TRENDS IN LGBT ACTIVISM:

DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF EGYPT'S QUEER CITIZENS

By

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Abstract

Egyptians who do not fit into the mold of the ideal, heteronormative citizen as perpetuated by the state face widespread persecution and criminalization. State security forces target homosexual and other queer sexualities and behaviors in the private and public spheres. From fake profiles on dating and social media websites to raids on clubs and private parties, this segment of the Egyptian population struggles to find a space for themselves within Egyptian society. When arrest often means abuse, torture, and coerced confessions, they are further pushed to the fringes of society. Although Egypt has promised to protect certain rights of its citizens, it has frequently failed. This paper presents three major systems of oppression for non-heteronormative Egyptians: the state security apparatus and legal code, nationalist discourses, and the dominant ideologies of Islam within Egypt. After analyzing how queer Egyptians are targeted, criminalized, and persecuted, I analyze different activist methods and strategies in order to present and support the most effective strategies for Egypt.

Introduction

Although not residing in a nation that explicitly bans or criminalizes homosexuality, gay and queer Egyptians have faced persecution by strict security forces over the last two decades. In one study, Long (2004) describes an interview with Taher, an eighteen year old law student. Long admits that Taher sat in jail when he composed the article. The young man was "facing a three-year sentence for the crime of merely wanting to have sex with another man" (2004). He continues to describe men's experiences with being whipped, beaten, raped, burned, and shocked while with the police for accusations of homosexuality. Nicola Pratt (2007) details another case of police forces persecuting homosexuality in Egypt: The infamous Queen Boat case in 2001. In this case, over 50 men on a tourist boat in the Nile were arrested and most were imprisoned. Like Long (2004), Pratt (2007) describes tortures, beatings, and adds claims of being forced to confess to homosexuality by the men. This persecution of homosexual behavior and acts continues in today's post-revolution Egypt. According to Lizzie Dearden (2015), human rights activists claimed that "2014 was the worst year in a decade for Egypt's gay community". These are only a few accounts of a multitude of stories, most told by men, of police entrapping, arresting, and torturing Egyptians. The stories range from mass arrests at nightclubs and other venues to personal accounts of men arrested by police officers who had posed as local gay men on social media and dating websites.

Understandings and opinions regarding homosexuality have altered with the changing regimes, powers, and historical movements. Once, non-traditional, non-heterosexual behaviors and identities were regarded immoral vices by Western, industrialized nation-states. As a result, these non-traditional behaviors and identities were frequently condemned by colonialist powers observing the Middle East and North Africa. Today, however, as a result of the colonial legacy,

religious doctrines, and state and nationalist-sanctioned policies, homosexuality and the LGBT community are being increasingly persecuted and criminalized in the Middle East and North Africa whereas the West is observing a period of intense LGBT activism that has spurred policy changes to protect the rights of these individuals. In the United States, the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriages in a landmark trial in 2015, whereas Egypt witnessed a large increase in police persecution of homosexual men in the early 2000s that continues through today (Pratt 2007). Throughout the state gay men have been arrested, tortured, and imprisoned for homosexual actions or accusations of such behaviors. Scholars, such as Massad (2007) have linked the notions of homosexuality as belonging to a sexually distinct category of persons to Western traditions and thought processes. Regardless of point of origin, Egyptian queer individuals face threats from security officials, nationalist ideologies, and dominant Islamic beliefs. Thus, there are individuals and groups who seek to locate a queer space within the Egyptian society through activist methods. In the face of these threats, this paper will continue the trend of those activists seeking to locate this communal, safe space that protects certain rights by analyzing activist methods for this minority group.

In this essay, I will seek to broadly present and analyze the issues and persecution faced by a number of Egyptians. This leads into a discussion of activist methods in order to present a potential aid for future activists to continue implementing what I argue are the most successful actions and proposed actions. Due to a lack of positive, non-pejorative linguistic resources, queer Egyptians struggle to express their experiences, behaviors, and identities. These are not universal or global categories spread to be used without contextualization. Thus, this paper will begin with a discussion of Arabic and English terminology for the LGBT community, including an explanation of the importance of terminology, previous uses, and a catalogue of terms used in

this paper. Terminology for lobbying and self and communal expression is necessary, thus the foundation of successful activism should be cautious in determining appropriate and suitable terminology. Analyzing activist methods and ideas must begin with an understanding of the complexities of the identities and individuals whose lives are affected. Next, I will present the documents, articles, organizations, and individuals calling for greater protection and promotion of LGBT rights in Egypt. By establishing that there is a call for certain rights to be protected, a background of which institutions and discourses in Egypt limit and restrict these rights can be presented. By examining the Egyptian legal code, nationalist discourses, and influential Islamic powers, I will locate reasons for the continued persecution of homosexuality in Egypt. Upon establishing this background, I will conduct an analysis of certain LGBT activist methods and attempts in conjunction with these sources of persecution. After presenting and demonstrating the failures of some previous methods, I will analyze how newer, proposed methods may prove successful as they account for Egypt's colonial legacy, current legal code, security apparatuses, nationalist influence, and Islamic powers. Aspects of this approach will include, but not be limited to, reforming the security apparatus, the implementation protection of privacy laws, a re-reading of Egyptian nationalism, re-interpreting dominant religious doctrine, and promoting women's rights and gender equality.

From a theoretical standpoint, this paper strives to locate a middle ground between two camps. Massad's prominent book, *Desiring Arabs* (2007) is often seen in discord with the works of liberal, Western-style, journalistic analyses. In this book Massad (2007) looks at the effects of the colonial legacy, and he examines the relationship between sex and civilization. He describes how Europe developed and defined sexuality, sexual norms, and expected behaviors; these ideas were then transported to the colonies where they became a scale to measure the level of "culture"

or "savagery" held by a society. Although this paper does not agree with all aspects and layers of Massad's argument, I emphasize, like Massad, that Egyptian society cannot be equated to others, thus the experiences of Egyptians should not be likened to the experiences faced by Americans, or Europeans; just as different Western countries may not be equated to one another. As Massad (2007) explains, Western ideologies, definitions, and moral systems have been imposed upon the Middle East since the early days of imperialism. Egypt did not escape this influence, and today the country faces a tumultuous history of attempting to establish its own state. This process has been further affected by Islamic policies, Western influences (ie: secularism and capitalism), nationalist movements, and the 2011 revolution.

Without taking this multitude of factors into account, any form of LGBT activism in Egypt will fail to achieve the majority of its goals. Additionally, Massad's differentiation between identity and behavior is useful for this discussion. There are layers of complexity found in identities and behaviors, which will be discussed in depth at a later point, and these complexities ought to be understood by activists. Differentiating between identity and behavior however, should not simultaneously ignore or mitigate the persecution faced by individuals in Egypt. While acknowledging some of Massad's criticisms regarding homosexual identities and experiences, the numerous accounts of Egyptians claiming to be queer and describing fear, torture, and exclusion are the primary sources of emphasis for this paper. They describe an inherent and deeply felt need for acceptance, community, and protection throughout their books, interviews, news articles, and blogs. It is this point that forces me to deviate from Massad's theory and trend of analysis to strive to promote more productive forms of LGBT activism within the Middle East, which is the ultimate goal of this analysis. After understanding the multitude of experiences and identities, activist efforts need to seek not only the protection of

certain rights but also to work towards mitigating these feelings of fear, exclusion, and identity confusion whenever possible. In Egypt, confronting the specificities of the Egyptian state, culture, and religious ideologies will continue with this trend.

Understanding and Defining the Terminology

The Importance of Language and Self-Expression

Before undertaking a discussion of activism for a certain community or minority, it is critical to document the history of terminology used in the conversation of aforementioned group. In some instances, such as this essay, individuals and groups face a long history of discrimination and prejudice through labels and terms. Individuals may face isolation due to the lack of terminology to define their experiences and identities; conversely, terminology may be utilized to overgeneralize communities or force individuals into a category with which they do not self-identify. Discussions of identities, sexualities, and genders can invoke different sets of vocabulary depending on the goals of the discussion. Even in the United States, terms to describe the multitude of sexualities and gender identities have varied and changed in recent decades. In Arabic, the traditionally used terms for non-heteronormative sexualities, identities, and behaviors have originated from terms with negative connotations or from popular, vulgar slang. This limited linguistic repertoire endangers the mobility, self-expression, and communicative abilities of these individuals.

Without the ability to define themselves or their experiences, queer individuals face not only inner turmoil, but a lack of linguistic tools to use to lobby their interests to their governments and communities. Even within the LGBT community, individuals may neglect to collaborate or unite without positive linguistic tools that allow for productive dialogue. In a study focusing on queer, Asian individuals, Mariela Patron (2015), discusses the challenges posed by a

lack of words in one's native language to describe sex and sexuality. From her discussion and interviews with different individuals, Patron (2015) explains that "[a] sense of community is created when people start using certain words to identify themselves". In the same vein, Merabet (2014) describes linguistic tools used to signify a "larger queer identified 'family'" (35) in his ethnographic account, *Queer Beirut*. It is this ability to evoke shared feelings, to express one's experiences, and to allow for lobbying that makes it necessary to discuss terminology at the start of an analysis of LGBT activism. Neglecting the importance of this aspect of experience leaves activists without truly succeeding in their goals of improving the lives of queer and LGBT individuals. Here, Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of the imagined community can apply to an LGBT group within a nation, as they can stand as a minority community within a larger nation (and may at times even cross state borders). However, without productive terms, queer Egyptians may not find paths to lobby their interests, find a sense of community, or describe their experiences. Thus, I seek to demonstrate some of the possible terminology and explain the linguistic choices in this paper as an acknowledgement of the importance of terminology when discussing individual and communal experiences within the context of activism.

Brief History of Arabic Terms

In Modern Standard Arabic, the bulk of language used to describe non-heterosexual, non-heteronormative relationships and identities has consisted of derogatory words. According to its mission statement on its website (bintelnas.org), *Bint el-Nas "*is designed to serve the needs and interests of women who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer, and who are identified ethnically or culturally with the Arab world, regardless of where they live". This website provides a detailed glossary of terminology in order to promote the use of positive terms. These terms are needed to combat the widespread negative terminology. Amer (2012) explains

that the majority of Arabic terms in this genre originate from vulgar slang and insults. However, she also emphasizes the need for Arabic terms to describe Arab identities and experiences. Relying on colonial and foreign terms only further isolates these individuals from the wider Arab world. According to *Bint el-Nas*, two primary Modern Standard Arabic terms to describe homosexuality are "'shouzouz jinsi' (unnatural or abnormal sexuality), [and] 'loowat' (the homosexual act among men, in reference to the story of Prophet Lot in the Bible or Lut in the Koran)" (bintelnas.org). Here, these terms evoke highly negative connotations regarding homosexuality. Fortunately, Arabic words and phrases are slowly being reclaimed and repurposed for positive uses, such as the term "mithli" which is commonly used to describe homosexuals. This surge in the use of positive, non-derogatory terminology shows a gradual shift towards a space and arena for queer individuals to express themselves and their interests. With a basis in and the importance of terminology established, the terminology to be used in this essay will be located and defined.

A Glossary for this Discussion

In the tradition of Brian Whitaker (2006) and other scholars, I will begin my analysis by locating the terminology for this work and reflecting upon the difficulties in doing as such. First, I posit that before defining behaviors and identities regarding sex, gender, and sexuality, it is necessary to differentiate between identities and behaviors. Discussions of the wider LGBT community in Egypt and elsewhere too often focus on identity as a universal, transcendental category without separating it from behavior and complicated notions of identity. It is imperative to acknowledge that one may perform a gender or sexual orientation without identifying as one of that group. In his book, *Desiring Arabs,* Joseph Massad (2007) brings into his discussion of the "Gay International", the difference between behavior and identity. Massad (2007) attempts

to separate Arab sexualities and sexual behaviors from traditional Western conceptions and categories. He posits that "[t]he categories gay and lesbian are not universal at all and can only be universalized by the epistemic, ethical, and political violence unleashed on the rest of the world by the very international human rights advocates whose aim is to defend the very people their intervention is creating" (40-41). Thus, Massad draws attention to the history of colonialism and supposed Western creations. He attempts to deconstruct the homo-hetero binary that he claims follows a distinctly Western ideology. Although his distaste for activism within this field is apparent in the book, his argument raises at one critical argument for this essay: the difference between identity and behavior. Activists run the danger of overgeneralizing behaviors and identities. Worse, they may trap or enclose individuals into categories of identity when they may in fact only engage in certain behaviors without classifying themselves as belonging to a certain identity or imagined community. Thus, it is important to acknowledge this difference as terminology is being defined and implemented in activist works and discourses.

Due to the diversity in sexualities and sex/gender oriented identities, this essay will broadly refer to a community whose non-heteronormative behaviors and identities encompass a wide spectrum of experiences. Thus, it is necessary to rely on potentially simplistic, generalizing terminology. In spite of the pitfalls of such generalizations and grouping of different individuals, this paper's function as a holistic presentation of certain rights, the Egyptian context, and activist methods is better served by striving to look at the LGBT community as a broader whole. The research here will be most applicable to those whom chose to identify with a queer identity; however, the criticisms and proposals of activist methods and analysis of laws, stories, Islam, and security forces will be applicable to all Egyptians with non-heteronormative behaviors and experiences.

While primarily utilizing English terms, I will differentiate between identity and behavior when it affects the analysis of activism and rights for the individuals and communities discussed in this paper. The terms in this paper will be familiar to most readers, however, it is important to recognize them as used for a distinct purpose in this discussion. It is not my intent to force individuals into categories that they do not wish to use, nor to marginalize those whom activism seeks to defend. However, these limiting linguistic tools are necessary to formulate a productive discussion. Although I strongly agree with the discussions regarding the importance of creating and promoting Arabic terms for Arab individuals and experiences, this discussion will primarily occur in an English-speaking sphere. Thus, I will rely on English terminology for now. However, the shortcomings in doing so are clear, and later studies ought to further develop and promote positive, Arabic terminology.

The LGBT community refers to the broad community of non-heterosexual, non-heteronormative individuals who identify with these biological categories; it includes an entire range of sexualities and gender identities, not simply those included in the general acronym (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender). This phrase has been considered too exclusive by some scholars, as explained by Wilkinson and Langlois (2014). Its distinct reference to four specific categories suggestions a lack of inclusion. This term risks the danger of over-simplifying a broad array of identities and experiences. However, with its ability to reference an entire community and its popularity in the West (a primary audience for this paper) it is useful for describing the community that faces a shared status as an underprivileged minority group within Egypt. Although I will reference the LGBT community as a broad whole, much of this paper focuses on homosexuality and homosexual behavior as this is where the bulk of research on this topic is found. Thus, I will frequently only mention homosexuality or homosexual behavior when this is

the primary subject of the research. Regardless of a researcher's focus, however, I posit that the conclusions drawn about the experiences of homosexual individuals and how different methods of activism apply to them can be applied to the LGBT community as a whole.

Queer refers to a non-heterosexual, non cis-gendered person or behavior**.** Used as a broad noun or adjective to describe individuals affected by the laws, norms, religious beliefs, and movements analyzed here, this term will prove exceptionally useful. Although the phrase LGBT invokes a sense of commonality, community, and shared experience, it also assumes self-identification with the biological categories that it includes. On the other hand, the term queer does not necessarily suggest personal-identification with a certain identity. There will be some inter-exchanging between these two terms, but I will lean towards queer when trying to cast the widest net and LGBT when referencing the importance of community and self-identification with a certain sexual orientation or lifestyle. LGBT more blatantly references individuals with explicit or personal identifications with these identities. Queer more easily references the wide range of individuals who may not follow the hegemonic, heteronormative norms regardless of their personal identities. This paper assumes that all of these individuals can and often do experience an unjust restriction of basic rights. Even if this restriction is not explicit or excessive, it will affect the lives of these individuals. It also assumes that this minority community as a whole faces widespread suppression. Before outlining the threats to queer Egyptians, this paper will establish that all individuals, including queer and LGBT Egyptians deserve certain rights.

Threats to LGBT Lives

Outlining Basic Rights

In the face of widespread arrests of queer individuals in Egypt and claims of mistreatment, torture, and entrapment by the police, it is imperative to discuss what basic human

rights are and how they apply to the LGBT community. Outlining these rights and their importance helps to clarify the manner in which they are threatened in Egypt. In spite of the Western-centric bias of a discussion on human rights, a number of sources productively outline and define human rights and to whom they apply. While support for the extension of protecting basic rights to include queer individuals has grown among Western countries, a large number of other states and groups have disagreed, even to the point of hostility towards these motions (Wilkinson and Langlois 2014). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has been signed by Egypt, provides the basic foundation for defining and defending the rights of queer individuals. Other, blatantly Western documents and institutions make similar demands. This pre-dominantly Western discourse and influence paints a slightly skewed picture over discussions and attempts at LGBT activism in Egypt, making it necessary to first examine these demands and their relationship to Egypt. Some scholars like Massad (2007) argue against applying these Western discourses to Egypt. Nonetheless, in the face of accounts of torture, maltreatment, and abuse, we must find a path to connect these demands and methods to applicable ones in Egypt. The line between depending too heavily on Western tools and resources and incorporating well-developed, specialized tools for an Egyptian form of LGBT activism is a fine one. Activists must take heed of this line and the warnings of former scholars.

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) does not explicitly refer to queer or LGBT individuals, its broad wording seems capable of applying its demands to this community. Articles 1 and 2 immediately demonstrate the application of equality "in dignity and rights" to "all human beings" regardless of any distinctions (UDHR 1948). The criminalization of homosexuality occurring in Egypt might be refuted by articles 5, 9, 10, and 11. Article 5 claims that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or

punishment" (UDHR 1948). In the same vein, articles 9. 10, and 11 detail proper behavior by security apparatuses and define the rights of all supposed criminals or lawbreakers. Scott Long (2004) is one of several authors to be mentioned in this paper who details blatant violations of these articles by Egyptian security forces. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not equal to a country's own constitution, laws, and on the ground actions, it represents a common charter meant to be followed by all states, particularly all signatories of the document. Later, I look further at Egyptian law in order to discuss the legality of these police and security actions in the nation. Other articles in this UN declaration will be presented and discussed with reference to Egypt at a later point. This document is only one of several sources to present and detail the rights that are believed to be held by all people.

The Yogyakarta Principles stand as another source for documenting these basic rights. The primary goal of the Yogyakarta Principles is to apply international human rights protections and laws to all LGBT and queer individuals (2008). Although the UN Declaration ought to include this community of individuals, states such as Egypt have neglected to apply it to them. Thus, the Yogyakarta Principles were adopted by experts such as judges, academics, a former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and others. There is a distinctly Western tone found in the Principles, and even the layout of the document mirrors that of the US Bill of Rights. Additionally, unlike the UN Declaration of Human Rights, states did not sign onto the Yogyakarta principles. Although some scholars have attempted to apply the Yogyakarta Principles to activist methods in the Middle East, there is an inherent difficulty in applying this very Western discourse to a region that has little place for it in the public sphere.

While these principles are beneficial in theory and can be used in some arguments and battles for promoting LGBT activism and rights, the limitations of predominantly Western

construed ideas restrict the ability to apply them to Egypt and the broader Arab World. Jayesh

Needham (2013) discusses methods of activism in the Arab world. In his article "After the Arab

Spring" (2013), he analyzes the Yogyakarta principles and explains that they have faced a weak

welcome in the Arab world. He documents efforts by the Organization of the Islamic Conference

(OIC) and the Arab world in general to block discussions of applying certain human rights to

LGBT and queer individuals. Just as Massad (2007) links the "Gay International" and the

homo/hetero binary to Western and colonialist imported ideas, Needham (2013) explains that

ideas such as those in the Yogyakarta principles are often considered to be a part of a wider,

Orientalist scheme, a "westoxification" of the Arab world. When a state such as Egypt does not

apply the principles outlined in the UHDR consistently and universally to non-queer citizens,

then the threats to queer individuals increase. These individuals make up a primarily unaccepted

minority, and if Egypt continues to block applying certain human rights to its citizens, it will

continue to be even more aggressive towards this non-heteronormative minority. If attempts to

mitigate these issues are perceived as threats and Western interferences, then activist methods

that depend on these human rights discourses alone will struggle to be successful.

  While this paper argues the validity behind these principles and the UN Declaration of

Human Rights, I acknowledge that there is an inherent difficulty in applying them directly to

activist efforts in Egypt. Although this discussion starts with these Western principles and ideas,

it continues into a contextualization of how to foster the protection of these rights within Egypt.

Just as we must move away from relying on Western terminology definitions of identities and

behaviors, this essay will move away from Western definitions of rights, documents, and activist

approaches. As a foundation for describing the limitations and threats felt by LGBT and queer

individuals, these rights may be referenced. The documentation of abuse, neglect, and struggle to

live in a manner that violates the hegemonic norm demonstrates that Egyptian institutions and civil society rarely accept these individuals as deserving of basic rights. This is only exacerbated by the fact that the Egyptian state does not comply with the UN Declaration regarding circumstances that involve other citizens. There are three primary sources for the persecution of LGBT and queer individuals in Egypt: the legal code/security state, nationalism, and the dominant strands of Islam. Understanding the inner workings of these three systems of oppression opens channels for activists to implement change within Egypt.

Egyptian Law and Homosexuality

Although homosexuality is not explicitly included in documented illegal actions and behaviors in Egypt, state security apparatuses are still able to target, criminalize, and imprison queer individuals. As mentioned previously, this is particularly important because Egypt signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which should prevent this response to homosexuality and non-heteronormative behaviors in Egypt. If Egypt fails to apply all aspects of the UDHR to its citizens at all times, regardless of sexuality, then it is no surprise that this minority faces even more threats. Certain infractions that have been described in various, primarily journalistic accounts demonstrate the neglect of Egyptian and Arab security forces to follow certain aspects of this agreement (El-Menyawi 2006, Kugle 2013, Long 2004, Pratt 2007, Walsh-Haines 2012, and Whitaker 2006). These works include numerous sources documenting severe abuse from these security forces. Mark Ungar (2010) traces the patterns of state criminalization and targeting of the LGBT community, even during democratic transitions; his work provides a useful source for understanding why and how this institutionalized targeting of queer sexualities and behaviors occurs. In this section, I will draw attention to how the Egyptian state utilizes the security system to target this community. Nationalist movements and state-forming processes have led to

increased policing of queer identities and behaviors. This trend suggests that states often feel threatened, as though these individuals challenge their authority. These tense feelings are felt throughout Egyptian responses to this community.

It is not uncommon for supposedly non-modern states to target homosexuality just as Western, so-called modern states do. Other Arab states have taken to criminalizing homosexuality and turning it into a scapegoat for the government. In her article, "Too Gay to Represent #Bahrain", Erin Kilbride (2014) conducts an analysis of twitter, particularly in the use of hashtags. She utilizes this analysis in a report of the state-sanctioned, popular targeting of homosexuality in Bahrain. According to Kilbride's (2014) study, a number of supposed threats to the state have been accused of homosexuality, and twitter tags and posts show a frequent linking of the terms "gay" and "terrorist". She also demonstrates that the majority of these accusations and links are directed towards migrant workers, human rights activists, and prominent figures in the Bahraini government's political opposition. Like Kilbride (2014), Michael Bosia (2014) analyzes how states target LGBT identities and sexual minorities as hostile entities. He also adds that this form of "state homophobia" may frequently develop in times of political and societal change and transformation. In his analysis of three different levels of violence within a state, Mark Ungar (2010) describes how states target and attack the LGBT community. Like Bosia, he links this targeting to change, however, he specifically links it to democratic transitions. He explains that the LGBT community poses a threat to the state, who often describes this threat in terms of health, morality, and culture. As the state feels increasingly threatened by individuals, behaviors, and identities that do not fit into the mold expected of a state citizen, the targeting and criminalization of them increases.

As I have demonstrated throughout this paper, there are numerous reports of police violence and abuse from queer Egyptians. These accounts vary from mild harassment to stories of torture and unjust trials and prosecutions. Although homosexuality is not explicitly banned in Egyptian law, homosexual individuals have been arrested and punished for their behavior, generally as enacted in the public sphere. Articles 333 and 328 as well as a law from 1961 against prostitution have been used to arrest and target homosexuality in Egypt (Inter Press Service 2012). LGBT activist Scott Long (2004) connected many of the laws that criminalize homosexuality in Egypt to the colonial legacy and French Napoleonic code. He also suggests that a 1950s law against prostitution is used to arrest and punish homosexual Egyptians. In spite of the lack of an explicit, statutory ban on homosexuality, security forces do treat these behaviors as illegal. Without the inclusion of LGBT individuals in certain international agreements, this becomes even harder to criticize. The presence of this legal aggression towards queer Egyptians creates a hostile environment for activism and for their abilities to live out their lives in manners of their choosing.

Criminalized queer individuals are positioned outside of the traditional legal system. The state's clear expression of feeling threatened leads to the relocation of this community to a unique space in which they are excluded from the general population. This repositioning is most visibly observed in Egypt through the blatant entrapping, arresting, and torturing of gay or supposedly gay men. Because of the threat that they pose to the state, these individuals are pulled out of the traditional legal system. In terms of the law and legal apparatus, homosexuals and those deemed to fit into queer categories occupy a space that is held in suspension. In this space, security apparatuses may hold these individuals outside of general legal standards. Kilbride (2014) hinted at the link between homosexuality and terrorism in Bahrain. In the United States,

suspected terrorists or national threats may be held in a similar space that prevents their basic rights from being protected, and they cease to be treated as citizens or as holder of these basic rights. So-called modern states frequently treat supposed national threats as non-citizens and strip them of any typical protections. Although this is a trend found in other states, such as the US and Bahrain, the situation in Egypt ought to be analyzed and incorporated into activist methods and strategies. By looking at these different accounts and the treating of the law, we see the extremity of the effect of these policies and perceptions on queer Egyptians.

Nationalist Discourses Define Gender and Sexuality

As a movement propelled by former Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalism played a vital role in constructing and defining gender norms and roles throughout the country. The strict emphasis on these roles gives nationalism a front-seat in driving Egyptian policies and general opinions towards restricting the freedoms and rights of queer individuals throughout the nation. Scholars have frequently cited nationalist movements as a major site for the oppression and marginalization of women. In one study, Yuval-Davis (1991) defines nations as imagined communities based on fabricated stories of common origin, shared culture, and equal state citizenship while arguing that this allows these nationalist projects to exclude certain groups (ie: minorities or women). Mayer (1999) and As'ad Ghanem (2013) both support this notion that nationalism can be and is used to oppress and control women. I posit that these arguments can be applied to the LGBT community as well. As nationalist projects seek to define and moderate gender roles and norms in order to create an ideal, unified community and nation, these roles and norms will affect all gender identities and sexualities. Minority sexualities will not fit into the hegemonic nationalist discourse; likewise, non-heteronormative behaviors and experiences will threaten the idealized national citizen.

As nationalist movements strive to define the ideal gender norms and roles, they directly affect society's expectations of both gender and sex. In an analysis of Palestinian documents, Joseph Massad (1995) found that the nationalist discourse referred to the Palestinian land as the mother, while likening the Israeli occupation to a violent, sexual violation of the virginal, pure woman. This is a common trend in nationalist discourses which tend to utilize gendered symbolism in order to promote the importance of the nation and the ideal national citizen. Threats posed to the nation, like Israel to Palestinian, can be described in gendered, sexual terms. This is not unlike the examples above from Kilbride (2014) who showed how homosexuality and queer identities and behaviors are often linked to forms of terrorism. There is a direct link between the political and the sexual, and this link is not absent within the Egyptian state, particularly following the strong nationalist movement spearheaded by former president Gamal Abdel Nasser. Understanding the general relationship between nationalism and gender and sex allows scholars to conduct analyses of the effect of Egyptian nationalism on gender roles and perceptions of non-heteronormative individuals and behaviors.

By linking gender and sex to the image and importance of the nation, these nationalist discourses create a crucible for state-sanctioned homophobia which in turn supports policies that target individuals based on gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexual behavior. The nationalist movement in Egypt, like the security apparatuses' attack on homosexuality and queer behaviors, cannot be neglected in discussions of LGBT rights. A clear role has been played by this movement. Its discourses, both in Egypt and in other states, create exclusion-based societies. Maha Abdelrahman (2007) supports this argument in her discussion of nationalism in Egypt. She explains that as nationalism is used for state-building, it is often useful in promoting the legitimacy or interests of a state. In Egypt, this was demonstrated when human rights

organizations became Western threats to Egyptian state hegemony. They threatened to tear the fabricated myth of national homogeneity regardless of the actual country of origin for these organizations. Any perceived threat to the state's ideal citizen and national identity will not be tolerated. Queer and LGBT Egyptians exist as part of a minority that this nationalist discourse excludes from the ideal, traditional citizens. Thus, it becomes even more difficult for LGBT rights to be defined, promoted, and protected in Egypt in the face of this historical, nationalist movement.

Islamic Interpretations of Sexuality

Several factors have led to the challenges faced by queer Egyptians as well as queer Arabs in general. The barriers described in this essay represent only a fraction of these difficulties. To continue discussing the challenges and the threats to LGBT rights in Egypt, dominant interpretations of Islamic sources regarding this population should be analyzed. A 2012 study estimates that approximately 90% of the Egyptian population is Muslim (Central Intelligence Agency 2016). With this overwhelming majority, no institution or group can deny that Islam has influenced Egyptian society and policy. Although recent events after the so called Arab Spring may suggest otherwise, the results of the Egyptian revolution as well as the traditional influence and strength of al-Azhar University and the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrate the prominence of Islam for Egyptians. In *Politics of Piety*, Saba Mahmood (2004) discusses Islamic Revivalism in Egypt and the women's mosque and piety movements in Egypt in the late twentieth century. In her ethnographic work, she too demonstrates the prominence of Islam within Egypt. The election of Mohammed Morsi as the first democratically elected president of Egypt also pointed at the Egyptian support for the major Muslim political party and institution (BBC News 2013). Thus with a large Islamic majority, Islamic beliefs will affect

Egyptian law and society. When mainstream Islamic discourses do not acknowledge or protect

LGBT rights, the difficulty of promoting and defending these rights within Egypt only

strengthens.

Both al-Azhar University and the Muslim Brotherhood are prominent Islamic institutions

based in Egypt. The former is an Islamic university while the latter is a societal movement with a

representative political party (Freedom and Justice Party). Aforementioned former president,

Mohammed Morsi, belonged to the Freedom and Justice Party (BBCNews 2013). Regardless of

his ousting via what is frequently coined as a military coup, the clear trend toward supporting

Muslim institutions and parties remains strong within Egypt. Current President Sisi's attempts to

weaken and squash prominent Muslim Brotherhood actors and ideologies reveals clear feelings

of anxiety and trepidation regarding the Brotherhood. If this were not a powerful institution with

the ability to influence Egyptian legal policies and the population, he would not have acted quite

so aggressively in these policies and positions. In his attempts to strengthen Egypt's role in

Africa, Sisi and his regime have turned to al-Azhar University, the major center for Sunni Islam

within North Africa (Aman 2015). His decision to turn to this institution in order to propel

Egypt's influence and policy in Africa forward suggests a certain level of trust in the university

and an acknowledgement of the influence of both Islam and the university in Egypt and the

surrounding region. Knowing the influence of Islam in Egypt, it is important to analyze and

elaborate on the mainstream, dominant strands of Islam's treatment of homosexuality and LGBT

rights and individuals.

The Quran and the Hadith, or the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad,

function as the two primary sources of Islamic beliefs; thus all major denunciations (or

promotions) of LGBT rights stem from these two sources. Sunni Islam is the major

denomination of Islam found in Egypt, thus these interpretations will focus on broad Sunni

beliefs. There are a number of Islamic schools of thought; however, for this section, the

predominant trend of denouncing or persecuting queer identities is a relatively universal one

among the four major Sunni schools (Hanbali, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanafi). According to

Rehman and Polymenopoulou (2012) in "Is Green a Part of the Rainbow", 78 states have laws or

penal sanctions concerning sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Of these 78 states, those

with the most extreme punishments for non-heteronormative orientations, behaviors, and

identities are found in Sharia-compliant states. Sharia law is based on the Quran, Hadith, and

fiqh (the concept of Islamic consensus). Rehman and Polymenopoulou (2012) explain that all

homosexual relations and behaviors are considered unlawful sex (zina) and haram (forbidden)

according to the major schools of Sunni Islam. However, the majority of the punishments and

discussions of these relations revolve around male homosexuality. This parallels the Egyptian

policing of queer individuals, which focuses on male homosexuality. Thus, there is a clear trend

in dominant Islam and in Egypt that targets male homosexuality and that has been used to

criminalize other queer identities and behaviors.

In the Quran, the story of Lut (or Lot as found in the Christian and Hebrew Bible) is the

most prominent source for persecuting homosexual and queer identities and, at times, just

homosexual (or non-heteronormative) behaviors. Lut is one of the major prophets of Islam and

stories of him are scattered throughout different surahs (chapters) of the Quran. As the prophet of

the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lut played an important role in the development of dominant

Islamic positions regarding queer sexualities. Surah 26 documents the struggles among the

people of Prophet Lut. It states that "the people of Lut denied the messengers" (Quran 26:160),

so Lut said to them "Do you approach males among the worlds and leave what your Lord has

created for you as mates? But you are a people transgressing" (26:165-166). In Surah 27, Lut

condemns his two cities, Sodom and Gomorrah (27). His accusations of shameful and abnormal

acts have been linked to those of homosexuality and led to the destruction of the cities of Sodom

and Gomorrah (27:56, 58). Thus begins the Islamic condemnation of homosexuality. Later, this

story will be re-examined in order to discuss whether or not the Quran in fact does condemn

homosexuality in the manner in which it is applied today. However, here we see just how this

dominant interpretation affects the lives of LGBT individuals in Egypt.

In addition to the story of Lut, definitions of marriage and gender roles within a marital

relationship reside in prominent Islamic sources. They can be and are often used in order to

restrict the rights of LGBT individuals in primarily Muslim countries. According to Dervla

Shannahan (2009), a nikah or wedding is the only legitimate space in which legal sexual

behaviors can occur in Islam. The roles in nikah are highly gendered and defined in Islam. With

such gender-specific roles and the legality of sex being rooted in the presence of marriage, it is

difficult to locate a space for homosexuality outside of this dominant, Islamic framework. Thus,

through Islamic definitions and understandings of marriage and lawful sexual behavior, one can

see the path from Islamic thought to real life restrictions imposed on the daily lives of LGBT and

queer individuals. Surah 4 details a number of religious commands regarding marriage. It

commands male followers to be sure to give the dowry and bridal gifts (4:4) and it details those

women whom men can and cannot lawfully marry (4:22-25). The bulk of all other verses in the

Quran that reference marriage make detailed commands specifically for men and women. The

verses are explicit in their outlining of lawful gender roles. Thus, they point to a definition of

nikah that depends on the union of a man and a women specifically in order to be valid.

These understandings of marriage, sex, gender relations, and gender roles within dominant trends of Islam also contribute to the struggles faced by queer individuals in Egypt. By outlining marriage, sex, and gender roles in a way that clearly supports a hegemonic, heteronormative society, the Quran and other Islamic texts restrict queer relationships and identities to the private sphere if they are to occur at all. In the public sphere, heterosexual marriage and heteronormative gender roles are expected and demanded by dominant Islamic beliefs as well as by a number of Quranic verses. It is hard to create a space to discuss the relations between and the lives of LGBT individuals when the religious discourse revolves around a certain norm and expectation. Without this legitimate space, states with Islamic-majority populations generally foster environments that are hostile to the protection of broader LGBT rights. In Egypt, we see that religious institutions, society, and government structures vehemently oppose public, queer behaviors, which creates a system that penalizes and restricts the lives of these individuals. However, the demands for mercy and forgiveness in the Quran have been lost in the application of these religious marital and gender-specific regulations. Later, I will discuss a possible re-reading of these religious texts in order to promote the protection of these basic rights and individuals.

Although this analysis does not encompass the entirety of how and when individuals in Egypt are persecuted, criminalized, and forced to reside on the sidelines of Egyptian life, these three systems of oppression demonstrate a broad introduction to how these experiences develop. In Egypt, the state penal code, security apparatuses, nationalist movement, and Islamic institutions function as the primary sources for these threats to LGBT and queer individuals. Beyond fear-mongering, criminalization, and abuses that they may face, these individuals may also be compelled to ignore their preferences or wishes in order to remain seen as proper, ideal

Egyptians by not only the state but also their employers, communities, peers, and families. These

demonstrate a wide array of forms of oppression that this segment of the Egyptian population

experiences. Thus, there have been attempts and proposed tactics to mitigating these issues,

which I will analyze throughout the rest of this paper. Understanding these primary sources for

persecution and de-humanization will allow a better understanding of how activist methods may

fail or succeed.

Shortcomings and Failures of Activist Methods

The outlining of the threats and sources of persecution faced by LGBT Egyptians and

some queer individuals demonstrates the difficulties faced by this sector of the Egyptian

population. This persecution permeates the public and private spheres as police actions have

started targeting men's behaviors online and inside of houses. Clear efforts have been undertaken

to battle against the restriction of LGBT rights in the Arab world; however, the vast majority of

these efforts have neglected to lead to any sweeping policy, institutional, or societal changes in

Egypt and the Middle East in general. Former attempts are almost always rooted in methods,

ideas, and discourses based upon and developed in a Western context. From Stonewall-based

methods to the Western governments, movements, and organizations calling for a widespread

application of human rights to include the whole of the Egyptian LGBT community, the results

of these attempts will inevitably be found lacking. Without accounting for Egypt's history, law,

culture, and societal context, they cannot hope to succeed beyond condemning the

institutionalized abuses in the country. Movements and activists even face the threat of

endangering queer Egyptians by promoting tactics only proven to be successful in America and

Western Europe. In this section, I will look at several authors and scholars who have analyzed

these activist methods within Egypt and the wider Middle East. Their critiques and their

suggestions will foster the start of a deeper discussion regarding which other methods could lead to more freedom, mobility, and accessibility for queer individuals in Egypt. In order to analyze newer, potentially successful methods and approaches, I will continue to build upon the groundwork that this essay is setting. With an understanding of the influence of the state, nationalism, and Islam on the experiences of queer Egyptians, the pitfalls of these Westernized methods can be better located and understood.

The Closet: To Escape or to Survive

The first, and, I would posit, the easiest critique of different activist methods is the Western discourse surrounding the notion of "coming out". Discourses that promote these actions heavily emphasize the idea that queer individuals exist in a hidden, private space and need to exit this space. These discourses expect all individuals to openly declare their queer identities and/or behaviors in order to enter the public sphere and share in the rights and privileges of other citizens. In a country where security apparatuses target and criminalize homosexuality, the concept of publicly declaring one's sexuality becomes less simple. Additionally, as Massad (2007) described, not all queer behaviors or actions equate identities or permanent lifestyle choices. We cannot ignore that this is a society where queer behaviors can bring shame to a family and affect marital and employment options for the both the individual and the entire family. Although activists may hope for this to not be a barrier, this is an experience that a number of individuals have mentioned. In Egypt, there is a common Islamic expectation for heterosexual marriage and procreation, which is only further supported by nationalist discourses. Under such circumstances, it is not uncommon for individuals to choose to follow such expectations in spite of other preferences or ideals. Thus, the notion of "coming out" is not relevant for them. Between this and the inherent danger in publicly declaring a

blatantly police-targeted, and criminalized sexuality, this course of activism does not fare well for LGBT Egyptians or even those who wish to or try to engage in queer behaviors. By claiming that individuals ought to come out, activists will be assuming a universality in different experiences and contexts.

Continuing the criticism of "coming out" and the widespread promotion of this tactic, several scholars have pointed out the shortcomings of methods that assume a universality in experiences. By pushing individuals to force their way past cultural, political, and religious barriers in order to enter the public sphere, activists trap all of these individuals into a mythological, universal category of experience and identity. Hassan El-Menyawi (2006), an Egyptian gay activist, wrote an article discussing not only his experiences under the Egyptian state, but also his critique of what he calls "'Open' Activism Strategies" (34). His accounts of abuse and maltreatment have been useful, however, they also demonstrate a first-hand account of how certain strategies failed to nurture LGBT rights and could not create a functional community for these individuals. The primary failures, according to El-Menyawi, stem from Stonewall strategies and the discourse of "coming out". He explains that he "internalised the 'coming out' narrative...was an heir of the rainbow flag, the pride parade and, without knowing it at the time, of Stonewall.... [and] acted as a conduit for the dissemination of a notion of gay rights activism in which gay identity is a key part of an attempt to open spaces for gay Egyptians." (2006, 37). Jayesh Needham (2013) is another scholar who criticizes these two strategies. Like Massad (2007), there is a warning against assuming a universality in these discussions. Although El-Menyawi (2006) and Needham (2013) both criticize Massad (2007), they have at least one underlying assumption in common: these two, major strategies might be operational in Western nations, however activists should not fall into the trap of assuming a universal identity or method

for the LGBT community. Activist discourses and tactics that support this notion of "coming out" and other strategies that assume commonality across different experiences will only fail to aid the LGBT and queer individuals that they seek to help.

Universalism, Secularism, and Modernity

Activists have often simplified the experiences of LGBT individuals in their efforts to protect their rights. This has occurred through universalizing the experiences of LGBT individuals, and hailing secularism and modernity as uniquely Western concepts and the primary solutions for activism. Several scholars have referenced the failures of utilizing any sense of universalism in queer and LGBT discourses and activism. If it is impossible to describe a universal experience for all queer individuals regardless of the specificities of their identity (ie: homosexual, bisexual, transgender, etc), then we should not allow for other generalizations and assumptions to cross physical, cultural, linguistic, religious, and governmental borders. By assuming universality in the experiences of LGBT individuals, regardless of economic status, home country, or other factors, activists oversimplify these experiences. This leads to basing methods on Western approaches, as if the experiences are the same, and an assumption that the solution is the same is made. Assuming that Western concepts, such as secularism or the misconstrued idea of modernity will solve the issues faced by Egyptians reveals another ignorance regarding the complexity of Egyptian state, population, and distinctive, unique traits of different individuals' experiences.

One renunciation of these ideas that assume universality at the micro and macro level is the critique of academic and societal connections between homosexuality and understandings of Western modernity. Momin Rahman (2010 and 2015) places a heavy emphasis on deconstructing the idea that homosexuality is a Western and thus a so-called modern identity. In

his article "Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay and Muslim Identities" (2010), Rahman demonstrates that modernity (when understood as a positive development found in select, typically Western states) and homosexuality are not exclusive to Western nations and ideologies. This concept that modernity is found in contemporary, capitalist societies is one rooted in racist, Orientalist discourses. Equating both modernity and the acceptance of homosexuality to democracy, capitalism, secularism and other supposed virtues of the West only serves to hurt activist efforts in Egypt and the Middle East. If notions of LGBT rights and activist methods are rooted in these preconceived notions of modernity, capitalism, and democracy, then activists in Egypt will neglect to contextualize their efforts. The assumptions made under these notions will ultimately prove to fail in Egypt. Instead, groups, individuals, and organizations should support methods that acknowledge the complexity of the Egyptian state and the validity of different political and societal formations.

Secularism, like modernity, is another frequently praised concept among failed activist methods. Activists focusing on secularism will find little space for their efforts in an Islamic majority nation such as Egypt. Rahman (2010 and 2015) argues, like Kugle (2010 and 2003), Whitaker (2006), and others, that homosexuality and Islam are not mutually exclusive. This aspect of Rahman's article is rooted in his underlying critique of modernity. In his most recent article (2014) he posits that connecting LGBT rights to Western modernity strengthens the Orientalist assumption that Muslim/Arab equals other/savage. Earlier, Rahman (2010) criticized both Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (2007) and Foucault as they universalize homosexuality and locate it in a distinctly modern, secular, Western sense. When we remove popular understandings of queer identities and behaviors from this limiting lens, it is possible to locate the multitude of diverse experiences, needs, power hierarchies, and systems of oppression that

these individuals face. These systems of oppression in particular open up an activist framework to discussions about theories that break away from the oversimplification found in ideas of modernity, secularism, and universality.

Intersectionality and the Critical Race Theory

By utilizing and introducing the concept of intersectionality, scholars have attempted to break away from the pitfalls of Western-based activist strategies. Shafiqa Ahmadi (2012) and Momin Rahman (2010 & 2015) are two scholars emphasizing the intersection of homosexuality and Islam in their works. Other scholars who conduct interview-based studies of individuals in the Western world attending support groups for queer Arabs and Muslims are also drawing on notions of intersectionality. By looking at more complex formations of identity, activists and scholars begin to depart from the traditional, Westocentric notions of sex and gender. By complicating predominantly oversimplified conversations and approaches to LGBT rights in Egypt, activists begin following the path towards more productive and potentially successful actions. Ahmadi (2012) also draws the Critical Race Theory into discussions of and with homosexual Muslims. She, like Massad (2007), differentiates between homosexual identities and behaviors or actions. According to Ahmadi (2012), the Critical Race Theory strives to understand the experience of those who identify with or belong to more than one marginalized or underprivileged community. Thus, both of these approaches are rooted in Western theories and methods that complicate mainstream understandings of homosexuality and the experiences of individuals who engage in homosexual behavior or acts.

Although intersectionality and the Critical Race Theory broaden activist methods to include more specialized strategies, they will not be sufficient for major changes in Egyptian society. First, the scholars mentioned above primarily focus on homosexuality while there is a

larger community of individuals with an array of sexual and gender preferences. These two approaches stem from the prominent trend in broad LGBT activism for Arabs that focuses on interviews, organizations based in Europe and the US, and journalist tactics. These journalistic and Western tendencies in activist methods that have proven to be the dominant actions for a considerable amount of time have also failed in achieving major change in Egypt. Without including other strategies and ideologies, they will continue to do so. Although, as I argue, the complication of experiences and identities improves activist methods, the need for more diversity and specialization in activist methods remains. New approaches that confront the nuances and specificities of Egyptian society, history, and law will prove more successful.

New Methods and Approaches in Context

Following the previous analysis, this final portion of the paper will focus on specialized strategies for activism in Egypt. I posit that these strategies will prove more successful in Egypt than previous measures; if implemented as part of a long term plan, they would increase the rights, mobility, and access to jobs, education, and acceptance for queer individuals within Egypt in the long term. In order to be successful, these strategies will account for the security and legal apparatuses, colonialist legacy, nationalist discourse, and Islamic influences. Focusing efforts on establishing and enforcing strict privacy laws will help counter the current criminalization and police efforts, as will reforming the security apparatus and promoting other general laws. In order to counter the nationalist discourses that promote certain gender roles, I argue that activists should focus on following methods that promote women's rights and deconstructing gender norms while working to establish and strengthen gender equality. Lobbying different policies within the government and focusing on re-interpreting the Hadith and Quran will ease religious pressure on the LGBT community. Supporting and creating strategies and organized efforts that

follow these more contemporary activist methods would better serve the Egyptian queer community.

Each of these strategies could garner a separate analysis and discussion in and of themselves. In the future, studies that draft detailed actions based on each of these sub-strategies could help fine-tune a plan for different individuals, organizations, lobbyists, and policymakers to instill change in Egypt. However, in this paper, I will keep the analysis and discussion broad in order to present a more holistic picture of these activist methods. Although there are limitations to maintaining a broad discussion, as I have done throughout this paper, this tactic will prove more useful in this introductory work attempting to augment the successes of activist attempts in Egypt. This broad introduction to terminology, several threats to queer Egyptians, different methods of LGBT activism and activists' strategies serves as a comprehensive introductory guide for potential policy makers, activists, and organizations working in this field. By establishing the groundwork and arguing the essentials of how each of these categorical strategies could develop and operate by adhering to certain Egyptian expectations and contexts, I hope to fuel a more developed, on-the-ground study and course of action.

Security, Police, and Privacy

The accounts of police abuse, torture, and neglect have been widespread in the research for this paper. The trend of criminalizing and targeting queer individuals, particularly homosexual men in Egypt has been a primary cause for the failure of mainstream, Western activist tactics. In this section, I will return to these accounts and demonstrate the need to reform these apparatuses in order to weaken these abuses and strengthen protective measures for these individuals. Without a significant change within the security apparatus, queer Egyptians will continue to face arrests, torture, and undercover tracking. Such methods strike fear in individuals

who may violate gender and sexual expectations, leaving them vulnerable to security forces. Some queer Egyptians may be forced to choose between pursuing their sexual preferences and risking meeting an undercover security officer or ignoring their desires in order to avoid such attacks. From the targeting of clubs, parties, dating websites, and even certain public behaviors, queer Egyptians will struggle to avoid the omnipresence of this apparatus.

This extensive criminalization of homosexuality and policing of sex is not unique to Egypt. In aforementioned study "State Violence and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (lgbt) Rights", Mark Ungar (2010) presents an excellent analysis of state persecution of the LGBT community, and he posits that this violence and policing strengthens during economic and political transitions. In the wake of the 2011 uprisings, Egypt is facing a tumultuous political transition. Ungar (2010) links the need for unity found in nationalist movements and new/transitioning democracies to the policing of queer identities. Coining Egypt's political system as a democracy, particularly following the most recent military coup may be too hasty; nonetheless, it is a nation in transition. Ungar (2010), Bosia (2014), Pratt (2007), and Puar (2007) all argue that LGBT and homosexual individuals are often perceived as direct threats to the state. This situation is not unique to Egypt, however; it is a distinct piece of the experience of queer Egyptians. As mentioned previously, homosexuality is not explicitly illegal in Egypt, but a 1961 law against prostitution has been used to target and imprison homosexuals (Inter Press Service 2012). With heavy policing and targeting of homosexuality, there cannot be a climate of "coming out". First, there needs to be a space for individuals to escape this state violence and persecution. Thus, activist methods that confront this specific form of criminalization and policing will prove more fruitful.

As I have documented, numerous accounts locate the presence of state violence against homosexuality within Egypt. Additionally, Nicola Pratt (2007) locates neoliberal economic policies as part and parcel of the Egyptian state's targeting of gay men. As these policies weakened the state, gay men were utilized as scapegoats, meant to divert attention from government failures in the early 2000s. Nationalism, state failures, and other causes have been cited as creating this response to homosexuality from the Egyptian security apparatus. But, other scholars have located former Western, colonial policies as the site of targeting Egyptian queer individuals. Joydeep Sengupta (2003) describes the history of sodomy laws in the US and how it has sent foreign aid to countries that target homosexuality. He also explains that there has been little protection of LGBT rights among international groups, and gender-based violent crimes have rarely been recognized as war crimes. The accounts of policing, targeting, and torture demonstrate just how widespread these issues are within Egypt and how they stem from a number of past and contemporary policies and threats, both foreign and domestic. Without looking towards mitigating this policing (and acknowledging the multiple sources for it), activist methods will ultimately fail to locate a space for queer Egyptians. Activist methods that target each of these layers of persecution from different angles will ultimately better benefit LGBT and queer Egyptians.

Future studies, proposals, and approaches should follow in the tradition of trends that directly and indirectly analyze and respond to the police targeting of homosexuals in Egypt. Some activism in this vein has begun already. Langhor (2015) describes activism against sexual violence and harassment in Egypt, and she documents institutional attempts to limit sexual harassment. These activist methods directly affect women's experiences within Egyptian society, and as I argued previously, activists seeking to increase gender equality and women's rights will

indirectly help queer Egyptians. Additionally, the methods employed in Langhor's (2015) article, such as the Harass Map, which tries to help prevent the harassment of women, could be employed for homosexuals who have been targeted by police. Security forces have blatantly targeted queer sexualities by policing public behavior, public and private venues and parties, and by creating false profiles on dating sites (Long 2004). Thus, activists and queer Egyptians can also use social media and cell phone applications like these women's rights activists in order to track and document police raids, false social media/dating profiles, police informants, and other aggressive actions of the Egyptian security apparatus. Another major approach of activist methods for combating this threat to the LGBT community is increasing and ensuring the protection of personal privacy.

Because the criminalization of homosexuality and queer identities has primarily taken place either in the public sphere or when police enter a supposedly private sphere (ie: dating sites, private clubs, and private parties), activists who work towards strengthening the private sphere for Egyptians will foster a safer Egypt for queer behaviors. Due to religious or familial expectations, Egyptians may not wish to bring their sexuality into the public sphere, thus causing activist methods that focus on the publicizing of sexuality, behavior, and identity to ultimately fail. Hassan El Menyawi (2006) argues for a sort of activism "from the closet" model which is in direct opposition to the model of "coming out of the closet". This method emphasizes the importance of privacy while perpetuating the importance of the presence of a community, albeit one behind closed doors, for queer Egyptians. Following El Menyawi, Jayesh Needham (2013) also advocates for another model of activism. Among other components, he emphasizes privacy rights for supporting the LGBT community in Egypt. Both of these scholars present pivotal, game-changing activist strategies for queer and LGBT Egyptians. As a foundational framework,

increasing privacy rights, reforming the security apparatus to place more checks on torture and arrests, utilizing social media to create and protect private spaces, and working to mitigate the state's fear surrounding queer behaviors will work to protect the rights and lives of queer Egyptians.

A Re-Reading of Mainstream Islam

Although dominant Islamic beliefs tend to be a source of oppression and persecution for queer and LGBT Egyptians, the religion cannot be removed from Egyptian society. Rather, activists who focus on re-interpreting mainstream Islamic understandings of women's rights, gender roles, marriage, and homosexuality can influence on-the-ground experiences of these individuals in Egypt. This tactic will require long-term commitment as it necessitates a slow evolution of religious ideals and influences in order to be successful. Nonetheless, in a country with a Muslim majority population, powerful Islamic political party, and other religious influences, these efforts will prove fruitful. This section strives to support the re-interpretation of certain Islamic teachings, however, motions to support this activist approach can and will vary. Here I will look at some of the ways in which teachings can be re-read and reinterpreted in order to include queer identities and behaviors in Islamic discourse.

Several scholars and activists turn to the story of Lut in order to open up discussions of homosexuality and its place in Islam. As I discussed before, this is one of the primary sources of anti-homosexual sentiment within Islam. In one article, Javaid Rehman and Eleni Polymenopoulou (2012) focus on Islamic law, the Quran, and the hadith in order to demonstrate how LGBT rights can be located within Islam. They provide an excellent detailing of the criminalization of homosexuality among different Middle Eastern states and the punishments found in different major schools of Islam. More importantly, they provide an excellent basis for

re-interpreting the story of Lut, one of the biggest sources of prominent religious feelings towards non-heteronormative identities and individuals. According to Rehman and Polymenopoulou (2012), the story of Lut focuses on excessive lust, victimization of men, and immorality among married men rather than homosexuality as it is understood today. By directing the attention away from homosexuality and towards sexual immorality and depravity stemming from lust and idolatry, this reading of a major Quranic story could slowly alter dominant understandings of homosexuality.

Scott Kugle also discusses the story of Lut in his book *Homosexuality in Islam* (2010). He, like Rehman and Polymenopoulou (2012) argues for an understanding of the story of Lut that focuses on other immoral behaviors, not necessarily homosexuality in and of itself. Kugle (2010) states that "the Quran does not clearly and unambiguously address homosexuals in the Muslim community" (50). He continues to argue that the vices condemned by Lut are primarily focused on the lust of heterosexual individuals, sexual immorality, idolatry, and even rape. It is up to activist approaches to promote these reinterpretations. Supporting religious teachers and institutions who promote this reading of the Quran as well as working towards increasing education on this reading will help increase LGBT rights in Egypt. Activists who continue with this trend by publishing documents and works that support these notions will create spaces for the lobbying of accepting these ideals within the major Islamic institutions and ideologies in Egypt.

Of course, the integration of different interpretations of a Quranic story will be a slow, difficult task. However, it is not the only re-reading of Islamic discourses that should occur. Regardless of the interpretation of the story of Lut, there is a clear theme of condemning sexual immorality throughout major Islamic texts. Moral sex generally occurs within the context of

marriage, and in Islam, lawful marriage is primarily accepted as a union between a man and a woman (Shannahan 2009). By searching the Quran, Hadith, and other Islamic teachings, activists might be able to strive towards locating a legitimate sphere for same-sex marriage. However, as Shannahan (2009) argues, the locating of this sphere begins with reforming the gender roles expected in marriage. By emphasizing the teachings that stress gender equality within marriage and demonstrating the potential power held by women, activists will indirectly affect queer Egyptians. The deconstructing of traditional, gender roles can foster potential avenues for advocating and creating spaces for non-traditional sexualities and sexual behaviors.

These are only a few of the potential and current activist approaches that incorporate Islamic teachings. Returning to some of the former approaches that I included in this paper, a number of scholars have conducted interviews with LGBT Muslims in the West regarding their sexuality and religious beliefs (Siraj 2012, Rahman 2015, and Shannahan 2009). Although I argue that the results of these interviews cannot be directly transferred to Egypt as they primarily occurred in Western democracies where Muslims make up a minority, they should not necessarily be dismissed. These interviews provide hints toward the difficulty of reconciling an Islamic and an LGBT identity. In Egypt, this may also occur. By examining the discourse and result of interviews, activists may continue to find new methods for confronting and communicating with dominant Islamic trends and institutions. They may also provide a set of tools for queer, Muslim Egyptians to reconcile their identities. While not all queer behaviors necessitate a queer identity, nor a desire for a permanent, non-heteronormative lifestyle, there are Egyptians who are striving to find a place for themselves within their religion or the religious beliefs of their families and friends. Looking at these interviews, supporting liberal Islamic parties and groups, and providing access to education in different interpretations of the Quran

and the Hadith will all serve to not only increases the rights of LGBT Egyptians but also betters their personal lives and experiences.

Women's Rights, Gender Equality, and Queer Activism

Although there are other factors that influence gender roles and expectations in Egypt, I have focused on nationalism and Islam for this paper. The nationalist discourses have created a societal expectation that permeates the public and private spheres. In addition to its effect on Egyptian women's lives, it is an influential factor in the limiting of the rights of LGBT individuals, particularly through unofficial measures. Dominant Islamic beliefs also define and guide gender roles and expectations in Egypt. The gender roles, constraints, and expectations popularized and enforced by these discourses and religious ideologies make the acceptance of non-heteronormative, non-heterosexual Egyptians less likely to occur. Queer identities and behaviors often cause individuals to violate societal expectations regarding gender and sex. Between marriage, sex, and expected gender duties and appearances, queer Egyptians will rarely follow the standard model set forth by society, nationalism, and Islam. By more closely examining what these expectations are and how they affect queer Egyptians, I will work towards potential actions meant to mitigate negative experiences faced by queer Egyptians.

A society or state that makes specific requirements for femininity and masculinity creates an atmosphere that fosters potential aggression towards violations of these requirements and expectations. In a study of female genital mutilation and cutting in Egypt, scholars Fahmy, el-Mouelhy, and Ragab (2010) demonstrate the importance marriage, sexual control, and preservation of gender expectations within Egypt. According to this study, "91% of women of reproductive age have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting" (181), and the primary reason for this high percentage is to preserve young women's marriageability by controlling their

sex drives and desires. Nonetheless, women do have a right to enjoy sex and both men and women are expected to satisfy their spouses (Fahmy et. al, 2010). Seeing this basic presence of sexual control looming over Egypt demonstrates the importance of femininity, sexuality, and proper sexual behavior in Egypt. A society that places such high importance on controlling the sexuality of women, and men, will likely oppose any threat to the sexual expectations of each gender. Any queer crossings or transgressions of these expected norms will struggle to find acceptance within Egyptian society.

Earlier, I discussed the influence of Palestinian nationalism on constructing masculinity and femininity. Authors Kanaaneh (2002), Mayer (1999), and Yuval-Davis (1991) have all examined the expectations set forth by nationalist forces. At the most basic level, these scholars suggest that women are expected to act as mothers, reproducers, and embodiments of the nation's land while men must fulfill their roles as defenders, martyrs, and builders of the nation. Although generally based on studies of Palestine, the conclusions of these women demonstrate the effect of all forms of nationalism on gender roles and norms. These rigid regulations of gender and sex continue in Egyptian society in the name of nationalism. There is a clear link between nationalist forces and societal emphases on reproduction. In her article "Sexuality, Religion and Nationalism", Jihan Zakarriya (2014) links gender and sex issues in Egypt to the legacy of colonial rule. She explains that the need to control gender and sex expectations and norms arose from a need to define and defend Egyptian culture and identity after the end of colonial rule (Zakarriya 2014). In a similar vein, Huma Ahmed-Ghosh (2012) posits that patriarchal systems often locate women's bodies and sexualities as threats to the state, religion, and society. Between nationalism and other forces, sexuality, bodies, and gender roles have become symbols for Egypt's identity and culture. As described previously, in an interview with a

young Egyptian, Scott Long explains that the man had been arrested "for walking too effeminately" (Long 2004). He continues to explain how police entrap gay men and often equate sexuality to espionage. Plus News (2012) argues that Egypt removed a TV advertisement that related foreign and queer individuals to international spaces. Thus, gender roles become blatant security issues. Activists that examine this policing of gender, body and sexuality are better prepared to confront the persecution of the Egyptian LGBT community.

These different forces setting forth restrictions on gender and sex directly and indirectly affect queer Egyptians. Shannahan's (2009) descriptions of marriage within Islam also demonstrate the issues located within Egyptian gender inequalities. I argue that these Islamic restrictions on men and women contribute to the experiences of queer individuals just as other gender expectations have done. Shannahan (2009) argues that the strict gender and power roles designated by nikah, or lawful, Islamic marriage, make the concept of same-sex marriages more difficult to define and justify. With the effect of Islamic precepts, nationalist symbols, and state security on gender roles and expectations, queer individuals are exiled from Egyptian society and thus from any basic protections. LGBT activist methods that focus on confronting gender inequality in Egypt and the importance of sex, bodies, and gender within the society before expecting significant change in the treatment of queer individuals and behaviors will find more success in their efforts.

Although the much of work done up to this point has had its pitfalls, it is important to connect it to the context of Egypt and a future framework. Shannahan (2009) brought interviews of queer Muslim women in the West into her study, and she concluded that the system of nikah must be reformed, gender equality must be increased, and Islamic sources should be used for legitimizing these actions. Although applying interviews conducted in a Western context is not

the best method for drawing conclusions about Egypt, her conclusions make an excellent foundation for creating policies in Egypt. Sexual harassment is one of numerous gender inequalities that plagues Egypt. Vickie Langhor (2015) documents some of the new forms of activism that arose following the 2011 uprisings in Egypt particularly in response to sexual harassment. Although this method primarily works with women, analyzing the specific methods for confronting religious and legal policies, policing of sexuality, and selective attention from security forces in Langhor's (2015) article opens up the forum for applying these Egypt-specific methods and actions to queer individuals as well. By promoting and expanding on women's rights and gender equality, activists can indirectly influence the experiences of queer Egyptians. With increased research within Egypt, this work can progress and develop into more direct approaches for aiding the LGBT community in Egypt. Even the experiences of individuals who violate expected norms but do not identify with a queer or LGBT community or identity may be improved by tactics rooted in confronting gender norms and expectations.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this paper has been to provide support for potentially successful activist tactics in Egypt for LGBT and queer individuals. To be successful, methods should mitigate the criminalization and persecution of non-heteronormative identities and behaviors. They should also work towards the breaking of barriers for queer individuals within the public and private spheres. Ideally, the trend should be moving towards more freedom of expression, less criminalization, and increasingly accepted queer identities and behaviors by the Egyptian state, society, and family unit. Although this cannot be expected to occur quickly or easily, particularly as other groups (such as women, minorities, and lower classes) may face similar struggles, activist approaches will be able to slowly alter the situation within Egypt.

As an acknowledgment to the importance of language and terminology, I started this paper with a brief analysis of the role that language plays for individuals and communities. Without positive terminology, individuals struggle to describe their experiences, lobby their interests, and participate in certain aspects of life and society. Anderson's (1982) concept of imagined communities can be applied to those who claim queer identities, but this will be difficult without a set of terms that do not stem from vulgar roots. Additionally, discussing terminology opens up a path to demonstrate and emphasize that not all individuals may claim queer identities; they may engage in certain behaviors without wishing to belong to a wider LGBT community. Acknowledging this difference is an important step in promoting basic rights and discussing activist tactics. After establishing a glossary for this paper, I presented the basic rights meant to be held by all Egyptian citizens.

The primary sources of persecution of rights for queer Egyptians were state-sanctioned security apparatuses, nationalist discourses, and dominant, often hegemonic, Islamic ideologies. By analyzing these three sources and outlining the manners in which they threaten the mobility, accessibility, and citizenship of queer Egyptians, I opened up a framework for how I analyzed different activist methods. By understanding each of these branches of persecution, an analysis of failures and successes within activism worked in parallel with these specificities of the Egyptian experience. As a broader, more holistic paper, I intend to point to the necessary aspects of successful LGBT activism within Egypt. Activists who acknowledge and determine appropriate, positive terminology begin this process. Then, it is necessary to understand how rights and lives are threatened in order to determine the best possible route to mitigating these threats. With these layers of context applied, I determined that the most successful activist tactics will seek to confront the security apparatus, emphasize and protect privacy, re-interpret and

promote alternate readings of Islamic ideas and texts regarding sex, marriage, and gender, and

promote gender equality and de-emphasize traditional gender roles.

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