Brotherhood, as women are demanding decision-making roles within their own organization now that Mubarak's repression is no longer a threat to movement leaders. If the Brotherhood adopts the principle of gender equality in decision-making within its own organization, it would be a powerful sign of commitment to women's equal rights, but this has yet to happen.

8.4.1 Summary

The post-revolution transition process orchestrated by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has been chaotic, undemocratic and largely left women out of the decision-making. Women are less able to contest this as street protests remain unsafe, while “formal” politics have become safer and more open to women's participation. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood has failed to internalize demands from its youth and liberals to reform women's roles within the movement.

8.5 Comparing theoretical perspectives

How do the three different theoretical perspectives explain this evidence about factors influencing the increase in Islamist women's political participation?

Which perspective explains the different developments better?

The sequencing argument that an opening to mass politics should await certain preconditions was in practice rejected by the popular uprising which led to the Egyptian revolution. Indeed, Mubarak had used precisely the kind of arguments that Mansfield and Snyder propose about preserving order at the cost of popular participation in politics to legitimize his continued authoritarianism. The regime's message was that Egypt was not ready for democracy. The interview material I have gathered for this thesis gives many examples of how women who tried to participate in peaceful politics were met by brutal oppression by the Mubarak regime. The Islamist women I have interviewed view the regime oppression as the primary factor that restricted their participation, as shown in chapter 7, not as a contribution to stability and construction of liberal prerequisites for democracy. Indeed, as shown in the assessment of democratic institutions important for women's political participation, the Mubarak regime did little to foster these prerequisites but instead abused or destroyed them.

When Mubarak was toppled by the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of citizens participating in peaceful demonstrations against his rule, the sequencing argument also suffered a blow. Egypt did not descent into violence and chaos. Nor did it experience an Islamist take-over like Iran, despite the empowerment of Islamist movements in the process that followed. The sequencing theory can not explain how the people rose up and demanded democracy peacefully. Egypt did not miss its “dictatorship moment”, as Thomas Friedman wrote; it shook dictatorship off after three crippling decades.

By the conservative understanding of democracy, the Muslim Brotherhood is a threat and only playing the game of democratic politics to exploit the system. By extension, they are also a threat to the democratic rights of women. This is how those primarily concerned with regime stability interpreted events in Iran with the Islamic revolution in 1979 and in Algeria, where the military intervened after Islamists won

the country's first multiparty elections in 1991, and civil war ensued. However the Islamist women I have interviewed consider the ideology they follow to be empowering and a force which encourages their political participation. In other words, it contributes to the development of equal political participation and democracy.

Despite its moderate, non-violent ideology, the Muslim Brotherhood's declared dedication to restoring sharia-based rule and a global Caliphate is enough for some democratization scholars and practitioners to eye them with mistrust as they seek to engage in democratic politics. This perspective justifies continued authoritarian rule in countries susceptible to the Islamist influence, a la Mansfield and Snyder's sequencing theory. As exemplified earlier with Adrian Karatnycky's Freedom House report, policy recommendations based on this perspective recommend increasing economic and civil freedoms while holding off on mass politics. Meanwhile, Mansfield and Snyder suggest that reforms can be implemented by moderate groups, which they certainly do not consider Islamists to be. Yet, the Muslim Brotherhood as I have shown in chapter 7 has managed to promote women's political participation in the face of violent repression from the regime. Clearly, the sequencing approach to democracy does not explain the rise of Islamist women's political participation.

The Muslim Brotherhood indeed emerged as the best prepared and strongest actor to contest political power after the revolution. However, the organization experienced much competition from both secular groups and other Islamists. In elections and as a vocal critic of the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' undemocratic strategies, the Brotherhood demonstrated commitment to democratic elections and the establishment of other institutions vital to the expansion of political rights. By a minimalist, liberal definition of democracy this makes the Muslim Brotherhood a democratic actor, simply by committing to electoral politics, rule of law and other core institutions of minimalist democracy. The election results even showed some electoral victories for women representing the Freedom and Justice Party. The same way as some of my informants have interpreted this as a sign of the Brotherhood's commitment to women's participation in decision-making, so would this suffice to meet a transition approach definition of an actor committed to women's representation.

Mubarak legitimized his violations of political freedoms in the name of protecting the people and the country's interests from the Islamists and other forces that would exploit any opening up of the political space for their own interests and destabilize Egypt. Although the Islamist threat has not materialized, this is exactly how the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces is still legitimizing its continued undemocratic rule as a necessary “sequence” before the country can be run democratically. In its rhetoric, “Islamist” has simply been replaced by “thugs”, a word used to de-legitimize protestors. Among the pro-revolutionary forces, this approach to democratization has long since lost its legitimacy. However, they also do not trust the liberal approach to democratization which allows democracy to be built top-down by elite negotiations and structuring of democratic institutions for the many, but by the few. This is most obvious among the youth, also among the young women from the Muslim Brotherhood whom I interviewed for this thesis. They wish the free, mass-scale political participation of the revolution to be preserved in the restructuring of a new political system. The findings in chapter 7 give examples of how some young women have even left the Brotherhood after the revolution because it failed to live up to their raised hopes and expectations by granting them decision-making equality within their own movement.

The Muslim Brotherhood leadership, however, appears to have a liberal transition approach to democratization, at least with regard to women's political rights. As shown in the assessment of strategy and dynamics earlier in this chapter, they seem content to focus on what they deem to be the most significant democratic institutions first, and leave women's rights and political participation to develop in response to the introduction and enforcement of these institutions. They also seem inclined to accept elite negotiations as a means to bring about a democratic system, as they have engaged in many dialogue meetings with the SCAF. By a transition approach to democratization, then, it would appear that the Brotherhood is an actor which is contributing to the transition to democracy and thus, somewhere down the road, to women's political participation. In this perspective, it does not matter as much if the Brotherhood is able to include women in decision-making within its own organization or otherwise integrate

women in its political project from below.

Because of this narrow, formal perspective, the transition approach fails to explain how women's political participation in the Brotherhood has already grown. As I have shown in the findings from my interviews and the assessments earlier, it has grown in the absence of the correct institutions and as a result of the Brotherhood's organizational capacity to mobilize support and the important roles women play in this mobilization. Although the institutions of elections, which the transition approach puts special faith in, have been in place, elections have indeed been too insecure to allow for Islamist women's participation with a few notable examples. As suggested by the interview material, Islamist women have increased their participation in a bottom-up process of expanding women's roles, and it has happened in defiance of a repressive regime rather than as encouraged by democratic institutions.

The transition approach also fails to account for another development, which further suggests that it is an insufficient explanation of Islamist women's political participation. According to liberal democratization theory, a democratic reform such as the introduction of a quota for women in parliament by elite negotiations and international support should have more formative effects on the actors. However, in Egypt the Islamist actors rejected their introduction. Although they ran women as candidates for the allotted seats, this was a strategy made to contest regime power by all means possible and did not amount to support for this institution, nor substantial adaptation to it. They consumed the quota as an institution enabling political representation but also contested its legitimacy and as such contributed to its destruction as soon as Mubarak's regime fell. Women's rights gains achieved in Egypt under authoritarian rule have been elite-negotiated by a regime seeking to «feminize» in order to legitimize itself, often in accordance with Western and international pressure, and women's rights organizations have let themselves be co-opted into compromises on principles of democracy. Such democratic institutions as the women's quota in parliament and improvements on gender equality in family law have been introduced by undemocratic means and are thus easily dismissed on account of their autocratic

heritage in the political turbulence following the revolution. As this assessment has shown, it has not been top-down measures by the previous regime that has empowered women in the Brotherhood to participate in politics. Indeed, in negotiating such institutions with much less influential and popular women's rights groups, the Mubarak regime excluded the actor which has the strongest influence on women's day-to-day-lives on the grass root level. Instead the women of the Brotherhood have increased their participation from the bottom up; proving their capacity in religious and charitable fields, and then advancing into politics. As recounted in chapter 7, my informants believe that candidates who do well in elections are those whom the public knows and trusts, and that Brotherhood women have earned this legitimacy with their long history of activism in the service of their communities.

In the perspective of Thomas Carothers and gradualism, the Muslim Brotherhood also has potential to be a democratizing actor in Egypt as it indeed has been a long-time oppositional force steadfast in its call and push for democratization and civil freedoms, but it is not a straightforward thing to judge. The reason is that if you adopt a broader definition of democracy, the answer to whether an Islamist movement exemplified by the Brotherhood is compatible with democracy and civil pluralism becomes more complex. This is especially true because the Brotherhood has changed its strategy and ideology over time in response to its surroundings and internal factors. Under Mubarak and since the revolution, however, the Brotherhood has stuck to its commitment to participatory politics and call for equal democratic freedom for all citizens.

During the revolution, women's participation was highly visible and important to its success, as my informants have emphasized. This raised hopes for women's political participation in Egypt in the future. But what happens after a revolution? How can mass contentious politics turn into institution formation when the movements are as leaderless as they appeared to be in the Egyptian revolution? A top-heavy transition is almost unavoidable in a situation like the Egyptian transition where the military is leading the process, but it has received much criticism. Indeed the pro-revolutionary forces in Egypt including the Brotherhood agree with Thomas Carothers that elites

deserve no special place in democratization, as in Egypt they are seen to threaten its success more than support it. This is especially true regarding women's participation, as we have seen that the strategy of the SCAF continues to avoid or abuse the institutions that should support their participation, especially the democratic control of instruments of coercion. The gradualism approach pays closer attention to the importance of contesting power in a democratization process than the transition approach does, and as such can better explain how women's participation is effected by this. Indeed, women's increased political participation in the Muslim Brotherhood is a sign of what Carothers called improved variety and quality of a main political actor. In terms of promoting women's participation, the Brotherhood has been an important alternative center of power which has managed to mobilize grass root support for its organization and by extension for its women. By empowering women in its movement and supporting them in elections, the Brotherhood has succeeded in a few cases of bridging the considerable gulf between women as citizens and the formal political system, which long remained a sphere for the elite regimes in Egypt.

Is something left unexplained by the three perspectives on democratization? None of these three theories pay special attention to the democratizing potential mass participation through revolutions, except for the sequencing approach which dismisses it as dangerous. However, it must be emphasized that the revolution has been the factor that has had the strongest impact on women's ability to exercise their right to political participation in Egypt today and, hopefully, in the future.

9 Conclusion

In this thesis, I aimed to explain why Islamist women's political participation is increasing in Egypt by a qualitative study of women's political participation in the Muslim Brotherhood. I have studied this within the perspective of democratization, as it is a question about realizing a political right which is necessary to reach the aim of democracy; “popular control of public affairs based on political equality”. In the post-revolution transition process Egypt now has entered, where the Muslim Brotherhood plays an important role as the most powerful democratically elected actor, it is a highly interesting puzzle to study.

I have sought to investigate this puzzle by gathering qualitative data about women's participation from their own perspective, and by combining this insight with secondary sources to assess the development of women's political participation. Further I have chosen to focus on a selected number of democratic institutions and actors to include in this assessment. As tools to explain the data about these institutions and actors by, I have used three theoretical perspectives about democratization; sequencing theory, transition theory and gradualism.

The findings in this thesis suggest that the integrating, bottom-up means by which the Muslim Brotherhood has contested political power in Egypt has been the main cause of women's increased political participation within the movement. By mobilizing support through grass root religious activism combined with activism aimed at improving social justice, and by utilizing women's activism to these aims, the Brotherhood has empowered women within its movement. Their entrance into political elections has been facilitated by the Brotherhood's wish to contest political power in Egypt in the strongest possible way and by the successful activism which women have demonstrated at the grass root level. It has happened in defiance of a repressive regime rather than as encouraged by democratic institutions. This can best be understood by the gradualism approach to democratization promoted by Thomas Carothers, as compared to a transition approach or a sequencing approach.

Islamist women's political participation has not been facilitated by the introduction of correct democratic institutions, as transition theory would propose, or

an authoritarian-led politics of order, which sequencing theory prescribes. Indeed, the Islamist women themselves emphasize the past authoritarian regime's power abuse as the main obstacle to women's political participation and democratic rights being respected before the revolution. This threat restricted the roles women were encouraged or allowed to take in the Muslim Brotherhood before the revolution; however many of the women did participate in high-risk political activism despite this insecurity. Today the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces continue to abuse the state's means of coercion to control street politics, with destructive effects on women's mass participation in politics.

Rather, the findings in this study suggest that the Muslim Brotherhood's capacity to engage women through alternative ways and arenas of participation, and by constructing the Islamist movement as an alternative center of power in Egypt, has had an empowering effect on its women. The Muslim Brotherhood has built its political capacity by organizing at the outskirts of a receding state and restructuring the values of society through religious activism. Women have been central to these efforts of building bottom-up influence and legitimacy, which has also empowered them as political actors and integrated them into the political project of the Brotherhood as well. Comparatively, the state has only managed to use religion by populist incorporation and has failed to both contain the Islamist movements and truly empower women.

This thesis suggests that experiences of activism as well as interpretations of activism as a religious duty are factors which encourage individual Islamist women into political participation. The women I have interviewed understand the increase of women's political participation within the Muslim Brotherhood as a natural expansion of their roles as activists in the movement. Their sense of religious duty and identity is a strong motivational force to go out of the home and try to change their society for the better. They see politics as a means to achieve this goal, thus they find support for political activism in their interpretation of the "real Islam". In addition, they emphasize that the revolution has facilitated women's political participation by removing the repressive former regime and the security threat previously connected to political participation.

These findings further support the notion that through activism aimed at spreading Islam and creating a just Islamic society, women's roles in Islamic movements and the Arab world have grown beyond what the movements initially envisioned. Thus, women's Islamic activism seems a potent strategy to empower women and change their roles within their societies. As women take on these new, public roles they are also renegotiating their roles within the Muslim Brotherhood organization. Whether the Islamist movements will develop more democratic structures and greater gender equality internally will be an indicator of whether an Islamic understanding of women's roles will indeed contribute towards a democratic system built on political equality.

Literature List

Abdel-Latif, Omayma (2008) "In the Shadow of the Brothers. The Women of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood." *Carnegie Papers*, no. 13 October 2008.

Abdellatif, Omayma and Marina Ottaway (2007) «Women in Islamist Movements: Towards an Islamist Model of Women's Activism.» *Carnegie Papers*, no. 2 June 2007.

Al Jazeera (2012) "The Brotherhood and Mubarak" published 24 May 2012, accessed 24 May 2012 at

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2012/05/2012517131828948619.html>

Barlow, Rebecca and Shahram Akbarzadeh (2006) "Women's Rights in the Muslim World: reform or reconstruction?" *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 27 no. 8, pp. 1481-1494.

Bayat, Asef (2005) "Islamism and Social Movement Theory" in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2005), pp. 891-908

Brown, Nathan J. (2012) "Egypt's Transition Imbroglio." *Foreign Policy*, published April 16 2012, accessed May 10 2012 at

<http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/04/16/egypt-s-transition-imbroglio/a8xc>

Carnegie Endowment, A (no date) "Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Election" accessed April 10 2012 at

<http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/01/25/results-of-egypt%E2%80%99s-people%E2%80%99s-assembly-elections>

Carnegie Endowment, B (no date) "Results of Shura Council elections" accessed April 10 2012 at <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/29/results-of-shura-council-elections>

Carnegie Endowment, C (no date) "The Muslim Brotherhood" accessed April 10 2012 at <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/11/the-muslim-brotherhood>

- Carothers, Thomas (2002) "The End of the Transition Paradigm." *Journal of Democracy* vol. 13, no. 1, January 2002, pp. 5-21
- Carothers, Thomas (2007a) "The "Sequencing" Fallacy." *Journal of Democracy* vol. 18 no. 1, January 2007, pp. 12-27
- Carothers, Thomas (2007b) "Misunderstanding Gradualism." *Journal of Democracy* vol. 18 no. 3, July 2007, pp. 18-22
- Clark, Janine A. (2004) "Islamist Women in Yemen. Informal Nodes of Activism" in Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed. (2004) *Islamic Activism. A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press
- Chandhoke, Neera (2009) "What is the relationship between participation and representation?" in Törnquist, Olle, Neil Webster and Kristian Stokke (ed.) *Rethinking Popular Representation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Dawoud, Aliaa (2011) "Why Egyptian Feminists Have Abandoned Women's Rights Discourse", paper presented at the 2011 AUC Annual Research Conference "Social Justice: Theory, Research and Practice", accessed April 16 at http://www.aucegypt.edu/research/conf/researchconf/Documents/Research%20Conference%202011/Dawoud_WhyEgyptianfeministshaveabandonedwomensrightsdiscourse_paper.pdf
- Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (2012) "Summary of the monitoring report with a gender perspective on the current People's Assembly election 2011" accessed April 16 2012 at http://www.1000peacewomen.org/upload/120122%20In%202012%20Parliament_What%20Women%20Lost%20and%20What%20Egypt%20Lost.pdf
- Elsadda, Hoda (2011) "Women's rights activism in post-Jan25 Egypt: Combating the Shadow of the First Lady Syndrome in the Arab world". *Middle East Law and Governance*, vol. 3 no. 1-2, pp.84-83. BRILL
- El-Sherif, Ashraf (2012) "Egypt's New Islamists: Emboldening Reform from Within" published January 12, accessed January 15 at <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2012/01/12/egypt-s-new-islamists-emboldening->

[reform-from-within/8z6r](#)

Ezzat, Heba Raouf (2007) “On the Future of Women and Politics in the Arab World” in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, ed. (2007) *Islam in Transition. Muslim Perspectives*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freedom and Justice Party (2011) “Election Program” accessed February 12 at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/73955131/FJP-Program-En>

Friedman, Thomas L. (2012) “Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way” *The New York Times*, published May 5 2012, accessed May 6 2012 at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/06/opinion/sunday/friedman-lead-follow-or-get-out-of-the-way.html?_r=1

Gerring, John (2007) *Case Study Research. Principles and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grugel, Jean (2002) *Democratization. A Critical Introduction*. New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillian

Hafez, Sherine (2011) *An Islam of Her Own. Reconsidering religion and secularism in women's Islamic movements*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Harriss, J. (2006). ““Politics is a dirty river”: But is there a ‘new politics’ of civil society? Perspectives from global cities of India and Latin America” in *Power Matters: Essays on Institutions, Politics and Society in India*. Delhi: Open University Press.

Hatem, Mervat (2006) “In the Eye of the Storm: Islamic Societies and Muslim Women in Globalization Discourses.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2006, pp. 22-35

Haynes, Jeff (2008) “Religion” in Peter Burnell and Vicky Randall (eds.) *Politics in the developing world, second edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Huntington, Samuel P. (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

- Høigilt, Jacob og Kjetil Selvik (2008) "Hva er islamisme?" *Babylon - Nordisk tidsskrift for Midtøstenstudier* nr. 2 2008. Oslo.
- Ibrahim, Saad Eddin (2002) "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups" and "Islamic Activism and Political Opposition in Egypt" in Saad Eddin Ibrahim (ed.) *Egypt, Islam and Democracy: Critical Essays*. Cairo: The American University Press.
- Kamrava, Mehran, ed. (2006) *The New Voices of Islam. Reforming Politics and Modernity – A Reader*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Karatnycky, Adrian (2002) "Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap." *Journal of Democracy* vol. 13, no. 1, January 2002, pp. 99-112.
- Mansfield, Edward D. and Jack Snyder (2002) "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War." *International Organization* no. 56, vol. 2, Spring 2002, pp. 297–337
- Mansfield, Edward D. and Jack Snyder (2005) *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Mansfield, Edward D. and Jack Snyder (2007) "The Sequencing "Fallacy"." *Journal of Democracy* no. 18 vol. 3, pp. 5-9
- Mietzner, Marcus (2012) "Indonesia's democratic stagnation: anti-reformist elites and resilient civil society." *Democratization* vol 19, no. 2, pp. 209-229.
- Moghadam, Valentine M. (2010) "Chapter 16 - Gender, Politics, and Women's Empowerment", pp. 279–303, in Leicht, K. and Jenkins, J.C. (eds.) *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective*. New York: Springer
- Moghadam, Valentine M. (2003) *Modernizing Women. Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*. Second edition. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
- Norton, Augustus Richard (2005) "Thwarted Politics: The Case of Egypt's Hizb al-Wasat" in Robert W. Hefner, (ed.) *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Ottaway, Marina (2012) "Egypt's Transition: Finding a Way out of the Vicious Circle."

Carnegie Endowment. Published February 6 2012, accessed April 20 2012 at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/06/egypt-s-transition-finding-way-out-of-vicious-circle>

Phillips, Anne (1995) *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Pitkin, Hanna F. (1967) *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Rashwan, Diaa, ed. (2007) *The Spectrum of Islamist Movements. Volume one*. Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler.

Roy, Olivier (1994) *The Failure of Political Islam*. Second edition. London: I. B. Tauris Publishers.

Save the Children (2011) “The Complete Mother's Index 2011” accessed April 14 at http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SOWM2011_INDEX.PDF

Al-Sharmani, Mulki (2011) “The Limits of Law: Reforming Egyptian Family Law and the Question of Gender Justice.” Paper presented at the 2011 AUC Annual Research Conference Social Justice: Theory, Research and Practice, American University in Cairo, accessed April 14 at http://www.aucegypt.edu/research/conf/researchconf/Documents/Research%20Conference%202011/AlSharmani_ReformingEgyptianfamilylaw_paper.pdf

Sholkamy, Hania (2010) “Power, Politics and Development in the Arab Context: Or how can rearing chicks change patriarchy?” *Development* no. 53, vol. 2, pp. 254-258

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Tadros, Mariz (2010) “Quotas: A Highway to Power in Egypt... But for Which Women?” *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 41 no. 5, September 2010, pp. 89-99

Törnquist, Olle (2004) “The Political Deficit of Substantial Democratisation” in Harris, John, Kristian Stokke and Olle Törnquist (ed.) *Politicising Democracy*. The

New Local Politics of Democratisation. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Törnquist, Olle (forthcoming) *Assessing Democratisation: A Critical Handbook with Indonesian Illustrations*.

UN (1995) “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” Beijing: Fourth World Conference on Women. Accessed 20.01.2012 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

Utvik, Bjørn Olav (2011) *Islamismen*. Oslo: Unipub.

Wadud, Amina (2006) “Aisha's Legacy: The Struggle for Women's Rights within Islam” in Mehran Kamrava (ed.) *The New Voices of Islam. Reforming Politics and Modernity – A Reader*. London: I. B. Tauris

Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky (2002) *Mobilizing Islam: religion, activism, and political change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky (2004) “Interests, Ideas and Islamist Outreach in Egypt” in Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed. (2004) *Islamic Activism*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan, ed. (2004) *Islamic Activism. A social movement theory approach*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wollack, Kenneth (2002) “Retaining the Human Dimension” *Journal of Democracy* vol. 13, no. 1, January 2002, pp. 20-25