Adapting to Stress in Alexandria, Egypt: Women During the Arab Spring

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ADAPTING TO STRESS IN ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT:
WOMEN DURING THE ARAB SPRING

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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August 2014
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Using ethnographic strategies, this thesis explored how women adapted to stress in Alexandria, Egypt after the rise of the Arab Spring in 2011. The Arab Spring has several times resulted in changes of political regime at the national level which affected the lifestyles and daily routine life of women. There were changes in goals, dreams and aspirations of young women. Some viewed sociopolitical changes as opportunity for a better future while others concluded that the only way to achieve their desired goals was to travel abroad, mainly to neighboring gulf countries or the United States. How changes in the lives of selected Alexandrian women help to clarify several theoretical ideas in criminology are addressed. Because very little research appears to have addressed how Egyptian women have adapted to stress associated with the Arab Spring makes this thesis unique.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

The Arab Spring erupted in 2011 through a series of uprisings throughout various countries within the Middle East. The Arab Spring, which was a sequence of activities ranging from political demonstrations to a civil war that occurred and continued in a number of Arab countries, including Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria; significantly impacted global nations, including the United States (Keiswetter, 2012). Due to the drastic changes within the government as well as the countries, the atmosphere of the communities have experienced drastic positive as well as negative changes. In Egypt specifically, a continuous series of demonstrations continue to take place in hopes of creating a new Egypt. Based on the drastic changes, many individuals experienced a change of goals, aspirations, and dreams as a result of the occurring changes. This research aimed to explore how young women, a sector of the population that may sometimes be overlooked, are adapting to the current situation.

Based upon on-site conversations with Egyptian women living in Alexandria, Egypt, this research explored perceptions of Egyptian women regarding what life is like in the aftermath of what is sometimes called the Arab Spring. Special attention was placed on how a sampling of Egyptian women defines their future life, and what anxieties they feel about achieving their life goals. The research aimed to collect a series of accounts held with women who predictably hold strong opinions about what is happening today throughout the Middle East, specifically Egypt, in terms of change in national leadership to an Islamic president and how they perceived or anticipated how this would affect their future goals and dreams. This research explored how young women were
adapting to sociopolitical circumstances, and how they were adjusting to life in the “new” Egypt.

**Research Questions**

This research explored four research questions.

First, what are aspirations of contemporary Alexandrian women in regards to long-term goals? Is there an Egyptian dream analogous to the American dream? How are such dreams or aspirations discussed and interpreted by Alexandrian women?

Second, in what ways do Alexandrian women perceive life to be more or less stressful after the Arab Spring? This research question builds upon the first question as it continues to question how women’s life goals may have changed as a result of the Arab Spring and how that may have led to stress.

Third, how has routine, daily life changed for women since the Arab Spring of 2012? How do the women perceive present day life as it pertains to law and order? This question builds upon the previous questions however it focuses more on the changes that occurred after the variations took place within the government, specifically the change from the Mubarak regime to the Army regime followed by the Muslim Brotherhood regime. This question will also focus on how law and order changed throughout the different regimes, especially when it comes to women.

And finally, fourth, as Alexandrian women adjust to stress of change brought on by the Arab Spring, in what ways do the adaptations to stress suggested by Merton and Agnew appear to apply or not apply? This question specifically explores how the women are adapting by applying Merton and Agnew’s definitions of adaptations to stress and change.
Significance of the Study

This study is important because it will further explore how young women in contemporary Alexandria, Egypt are adjusting to the sudden rise of the Arab Spring. This research will then enable researchers to have a clearer understanding of the social constraints the young women face in their struggles to adapt to modern Egyptian society. The study is essential as the area affected by the changes has significant impact upon other nations around the globe. Minimal research appears to have addressed this issue which makes this study unique. This thesis provides the personal expressions of an overlooked sector of the population.

Research Setting

This ethnographic research was conducted in Alexandria, Egypt. Alexandria is the second largest city in Egypt, with a population of 4.5 million, extending for about twenty miles along the Mediterranean coast north-central of the country (UNdata, 2013). Alexandria was founded and named after by Alexander the Great in c. 331 (O’Conner, 2009). It remains a popular tourist resort to this day. Alexandria is the largest city situated directly on the Mediterranean coast. Alexandria is Egypt's largest seaport serving approximately 80% of Egypt's imports and exports (WorldFactBook, 2013). Alexandria is an important industrial center because of its natural gas and oil pipelines from the Suez region. Alexandria University is the second largest public university in Egypt, where potential candidates may be identified. Alexandria is also home to the Alexandria Library which was rebuilt slightly over a decade ago.
Theoretical Orientation

This exploratory study is not designed to provide test of a specific theoretical framework. Nonetheless, it is anticipated that the study will be logically informed and guided by the body of work popularly outlined as strain theory, originally conceptualized by Emile Durkheim (1893), and later refined by Merton (1949) and Agnew (2001). A further discussion of the theoretical perspectives, and how this study may work to clarify strain theory, will be discussed at the end of Chapter 2.

Summary of Research Plan

The conversations for this study were gathered through in-depth, face-to-face discussions. The researcher spent much of her youthful years in Alexandria, Egypt and today holds dual-passports from both Egypt and the United States. The conversations were conducted in Arabic and translated into English. The conversations were held with forty-five women. In some instances, a small grouping of respondents congregated and resulted in concentrated social interaction and dialogue. In such cases, the advantages found in focus group activity were recognized (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Participant observation, listening also helped guide the research. Chapter 3 will outline in greater detail the research methods.

Definition of Terms and Concepts

Definitions of terms given in the subsequent section refer to the Arabic terms and concepts that will be used throughout this thesis.

1. Arab Spring: A series of activities ranging from political protests to civil war that occurred and continues in a number of Arab countries, including Libya,
Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria that began in the early months of 2011 (Macmillan dictionary, 2011).

2. Youthful women: Females who are over 18 but are still planning and preparing for their adult life. This includes education and career planning for the over 18 but under 25 persons, or what might be called young adults.

3. Islam: The religious faith of Muslims including belief in Allah as the sole deity and in Muhammad as his prophet.


5. Muslim: A believer of Islam.

6. Salafi: Militant group of extremist Sunnis who believe themselves the only correct interpreters of the Koran and consider moderate Muslims to be infidels; seek to convert all Muslims and to insure that its own fundamentalist version of Islam will dominate the world.

7. Sunni: Muslims of the branch of Islam that adheres to the orthodox tradition and acknowledges the first four caliphs as rightful successors of Muhammad.

8. Shia: Muslims of the branch of Islam comprising sects believing in Ali, one of the prophet’s companions and the Imams as the only rightful successors of Muhammad, and in the concealment and messianic return of the last recognized Imam.

9. Muslim Brotherhood: An Islamic religious and political organization dedicated to the establishment of a nation based on Islamic principles. Founded in Egypt.
10. Niqab: A veil worn by some Muslim women in public, covering all of the face apart from the eyes.

11. Christians: In Egypt, orthodox Christians are commonly referred to as Coptic’s.

12. Tahrir Square: located in Mid-town Cairo, Egypt. Very famous for political demonstrations.

13. Infitah: President Sadat’s “opening the door” economic bill.


15. ACE: After Christian era.


Chapter Two of the thesis will provide a review of the literature which pertains to the research problem and questions. It will also provide a discussion of the theoretical perspectives that are expected to help guide this research.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORY

This thesis explored how contemporary women adapt to changes brought about by what has been called the Arab Spring, with special focus on Egypt. The Arab Spring is about people rising up and demanding a new government and a new direction for their country. In the past few years, such uprisings have emerged in multiple nations in the Middle East and all social institutions have been affected. All people, not only women, have felt, and are feeling, the socio-political changes. The following pages of this chapter will briefly discuss the position of women in Egypt over its long history.

Ancient Egypt

Women in Egypt have played a significant role throughout history in the development of the country. In the early era, Cleopatra, the last pharaoh of what is referred to as Ancient Egypt, reigned from the year 51 BCE to 30 BCE following Alexander the Great’s death (Rice, 1999). Nefertiti, who ruled with her husband Akhenaton, played an active prominent role in the ancient Egyptian society from 1370 – 1330 before the Common Era (BCE). She ruled alone for a short period following her husband’s death. Earlier on, Queen Hatshepsut ruled from 1503 to 1480 BCE. The economy of the country flourished by her introduction of a business, trade, and marketing based society that augmented what had been a more purely agricultural society (Rice, 1999). She also played a significant role in enhancing Egypt’s assembly of religion, trade and domestic and foreign policy.

Other than the rule of women during this early time of Egypt, the common women in the ancient society had significant roles in political and societal aspects which
were protected by governmental laws and regulations. In the ancient era, any
discrimination was based more on socio-cultural differences, rather than gender
differences. Most of the time, upper and middle class women were housewives, though
women did on occasion hold administrative positions. Some women were elevated to the
highest positions to include pharaohs, queens and advisers to such leaders. At the same
time, many women worked as field hands with equal status along-side men.

Upper-class women held high level judicial positions. Nebet, 6th Dynasty, was
titled as "Vizier, Judge and Magistrate.” She was the wife of King Coptos and
grandmother of King Pepi I (Ruiz, 2001). Another woman held the title "Second Prophet
(i.e. High Priest) of Amun" at the temple of Karnak, a title usually held by only by males
(Gunnell, 2013). Queen Ahhotep, 18th Dynasty, was rewarded the Order of the Fly,
Egypt’s highest military decoration, on three separate occasions. Her planning and
organization helped save Egypt during the wars of liberation against the Hyksos (Ruiz,
2001). Women were also offenders as well as victims of crimes. Women offenders did
not appear in many early scripts, but a record of a woman named Nesmut, was implicated
in a series of robberies of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings during the Twentieth
Dynasty (Piccione, 2012).

**Mamlouk Dynasty (1250-1381 AD)**

Prior to the Mamlouk era, Egypt was conquered by the Arab Islamic forces in 642
AD, led by Amr Ibn Al As (Halsall, 1998). Amr Ibn Al As was one of Prophet
Muhammed’s companions and was well known for his military skills and leadership
(Kennedy, 2008). Egypt became an Islamic country after Alexandria submitted to the
Muslim armies in the year 647 AD.
The Mamlouk era was one of the wealthiest and strongest times in the history in Egypt, which was constructed and named after by a mix of Turkish and Asian-Muslim armies which consisted of mainly Turkish slaves. It is named el Mamlouk because they kidnapped slaves and trained them to be a part of the army, the word Mamlouk in Arabic means enslaved (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Shagaret El-Durr is the only female Egyptian ruler who held the throne after Egypt became an Islamic State. She is considered to be one of the most powerful women in Egyptian history. She was a slave before she ascended the throne. Following Salih Ayyub’s, her husband, Egypt’s ruler in 1250’s death, El-Durr hid his death in order to maintain the army’s stability during the war against France’s troops to return Damietta, an Egyptian state back. Three months after, she married Amir Aybak who became the official ruler. It is believed that she continued to rule for the seven years that he held the throne. Printed money included both their faces, which was an indication of her power (Women in World History, 1996).

Women in Ancient Egypt and the early centuries held high positions and had substantial authority; however as time progressed and Islam variously interpreted, women’s status slipped. Within the last century many movements sought to regain women’s rights and statuses within the Egyptian society. As successful as those movements were, women throughout the country remained under strict government control and under the control of men generally. This pattern was especially noticeable in rural Egypt and among the lower classes. As the generations progressed, women did begin to gain status, though not as in the ancient era of Egypt. However, during the Mubarak era, the status of women once again reached a low level.
Modern Times (Late 1800’s AD– Today)

During modern times, young women are restricted from interacting with men in public although there are still some women who lead active roles in society. Patterns of segregation were usually more apparent within the lower social classes, and in rural areas. In the modern era, many women were deprived of education. Mohammed Ali, Egypt’s ruler and the founder of modern Egypt (1805–1848), modernized the state and called for the education of women. In 1832, he established the first Midwifery school (Fahmy, 2002). This was the very first school for girls; it was attached to a hospital located in the Azbakiya district close to present-day Ataba Square, Cairo Egypt. In 1872, social reformist Rifa’ah Tahtawi strongly advocated educating women. As a result, one year later, the first government school "as-Siofiyya" for girls was established with 286 students enrolled (Hoodfar, 1992). Princess Fatima, Khedive Ismail’s daughter, donated 6 feddans (one feddan is equivalent to 1.083 acres) of her property to build a university (now known as Cairo University) to help aid in the advocacy of educating women. In 1929 the first female student was accepted at Cairo University, Soheir Al-Qalamawy, who later became a lecturer at the university (Osman, 2012).

In 1892, the very first women magazine, Al-Fatah, was established in Alexandria, Egypt which advocated women’s rights (Hoodfar, 1992). In 1925, Rose Al-Yusuf, the very first magazine established by a female journalist was published in Cairo, Egypt (Bizawe, 2009). Rose Al-Yusuf was originally an actress who, shortly after ending her acting career decided to enter the journalism field and established the magazine, thus creating work for herself. This magazine remains as one of the most popular weekly magazines in Egypt.
Women’s organizations developed in the 1900’s. Huda Shaarawi, the first Egyptian feminist and female leader, developed several agencies run by women that provided aid to women and children. The development of the early struggle for women’s rights is often attributed to male modernist reformers like Muhammad Abdu, Gamal al-Din al-Afghani, and most prominent among them Qasim Amin (Al-Ali, 2000). Qasim Amin worked closely with Shaarawi in the 1920s. Shaarawi was elected head of Al-Wafd (Central Women’s Committee) under the leadership of Saad Zaghloul, a prominent Egyptian revolution leader and political figure (Hoodfar, 1992). This was the first instance in modern times where a woman was recognized by a political party. She developed the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) (Sika & Khodary, 2012). This group’s purpose was to raise awareness among women about political and social equality. The development of the EFU is important because it led to women’s participation in the 1919 revolution alongside men, demonstrating against the British colonial power (Sika & Khodary, 2012). Sha’arawi then led the first Arab woman delegation to an international conference in Rome, Italy, in 1923 (Hoodfar, 1992). In Italy, as soon as she got off the train she removed her head cover as if to free herself. During this time, head covering, as well as body covering, was not associated with Islam. Rather, it was required by all women to wrap and cover themselves as soon as they leave their homes. She also advocated for, and successfully made it illegal, for females under sixteen to marry (Badran, 1995).

The Arab Women’s Association was established in 1924, and in 1925, a feminist party, the Egyptian Women’s Party was formed (Hoodfar, 1992). In 1942 the Women’s National Party, was established which called for women’s employment in all state
positions, and a few years later, in 1949, the Bint en-Nil (Daughter of the Nile) Party was formed by Doria Shafiq, with support from the British Embassy (Blaydes & El Tarouty, 2009). Bint el- Nil called for social and gender equality in social and political domains. These are significant dates because at the time, women possessed very few rights and interest in the government (Blaydes & El Tarouty, 2009). Women slowly began to be recognized, their impact felt on society, and women from middleclass started to join those in the upper classes who were actively calling for increased rights. Even-though they had an impact, this did not change the societal relationship between men and women. Men still remained in strong patriarchal positions in regards to government and law-making, and their general acceptance of the subordination and subservience of women.

The 1919 Revolution is one of the most significant revolutions in Egyptian History. Egyptians from all sectors, both men and women, Muslims and Christians, joined forces in the fight for national independence. This was the very first time in the history of modern Egypt, where women openly presented their own public demonstrations. Two were shot dead by British occupation forces (Hoodfar, 1992). Egypt was under Britain’s control from the early 1800’s until 1952. Although Muhammad Ali had won the war against them before his rule, the British remained in Egypt for 75 years. Women’s participation in the 1919 nationwide marches, strikes and protests against the British colonizers is seen as an extension of women’s struggle to end their oppression of the previous decades (Ahmed, 1992).
Nasser Era (1956-1970)

After the monarchy’s rule ended in 1952, The Egyptian Free Officers ascended to power and many women’s organizations gained ‘momentum’ (Sika & Khodary, 2012). President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the first freely elected Muslim president of Egypt on June 24, 1954, was one of the most popular and loved presidents in Egypt’s history (Nasser, 2012). Men and women alike supported him and were devoted to him. During the Nasser era, named after former president and leader Gamal Abdul Nasser, many policies were passed advocating for women’s rights and welfare. In 1956, for the first time, a constitution was passed forbidding gender discrimination, and women were allowed to vote (Kassem, 2004). In the first elected parliament after the revolution of 1952, five women ran in the elections and two of them were elected to office (Osman, 2012). In 1959, women gained the right to equal pay as well as social and economic rights (Osman, 2012). At least on paper, they were guaranteed the same employment rights after graduation from school.

The first female Minister, Hekmat Abu-Zaid, Minister of Social Affairs, was appointed in 1962 (Hoodfar, 1992). In 1962, President Nasser issued the Charter of National Action, declaring that women “should be freed from all social barriers” (Osman, 2012). Women were also appointed as ambassadors and other prominent government employees.

Although Nasser helped the rights of women, they were still expected to remained submissive and under men’s control. Family laws, and public discrimination against women in public settings, remained untouched by the Nasser regime (Sika & Khodary, 2012). The Nasser regime shaped women who were economically independent of their
families, but still dependent on the state for employment. Women still depended upon male dominant government agencies for social services such as education, healthcare and day care, and for any political representation. During the Nasser era, personal and familial views of women’s dependency on men remained institutionalized (Hatem, 1992: p. 233).

After Gamal Abdel-Nasser’s death in 1970, Mohammed Anwar Al- Sadat stepped into office and influenced the economy and the role of women.

**Sadat Era (1970-1981)**

Shortly after president Mohammed Anwar Al- Sadat came to power, Egypt fell into economic disarray. Sadat moved away from a concentration on social equality and equal opportunity for all and was forced to fix his attention on economic decisions (Al-Ali, 2000). Many of Nasser’s earlier commitments to gender equality were disregarded, and infitah (open door) policies were installed which led to an increased gap between the rich and poor (Becker, 1990). Yet, oddly enough, it was under Sadat that the Personal Status Law was reformed in favor of women’s rights (Al-Ali, 2000). The incorporation of women into the economy, which had been part of Nasser’s plan, was overshadowed or pushed aside by high rates of unemployment, and a populous mood of a subjugation of women by the patriarchal traditions that are carried on until today (Al-Ali, 2000).

The poor economic turn during the Sadat era led to the out-migration of men to other Gulf countries in search for better job opportunities. This resulted in many women taking over the responsibilities that were formerly carried out by their husbands (Hatem, 1992: p. 238). Although a number of women might have used this opportunity to gain independence during the absence of men, this did not happen (Graham-Brown, 1981).
With the economic pressures on women, (perhaps being in position of potential authority) conservative ideas started to promote women’s return to the household, and domestic life (Hatem, 1992).

Under the influence of president Sadat’s wife, Jehan Sadat, a strong advocate for women’s rights and feminism, reforms to the Personal Status Law (governing marriage, divorce, custody, etc.) were proposed (Al-Ali, 2000). The reformed law was known as “Jehan’s Law”, which granted women legal rights in marriage, divorce, and child custody; it was instigated by a presidential decree (Davis, 2010).

**Mubarak Era**

Following the assassination of Al-Sadat, Mubarak was voted in as president. In 1979, Mubarak allowed women to hold seats within the parliament. However, in 1987 women were granted less legal power in divorce, sexual harassment cases; and during this time, violence against women became a communal epidemic (Hatem, 1992).

Prior to demonstrations taking place on the Egyptian soil, Tunisia is credited with leading the revolution against oppressive government and dictatorship in the Middle East. On January 4, 2011, over 5,000 people demonstrated in Sidi Bouazid, (Tunisia) protesting the death of Mohammed Bouazizi, a local grocery merchant, as well as commanded better living conditions from the government, and an end to police brutality and corruption around the nation (Timeline Arab Spring, 2011 p.1). Bouazizi, was arrested on December 17, 2010 without reason, and his grocery cart was confiscated. He filed complaints about police brutality. After being ignored by the Tunisian authorities, he set himself on fire which resulted in his tragic death on January 4 2011 (Timeline Arab Spring, 2011 p.1). Over the next ten days, Tunisian young men and women took to the
streets where they demonstrated day and night, demanding to have their needs met and their rights returned. They accepted nothing less than the departure of the entire government. After numerous clashes with the police, dozens of lost lives, numerous speeches, promises and bargains from the president’s office, on January 14, 2011, the Tunisian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali stepped down and fled to Saudi Arabia (Timeline Arab Spring, 2011 p.1).

The revolutionary spirit of Tunisia spread throughout the region. As early as January 16, 2011, protests began in the streets of Cairo as a demonstration against Egyptian President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak’s regime. Young men and women alike took to the street. People were chanting that Mubarak must depart and join Tunisia’s Ben Ali. Mothers carrying babies joined the protests at Tahrir Square chanting “Revolution until victory.” Lamia Rayan, a 24 year old female protestor stated “We want to see change just like Tunisia”, and that she will not leave the square until this happens (Micheal, 2011). The uprising protesters demonstrated their anger against poverty, unemployment, government corruption, and President Mubarak’s regime, which had been in place for the three decades since 1981 (Timeline Arab Spring, 2011 p.2).

Oppression During Mubarak’s Regime

The primary reason behind the demonstrations was the call for democracy. For the last three decades, the political elections that took place every six years were believed by the citizenry to be rigged by the government administration. Noor Khan, a professor of history at Colgate University, referred to the elections as the musical chairs, the same people moved around throughout the government with little regard for the people’s choice (Ulrich, 2011).
The demonstrators also called for an end of police brutality. The police in addition to other law enforcement authorities were protected under the Emergency Law, which suspends individual’s constitutional rights and enhances police authority. This law had been in effect since 1981 (Williams, 2006). It has become prevalent and customary to the point that no one expects to escape torture if detained. The reasons for arrest could be as simple as not moving fast enough to get out of the way of a police officer (Ulrich, 2011). Frequently, people die or disappear within custody of the police and if the arrest was allegedly for political reasons, subsequently chances were slim that the detainee would ever be released. A prominent example is Khalid Said, a young man who was killed as a result of perceived police brutality. In June of 2010, he was at a cyber café when police randomly entered and asked for identification. Upon his refusal, police dragged him out and bullied him until his death in Alexandria. Police never justified their actions which led to citizens outrage (Viljoen, 2012). His death resulted in an outbreak of demonstrations targeting police brutality. Afterwards during the demonstrations of January 2011, people chanted “We will seek his revenge and bring back his rights” (Viljoen, 2012). Women also were bullied by the police, especially those without political connections, or women from low social classes.

Another reason for the demonstrations on the streets of Egypt’s major cities was corruption. Corruption has been widespread throughout the Egyptian society to the point where it is perceived as normal. To get anything done in Egypt, an individual is expected to pay some sort of bribe and the better the bribe the sooner the task is completed. For example, if an individual needed a driver’s license or an identification form, passport, a permit or legal document notarized, it has become near impossible to complete the
process in fewer than five or even ten visits with multiple under the table payments. A simple document may take months to complete. Men have traditionally been given priority over women, unless the woman is of extreme beauty, or part of the upper class (Ulrich, 2011)

Women played a significant role in the Arab Spring in Egypt, where they actively contributed to the revolutionary protests. Without question, women have been directly impacted by the oppressive government that set the stage for dishonest, unethical, or corrupt social institutions. The social institutions of education, health, and housing authorities, particularly had an impact on domestic life, and thus specifically the women.

The education system also has been criticized as being corrupt (El-Masry, 2013). Free public schools are exceedingly lacking in terms of classroom sizes, teachers, school buildings, nurses, and restrooms. The general population strives to send their children to private schools even if it means going into debt. Only the very poor send their children to public schools. A regular class size is at least seventy to eighty students and the classroom itself is not built to support such capacity (El-Masry, 2013). The majority of students either stand or sit on the floor if they want to attend class. Every student is expected to take private lessons with the classroom teacher after school hours (Michael, 2011). Failure to attend and pay fees for the extra lessons sometimes results in suspension from the system. It is hard to pass school requirements if one does not participate in such private lessons. The after school lessons are supposedly illegal, but teachers continue with the practice for their own economic survival (Michael, 2011). Parents borrow money so that their children can graduate, even though they are aware that upon completion of college they will most likely lack employment (Ulrich 2011).
At the university level, over 71% of students at Alexandria University blame professors for the corruption (El-Masry 2013). Hagar, a student at the university was sexually harassed by one of her professors in return for leaking exam questions (El-Masry, 2013). Habiba, a senior at the University, said that “a number of professors used to specify the important parts and questions in upcoming exams to female students on the condition that they perform immoral acts” (El-Masry, 2013). A poor student’s father explained that a professor has helped his daughter throughout the year, however he expressed that he is afraid she may fail if he did not buy him a gift, the professor said he likes whiskey, but refused to accept the cheap brand stating he only likes the foreign kind. The father does not have access to it nor to the funds (Michael, 2011).

Poverty is a major issue in Egypt. Nearly half of Egypt's population lives under or just above the poverty line set by the United Nations at $2 a day (Michael, 2011). Poor quality education, health care and high unemployment have left large numbers of Egyptians deprived of basic needs. Women generally are paid at a lower scale than men. Teacher’s pay rates are not the only low ones; the majority of public government jobs are paid about the same, oftentimes less, which is why people rely on bribes to enlarge their paychecks. Those in government sectors with this low income are luckier than the disabled or those relying on government pensions or retirement funds to survive. A large percentage of the poor people are surviving on 100 L.E to 200 L.E a month ($ 14.8 to $29.67) (Ahram, 2012). Due to the low pension amount, thousands of people are homeless; they are eating out of waste baskets and dying due to untreated diseases (Ahram, 2012).
Women, a sector of the population that is sometimes overlooked, participated actively throughout the public demonstrations. Women represented different classes and fought for various reasons, side by side with men throughout the country. They were concerned with all issues, speaking out for their rights to be free of the dictatorship rule, asking for equality in wages and speaking up against sexual harassment and violence which have become somewhat of a trend over the last few years. Women are harassed on a daily basis on the streets and most commonly in public transportation where men will physically touch them, with no fear of intervention. This problem has become worse after the election of the Muslim Brotherhood because of the lack of law enforcement and the general population’s attitude that they no longer fear the consequences. The rise of harassment is initially due to the high unemployment rates of young men up to the age of 35, which also leads to their inability to pursue a lawful relationship. Helen Rizzo, chair of the Department of Sociology and Psychology at the American University in Cairo, said "The issue is that you have young men that are unemployed or underemployed hanging out on the street with nothing to do, this is the way (sexual harassment) they prove their manliness to each other" (Wolf, 2011).

The last straw was when there were rumors that former president Mubarak had plans to have his son Gamal succeed his rule and with the elections soon scheduled, the civilian population was enraged. This was one of the main factors that motivated thousands of individuals to occupy the streets throughout the country. Due to the widespread of corruption, and the rumors about the elections, the Egyptians started initial protests that led up to what was referred to as the “Day of Rage”. On January 25, 2011, millions of Egyptians protested in the streets, particularly in Tahrir Square, and
demanded Mubarak’s resignation. President Mubarak officially stepped down on
February 11, 2011 despite the fact that ten days prior he had announced he was not
running for re-election (Timeline Arab Spring, 2011 p.3). The protest activities of both
men and women alike contributed to the success of this revolution. Naomi Wolf (2011)
stated: “Women in Egypt did not just ‘join’ the protests—they were a leading force
behind the cultural evolution that made the protests inevitable”. She discusses how the
women played multiple roles during the revolutions, such as bravely protesting in Tahrir
Square, and providing security and shelter for fellow Egyptians (Wolf, 2011).

Furthermore, women provided substantial benefit by organizing many of the
protests (Rice, 2011). In an interview with Al Jazeera, Gigi Ibrahim, a young female
protestor, stated: “In my experience, women play a pivotal role in all protests and strikes.
Whenever violence erupts, the women would step up and fight police, and they would be
beaten just as much as the men” (Naib, 2011). In another interview aired on the National
Public Radio with Egyptian journalist Mona Eltahawy, 2011, she spoke of how the
women involvement was a cross-generational mix of young and old Egyptian women
who wanted an end to the control of Mubarak’s regime. Additionally, she also praised a
video posted on YouTube by Asmaa Mahfouz, a young Egyptian woman credited as the
founding member of the April 6 Youth Movement, in which she boldly declared, “Don’t
be afraid of the government, we need to fight for our country” (Martin, 2011). As
demonstrated by Mahfouz’s video, Egyptian women also actively continued to involve
themselves in the social media aspects of the revolution. Furthermore, while the
Mubarak regime particularly ignored, and at times promoted, the sexual harassment of
women, one young female activist explained that during the revolution “[Women] feel
like they can be around, and involved, without any fear of being bothered or abused. It is like they have finally been given the way to be an equal, effective and important part of society” (O’Neil, 2011).

Over the course of the last few years, Egyptian women have participated in strikes, and during the revolution, they played an active role throughout. In previous demonstrations, women usually accounted for ten percent or less, however in Tahrir Square that number increased significantly to forty and fifty percent (Biggs, 2011). Women, with and without veils, Christians and Muslims, young and old, participated in the protection of the square, set up barriers, led debates, shouted slogans and, alongside the men, risked their lives (Frederiksen, 2011). Mozen Hassan, the director of the Nasra Feminist Studies Centre in Cairo said "No one sees you as a woman here; no one sees you as a man. We are all united in our desire for democracy and freedom" (Biggs, 2011). Women, such as Mai Shoukoury, 30, a researcher in Cairo, said she “had never voted, and never demonstrated before, but felt compelled to join the protests in Tahrir Square”, and Doaa, 23, an economics student who, on the day after the battles in the square between democracy protesters and supporters of Mubarak which left more than 100 people dead, was back at the barricaded entrance, and fearlessly took on the soldiers who were trying to prevent her from getting in (Biggs, 2011).

Prior to the Muslim Brotherhood rule, The Supreme Counsel of Armed Forces (SCAF) ruled until the elections were held, from February 2011 to June 2012. During the period of their governing, SCAF used force against women activists in Tahrir Square, where they stripped them of their clothes and dragged them through the square, in some instances partially or fully naked (Sika & Khodary, 2012). SCAF vocalized that decent
women belonged at home and not out demonstrating, stating that those out were indecent women. SCAF forced ‘virginity tests’ on women activists in the square (Bakry, 2012). This was performed arbitrarily by male doctors and not female doctors which is unacceptable and shameful to Muslim women. The military was using this method in order to file claims against the women in the square stating that they were there to sleep with the men which would result in their prosecution (Bakry, 2012).

Following the rule of SCAF, the Muslim Brotherhood were elected in 2012 and began their reign on Egypt led by President Mohamed Morsi. The Muslim Brotherhood demonstrated their reluctance to pursue formal equality between men and women. Prior to the revolution while they, Muslim Brotherhood, still were banned from forming a political party, the Muslim Brotherhood condemned the possibility of a female president. Following the revolution, they refused to stand with the women demonstrating on International Women’s Day. The Brotherhood vowed to reconsider Egypt’s party status to The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and sought to eliminate the already marginalized National Council for Women (Kassab, 2012). The 2012 Ministerial Council, consisted of only three women out of the twenty-six ministry representatives which indicates how women representation is not on the new government’s agenda (Olimat, 2014). The Muslim Brotherhood lobbied against a set of laws that protected women and claimed they were atheistic laws. These included the following:

- The cancelation of the khul’ law (where a woman can initiate divorce);
- The cancelation of the Penal Code which protects women against sexual harassment,
- The cancelation of the right of women to travel alone without the consent of a male relative;
- The cancelation of the new family status law which provides women the right to have custody over her children until the age of 15;
- The cancelation of the amendment to article one of the Egyptian Nationality Law (number 26/1975) which grants children born to an Egyptian mother and a foreign father, an Egyptian nationality. (Sika, Khodary, 2012).

The Brotherhood recently rejected the UN declaration draft which called for an end to all forms of violence against women claiming that it violated “cultural specificity” which will lead to a breakdown in society if the declaration is approved (Nowaira, 2013). Osama Yehia Abu Salama, the Brotherhood family expert, at a seminar training women to become marriage counselors, said that “A woman needs to be confined within a framework that is controlled by the man of the house,” “Even if a wife were beaten by her husband, show her how she had a role in what happened to her.” (Kirkpatrick, 2013).

With the Muslim brotherhood’s rule in Egypt, many women have been harassed whether or not they were veiled, young or old, Muslims and Christians alike. The lack of police throughout the country helped induce the harassment, and crime has been rising. Three women, a 13 year old, 16 year old and a 30 year old, on a subway were harassed by Niqabi women who preceded to cut off their hair (Middle Eastern Correspondents, 2012). A male teacher rapes his six year old student in Aswan; while an engineer rapes girls in an orphanage in Cairo (Ibrahim, 2012). Teachers at public schools are now cutting ten year olds hair because they refused to cover their hair, this spiraled after a Niqabi in Luxor cut two young girls hair in class. It has become somewhat of a habit of Niqabi
women attacking women showing their hair, beating them, and cutting or burning their hair, most common in rural parts of the country but spreading towards the major cities (Strachan, 2012).

A Coptic 14 year old girl, Sarah Ishak, was abducted by a Salafi (a strict religious sector of Islam) guy, then converted to Islam, and married off, following the incident a statement was issued by the Salafist Front on October 28, warning human rights organizations, especially the National Council for Women, not to attempt to return Sarah to her family, as she has converted to Islam and married a Muslim man. They said “Attempts of the church and human rights organizations to put pressure on the Interior Ministry to return the girl is rejected in form and substance, confirming that the girl has full freedom to convert to Islam and have full freedom to marry as long as ‘she has reached puberty and can withstand marriage with its consequences and responsibilities.’(Abdel-Massih, 2012). According to the constitution’s drafts that have been released, girls will be married off once they have hit puberty. Reem Maged, Hala Sarhan, Sherif Amer, and Lubna El Asaly are just a few name of the 1000 plus journalist and state TV hosts that are now facing charges that have been filed by judges accusing them of insulting the bench and courts (El-Din, 2012). Eman, a young veiled Muslim girl in Asiut, Egypt refused to be sexually harassed and ended up shot (Ibrahim, 2012).

Women are now living in fear of what may happen to them.

The government proceeded to force Egyptians to go to bed by 10 pm by closing down shops, restaurants, and coffee shops; officials stated that it was an attempt at energy conservation but in reality they wanted to give people the chance to sleep early to be able to pray at dawn and go to work refreshed and alert, acting like a godfather, however
Egyptians refused, some protested by locking their shops doors and leaving the lights on (Associated Press, 2012).

**Theoretical Orientation**

This study is designed to collect data on whether or not there is an Egyptian dream comparable to what has been called the American dream, and how a small sampling of Alexandrian women perceive their ability to achieve contemporary Egyptian goals. As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, this study is not designed to provide an explicit theoretical test. However, it is anticipated that the research will be logically guided by the body of work popularly outlined as strain or anomie theory originally discussed by Emile Durkheim (1893), and later developed by Robert Merton (1949), and Robert Agnew (2001). The researcher will follow classifications of stress used by Merton and Agnew and contrast these with scenarios gleaned from on-site accounts of Alexandrian women. Special attention will be placed on how Alexandrian women are adapting to pressures brought on by the rise of the Arab Spring in Egypt.

Emile Durkheim had outlined how persons became alienated from fellow citizens as they moved into large, urban areas and away from the more folk communities of rural life. Urbanites, experienced a loss of community spirit that was replaced with personal anxiety, or what he referred to as anomie (Durkheim, 1893). Later, Robert Merton, building upon Durkheim, developed a strain theory model to explain how American citizens appeared to be adapting to various anxieties and tensions brought on by difficult socio-economic times in the USA after the great depression and at the beginning of the Second World War. Merton argued that the American culture generally set forth basic objectives that citizens were expected to strive for in their lives. These “cultural goals”
were basic to all and were thus seen as fundamental to citizens. Such objectives to be striven for were commonly economically driven. That is the American Dream as suggested by Merton was to achieve economic success. These could be such objectives as owning a home, attaining a college degree, and eventually marriage and family (See, for example, Mutchnick, Martin, and Austin, 2009). Most citizens work hard and conform to the expectations of society to climb the economic ladder (i.e. become “conformists”). Conformity, the most commonly used form of adaptation, is the example whereby the individual chooses to pursue society’s prescribed goals using the legitimate means provided by society. Thus the scheme is often referred to as the “goals-means” theory. However, some citizens find the goals established by the American culture to be too difficult to attain given limited means to achieve them.

Citizens who have difficulty realizing the American Dream may fall into a variety of categories suggested by Merton. These include innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion depending on a person’s varied ability and decisions to work toward goals with available means. For instance, “innovation” pertains to a form of adaptation whereby one that chooses to retain society’s goals but uses inappropriate means to achieve the goals. Such a person might be a law-breaker, whether a blue-collar or white-collar offender in Merton’s words (1935). According to Merton, this is commonly found in the lower status sector of society where citizens desire the goals but are not exposed to the means and therefore may follow law-breaking paths to achieve them. The goals are important but the means less so. With ritualism, the individual rejects the cultural goals but continues to proceed with the prescribed means. This form of adaptation might be characterized by
the citizen who finds a job but does not try to improve herself, rather being willing to work decades at a menial task on an assembly line doing the same thing day after day.

Retreatism, on the other hand, pertains to one that chooses to reject the goals and also the available means. Merton suggests that such individuals may actually become “drop-outs” from society and basically doing nothing (i.e., the hobo, or the chronic drunkard) (For discussion, see, Williams and McShane, 2010). Rebellion is characterized by the person who not only rejects the goals and the means but also openly replaces them with his or her own novel goals and means. Here we might find the person who rebels against official, governmental laws and principles to follow a new and different ideology. Members of extremist groups would apply.

Robert Agnew (1985, 2001) built upon Merton’s theoretical work and further developed additional origins of personal stress other than economic failure. Basically, these are stresses that might arise because one suffers, for instance, being harassed or bullied (i.e. negative stimuli). On the other hand, one may suffer the loss of positive stimuli such as being the victim of theft, loss of wealth in a fire, or loss of loved ones (See, for example, Kubrin, Stucky, and Krohn, 2009).

By combining both Merton and Agnew’s ideas, this study will explore how a sample of women in Alexandria, Egypt adapt to their own styles of stress as a result of life during the socio-political transition brought on by the Arab Spring.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology and research setting for this thesis. It also addresses the plan for analysis, validity and reliability issues, as well as the protection of human subjects.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used to conduct this study. In order to answer the research questions, this thesis follows a qualitative approach of data collection and analysis. The chapter is divided into multiple sections. These sections include a description of the research questions, sampling, data collection techniques, and the analysis plan. Also briefly discussed are validity and reliability issues, limitations of the study, and finally, the protection of human subjects.

Research Questions

A number of research questions will be addressed in this thesis, these include:

1. **What are aspirations of contemporary Alexandrian women in regards to long-term goals? Is there an Egyptian dream analogous to the American dream? How is this discussed and interpreted by Alexandrian women?**

2. **In what ways do Alexandrian women perceive life to be more or less stressful after the Islamic Spring?**

3. **How has routine, daily life changed for women since the Islamic Spring of 2012?**

4. **As Alexandrian women adjust to stress of change brought on by the Islamic Spring, in what ways do the adaptations to stress suggested by Merton and Agnew appear to apply or not apply?**

Sample

As a native Egyptian and prior citizen of Alexandria, and being fluent in Arabic, the researcher holds a unique position as researcher. The researcher lived in this city for several years of her life before moving back to the United States. The benefit of being an
insider is of great advantage to the researcher as she already has an understanding of the cultural customs of the city.

The researcher applied the snowball sampling strategy to identify potential subjects that will result in a non-probability convenience sample. This sampling process is set forth when (upon identifying and conversing with a first respondent), the researcher will ask the participant to suggest others who may know about the research topic and may be willing to participate in the study (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011). The snowball or networking process will be performed numerous times until the researcher concludes that new information is no longer forthcoming or that the information being collected is redundant. This process resulted in conversing with forty-five participants. In some instances, a small group of respondents converged resulting in a more concentrated, small-group interaction. In such cases, the advantages found with focus group activity were recognized (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Due to the researcher’s connections in Alexandria, Egypt, it was not difficult to identify the women.

**Data Collection Procedures**

In order to completely explore and respond to all aspects of the research questions, the researcher applied multiple, qualitative data collection procedures including conversations. The conversations were held in Arabic and translated into English. Where it was convenient and not distracting to respondents, a tape recorder was used.

**Participant Observation**

The researcher resided in Alexandria, Egypt for a period of three months during the summer of 2013 and experienced first-hand the living environment and circumstances
the women are exposed to during the transitional changes resulting from the Arab Spring. Not only did the investigator carry-out on-going conversations with a number of Alexandrian women, she also participated with the respondents in a variety of daily, routine activities. These included visiting the market places, schools, Mosques and Churches, beaches, resorts, parks and a variety of social events. This aided the researcher in gaining a better feel for what the women were experiencing and how they were adapting to life in contemporary Alexandria, Egypt.

**Conversations**

For the purpose of this study and the safety of both the researcher and the subjects, a conversation analysis was conducted. A conversation analysis is the elementary study of dialogue. Conversation analysis was first inspired by Erving Goffman and Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff in the 1950’s (Rawls, 2012). The researcher engaged in daily conversations with young women. Such conversations revolved around the current events taking place and how the participants were affected. The conversations were in-depth, face-to-face discussions which allowed the researcher to explore the research questions and collect rich, personal accounts of women in Alexandria, Egypt. The conversations were held in Arabic and later the researcher transcribed them into English, if the conversation was of any relevance to the research.

The researcher conversed with several different categories of female subjects. These included youthful and the more mature adult women, married and single, educated and uneducated, professional and non-professional, and Muslim and Christian. Each subject group provided dissimilar insights about the Arab Spring’s influence on the community with specific emphasis on how goals have changed for young adult women as
they adapt to changes in the socio-political environment of the research setting. Women of differing social statuses and sectors of the city were conversed with; with a general focus on college aged women who were thinking about their future and what they may anticipate as an emerging freer, more liberating nation, but whose outcome is still uncertain.

**Direct Observation**

In addition to being a participant observer, the researcher also engaged in direct observation. There were moments where the researcher found herself in situations where direct observation took place without the researcher becoming part of what is being observed, which aided in the gathering of unbiased data. As Maxfield and Babbie (2011) discussed: “The subjects of research might not even realize they are being studied because of the researcher’s unobtrusiveness” (p. 299). The researcher utilized this method at various times; for instance, from a distance, the researcher observed from a distance others demonstrating and interacting with authorities. Riding public transportation and listening to other women participate in discussion about their daily lives and the events that were taking place during the summer of 2013. Due to the high levels of traffic in the city, it took a long time to travel from one place to another which provided enough time for others on the bus and microbus to participate in discussions about how they feel and perceive life to be during this time period.

**Listening**

My participant observation included listening. I listened to conversations held by other women at various locations such as the grocery market, the mosque, beach, demonstration areas, public transportations and gatherings as part of my direct
observations. Such observations aided in adding further insight as to how the women in the area feel and think about their current situation. Listening to such conversations took place when the participants were aware of the presence of the researcher. Listening assisted in utilizing unobtrusive methods to gain data by simply being present and observant of the surroundings.

Analysis Plan

For this thesis, the data was recorded and collected through handwritten notes and in some cases, audio tape-recorded. These field notes were coded into two categories: line-by-line coding and focused coding (Lofland, et al., 2006). In the initial coding phase, the researcher analyzed each line, assessing what is expressed during the conversation, including the context of the statement or observation. At this stage the accounts were translated from Arabic into English. A subsequent focused coding procedure allowed the researcher to further analyze the initial coding by searching for and identifying patterns and themes. That is, the observation along with the accounts reflected on how young women were adapting to stress associated with the Arab Spring. Finally, effort was made to explain and clarify how the findings pertain to Durkheim, Merton and Agnew’s theoretical work. As anticipated the study was logically informed and guided by the body of work popularly outlined as strain theory, originally conceptualized by Emile Durkheim (1893), and later refined by Merton (1949) and Agnew (1985). The researcher generated a definition of stress by applying Merton and Agnew’s explanations. Special attention was placed on how Alexandrian young women are adapting to stress post the rise of the Arab spring.
Strengths and Limitations

Ethnographical research is a robust strategy to understand people and their behavior. It is highly valid, but may sometimes have questionable reliability (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011). Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002), argue that to enhance validity and reliability “it is essential that the investigator remain open, use sensitivity, creativity, and insight, and be willing to relinquish any ideas that are poorly supported” (page 11). The researcher took these steps into consideration throughout the data collection phase of the study. In order to achieve ultimate reliability, the research findings must be replicated by other researchers. Although this may be viewed as a limitation, it is a limitation common to all ethnography.

Human Subject Protection

Data collection for this thesis began only after the study received IRB approval. Participation in this study was voluntary and all participants were informed of their rights. All of the participants were eighteen years of age or older. The researcher informed the participants that she is engaged in researching how women are adapting to stress during and after the Arab Spring. The identity of the participants will be concealed and not revealed to anyone. The researcher assigned different names to the participants in order to preserve anonymity. Transcripts of the field notes will be saved only on a zip drive and kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only by the researcher and the advisor along with all consent forms and other identifying documents for three years.
CHAPTER IV

DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

This chapter sets forth the findings resulting from the data collected in Alexandria, Egypt. The aim of the thesis was to observe and converse with Egyptian women regarding what life was like in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. This research explored how young women were adapting to the on-going sociopolitical turmoil, and how they were adjusting to life in the “new” Egypt. The research findings are set forth in-line with the four research questions. 1. What are aspirations of contemporary Alexandrian women in regards to long-term goals? Is there an Egyptian dream analogous to the American dream? How is this discussed and interpreted by Alexandrian women? 2. In what ways do Alexandrian women perceive life to be more or less stressful after the Arab Spring? 3. How has routine, daily life changed for women since the Arab Spring of 2012? 4. As Alexandrian women adjust to stress of change brought on by the Arab Spring, in what ways do the adaptations to stress suggested by Merton and Agnew appear to apply or not apply? As expected, some overlap may exist among the research questions and how each section of this chapter is identified with one or more of the research questions.

1. What are aspirations of contemporary Alexandrian women in regards to long-term goals? Is there an Egyptian dream analogous to the American dream? How is this discussed and interpreted by Alexandrian women?
**Long-Term Goals**

Alexandrian women express numerous goals. Long-term goals included traveling, attaining a job, completing a proper education, marrying, having a family, and gaining wealth and status. Although the final goals were similar among the women conversed with, the variation was often due to the women’s age and social status.

Young women in Alexandria expressed a desire to change their surroundings, especially if it affected their personal life. Some women believed that by traveling and attaining a job abroad, their personal lives could be altered by achieving wealth. Then, once they returned to their homeland, their lives in Egypt would be changed. Women from lower and middle classes thought that attaining employment abroad was the key to change.

Somaya, nineteen years of age, stated that:

My goals in the future include marrying and working abroad. I plan to return once I have made enough money to live a good life in Egypt. This is the only way to live good here... to bring money from another country and spend it here.

Somaya talked about how she cannot wait to finish her college degree and leave.

Although to travel abroad and find employment is a difficult task, she said she “has enough connections in one of the Persian Gulf countries to help secure a work position.” Her degree type does not matter to her, it is only necessary so that she can better compete for a job.

Maha, 21 years old, also commented:

I will only accept a marriage proposal from someone who works abroad, there is nothing in Egypt. The only job opportunities exist in other countries… but here it
is long dead. My dad is not rich and we don’t have enough connections here or money to bribe enough people to be able to secure a job. I would be crazy if I marry someone here.

Maha, like others, believes the only chance she has is to leave the country through marriage. Many young women want to travel, but either due to current financial circumstances or strict parents, cannot leave unless they are married. Parents and family play a large role in young women’s lives. They have a stronger influence on women compared to men. Young women cannot travel without their parents’ permission. If they leave, they may risk parents’ renouncement, if not disownment. Reportedly, many women have had the opportunity to leave but could not due to their parents’ lack of consent.

Nadia, 24, is an example of a woman who had opportunity to leave Egypt, but due to her social surroundings, remained.

I had an offer to continue my studies abroad, but because I wasn’t married my family wouldn’t allow me to leave. At first they tried to make me marry any guy so that I could leave, but I chose to stay. Staying would be better than marrying someone I don’t know for the sake of continuing my education. I wonder if I made the right choice sometimes but too late for this now.

Nadia went on to explain how much family is important and if she had left, both she and her family would have lost face within the community. This is a common case; many families will not allow their daughters to travel to another city by themselves, let alone to another country. They claim that it is for their own protection and safety. Among lower and even middle class circles, it is considered taboo. Parents, who allow
their daughters to leave, whether it is for school or job opportunities, are looked down upon by the community members. They would risk becoming the daily conversation of the town and their honor and pride would be questioned. If it were the male who was to travel, it would rarely be questioned. The family would be congratulated and the male would become a highly esteemed member of the community. It is uncommon that the family allows their daughters to depart without a guardian. In most cases the only solution is to find a suitable man to marry.

Nermeen, 26 years old, commented: my university here in Egypt offered me a scholarship to study in Europe. In order to leave, my family said I must first get married. Prior to leaving they did, indeed, find a suitable man for me and we became engaged. We also signed the marriage contracts a few days before I left. He wasn’t coming with me, I was leaving alone but it became much more acceptable as soon as I was engaged.

This is a fairly common situation. Maysa, 29, also had a similar experience. She was offered a scholarship to study abroad at the age of eighteen, but her parents refused. She agreed to get married in order to go through with the scholarship.

I agreed to marry him so I can leave. He came with me and after a few years we separated there. I knew it was a bad idea to get married, and it may have been best if I had just gone to a university in Egypt, but I knew this was my only chance to achieve my dreams in the future. I didn’t care about what divorce may be like to my reputation, I just saw getting away as the only way out.

Although the consequences of an impulsive decision to depart Egypt may be great, many do choose to follow their dreams. Culturally, there is a great amount of
emphasis placed on women’s honor and virtue which explains why parents are reluctant to send their daughter’s out of the country by themselves. The fear of what community members will say when they learn of what happened, and how it will affect their reputation is what keeps young women and their families from pursuing such opportunities.

What is surprising is that for the more well-to-do, upper-middle classes, as well as, the upper-elite classes in Egypt, the case is just the opposite. Young women that belong to these classes enjoy the freedom of traveling, whether it is for educational opportunities, employment, or just for the enjoyment of traveling. The opportunity to travel is greater, in terms of actually receiving approval from the government, and for obtaining required travel documents. The commonly heard perception is that visas are processed at a faster rate for the wealthy. For some women, traveling abroad is simply understood as a given expectation, not just as a privilege.

Amina, a young woman of 22, remarks:

I have travelled alone to several places including Europe and the United States. My parents don’t mind. It’s normal to do so. My sister is currently studying medicine abroad on her own. I don’t want to live abroad because I find Egypt to be beautiful and full of opportunities for those who take the time to look.

Young women like Amina, usually come from affluent families who have enough wealth to lead a better life than what they may expect to be found abroad. Traveling is often for shopping or luxury, and not necessarily for attaining a better opportunity than is available in Alexandria, or Egypt in general. Such women tend to have a far different opinion than those who have limited opportunities.
Farida is 24 and shares a similar opinion to Amina’s in regards to traveling for better opportunities.

I travel whenever I have the opportunity to do so. It’s usually a gift from my parents for doing well in school. I am a medical student. I plan on traveling abroad and continuing my education once I graduate, but my plans are to return as soon as I am done. I find Alexandria to be the most beautiful city, and I wish to have a family of my own here. I find it ridiculous when some people believe that living abroad is the only way to have a good life. I understand politically the country is not stable, but everything else is fine. We are more modern than other places. I think we should look here and not elsewhere.

It appears that young women of the more elite Egyptian family backgrounds prefer to remain in the country than to migrate elsewhere. They perceive that the country is more fruitful than what those of lower social classes make it out to be. This opinion is especially common for those who study abroad and return once their education is completed.

Yousra, a 21 year old female undergraduate student at a university abroad stated:

I hate leaving Egypt. I love Alexandria, and the people and places here as well as the things to do. I only leave because, like my parents and grandparents before me, I had to go to college abroad. Education in Egypt is not good so I have to learn abroad what I can, especially since I am expected to help run my father’s company in the future. When I leave I cannot wait to return home. Living abroad is an interesting experience. However, I cannot wait to return and settle down here.
Another young woman expressed similar thoughts. Mayada is 19 years old studying abroad at a prestigious school.

I enjoy learning and living abroad. It’s a wonderful opportunity that many do not enjoy. I could’ve stayed and studied at the American University at Cairo like many of my peers. However, by learning abroad I will be able to help this country prosper. I plan on returning as soon as my studies are completed.

Although many of the respondents expressed a desire to return, there were a few exceptions. Some plan on never returning to Egypt regardless of whether or not their situation and conditions change.

Wessal is a 19 year student at Alexandria University and expressed a desire to leave Egypt without returning. She explained that this country (Egypt) is over, and the only way to achieve all her dreams was by migrating to another country.

I would be crazy if I married someone and lived here. The only opportunities available are abroad. If I were American or European I may have found countless opportunities here, but this is not the case for me. I will only marry someone who lives and works abroad so I can leave. I don’t plan on coming back. I have already started to search online for jobs in other countries so I can understand the requirements and work to satisfy them.

Wessal is not the only one who thinks like this. Many others feel that the only way to achieve their goals is by traveling and finding opportunities elsewhere. The dream of traveling for better job opportunities, and better living conditions has been widely spread across multiple generations. Although the desire to leave is expressed
strongly among youth, there is also a desire among older generations who still retain hopes that they may one day have the opportunity to leave Alexandria with their family.

Getting married, gaining wealth and status, all seemed to be intertwined with traveling and leaving the country. This is evident specifically among those who currently lack the opportunity to gain wealth and employment within the country. Whereas some may find it best to move to the city to find opportunities to better themselves, those conversed with in Alexandria believed that moving to another country was the best solution. It has become common to hear people on the streets blame Egypt for whatever issue they may be having. The problem could be the inflated price of food, or that another person, perhaps in government, blocked their way. It is common for an individual who strikes up a fight with another person on the streets, at the end of the melee, to hear such comments as “balad motakhlefa” idiotic country, and “balad bent weskha” which is a similar acronym of the first but with a stronger obscene meaning.

**Egyptian Dream Akin to American Dream**

The “American Dream” is frequently known as one of the main characteristics of the United States. The dream includes a set of principles whereby one has the freedom and opportunity to pursue wealth and success as long as they are willing to work hard to achieve such aspirations. Regarding the American Dream, James Truslow Adams stated: "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or the circumstances of an individual’s birth and heritage (1931). The idea of the American Dream appears within the United States Declaration of Independence whereby it decrees that “all men are
created equal…endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Onuf, 2007 p.179).

In Egypt, the vision of freedom, liberty, attaining basic human rights, and having enough opportunities to achieve individuals’ goals and dreams is also a dream. This dream is analogous to the American dream in terms of the goals that the citizens seek. Many young Alexandrian women, aspire for a better future where knowing and having the proper connections, and where one comes from does not matter, but what the individual can do and how hard they are willing to work does matter.

The socio-political revolution which resulted in what became known as the Arab Spring was instigated based upon the principles of freedom and liberty. Many women who went out to demonstrate against the corrupt conditions expressed that freedom was the main fuel behind their joining the demonstrations and riots. Asmaa, an 18 year old engineering student said that this was what motivated her to go out and demonstrate.

I always thought I would get my degree and search for a job abroad, but when I saw that the revolution was making progress and people were accepting it I went out to the streets with my family and friends. It suddenly became a dream come true, we can be humans here; we can have freedom just like those in other countries. I started to brush off thoughts of leaving and began planning on remaining.

This was a common idea among young women as well as among older generations. Individuals on the streets, in cafes, sport club settings, and the library expressed similar ideas. Everyone craved freedom, liberty and a set of rights. Many individuals noted that they desired expressing their own opinions and ideas without fear of imprisonment.
Laila, a 22 year old journalism student remarked that she wants to have freedom of speech like that found in other modern countries.

As I studied media and journalism I dreamed that I will one day change the media in Egypt. I hoped that I would be the one to express only the truth and report true news rather than covering up and reporting falsified news that would please officials. I hoped that reporting accurate news would, in turn, provide me with better job opportunities. I want us to be free of all the cuffs and chains holding us down. I hope every individual here will be free to think, say and act as they please.

Both the American dream, as well as, the Egyptian dream is based upon similar principles with freedom, liberty and the ability to achieve goals and dreams being the main common characteristics. Respondents in Alexandria appear to echo what is occurring in other parts of Egypt. The most celebrated chant in the recent revolution was “eish horia adala igtima’aya”, which means “live free and be socially equal”. It appears clear that both the American and Egyptian dreams are fundamentally the same.

2. **In what ways do Alexandrian women perceive life to be more or less stressful after the Arab Spring?**

Women in Alexandria perceived some aspects of life to be more stressful than others. The location of where the women resided, attended school or were employed, also played a role in whether or not they were stressed. For example neighborhoods of El- Montaza, an area located further north in Alexandria where the King Farouk’s palace and gardens are located, were influenced differently than those who resided in Sidi-Gaber, located midtown of Alexandria and known to host a large number of
demonstrators and occupiers. There were some areas in Alexandria that were heavily impacted by the politically motivated rebel events that were taking place while other areas, especially locations on the outskirts of the city, were not affected as much. Thus, the attitudes of the residences in the various areas differed. Political involvement and awareness of local affairs also seemed to be influenced according to where citizens resided in the city. For example, those who lived near areas that encompassed larger groups of demonstrators and supporters of either political faction were also most likely to voice their opinion, or become involved than those who were not. Women who had family or friends in areas that were more exposed to such events were also most likely to become involved. It appears that women’s lives were significantly provoked after the upsurge of the Egyptian grassroots rebellion movement of June 30, 2013 called the “Tamarod”.

**Life Before Tamarod**

As noted earlier, the *Tamarod* is what the June 30th, 2013 rebellion movement demonstration was referred to as. A few days before a rebellion movement, I noticed that there was an increase in individuals spreading the word and philosophy of the *Tamarod*, by use of rebel identification forms. *Tamarod* forms disclose the citizen’s identification numbers that are similar to a social security number, one’s governorate (the state to which one belongs), and one’s district (which is generally determined by the closest police station in the area to one’s residence). Finally, the form includes one’s signature, if it is filled out on the street. Otherwise, if the form is completed on-line, only an email address is included. As I walked around the streets, I noticed that they were crowded with persons discussing the possible outcomes of the *Tamarod* rebel movement, and
young adults, street vendors, public transportation drivers, and senior citizens deliberate
over this political movement and activity. Many young women were aiding in the
distribution of the forms as well as the explanation of what Tamarod meant, especially to
individuals who were indigent and lacked knowledge of this movement. It has become a
daily dialogue between families and friends. As I was in a taxi, a woman, late twenties
and a science teacher, explained to the driver and I her feelings during the turmoil:

I am one of the people who see a black curtain in front of me. There is no future.
I no longer spontaneously ride a train to travel to Cairo. It’s scary. I no longer
feel safe, I can’t go out later in the day as I used to. I feel like if we were being
stepped on before we are now being stomped and jumped on…I hope this
Tamarod thing works, I really hope so, how much more screwed can we get in
this country.

Both supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as supporters of the Rebellion
movement are preparing for street demonstrations. However, as it draws close, there is a
rumor that individuals are being arrested as they sign the Tamarod forms.

Mariam, 23, Medical student stated: “My friend’s brother got arrested as he was
signing the form on the street. They say some of the people handing out the
forms are with the police. Tell everyone to sign it online”.

Several individuals reported similar experiences. There were a number of
Facebook announcements that were targeted for spreading “encouragement” for people to
go to the streets and join in on the demonstrations of June 30, 2013. Although it is hard
to determine the trustworthiness of such information, a few Facebook reports indicated
that persons identified with spreading rebel information were victims of gunshot.
Rumors spread through social media indicated that the government was monitoring Facebook pages and some women contenders remarked that they lessened their use of Facebook and social media in general at the height of the street demonstrations and social unrest.

The rebel movement was directed against president Morsi’s regime because the citizens felt that they had not achieved the goals of the original revolution. Citizen’s desire for social equality, freedom, justice, and employment, along with other numerous demands, was not met by the president. The rebel political leaflet and identification form stated:

“Because safety has not been found to this day ... You are denied;
Because the poor are always ignored ... You are denied;
Because we are still begging for loans from outside ... You are denied;
Because no justice has been given to the martyrs ... You are denied;
Because no dignity was preserved either for myself or for my country ... You are denied;
Because the economy has collapsed, and many depend only on begging ... You are denied;
Because Egypt continues to follow in the footsteps of the United States ... You are denied.” (See Appendix A).

As the days draw near to scheduled street demonstrations, I noticed that the citizens began to stock up on necessities such as water, rice, bread, and other amenities. The price of food, in general, spiked high. Merchants that I talked to explained that this was because they will have to close their shops and they don’t know for how long.
Women reluctantly continued to stock up as they did not have another choice. As the citizens purchase groceries, conversations are overheard concerning whether or not one will participate in the demonstrations, which side they are voting for, who they will go with, and what they expect as the outcome. If an individual expresses that they will not take part, others nearby will proceed to persuade them to participate, declaring that it is a national duty to do so.

It appeared that to many women the revolution and demonstrations were adding to their stress and anxiety, not only because they worry if they have enough to survive for a few days but worrying about whether or not they, and their families will come out alive. I overheard a woman, mid-forties, grocery shopping at the street market explaining to both the merchant and those surrounding her concerns:

Our kids are dying every day and those people in higher positions don’t care. I sent my kids away to my family at the country-side until this is over. I don’t want my son to die, or my daughter to get raped. May god show us all justice!

As the discussion continues, there appears to be a segment of the citizenry at the research site that plan to participate in the rebellious movement because they missed out on contributing during the earlier January 25, 2011 revolution. While some are taking this seriously, others think of it as a “fun” event. This could be attributed to a lack of political education in Egypt over the last few decades. The past several generations of elderly folk in Egypt have not been as aware as today’s modern and higher-technologically savvy younger generations. Yet, even the younger generations have only recently, specifically after the 2011 revolution, begun to intensify their awareness of
politics. Politics was taboo in earlier years, and many individuals chose to not participate in such discussions especially since it could result in arrest and imprisonment.

Zainab, a 54 year old vice-principle of an all-girl secondary school commented:

When I was growing up, no one talked about politics. It was common knowledge that if you do, you risk going to prison and risk never being seen again. I know many people who lost their brothers and sons because of this. Afterwards, we just stopped talking about it unless it is to praise them. I taught my kids the same.

Now, I am proud of this new generation, and wish we did the same

As an outside observer residing in Alexandria, it became clear that the research site generally had gone from occasionally discussing politics, and the government to an everyday obsession about the political situation. School age youth, as young as seven year olds, were chanting for “their” supporters. Young children were also present on June 30, 2013 at the various demonstration locations that I was able to observe.

On June, 30, 2013, I went out and realized that the streets were surprisingly empty in the neighborhood. However, as I walked closer to the location of the demonstrations nearest to me, Mhatet el Raml (larger groups) of people began to surface. There were microbuses that were transporting people to the locations of the demonstrations. There were street vendors scattered all over the area, and rows of hawkers in the surrounding areas selling flags, tamarod signs, Morsi and El-Sisi signs, black, white and red beads (the Egyptian flag colors), as well as, face painters.

Most of the citizens on the streets were dressed in red. Families, young children, babies, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters were chanting alongside one another. Bulldozers carried people holding long banners (Appendix B). Others were spraying
graffiti on the roads. Loud music blared and people chanted while waving flags and posters—all part of the demonstration spirit. A woman beside me said “this is making me believe in the revolution again, I was afraid it was dead.” Many conversations with similar contexts were taking place. Numerous individuals were expressing that they would continue to occupy the area until their demands were met. What started as a demand for justice and equality, however, ended with demands to revoke the presidential rights of Morsi.

A young woman at the demonstrations who appeared to be a student said:

He (meaning Morsi) is making us all non-Muslims, what Islam is he representing?

Those Islamists, why do they act as if they were seriously sent by god to save us... and save us from what? He will kill us! He will turn us into illiterate people!

And for what? We will not surrender to them…. We will win.

Over the next few days, the streets continued to be occupied, and army chief Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi gave president Morsi forty-eight hours to step down (Ammar, 2013). Following the two day period, Morsi did, indeed, step down. Afterwards, the demonstrations of both sides increased. While the army supporters celebrated, Muslim Brotherhood supporters did not welcome the news. Instead, they took to the streets. There were a series of chaotic outbreaks throughout the country; and in the city of Alexandria, I observed and witnessed that there were a large number of fights, some resulting in death between protestors. It became difficult for young women especially to go about their daily activities. Women were also being dragged into fights, as I passed near a demonstration sight, I noticed that a woman was being assaulted by both men and women, it was unclear why; some of the bystanders were saying its due to political
beliefs. Another woman was dragged out of her car and beaten by surrounding people as her car had decals that supported the Muslim Brotherhood.

Army helicopters were seen across the sky in Alexandria. In Sidi Gaber (a local neighborhood), young women waved green flashlights at the helicopters. The helicopters saluted the people by throwing flags at the citizens. However, in Mahtet el Raml (a local neighborhood at the research site), the demonstrations were violent as the Muslim Brotherhood supporters continued to call for the reinstatement of the now ousted president Morsi. Over the next few weeks, such demonstrations continued. However, the violence increased among the people.

Life After Tamarod

As the day of Tamarod ended, some citizens returned to their daily routines. Yet, many daily activities were now a burden as the chaos continued to erupt throughout the city. Certain drivers, for example, would kick passengers off of the public vehicles if passenger political views conflicted with their own. Some passengers chose to get off as soon as any political conversation started. This was observed on several occasions. As a researcher, traveling from one place to another became a tedious task as the roads were blocked by the demonstrators that refused to leave. It became difficult, for example, to call a taxi. The taxis would refuse to pick up a fare if the destination was located beyond an area that was blocked off by demonstrators. One night, I, along with my siblings, had to walk home from an event we attended on the other side of the city. We left the event at approximately 8 pm and didn’t reach our house until 2 am. During the way we attempted to stop taxis as well as other forms of transportation. Upon learning our destination, they would refuse, regardless of what money we were willing to pay.
We resided in an area near a Muslim brotherhood demonstration. The train, for example was forced to stop operation. Most forms of transportations were not operating on that day. It was a Friday—a day popularly used for demonstrations. As we drew nearer to our final destination, approximately fifteen minutes away by car, we were able to hail a taxi. He stopped when he saw us and said he will return after he drops off his customers. We were not the only individuals who experienced this; there were countless families and groups of people who were trying to stop any car, and to pay high prices just to reach their destinations.

Conversations revolved around whether or not Tamarod was correct, as well as, whether or not the military was on the right path. Support for the armed forces increased throughout the city and people hung large photos of El-Sisi from their balconies and windows (Appendix C). Chants of “El-Sisi howa ra’isi” meaning “El-Sisi is my president”, was heard everywhere. Support for the Muslim Brotherhood also increased, and demands for the legitimacy of Al-Sharaia, increased as well. Many young men and women called for the legitimacy of what was taking place, specifically calling for the reinstatement of Morsi on the basis that the citizens of the country had signed a “contract” when they elected President Morsi for four years.

Shahira, 23, a housewife, stated:

We elected him for four years; we should at least respect this and wait until his sentence is done. Are we going to demonstrate every time a president does something we don’t like? We should have more respect than this.

Rabi’a square was occupied in Cairo by Muslim Brotherhood supporters and the number four was used as a symbol by supporters of the brotherhood throughout the
country. In Alexandria there were citizens bearing the symbol throughout the
demonstration areas. *Rabi’a* in Arabic means number four, and the square was originally
named after Rabi’a El-Adaweya a famous female figure in Islam. She was a symbol of
piousness and virtue in the Islamic Era (Smith, 2010). Rabi’a was also named as such
because she was the fourth of her siblings. It is said that the square was used as not only
an Islamic symbol, but also because Morsi was the fourth elected president of Egypt
(Ozdemir & Hadad, 2013).

Violence increased among supporters of both sides, occasionally leading to the
death of some peaceful demonstrators. Fierce verbal confrontations were also common.
If bumper stickers were spotted on a supporter’s vehicle, especially common among
microbus and taxi drivers, comments would be shouted at the driver. One Friday, as I
was in a microbus going from *Miami*, a neighborhood further north-east on the coast, to
*El-Manshia*, west of the Mediterranean coast, several passengers hopped on and got off at
*Mhatet El-Raml*, two stops before *El-Manshia*. As soon as they were off, the driver and
the remaining passengers began to remark “why would they travel forty minutes to pray
here? Why support the MBH?” one passenger made obscene comments while another
said “poor children are killing themselves… how did their mothers let them out, they
should go home”. A series of confrontations among taxi drivers and microbus drivers
continued, as traffic increased and traffic accidents took place, verbal confrontations
often turned into physical ones and occasionally ended with a political outburst. I
overheard a conversation between two middle aged women who were reprimanding the
young men saying:
May god take them (meaning kill them) so this can end. All those that are causing this chaos in the city…This is not life, we can’t live anymore and it’s all their fault and their leaders fault. They brain-washed them and destroyed our lives.

Another woman explained how this is only making their lives more difficult and adding to their stress where her and her husband had to change the way they dress to escape the reprimanding comments. Because of this new war between whether we are Muslims or Muslim brotherhood (MBH) I had to uncover my face. I have been covering my face for over 25 years now but suddenly I became harassed and called a MBH supporter when I am not. My husband had to shave his beard. My kids had to dress more “normal” so they can fit in society better. Everywhere we went comments were made when we were doing it for religious observation and not for political expectations.

As the two women continued to discuss and share their thoughts about what is taking place, another woman joined in the conversation opposing their opinion and supporting what the young men and women were doing:

It’s people like you that are taking us back (meaning bringing us down to a lower class), you don’t understand anything, let the army “protect” you and treat you worse than dogs. Let the boys fight for us and Morsi. He will come back!

**Life Beyond the City**

While Alexandria, Cairo and various other major cities continued to rebel against the current events, outside of Alexandria, mainly on the Mediterranean coast, daily life
continued as if they were detached from the country. Once an individual steps outside and reaches any of the towns along the coast, it is evident that the stress of the city, politics and changes is not felt there. As part of my research setting, I had the opportunity to leave the main city of Alexandria and travel to the resorts of the North Coast, about an hour to two hours away from Alexandria. Although most of the resorts are mainly occupied by residents from Cairo and Alexandria, the chaos that is taking place in the big cities appears to have no place in the resorts. Social parties continued to take place as well as other planned events. There appeared to be no room for political conversations. Although there were a substantial number of individuals at the resorts who normally reside abroad, there was also a high number of youth who had come up from the city. Everyday activity there was not affected whatsoever. News travelled at a slower rate in Marina, the Diplomatic resort, and other resort locations. The resort occupiers left behind the chaos in the city along with the political turmoil.

As the chaotic atmosphere increased in Alexandria and Cairo, the armed forces, which were considered to be the current authority of the country, instated a curfew. At the North Coast however, individuals were unaware of the events that resulted in the curfew and they were unaware of its establishment. The curfew did not affect anyone who was outside the city, at least those that were at the North Coast resorts. Transportation became difficult between the city and the smaller towns, and it increased difficulty for those who were trying to return to their homes. Amira, 22, literature student said that:

I had no idea what was happening, I was attending a wedding in Marina, everything was normal here, until my family called and said they were worried
because they couldn’t reach me. Afterwards we turned the news on to see what was going on. It was hard to return, it took 6 hours, and I was only an hour and half away, there were many check-points along the way… it was crazy how different life was.

Curfew

Fourteen states in Egypt were declared to follow curfew which began at 6:00 am and ended at 7:00 pm, on August 14, 2013 (Rayman & Davidson, 2013). A few of the states required to abide by this law included Cairo, Alexandria, Giza, and Suez. While the curfew was intact, any citizen seen on the street was to be arrested and prosecuted for endangerment of the country. This law strips away rights of due process of the citizen. The law was initiated in hopes of breaking up the occupiers, mainly those that were supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. Street vendors were forced to close their shops early and citizens were forced to return to their homes. Such laws and actions had a significant impact on women. It limited their actions and activities, and restricted their movement whether commuting to work, or buying daily necessities.

Army tanks were seen across the Mediterranean coastline in Alexandria. There were several tanks parked outside the Alexandria Court of Appeals, which was undergoing construction at the time, and the Alexandria Elementary Court. Several police stations also had army tanks stationed in front of them. The citizens grew restless as the curfew was enforced upon the city. Many complained that it was summer, why should we be locked up? Others felt that they were being punished for a crime they did not commit, specifically those who did not partake in the events that were taken place. Some citizens broke the curfew and carried on with their planned events. At the local
hair salon, I met a bride and her two bridesmaids. I noted that the time was drawing near for the curfew and asked them if they were having a wedding at their private home or at another wedding venue. One of the bridesmaids answered “yes we are holding the wedding.” When I mentioned that the curfew was near the bride commented:

I don’t care about the curfew. If any of the guests are scared they can stay home.

I am holding my wedding regardless, I am not afraid; I would go to jail if I have to. We worked hard to gather the money, our families chipped in and we borrowed money from friends to put the wedding together. If I cancel I will not get a refund, I am going regardless.

The hairdresser exclaimed that this is not the first bride she had since the curfew. She explained that she moved their appointments to earlier times so that she could go home prior to the curfew, however the brides did not care and proceeded with the weddings.

There also happened to be a wedding which took place over a series of a few days at the neighborhood I was residing at. The streets were decorated with colored lights and music was played very loudly until late hours throughout the night. I was able to view the celebrations from my balcony. Although this is viewed as violating the law, I did not come across any news that any brides and grooms were arrested. It is not clear if any of the other wedding guests shared the same luck.

Over the series of the last few days of my research, there were several incidents of “broken” curfew. Such incidents were primarily committed by young men, mostly teenagers and children, who appeared to be perceived as street children that vandalized shops. Past midnight, two nights in a row, a large group of teenage boys vandalized a
large shop. The first night the boys threw rocks at the second floor windows and they successfully broke one. After about thirty minutes, what appeared to be a building security guard walked out with a large stick in his hand and chased the boys away, yelling at them. The following night at about 1:00 am, a larger group of boys came and proceeded to throw rocks at the store. They successfully broke all the glass windows on the second floor and managed to throw a Molotov cocktail, and set the store on fire. There were several gun shots, it was not clear if someone was hurt. Several minutes afterwards a truck came in and the boys climbed on a ladder into the shop and proceeded to throw boxes out of the store and into the truck. The boys also attempted to break into a jewelry store which was located beneath the vandalized shop, but they only succeeded in denting the metal door. The same thing occurred when they attempted to break into a hareesa (pastry shop).

Eventually, several men went outside in an attempt to make the boys leave, however the boys continued to enter the building. Once they tried to do so, the men pushed them away and ran back to close the metal doors. In the building where I was residing, my male family relatives took knives out of the kitchen and went downstairs to guard the building. Almost all males in the building did the same. Similar acts took place at neighboring buildings as well. One male remained in the apartment while the others went downstairs. Following my relatives departure from our building, we pushed the dining room table against the doors. Shortly afterwards we blocked the windows and balcony as gun shots were heard. This took place about three or four blocks away from the court of appeals where several army tanks were located. Neither police nor army officials appeared as this violent event took place. It lasted several hours, until dawn
broke and no one appeared. The original store that was vandalized was rumored to be owned by a Muslim Brotherhood supporter, however whether this was the reason behind the attack is not clear. Such outbreaks instilled fear within the women in the neighborhood, especially the younger women. The distress and concern was for their safety, many were worried that the attacking boys would try to rape them or hold them for ransom as there were stories circulating the area about two girls that faced such a fate.

After the curfew was enacted, the arrival and departure times of air-traffic were affected. Flights were cancelled and rescheduled causing chaos in the airport and unease among the departing citizens. As the political events turned increasingly violent, many individuals attempted to change their departure dates which added to the chaos. My own flights were cancelled three times, and after the fourth attempt to reschedule, we decided to make our way to the airport. It took us approximately eight hours to get to the airport, a normal trip between Alexandria and Egypt would take between two and four hours. After traveling on one highway, the entrance to the road to the airport was blocked and the driver had to retrace his steps. This increased traffic chaos and road rage among other vehicle occupants. Once at the airport, there appeared to be families that had been camping on the site for several days waiting for seats to become vacant for air travel. The airport was overcrowded, and the shuttles were in disarray and disorganized. For instance, the shuttle proceeded to drive off as my brother was arranging our luggage. Finally, we secured tickets and we made it back safely.
3. How has routine, daily life changed for women since the Arab Spring of 2012?

Routine Daily Life

Routine daily life in Alexandria, Egypt changed since the rise of the Arab Spring. Women altered their daily activities, whether it is due to the curfew or due to safety concerns, life has certainly changed for women at the research site. The general atmosphere of the city also changed. Most evident are loud music at odd hours of the night, an increase in trash on the streets, graffiti on walls, as well as, an escalation in the general disorganization of the community.

Safety has also become a great concern and a daily discussion among females in Alexandria. Many women now fear going out alone, going out at certain times of day, and going to certain areas. Rumors of abducted females increased which added to the anxiety of remaining safe. Police were no longer as visible as they once were which also added to the concerns of young women. Samah, 27, an accountant, stated that after the revolution she has had to cancel her morning jogs:

I used to run in the morning with my sister along the kornish, (boardwalk), and had to stop going. We were harassed twice and didn’t feel safe anymore so we discontinued running. We only go when my brother can go with us… it’s like, as soon as a man is present, we are left alone… and that’s not always the case.

Certain areas of the city were avoided due to the lack of security. For example, if a woman was to take a taxi to an area where only back roads would be used, she would not go altogether or would call a friend who could drive her. Many malls and clubs are in isolated areas of the city, areas that have large amounts of open lands. The highway,
which is partially isolated, is needed in order to travel to such locations. Over the last few years, there was an increase in reports of women being abducted or robbed and left stranded that led to women’s fear of public transportation and isolated areas.

Malak, 25, graphic designer, stated that:

I was robbed on my way to work at 7 am. As soon as we reached the parking lot of my work, the taxi driver pulled out a gun and told me to leave my purse, my phone, and to take off all the gold I was wearing. He even took my engagement ring. He said he wasn’t afraid to kill me if he had to. I left everything and walked out of the car. Now my father or husband-to-be takes me to work.

Malak went on to explain that she will never ride in a taxi alone, at least until order is restored to the country. Another young woman, Nadia, 24, and an engineering student, shared a similar experience.

I was with my friend in a taxi and as we were about to exit the taxi the driver pulled out a pocket knife and told us to leave our wallets and cellphone, he even apologized saying he has to feed his kids even if this was the way to do it.

Nadia, also addressed safety concerns. She said that she and her friends have a “system” where they text each other the taxi’s license plate number and talk on the phone until they departed the taxi.

Dalia, 22, housewife, talked about her experience with public transportation. She said that once she was wearing a gold necklace that was snatched on the bus.

One minute I was holding it on my chest, the next it was gone. I still don’t know who took it. I could swear it was the man behind me but no one even flinched as I called for help.
Soha, 25, housewife, talked about how she was robbed at a wedding raid.

I was at a wedding with my family and suddenly the lights went out and a group of robbers went into the wedding with weapons. They held bags and told everyone to take off their jewelry and money and throw it in the bags. He took everything. You know Egyptian weddings; everyone wears everything they own to showoff, we wish we didn’t. Everything is gone now. They even took the brides shabka, wedding jewelry gift from the husband. They took our wedding bands as well… everything in our pockets and left.

Such incidents have become very common and they are now a part of daily conversations.

Going out in groups has now become more publicized and emphasized in the community as well. Although at first it appeared that the emphasis was placed on females, males were also encouraged to go out in groups. The current state of chaos in the community, and the general social disorganization and disarray of the town has led to an increase in incidents of robbery and personal harassment.

Even as a researcher, I was holding my cellphone in my hand and recall placing it in my purse as I was waiting for a taxi. One minute it was there the next it was gone, I know I did not drop it on the ground, but it must have been quietly lifted by someone in the crowd. Then, such stolen items as phones and cameras can be bought on street corners. During the demonstrations for tamarod, one of the street vendors was showing me a Nikon camera and tried to sell it to me. When I asked where he got it, he said he found it.
Another incident with a taxi driver involved the driver attempting to be paid twice. As the taxi driver refueled the car, I asked for change from one of the gas station operators. The man gave me a large portion of the change in coins, as I discussed my reluctance for coins, the driver exclaimed that he rather liked them, so I gave him more than enough change to cover the fare. When we reached the destination, the driver announced the fare, and I had to remind him as I left the vehicle that I had already paid him.

When I first arrived at Alexandria, I took a taxi, but about five minutes into the destination, I had to change the location of where we were headed. The area I was going to was on the way, so it did not cause any trouble. Upon reaching the destination, I was about to pay the taxi driver. He expressed how unhappy he was with the fare. After several negotiations, I ended up paying 60 pounds for a destination that shouldn’t have caused more than 15 to 20 pounds. I believe that the driver was alerted to how confused I was when he took a route I didn’t recall from a prior visit. This is common. When any merchant or taxi driver is alerted to the fact that an individual may have spent even a small amount of time outside the city, they spike up the prices.

Traffic in Alexandria, as well as most parts of Egypt has become a nightmare. In the summer in Alexandria, traffic increases due to the tourism that takes place in the city. It has become very common for accidents to take place along the kornish. This is mostly due to the lack of traffic coordination. On a daily basis, at least one or two incidents of death occur where people were attempting to cross to the other side of the road, and instead met their death. Almost all roads lack police officers to patrol the roads, and on occasion, those that are present, are often seen on their phones. It has become a rarity to
go out by vehicle, and reach the final destination without heavy traffic. Many individuals have changed their traveling times in attempts to avoid what they commonly referred to as tourist traffic.

During *Tamarod*, and other demonstration days, it became nearly impossible to travel within the city. A destination that would usually take us 45 minutes took over three hours due to traffic congestion. The vehicles would travel to a certain stop, whereby passengers would depart and walk to another area to take another form of transportation. This discouraged many individuals from commuting to work, especially women. As concern and alerts rise, many women are not able to go to work because of social unrest and instability in the city.

Yasmeen, a 28 year old medical doctor remarked:

Where I am stationed to work and train is on the other side of the city. When things like this occur, I am unable to go to the hospital and work, or even help out. My family would stop me from going if I insist because of how dangerous it is now. The lack of direct forms of transportation with increased harassment as people try to take shortcuts through streets is very frustrating… and when something happens they say it’s the women’s fault for being out… as if we are not working and trying to make the place better.

**Public Loudness**

Loud music in public has become a new trend that has escalated with the Arab Spring, and is affecting routine life for all in the research setting, including women. Motorbike riders have speakers attached to their vehicles, and they play music at extremely high levels. Such music is referred to as *mahragant* which literally means
festivals. The type of music played is commonly called street music. It is a form of rap mixed with loud music. Such music is used with “pocket knife dancers” popular in the research setting, whereby dancers display rapid motions of “slashing with a knife”. This music is played at all hours of the day and night. Due to the lack of community policing and regulators, streets have seen an increase in motorbike riders with loud speakers. Such bikes often have over three passengers. I resided on the sixth floor and the music was so loud that it altered simple daily activities and also sleeping.

Sarah, 18, senior high school student shared:

This is my senior year and I need all the points I can get to get into a good university. Day and night I can’t study or rest because of this music and if you try to stop one and talk to them they will make very inappropriate remarks and attempt to pull out a pocketknife sometimes.

Social Disarray

Lack of social order in regards to daily activities such as visiting a merchant or riding public transportation was a common problem. If an individual goes to any store, people do not wait for their turn in line; instead they push their way to the front. Those at the back of the line wave the money at the merchant. The merchants do not call for order either; they grab the money and write the orders down as they come. Occasionally they would stop if they recognize someone standing for an excessively long time. When that occurs they tend to show a small amount of reluctance and irritation toward the individual. In public transportation, it has become rare for people to wait and slow down as they are getting on and off of buses, people now push and force their way on and off. If someone complains, or speaks “slow down” or to wait, it becomes an invitation for a
verbal altercation. For women, this is very difficult, as they get shoved at both the shops, at street vendors, as well as, on public transportation. Not long ago men made room for women, but now they no longer care and thrust them aside. Occasionally there would be someone who is considerate, but even in such cases another individual would mock them. Rodaina, a 20 year old education student, remarked:

When I go buy things for my mom, it’s like going to war. You must push your way to the front and grab what you need or else you may even get stomped on in the crowd. If you stand and wait your turn, expect to be the laughing stock of people. You have to use your arms to survive…

Supply Shortages

During the summer of 2013, a shortage of gasoline occurred throughout the country. Gas stations shut down and prices spiked for gasoline. Finding gas became a novelty of sorts. Stations that had gasoline had cars lined up for several miles. One female said she waited for five hours, and when she finally made it to the front of the line, the gas was gone. Many people reported similar experiences. One respondent said her brother would take the cars at 4:00 or 5:00 am and go to the gas station since the wait would be an hour, and if he is lucky, perhaps less. Gas shortage was rumored to have been initiated by the government to control the supply.

Electricity and water shortages were also spread throughout the city. Many condemned Morsi and blamed him for the shortage. Electricity would be cut off for four or five hours, several times a day on a daily basis. The shortage resulted in damaging appliances that relied on electricity. My sister’s laptop burned due to the electricity cuts as it was plugged in when the electricity returned. Several chargers at home were set on
fire due to the same reason. Because of the shortage in electricity, many daily activities were altered—particularly of the women. People couldn’t go out, or those who went out and the electricity went out as they were outside their homes were unable to return. This was especially common among older people and those who resided on higher floors. On several occasions, I witnessed lines of people in front of the elevator, with people sitting on the floor of the lobby awaiting the return of electricity. People who resided in areas with a higher number of police officials said that they did not experience as many blackouts or brownouts. Laila, 25, housewife, resides in an area known to have a large population of public officials in residence and remarked that “electricity scarcely ever is shut down.”

Water shortage was also a common issue that was also blamed on Morsi. Miami, Alexandria, a neighborhood east of the coast, had a shortage of water for almost two months, the water hardly ever worked. Most people vacated the area. As a resident of Miami, I hardly ever remained at my apartment due to the lack of water. Many of my neighbors vacated the building and fled to other family homes. Many people said they had to go shower at their friends’ homes. Towards the end of the summer, almost everyone who had access to another apartment was gone. Until my departure, the water supply was still short, almost nonexistent. Such shortage of water made even the basic necessities impossible. People used mineral water to cook. And on occasion, when the water supply returned, people filled up buckets to be able to use them in the bathroom and other cleaning purposes. This represented a great challenge for poorer residents who could not afford to use mineral water.
Roads, streets, schools, and even the sea all fell victim to excess waste. As the chaotic state of social order continues, trash has increased everywhere in Alexandria, even elite neighborhoods saw the same misfortune. Gardens and public parks were destroyed, and national monuments shared the same faith. Across from the court of appeals there was a garden with Mohamed Ali Pasha’s statue. While growing up, in the early 2000s, I recall when the first garden was renovated and trees, plants, as well as, a water fountain with light reflections were added. Now the garden is ruined. Make-shift street vendors take up public space to set up their stands. School boarders were surrounded by piles of trash. I walked with Yosra, a 23 year old medical student, around one of the most exclusive areas in Alexandria and near the home of a senator who resides in a palatial home near an historic monument. She pointed to a pile of trash that was extremely small compared to others seen around the city, and remarked:

Look what we have to deal with now. One of the best areas in the city, and there is trash here, just rubbish. It does not appear as if any forms of solutions would be decided upon anytime soon to solve such an issue.

4. As Alexandrian women adjust to stress of change brought on by the Arab Spring, in what ways do the adaptations to stress suggested by Merton and Agnew appear to apply or not apply?

At the research site in Alexandria, Egypt, women have been shown to experience specific styles of stress resulting from turmoil brought on by the Arab Spring. Also, it is clear that some of the modes of adaptation as suggested by Merton and/or Agnew can apply to Alexandrian women as depicted in this chapter. Several of Robert Merton’s modes of adaptation need further clarification as they apply to the research site.
Conformity

Most of the women depicted in the discussions tend to fall somewhere between Merton’s modes of adaptation of “conformist” and “innovation.” That is, the women tend to adhere to the laws of the research setting (i.e., do not engage in criminal conduct), and accept “cultural goals”, but do not necessarily fully adhere to the “means” of achieving such societal or cultural goals as expected for women. That is, the “means” for obtaining the goals are not easily available in such a politically unstable locale as the research setting of Alexandria, Egypt. As discussed, many, if not most, of the women respondents chose a pathway of striving toward societal goals of a better life. However, to strive for a better life means, for most, departing Egypt, either temporarily or permanently. Thus, the women become “partially conformist” and “partially innovator”.

Because the women do not actually become law-breakers, they might best be considered somewhat “social deviants” to the extent that they desire to satisfy cultural goals by leaving the country. Oddly enough, it seems that “departing the country” for a better life may be becoming the norm, or customary, at least as shown by many of the candidates. If there was an Egyptian dream” of succeeding by remaining in the country, it seems to be now in transition of being replaced by an accepted custom of “leaving” the country, if at all possible.

Interestingly, the goals of a better life can be both economic, as well as, finding a suitable marriage partner. And, as noted in several conversations, in order to depart the country for a better economic life, young women may have to first enter into marriage.
Innovation

As discussed, young women do not commonly enter into law-breaking to achieve their goals. However, should young women find a way to depart the country alone, and without a marriage partner, she most likely would be breaking the cultural norms of Egyptian life in Alexandria. She would in a sense be an “innovator” by not following accepted “means” as laid down by the culture of life in Alexandria. Yet, it was also noted that upper-status women might be able to circumvent such a cultural pattern. The research site appears to have a different set of guidelines for young women, depending on what social class they happen to find themselves.

It may be that the works of Robert Agnew, 2001, are helpful in the case of women of the research site departing to seek their goals and aspirations outside their native country. That is, as Agnew points out, one can “lose something” and the subsequent stress experienced can motivate them toward social deviance or even law-breaking. A number of the young women conversed with had lost the desire to remain in their native country (i.e., follow any semblance of an Egyptian Dream), and instead became determined to find a way to depart the country for a better life. Such a motivation to leave the research site in Alexandria, Egypt must be viewed as an extension of “strain” theory as earlier proposed by Merton and further clarified by Agnew. To the extent that the women generally actually come to accept “departing the country” as customary, then their behavior pattern approaches the norm and would fall under the category of “conformity”, even if marginally so.
Ritualism

Merton argued that another mode of adaptation would be to reject the cultural goals, but accept any available means to survive in the research setting. Such a person would not engage in law-breaking (i.e., innovation). Instead they simply drift through society, perhaps in menial jobs, not attempting to improve themselves. To the extent that a young women’s primary objective was to simply marry and to perhaps become a “home-body” and not become involved in pursuit of occupational goals, and not keep up with the changing political climate of the research setting, they would fall closer to the mode of adaptation of “ritualism.” Although there were no explicit examples of young women contenders who absolutely fitted this category, some of the women were, in fact, willing to ride out the storm of the Arab Spring and stay at home, and at the same time, not think about departing the country.

Rebellion

Clearly, as noted in this chapter, some of the women respondents did, in fact, take part in the socio-political upheaval that was on-going during this research in Alexandria. Some women would accompany their men folk and would attend rallies and extremist parades of the opposing political party. To the extent that the women discarded the goals expected of young women, and also rejected the means available for achieving such goals at the research site, these women would be characterized as fitting Merton’s “rebellion” mode of adaptation. It is likely that these women contenders would also be better characterized as “marginal” rebels. That is, some of the women respondents may join the “opposing” political party of the one in authority, but perhaps out of curiosity take part in rebel activity. Having political views opposite of the party in authority might just
become another motivation to depart the country. A pure example of the “rebellion” mode of adaptation would be women who totally reject both cultural goals as well as any available means to achieve them, and actively set on a course to change the system. To the extent that young women at the research site fit the category of “rebel”…they likely are marginal rebels.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

During a time of socio-political disorder, this research sheds light on an often neglected sector of the Alexandria, Egypt population—young women. This section will reflect on the four research questions. 1. What are aspirations of contemporary Alexandrian women in regards to long-term goals? Is there an Egyptian dream analogous to the American dream? How is this discussed and interpreted by Alexandrian women? 2. In what ways do Alexandrian women perceive life to be more or less stressful after the Arab Spring? 3. How has routine, daily life changed for women since the Arab Spring of 2012? 4. As Alexandrian women adjust to stress of change brought on by the Arab Spring, in what ways do the adaptations to stress suggested by Merton and Agnew appear to apply or not apply?

Following the discussion of the research questions, the researcher will address a few limitations of the research. Also, a few recommendations for future research are set-forth.

Research Questions

The first research question revolved around how Alexandrian women continued to view their long-term goals. The second part of the question focused on whether or not the Egyptian dream was similar to the American dream. What are aspirations of contemporary Alexandrian women in regards to long-term goals? Is there an Egyptian dream analogous to the American dream? How is this discussed and interpreted by Alexandrian women? The majority of the participants shared similar goals which consisted of traveling, accumulating wealth, education and marriage. Women believed
that by traveling and leaving the country they would have the opportunity to gain wealth and therefore be able to attain the culturally prescribed goals which generally prescribed a certain lifestyle. Such lifestyle included the ability to afford an apartment in a prestigious neighborhood, as well as having a car, the ability to have a membership at a famous sports club and when kids are present, the ability to provide an expensive education for their children. Most women believed that the only available means to achieve such goals is through marrying an individual who already resides abroad or in some cases, through finding an educational opportunity abroad. The current culture emphasizes a certain lifestyle that is almost unachievable mainly due to the high unemployment rates as well as the low wages that are given to those employed. Many young women rely on their families to survive. Most women indicated that they wouldn’t consider marrying someone who resides within the country unless they can provide the standard of living they desire.

The fundamentals of the Egyptian dream coincide with those of the American dream. Freedom, liberty, equal opportunity and basic human rights established the Egyptian dream. Women took out to occupy the streets and take part of the January 25th, 2011 revolution, along with the many demonstrations that followed; due to the belief that they can and will have the established set of liberties they have lacked over the last few decades. The revolution itself enabled people to believe in the Egyptian dream, in the freedom and the opportunities that could be available once the governmental corruption is eliminated. Many individuals decided to remain and take part of the events in hopes that they can and will be able to enjoy the freedom and liberty that is often found in western countries within Egypt itself.
The second research question focused on how women viewed their life to have increased or decreased in terms of stress that was related to the Arab spring. *In what ways do Alexandrian women perceive life to be more or less stressful after the Arab Spring?* In order to answer this research question, the participants clarified that the level of stress and whether or not they experienced stress was all intertwined with where they resided, location of school, college, and jobs. Areas heavily impacted with demonstrations affected the overall safety and stress levels of the residence. Through the research, women who resided close to an area impacted by the current events tended to be more involved with the turmoil. The location of the participants as well as where they had to travel significantly impacted how they were affected by the repercussions of the Arab Spring. If women had to travel to or from an impacted location, it hindered their day to day activities and in some cases they weren’t able to go on with their lives. Women who lived beyond such areas and didn’t need to travel to or from an area impacted by demonstrations experienced less stress. Transportation was heavily affected by the turmoil which also led to a restriction of movement. Such restriction added to women’s stress. *Tamarod*, the rebel movement, gave hope to women and towards the end turned into a “fun” event for most. Individuals who didn’t participate in the 2011 revolution decided to partake a role during this event to have a sense of what it feels like. Thus, stress to women in Alexandria was generally related to the location of residence, employment and education.

The third research question concentrated on how the daily livelihood of women was impacted due to the turmoil. *How has routine, daily life changed for women since the Arab Spring of 2012?* The participants’ comments generally revolved upon social
disarray, supply shortages, public loudness, trash and safety. Many women suffered from the supply shortages of water, electricity and gas which disabled simple day to day activities. The lack of gas spiked up transportation costs and sometimes hindered the citizens’ ability to travel from one place to another. The lack of water in some areas forced individuals to vacate the neighborhoods in search of other areas where water was available, at least more often than within their old homes. The shortage of electricity resulted in destroying appliances and gadgets. Public loudness was also an issue that hindered many women’s activities, such as studying, relaxing and sleeping. Many motorbikes blast music throughout the day and night and refuse to turn off or turn down the music creating public disruption. The safety of the women also affected their routine daily life activities. Many women weren’t able to travel daily due to the fear of being abducted or robbed. Due to the current turmoil, public safety became an issue due to the lack of security within the country. The lack of defined rules and laws caused a broken society which resulted in elevated crime levels impacting day to day activities especially women’s.

The final research question focused on whether or not Merton and Agnew’s strain theory applied to women in Alexandria, Egypt. As Alexandrian women adjust to stress of change brought on by the Arab Spring, in what ways do the adaptations to stress suggested by Merton and Agnew appear to apply or not apply? The answer to this question is clarified within the following section, theoretical overview.

Theoretical Overview

In considering women of Alexandria, Egypt, and how they are adapting to changes brought on by the “Arab Spring,” the results of this thesis provide at least partial
support for what is referred to as “Strain theory” in criminology. Accounts of young women in the city of Alexandria provide insight on how Robert Merton’s modes of adaptation, as well as Robert Agnew’s refinement of strain theory were applicable, if only in limited ways, to this research. As the Arab Spring continues, and as the turmoil spreads throughout Egypt, to include Alexandria, many young women have had to adapt to increasingly difficult daily lives. Some women chose to change their daily routine as well as their long range aspirations to fit the new circumstances while others elected to hold their stance. As explained in Chapter 4, the adaptations of Alexandrian women can be categorized and better understood by considering Merton’s conceptual scheme of “modes of adaptation.”

As Merton explained, those who fit the category of “conformist” accept both the cultural goals and institutional means available for reaching such goals. Some of the young women respondents in Alexandria must be identified as “conformists.” They adhere to what the cultural customs expect of young Muslim women, and the women accept or abide by what means can be found to work toward cultural goals. Such goals of the Alexandrian culture include completing a proper education, marrying, attaining respectable employment basically becoming a productive Egyptian citizen. Women conformists, regardless of socioeconomic status, aimed to achieve such goals by utilizing the available means and opportunities. The conformist female in Egypt did not participate in any law breaking behavior. As noted in Chapter 4, it may be necessary to re-think or re-conceptualize what is meant by “conformist” as it applies to young, contemporary Alexandrian women. It appears to be becoming acceptable, if not expected, for young women to seek ways to depart the country during the Arab Spring.
That is, because of the socio-political turmoil, even reaching the residential neighborhoods; many respondents now accept a life goal of leaving their native country. Only by escaping Alexandria can they find a better life.

These women are not actually law-breakers, but they are, in a sense, deviating from long presumed customs of remaining in Egypt. To the extent that it is now becoming “expected” and perhaps a normal cultural goal to depart the country, some women might be looked upon as somewhere between “conformists” and “innovators”. Today, some women who were at one time conformists are now somewhat “socially deviant” by accepting a goal of departing the country, at times with an attitude of never to return. It seems that in a society as depicted by Alexandria, it may be necessary to bend the definition of “conformity.” In other words, “cultural goals” and the “institutional means” for reaching the goals are shifting. It might even be unusual for young women in the research setting to totally adhere to a “conformist” model. At the same time, following Merton’s theoretical scheme, the women are not purely following the mode of adaptation of becoming an “innovator.”

Innovators, those who accept the goals but reject the culturally prescribed means available to reach the goals, were occasionally apparent among a few respondents. The innovator in this research was found among females from low socioeconomic statuses. Such women viewed money as the primary goal, and were willing to violate a few laws so long as they achieve the end goal. If the goal is attained, then anything and everything else was worthwhile. The idea of what actually is an “innovator” may also have to be re-thought in a setting undergoing sociopolitical upheaval, as being evidenced in Egypt during the Arab Spring. That is, many new city ordinances and laws are rather abruptly
established by a new political regime that citizens are expected to follow (i.e., curfews). 
If a women choses to blatantly violate the curfew in order to pursue personal goals, they 
could, in point of fact, become “innovators.” It appears, at least among the respondents, 
that the women did not become “career” offenders and thus innovators, but rather became 
“situational” or “technical” innovators based on what they likely saw as temporary laws 
by perhaps illegitimate authorities.

The “ritualist” would be those women who adapt to stress by rejecting the goals, 
but who basically accept the means available to them get along in society. In other 
words, she does not make any noticeable attempt to improve herself. The researcher 
came across a few cases where women, in a way, gave up on achieving goals beyond 
their limited means. In essence, these women gave up on any goal to climb a ladder to 
success, or to depart the country. They dutifully stayed at home, perhaps found a low-
level job, and eventually married. It did not really matter so much whom they married, 
only that they married and in “ritualistically” went about their daily lives. Such a life to 
the modern “marginal conformist” (i.e. one who aspires to depart Egypt discussed earlier) 
would be considered unacceptable. Likely, to the larger Alexandrian society, these 
women who adapt as “ritualists” would be accepted and not considered as “socially 
deviant.” Interestingly, in American society, the “ritualist” might be considered rather 
socially deviant, but in Alexandrian society, the “ritualist” might actually be acceptable.

Merton’s “retreatist” is an individual who rejects both the cultural goals and 
institutional means available to reach them, and chooses instead to withdraw from 
society. Thus, as Merton says, “they are in society but not of it” (1938). Through this 
thesis research, the researcher came across very few women who fit this category.
Walking the streets of the research setting, one can, on occasion, come across women who appear as part of the homeless culture, those who have literally dropped out of society. To the extent that they make no effort to better themselves, they must be categorized as retreatists. As suggested in earlier paragraphs, in a setting filled with demonstrations and turmoil, it may be difficult to separate voluntary retreatists from Merton’s last mode of adaptation, the rebel.

The rebel mode of adaptation category consists of individuals who not only reject the goals and the means but also openly replace them with their own novel goals and means. Here we might find the person who rebels against official, governmental laws and principles to follow a new and different ideology as well as members of extremist groups. The researcher identified three categories of women who fell under this category. The first group consisted of those who continued to rebel against the government until the original demands of the revolution were to be met. The second group of women included those who rebelled against the Muslim Brotherhood, and called for the return of their ousted leader and refused to leave their town square until such demands were met. A third group included those who demanded an end of the current lack of security, and the restoration of peace and civility to the land.

Consequently, in regards to the modes of adaptation to stress, or anomie, as outlined by Merton, the data of this thesis must conclude that the categories do, in fact, apply although with some modification. In other words, “cultural goals” often can rapidly change and what goals are defined as “expected” or “customary” may fluctuate in a society in sociopolitical turmoil such as Alexandria, Egypt during the Arab Spring.
Agnew’s General Strain Theory focused on how individuals opt-out of adverse or excruciating scenarios (Agnew, 2001). Agnew explained that the negative conditions include the loss of positive stimuli which result in introducing a new harmful stressor (Williams & McShane, 2010). Agnew, 2001, further explained that the new stimulated negative emotions and adversity could result in the individual committing crime or partaking in deviant behavior. This argument can be applied to the females at the research setting that are under the pressure of attaining certain prescribed life styles. As the struggle continues in Egypt, many women have found it hard to keep or find a new job which resulted in resorting to other means such as emigrating, and in some cases law breaking behavior. As the access to opportunities continues to be smaller women often resort to other means to make ends meet. The loss of family members as a result of the current circumstances also adds to the stressors that can force women and even young men and children to seek refuge in law breaking or deviant behavior. The point here is that Robert Agnew allows for styles of stress to be included that were not included in Merton’s classic five modes of adaptation. Thus, to “lose something” such as a family member, or a means of livelihood, or an accepted style of government could also lead to stress and strain. Such could be seen as outside the usual boundaries of Merton’s five styles of adaptation. At any rate, the data presented in this thesis is more clearly understood if it encompasses some of the refinement of Merton.

**Limitations**

A limitation of this study is that it was restricted to a convenience sample of young women residing in the single city of Alexandria, Egypt. In a statistical sense, no attempt should be made to generalize these findings to larger populations, even though
the findings might be useful in future hypothesizing. Moreover, the respondents were youthful and female. Thus, no presumptions can be made about the accounts or perceptions of older women, or men in the research setting. Confounding the study was that the data were collected during a time of rapid change. The fact that the observations and conversations were made over a summer excursion to Egypt is itself a limitation. Longer time in the field could furnish deeper insights. It might be that a return trip during a following summer could result in different conclusions, particularly in a society that is undergoing rather major political upheaval. Although the researcher spoke Arabic and could pose as an insider, the truth is that being from the USA, even with dual passport, she must be considered an outsider, even if marginally so. As with much ethnography, conversation results must be filtered through the mind of the investigator. This process, although rather typical, must also be viewed as a limitation. Such reflexivity and/or reactivity of processing data were a constant concern (Lewis, 2009). A solution to most of these limitations would be replication of this study by other researchers.

**Directions for Future Research**

The main goal of this research was to examine how young women’s goals and aspirations may have been affected by the sociopolitical turmoil as well as how they adapted to the prevailing conditions. Future researchers should continue to study how women, and individuals in general, continue to adapt as the circumstances in Egypt and the Middle-East overall continue to change. This thesis explored how young women in Alexandria were, or were not, adapting as in the midst of sociopolitical transition. Future research should explore how males, and diverse generations are adapting to such change.
Further analysis should be conducted on how goals and aspirations were affected. As the nation continues to transform in hopes of becoming a liberated country, a sustained comparison of the “American dream” and “Egyptian dream” should continue as well. An exploration of whether or not the turmoil has had an impact on evolving crime and law breaking behavior needs to be conducted. What is the impact of sociopolitical turmoil, such as the Arab Spring, on the nature of crime and justice processing? This study only touches the surface of such a key question.

**Conclusion**

This research explored how young women in Alexandria, Egypt adapted to the political changes within both the country and the Middle-East. Women’s goals, dreams and aspirations were in some cases affected by the national changes. While some experienced higher levels of stress and strain, there were others who experienced very low levels. As some women altered their routine daily life because of the turmoil, there were a few who were able to maintain their previous lifestyle with little alteration in their life. It appeared that the socio-economic status of the women played somewhat of a role regarding how they perceived the events and how they responded to them. Merton’s “modes of adaptations” as well as Agnew’s “general strain theory” aided in explaining how young women in Alexandria, Egypt adapted to the anxiety caused by the rise of the Arab Spring.
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Appendix A

Tamarod online form

That said,
I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I am of sound mind and with my full will, as a member of the Public Assembly of the Egyptian people, the destituation of Dr. Mohamed Morsi Isa Ayat, and call for early presidential elections, and I promise to uphold the goals of the revolution and work to achieve them and propagating the Rebel Campaign for masses so that together we can achieve a society of dignity, justice and freedom.

Rebel Campaign
(For the destitution of Mohamed Morsi Al Ayat)

- We reject you ... Because Security has not been recovered so far
- We reject you... Because the deprived one has still no place to fit
- We reject you ... Because we are still begging loans from the outside
- We reject you ... Because no Justice has been brought to the martyrs
- We reject you... Because no dignity was left neither for me nor for my country
- We reject you... Because the economy has collapsed, and depends only on begging
- We reject you... Because Egypt is still following the footsteps of the USA

Since the arrival of Mohamed Morsi to power, the average citizen still has the feeling that nothing has been achieved so far from the revolution goals which were life in dignity, freedom, social justice and national independence. Morsi was a total failure in achieving every single goal, no security has been reestablished and no social security realized, thus and gave clear proof that he is not fit for the governance of such a country as Egypt.
تلخيص:

أعلنت الحملة نية تمرد محمد مرسي ونوابه، وذلك في فترتين من رئاسة الجمهورية. يشمل التمرد الاستعراضات من عدة مراحل، بما فيها إضراب واعتصام في عدة أماكن.

المملكة العربية السعودية:

المملكة العربية السعودية تعود إلى تمرد محمد مرسي، وذلك في فترتين من رئاسة الجمهورية. يشمل التمرد الاستعراضات من عدة مراحل، بما فيها إضراب واعتصام في عدة أماكن.

العربية:

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Appendix B

Figure 1. Demonstrators.
Appendix C

Figure 2. Map of Egypt.
Figure 3. Map of Alexandria.
Appendix E

Figure 4. Merchants selling watermelons.
Appendix F

Figure 5. Merchants at market.
Appendix G

Figure 6. Chicken for sale.
Figure 7. Eggs for sale.
Appendix I

Figure 8. Behind the stand.
Figure 9. Mango stand, Morsi rebel sign in the background with an X.
Figure 10. Newspaper vendor at research site.
Appendix L

*Figure 11. Photo from balcony from researcher’s residence.*
Appendix M

Figure 12. Revolution rules (in Arabic).
Appendix N

Figure 13. Street scene during Rebel Movement day.
Appendix O

Figure 14. Street Scene during demonstrations.
Appendix P

Figure 15. Persons on Alexandria’s streets with demonstration signs (Go to hell Morsi).
Appendix Q

Figure 16. Family on street the day after Rebel movement.
Figure 17. Researcher at research site. (Arabic writing on street reads “Leave donkey” referring to Morsi).