Contemporary Arab Affairs, 2013
Vol. 6, No. 1, 1–16, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2013.746198

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Youth and the revolution in Egypt: what kinship tells us

Zina Sawaf*

Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland

Studies of youth in Arab societies have tended to posit and explore their social exclusion, marginalization and even de-politicization. Events sparked by the January 25 uprising in Egypt have reconstructed youth in a contradictory light, hailing them as new symbols of the nation. Careful consideration of current thinking in the anthropology of kinship and the nation, however, cautions the audience of the revolution to think twice. Taking for granted the 'blurred boundaries' between kinship and the nation, this paper suggests that the transformation from 'totalizing and patricentric rule' in Egypt evokes the symbolism of kinship and its wider metaphorical uses, manipulations and transformations. It uses kinship to re-examine the role of youth in the Egypt revolution, on the one hand, and the end of Hosni Mubarak's totalizing and patricentric regime, on the other. Firstly, it shows how a discursive concern with youth's place in the revolution is simultaneously and more strongly a concern with kinship. It then sheds light on the kinship idiom that has defined the Egyptian nation since its birth to its 'demubarakization'. Finally, it shows how kinship and nation are mutually susceptible to manipulations and transformations in the aftermath of the revolution. The paper concludes by noting the relevance of kinship to contemporary political events.

Keywords: youth; Egypt; revolution; kinship; nation; relationality; patriarchal connectivity; father; son; Mohamed Bouazizi; Hosni Mubarak

Introduction

After years of decrying and expounding on Arab youth exclusion and alienation in the political, social and economic spheres, leading social scientists and policy experts were vindicated by the masses of youth leading riots, protests and opposition movements throughout the region from Tunisia to Bahrain. In Egypt, leading youth experts began to speak of the 'two faces of revolution' (Herrera 2011) and the 'young man's burden' (Shehata 2011, 27), emphasizing the stories of two young men whose deaths galvanized their cohorts to take to the streets and to cyber space. What I saw and read in the media during those days left me bewildered, particularly because I had spent nearly three years running an Arab youth research and policy programme at a leading regional think tank, discussing and writing on youth identities, values and participation at length. Were youth in the process of making a transition from object to subject? Was the youth population bulge spilling out into the nation's cracks and interstices? Were youth standing up to 'the terrors of the present, the errors of the past, the prospect of a future' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 268)?

As the camera zooms out and the advantage of hindsight can be enjoyed, two dramatic and cathartic moments are striking. In December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi,

*Email: zina.sawaf@graduateinstitute.ch

© 2013 The Centre for Arab Unity Studies

a few months shy of his 27th birthday, set fire to himself in front of a state building in the middle of traffic in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, after he was publicly humiliated by the police and municipal officials and prevented from selling his fresh produce. His self-immolation led to riots and protests in his hometown and elsewhere throughout Tunisia, culminating in the resignation of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, after 23 years in power. Bouazizi's story is widely known by now and credited with triggering the Tunisian revolution (Hermez 2011) and sparking revolutionary fires elsewhere in North Africa and the Near East.

Months later in Cairo, time stood still as another Arab nation experienced a historic moment. On 3 August 2011, former President Hosni Mubarak made his first court appearance in the aftermath of a popular revolution that brought down his regime of 30 years. Accusations were read to him as he lay on a hospital bed in the New Cairo's police academy that no longer carries his name above the door.

These turning points in the history of the two nations are steeped in symbolism that social scientists have commented upon. Bouazizi's self-immolation, for instance, has given rise to 'copycat followers' (Hermez 2011) elsewhere, sacrificing themselves in the hopes of engendering similar popular reactions within their own nations. Wealthy Arabs have approached Bouazizi's family to buy his produce cart, now considered a symbol of freedom. Mubarak, for his part, has come to embody the symbol of the last 'pharaoh' (Shehata 2011, 26). Yet, few have noted the symbolic forms of paternal authority and subjective identification that pervaded these landmark scenes.

On the one hand, Bouazizi was the main provider for his family and put his brother and sisters through their education. His father died when he was three, and his mother remarried his paternal uncle who was not healthy enough to work. Bouazizi's story is thus 'as much about his family as it is about him' (Beaumont 2011). On the other hand, and as the camera in the court room zooms out from its focus on the former Egyptian President, the audience beholds Mubarak's sons and co-defendants, Alaa and Gamal, standing protectively next to their father's bed in their prison uniforms and facing similar criminal charges. That father and sons are being tried together is powerfully symbolic for both Egyptian families and the nation at large.

Underlying these scenes is the kind of division of responsibility and interdependence prevalent among families in contemporary Egypt (Al-Akhras 1980), as well as notions of relatedness that contrast the 'Western individual' with a non-Western self that is realizable 'only by way of others and constituted through relationships with others, past and present, living and dead' (Holy 1996, 159). In the context of Arab 'sociocultural systems', anthropologist Suad Joseph refers to this kind of relatedness as 'patriarchal connectivity', that is, 'the production of selves with fluid boundaries organized for gendered and aged domination in a culture valorizing kin structures, morality, and idioms' (Joseph 1999, 12).

As a male elder, Bouazizi stood in the place of his dead father, bearing responsibility for his younger siblings and occupying a position of respect and authority. Beyond the 'dutiful son' (Beaumont 2011), Bouazizi saw himself not as a separate or autonomous person but rather as a 'connective person … with diffuse boundaries who require[s] continuous interaction with significant others for a sense of completion' (Joseph 1994, 55). Bouazizi approximated the 'pater', or paternal, function of the father as he sought to provide materially and morally for his family of birth. Mubarak's downfall is similarly one that revolves around a father–son relationship. His regime's end has been attributed to three main factors, not excluding its tactics to ensure a smooth succession to his son Gamal during the 2011 presidential election (Shehata

2011, 30). In a metaphorical way and as the nation's (grand)father sought to impose a new father onto his nation and its youth, the latter resisted and sought to stand in the place of an illegitimate father, Gamal Mubarak, who would have no basis other than patrilineage to claim his authority.

In the following paper, I draw inspiration from the works of Janet Carsten (2000, 2004), John Borneman (2004a, 2004b), and from the spirit of 'post-Schneiderian kinship' (Stone 2004a, 332) in order to explore how kinship can account for the end of Mubarak's regime. Taking for granted the 'blurred boundaries' between kinship, the nation and religion (Carsten 2004, 155), in addition to the emotional appeal and 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' (Schneider 1972, 263) common to those domains, I suggest that the transformation from 'totalizing and patricentric rule' (Borneman 2004b, 9) in Egypt evokes the symbolism of kinship and its wider metaphorical uses, manipulations and transformations. In the following sections, I move away from the facts of biology, such as age and generation, in explaining the end of Mubarak's regime. In the next section, I show that a discursive concern with the youth's place in the revolution is simultaneously and more strongly a concern with kinship. The following section sheds light on the kinship idiom that has defined the Egyptian nation since its birth to its 'demubarakization' (El-Dahshan 2011) variously involving imageries of the mother of the nation, 'Egypt as a woman' (Baron 2005), and the father in his different roles. This leads, in the final section, to a consideration of recent ethnographic examples that reveal the creative potentialities for creating and transforming kinship in a post-Mubarak Egypt.

'**Youth is Just a Word**'

In this section, I hope to show how the emphasis on youth in the public and academic discourses of the Egypt revolution is simultaneously and more broadly an emphasis on kinship relationships. I begin by showing how youth as a social category is privileged in many, if not most, explanations of the revolution. I contend that such explanations belong to a 'new grand-narrative' (El-Mahdi 2011), which is a continuation of the exceptionalism that has defined social science and policy research on Arab youth in the post-September 11 era. In a post-Schneiderian vein, I then use the issue of biology, which is credited with both the 'demise and revival of kinship' (Stone 2004a, 332) to destabilize the relationship between 'youth and the revolution in Egypt' (Shahine 2011) in the second part of the section. Finally, I draw on ethnographic evidence from the region to explore the youth category in a way that does not privilege age or generation, but rather cross-subjective 'relationality' and 'connectivity'.

Youth as the drivers of change

In the days preceding the resignation of Mubarak from office, commentators by and large noted the growing age gap between the older generation and the rest of the nation. As protests spread farther throughout the region, Arab leaders were increasingly referred to as 'grandfathers of the nation', in contradistinction with the youth:

> Is there a more poignant portrayal of what ails the Arab world than images of its young people killing themselves as their leaders get older? … the majority of the Arab world is younger than 30, they have known no other leaders than the men who rule them, not so much fathers, but grandfathers of their nations. (Eltahawy 2011)

In the aftermath of Mubarak's downfall, popular international and local media presentations converged with analyses of Egyptian social scientists to reaffirm the role played by youth in the revolution (El-Mahdi 2011). Political scientist Dina Shehata argues that the 'alienation of the youth' was one of the three main currents that brought down the regime (El-Mahdi 2011, 26). Economist Samir Amin contends that the main element of the revolutionary movement was the 'politicized and organized youth', hailing primarily from the middle and lower classes, and constituting a 'new generation' (Amin 2011). Anthropologist Selim H. Shahine similarly asserts that the urban, middle-class youth of Egypt toppled the regime (Shahine 2011, 2).

The narrative of 'youth and the revolution in Egypt' relates to an exceptionalism that has characterized the discourses of the state, the mass media, pundits and professional commentators vis-à-vis Arab youth in the post-September 11 era (Sukarieh 2009). Various studies and policy papers have proliferated in the past few years to understand why youth in the region 'feel excluded from society' (Joseph 2010, 4). Social, cultural, political and economic studies discuss the failure of the educational system and markets in creating and sustaining jobs and careers for youth, the impossibility of getting married and creating families, in addition to the appeal of religious and fundamentalist ideologies and organizations for youth (Joseph 2010, 2–3). Political scientist Diane Singerman, whose fieldwork in Cairo is treated as anthropological and sociological, coined the concept of 'waithood' to describe an exclusively Arab phenomenon whereby youth spend their best years waiting for their education to translate into good jobs, and their jobs to translate into the economic imperatives required for marriage (Singerman 2007). Waithood implies a period of protracted adolescence for Arab youth, not before which they are able to enter adulthood.

In this way, Arab youth have figured prominently in 'elite imagination', generating 'various expectations and imprecations' and leading anthropologist Ted Swedenburg to depict them as 'imagined youths'. Their 'sheer numbers' in particular have featured regularly in studies and have invariably been cited as the 'Achilles' heel' of the region's non-democratic order (Swedenburg 2007). It should come as no surprise, then, that youth took centre stage, demographically and discursively, during the Arab revolutions.

Youth and the weight of age

> How can you call us 'young'?
> How can you call us 'new'?
> We are just getting used to love, death and art
> Our soccer player, our singer, our queer
> It's really a moot hope:
> Our retirement will end one day.
> We were old when you gave birth to us,
> We will get younger as we die! (Neyzi 2001, 411)

In the above poem, a young Turkish poet bemoans the expectations placed upon the young generation by the older generation, expressing the burden felt from the weight of the latter and the weight of 'newness'.

In the post-September 11 era and through the 'Arab spring' particularly, youth are simultaneously idealized and pathologized, championed and ignored. An illustration of this ambivalence is provided by Rachid Khalidi: 'Seemingly out of nowhere, young

people in the Arab world have gained a confidence, an assurance, and a courage which have made fearsome police state regimes that once looked invincible tremble' (Khalidi 2011, 3). Such observations imply that the younger generation, previously dampened by the older generation, 'out of nowhere' comes to command an agency required to rise up and resist the system.

While a few social scientists point to other prime reasons of the revolution in Egypt, like the complete failure of neoliberalism (Armbrust 2011), some have challenged the 'new grand narrative' that constructs the revolution as a youth-led and non-violent revolution with social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, playing an iconic role (El-Mahdi 2011). Questions surrounding youth involvement in the uprising are brought up forcefully by Rabab El-Mahdi, who suggests that the status of youth as guardians of the uprising is 'both disturbing and telling' (El-Mahdi 2011). El-Mahdi is critical of this narrative because it 'orientalises' the Egyptian uprising and cloaks the class composition of dissent with 'a new imaginary homogenous construct called "youth"':

> In this construct, the media and academic analysts lump together the contradictory and often conflictual interests of 'yuppies' (young, urban, professionals …) with those of the unemployed, who live under the poverty line in rural areas and slum areas. Under this banner of 'youth', the 'yuppies' and upper middle-class young people are portrayed as the quintessential representative of this uprising.

The aim here is neither to criticize this narrative nor to support it. The brief survey of the public and academic discourse on 'youth and the revolution of Egypt' presented above, while not comprehensive, serves as an indication of the weight of age and generation in prevalent media and academic explanations of the revolution.

Yet at the same time, some social scientists are not taking such narratives for granted and are beginning to ask what kind of picture a broader historical perspective and a deeper structural analysis of the events in Egypt would yield (El-Mahdi 2011; El-Shakry 2011). Moreover, while an understanding of neoliberalism and demographics, including the effects of privatization, economic deregulation and structural adjustment programmes, are necessary for grasping the immediate historical setting in which the revolution took place, a focus neither on neoliberalism nor on youth are sufficient to address the question of the 'historical relationship between ruler and ruled' (El-Shakry 2011).

Youth, kinship and relationality

In the remainder of this section, I draw on the work of Janet Carsten in *Cultures of Relatedness* (2000) and *After Kinship* (2004), and on ethnographic insights provided by Jean Iris-Klein during the first Palestinian Intifada, in order to resituate the youth category in its kinship context. I move the analysis in two directions. Firstly, I use the issue of biology to destabilize the universality of youth as a category. I suggest that youth as a category is similar to kinship in its pre-Schneiderian guise. Secondly, I show how 'relationality' and 'connectivity' are more useful in understanding youth and the revolution in Egypt specifically.

After Schneider dropped the 'bomb' on kinship by demonstrating how it was historically modelled around biological relationships and based on physical procreation, the issue of biology became the key to both the demise and revival of kinship (Stone

2004b). In a similar vein, Pierre Bourdieu problematized the biological and its relationship with 'youth' by contrasting biological age, on the one hand, and social age, on the other (Bourdieu [1984] 1993). In his *Sociology in Question* (1984), Bourdieu compares different categories of youth, such as those who stay in school and benefit from various student subsidies, versus those who drop out and work from an early age (Bourdieu [1984] 1993, 95). The former are young as a virtue of their social and biological situation, while the latter are young merely by reference to biological datum. Given the complex relationship between social age and biological age, divisions into age groups or into generations are thus variable and subject to manipulation: 'age is a biological datum, socially manipulated and manipulable … merely talking about 'the young' as a social unit, a constituted group, with common interests, relating these interests to a biologically defined age, is in itself an obvious manipulation' (95). Decoupling 'youth' from its base in biology leads Bourdieu to make his paradigmatic statement that 'youth is just a word' (94).

Like kinship, youth is thus not a matter of biological connections, nor is it a universal category. Moreover, while contemporary studies tend to posit the universality of youth, and public discourse in the West tends to deal with youth as a 'transhistorical, transcultural category' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 267), there are few historical and ethnographic studies of how youth is constituted in non-Western societies (Neyzi 2001) and in Arab societies particularly. Societies do not constitute their 'kinship' or 'youth' in comparable terms. Anthropologists from Bronislaw Malinowski to Margaret Mead have maintained that the cultural meanings and social attributes ascribed to 'youth' vary considerably across time and space. When Carsten 'rescued kinship from its post-Schneiderian demise', she replaced 'kinship' with the more open and flexible category of 'relatedness' and insisted on understanding people's own terms and conceptions in order to study their social worlds (Stone 2004b, 251). Adopting a similar flexibility and exploring people's own understanding of 'youth' are necessary for beginning to understand what youth means in an Arab, non-Western context broadly and in an Egyptian context more specifically. Given the centrality of the family and 'relational selves' in Arab societies (Joseph 1999, 9), and based on ethnographic evidence from the West Bank during the first Palestinian Intifada, I suggest that the experience of age in an Arab context is 'a collaborative, cross-subjective exercise of self' (Iris-Klein 2000, 102–103).

In the context of the first Palestinian Intifada, Iris-Klein shows how young men are transformed through political activity in a collaborative, cross-subjective way with their mothers and sisters. Iris-Klein brings kinship back in by insisting that although young men's political activism takes place outside the house, it is not outside the bounds of kinship. Mothers and sisters are actively engaged and are themselves transformed by their sons and brothers' activism, respectively: 'Young men became moral persons (*shabab*, i.e., activist youths) with their mothers and sisters – who in the process became 'mothers of heroes' and *banat* (politically active girls), all in a collaborative, cross-subjective exercise of self' (Iris-Klein 2000, 102–103). Women make the sacrifices of their sons or brothers visible to the community and extend their victimization into the space of everyday through verbal recitation and cross-embodiment (Iris-Klein 2000, 109). '*Ziyarat tadammuniya*' (solidarity visits) to kin, friends and neighbours are occasions in which mothers narrate critical incidents involving their sons and other young men (Iris-Klein 2000, 108). Maternal accounts detail the various corporeal and somatic processes experienced by their sons and other prison inmates, stirring up an intimate sense of the latter's personal trauma, either physical or psychological.

Since women often take the lead in reporting events involving their '*shabab*', Iris-Klein (2000, 110) suggests that this is a forceful illustration of the 'social multiplicity of young men's bodies and of the circuitry of political and domestic agency'. Sisters of the '*shabab*' similarly take part in the verbal narration of their brothers' victimization. They assist their mothers in this 'cross-subjective narration' by interlacing and supplementing the latter's reports with affirmative statements, in a similar way that they have historically cooperated with their mothers in carrying out house-cleaning, food preparation, visiting, or nurturing younger and male siblings (113).

For Iris-Klein, the silence of the *shabab* upon returning home from prison or hospital constitutes the most compelling evidence of 'familial cross-subjectivity' (114). The *shabab*'s silence and discretion are particularly noticeable in the presence of their mothers while the latter recount the ordeals of their sons; the *shabab* rarely speak or show their physical scars without the explicit cue from their mothers. Moreover, a young man does not resist when his mother shows evidence of his torture or corporeal punishment by grabbing his body and turning it or by partially undressing him in order to show others the scars of heroism (115).

While Iris-Klein's ethnographic insights are not drawn from Cairo or any other context in Egypt, they reflect a wider understanding of the youth category in a non-Western, Arab context. I do not suggest that these insights account for the experiences and subjectivities of all youth throughout the region. Rather, they show that in order to be a meaningful concept, youth has to be understood in its kinship context. I propose that youth, like kinship, can be better explored as a culturally specific notion of relatedness (Carsten 2000). Moreover, and oftentimes in Arab societies, such relatedness can become conjoined with structures of gendered and aged forms of domination characterized by kinship rules, moralities and idioms (Joseph 1999, 2), giving rise to what Joseph terms 'patriarchal connectivity'. Most recently, Sari Hanafi refers to the emergent political subjectivity of youth during the Arab revolutions as 'reflexive individualism' (Hanafi 2012, 199), which is distinguishable from neoliberal individualism, and is not necessarily anti-patriarchal or anti-communal.

As the 'dutiful son', for instance, Bouazizi in Tunisia took on the role of pater because kinship norms maintain that the older children take care of the younger ones, in return occupying positions of greater respect and authority among the siblings. Bouazizi could have been sixteen, 36 or 46 years old; the fact of his biological age does not reveal more than the fact of 'familial' or 'patriarchal connectivity' he experienced in providing for and caring for his siblings and mother. The 'youth' aspect of Bouazizi belies the relational self he enacted day in and day out.

Moreover, during the revolution in Egypt, youth were not 'in' Tahrir Square and other public spaces because they were 'out' of the house, or 'out' of the bounds of kinship. Effectively, young people often needed their family's permission to join ongoing protests (Winegar 2012, 69) and were afraid to tell their mothers the truth about joining (Ibrahim 2012). This is dramatically and heartbreakingly captured in the story of Sally Zahran, who accidentally fell from her balcony in a provincial southern town after threatening her parents with suicide if they prevented her from going out and joining demonstrations (Winegar 2012). It is said that parents began to descend on Tahrir Square in greater numbers only after Mubarak cut off the telephone lines and Internet connection, which until that point presented the only way to ensure their children were safe (Ibrahim 2012). In addition to parental permission, gender and kinship position largely structured one's experience during the revolution. If not among the eldest males in the household, one generally had to have one's family

permission to go to protests. Tasked with taking care of children and other dependents, older sisters usually stayed at home (Winegar 2012).

Finally, while youth were at the frontline of the protests in the early days, and proportionately were very present among the numbers of the protesters, their subjectivities were intimately interwoven with those of their mothers, fathers, siblings and with the nation at large. This is powerfully captured in the televised scene of an emotional interview with Wael Ghonim, a cyber activist who spent eleven days in secret incarceration at the outset of the revolution, hours upon his release. In the interview, which is widely credited with re-energizing the uprising and galvanizing protesters until the defeat and gradual resignation of Mubarak, Ghonim denies any labelling of heroism,

> So please, everyone, there are no heroes! The heroes are the ones on the streets. The hero is everyone one of us. There isn't one of us here that is on some high horse leading the masses. Let no one fool you into thinking that! This revolution belonged to the Internet youth, then the revolution belonged to the Egyptian youth, then the revolution belonged to all of Egypt. (Dream TV 2011)

Ghonim's grief is especially aroused when discussing the mothers and fathers of the protesters and activists, including his own. He is angry not so much because he was detained without evidence but because none of his family knew his whereabouts. In tearful pitches, he says:

> It is just not right … not right … that my dad, who has lost an eye, and could lose the other any day, spent 12 days not knowing where his son is! … I want to tell every mother and every father that lost a son, I'm sorry but it's not our fault [cries].

In the above scene that was watched by countless millions throughout the country and the Arab world at large, Ghonim is the son of all Egyptian mothers and fathers as he speaks directly to them and puts himself on par with their own sons. Ghonim resists the label of heroism because he realizes the extent to which his own transformation and enactment of self is highly relational and cross-subjective, implicating not only his fellow activists, but also the mothers, fathers and siblings of all those calling for the end of the regime, 'in' and 'out' of the house, the streets and Tahrir Square.

Kinship idiom and the revolution in Egypt

In the previous section, I sought to bring kinship back into anthropological enquiries of 'youth' in non-Western and Arab contexts. In this section, I shed further light on youth, the revolution and the end of Mubarak's regime by discussing the kinship idiom that has defined the Egyptian nation since its birth to its 'demubarakization' (El-Dahshan 2011), variously involving imageries of the mother of the nation, 'Egypt as a woman' (Baron 2005), and the father in his various roles. In this way, I hope to show that the father/son relationship is key to unravelling the end of Mubarak's regime.

Kinship is not a dead metaphor

Since the interpretive turn in the social sciences, anthropologists have stressed the importance of the analysis of metaphor in anthropological inquiry. James Fernandez in particular argues that the metaphoric assertions men make about themselves or about others influence their behaviour; metaphors 'can lead to performance and

create a scenario' (Fernandez 1986, 6). While the metaphor of nation as a family seems like a 'dead metaphor', in the sense that it is deeply engrained in culture and no longer distinguishable, it is nonetheless very much alive, especially in the emotional appeal and extraordinary sacrifices that nations and nationalist movements continue to evoke throughout the world. In the last section, for instance, it is unclear whether Ghonim is crying for the nation, his own family or for other families of the nation, since the boundaries between them are blurred. Crying for one is like crying for the others, and thus he is crying for all three at once. Effectively, Ghonim came to embody the nation, becoming a 'source of unification' and bringing together all those who opposed the regime (Hanafi 2012, 203).

Since its struggle for national liberation from British rule in the early twentieth century until its recent struggle from Mubarak's totalizing and patricentric rule, Egypt's contemporary history has been characterized by kinship metaphors, gendered language and images of the nation. The idiom of fatherhood is particularly revealing with regards to changing forms of authority, as I suggest below and illustrate in the next section.

By all accounts, and with few exceptions, nationalist iconography depicts Egypt and the Egyptian nation as a woman (Baron 2005, 57). Lisa Pollard suggests that Egypt figured so strongly as a woman during the struggle for independence precisely because an independent Egyptian nation could be born only of an 'ideal mother' (Pollard 2005, 189). After all, in common parlance, Egypt is '*umm al-dunya*', mother of the world. During the revolutionary period, the nationalist leadership used motherhood to stir up nationalist sentiment among the people, since 'mother Egypt gave Egyptians a common heritage and provided them with a new lineage – regardless of their class background' (Pollard 2005, 193). Following the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, one woman in particular came to embody this motherhood as '*umm al-Misriyyin*' (mother of the Egyptians) (Baron 2005, 141). Safiyya Zaghlul was wife of the leading nationalist revolutionary Saad Zaghlul, whose exile by the British triggered the revolution. While her husband was in exile, she played an active role in the national struggle as mother of the Egyptians and commonly addressed the nation in the collective 'you', as her children (Baron 2005, 143). Safiyya herself had no children, and this fact played in her favour politically, facilitating her role as the mother of all Egyptians (Baron 2005, 139). Safiyya's motherhood thus served a 'dual function'; on the one hand, it created a sense of solidarity among the population, while on the other hand, it eased class antagonisms. This further 'naturalized' the right of the elite to lead the nation in the same way as fathers and mothers have the right to raise their children (Baron 2005, 145).

Accordingly, fatherhood was represented by the Wafd party, which constituted the nationalist leadership at the time of independence; naturally, Saad Zaghlul was the father of the nation. Nationalist iconography depicting the nation as a woman served to naturalize the leadership of the Wafd, especially through the latter's relationship to Mother Egypt and to activities associated with maternalism and domesticity. Those who shaped and circulated nationalist iconography 'in feminine garb' pushed an image of Egypt as a national and modern family: 'The discourse about the "nation" and the "national struggle" reveals a belief that Egyptians of all classes and creeds made up an Egyptian family – a family that, once "fathered" by the Wafd, would succeed in gaining independence' (Pollard 2005, 178). The iconography and symbolism that were so central to the 1919 revolution and its aftermath suggest that Saad Zaghlul and his contemporaries in the Wafd facilitated the birth of the nation (Pollard 2005, 211). Thus, if the 1919 revolution was about 'fathering' the nation,

then this latest popular revolution in Egypt's history is about patricide, or the 'death of the father'. From the drama of national liberation to the drama of regime end, the 'father' has played a central role in the birthing and re-birthing of the Egyptian nation.

From the order of the father to the death of the father

In the last section, I showed how the metaphor of the nation as a family in Egypt was necessary both to show British rulers that Egypt could call itself a nation, and to naturalize the leadership by the Wafd of the national movement. In this section, I further explore the 'father' and his authority in Egyptian politics. I look specifically to the relationship between 'father' and 'son' in order to conceptualize political authority in Egypt during the last revolution. The metaphor of the relationship between father and son, while appearing to be hackneyed, is especially helpful in understanding the downfall of Mubarak. The kinship idiom thus emerges as a key analytical tool in an anthropological inquiry of the end of Mubarak's totalizing and patricentric regime.

In his exploration of the 'anthropology of ends', John Borneman generates theoretical insights about authority and regime transformation in Europe that may apply to comparable regimes elsewhere (Borneman 2004b, 3). His analysis of the end of Nazi authority in 1945 is particularly useful in theorizing the end of regimes like Egypt's Mubarak, Spain's Franco or Syria's Asad, which were all 'totalizing in their claims on sovereignty and patricentric in their leadership' (3). In Egypt, for instance, Mubarak appropriated for himself all forms of paternal authority; that is, all authority was exercised in his name. According to Borneman, such regimes rely on both premodern and modern forms of sovereignty, death cults and biopolitics, and more importantly demand for subjective identification with the father (4). It is not a coincidence that during his last televised speech before his resignation and eventual trial, Mubarak addressed the nation as his children, and paralleled his own experience as a young man with the experiences of his children:

> I am addressing all of you from the heart, a speech from the father to his sons and daughters. I am telling you that I am very grateful and am so proud of you for being a symbolic generation that is calling for change … I was a young man, a youth just like all these youth, when I learned the honor of the military system and to sacrifice for the country …. (Mubarak 2011)

Until the last days in office, Mubarak attempted to unify his subjects and create a modern subjectivity through identification with him.

Borneman (2004b) attributes the efficacy of totalizing regimes to the 'peculiar kinds of fusing and splitting of the pater and genitor roles' (10). The kinship distinction between pater and genitor is that between the ecclesiastical or spiritual father, associated with discipline, and the reproductive or biological father, respectively. In Nazi Germany, for instance, Adolf Hitler functioned as both pater and genitor, and authority was based on an inescapable and subjective identification with the leader, 'an equation of the identificatory Father with the pater who disciplines' (84). In the aftermath of the Allied occupation of Germany, however, and given a strong aversion to death cults, including limited or nonexistent public mourning for national leaders, a shift took place in the identification with and authority of German leaders who might occupy the symbolic space of the national 'father' (67). In Germany today, the pater is no longer represented by an individual phallic authority, but rather is most frequently

associated with institutions such as the Constitutional Court or the Bundesbank; institutions that are represented neither by the individuals who head them nor by the sum of their members, but as 'collective moral bodies' (71). As for the genitor function, women have largely taken it up; in line with other European countries, German families are increasingly headed by women, and oftentimes the name of the father is actually omitted from the birth certificate (91).

Borneman's theoretical insights are useful in understanding the relationship between Mubarak and Egypt's young generation who have known no other leader nor 'identificatory father'. Mubarak is the longest-serving ruler in the history of the modern nation, having assumed the presidency in 1981. He represented order and discipline, embodying the functions of the symbolic pater. Throughout his rule, Mubarak stayed aloof and above the fray of everyday petty politics; his inviolability was secured by a taboo that threatened writers and dissenters with imprisonment and the loss of their publishing licence if they were to discuss or publicly question him. By leaving technocrats to govern, Mubarak operated more like a 'coordinating manager' and sought to maintain his position as father of the nation (Günay 2011).

The 'order of the father' in Mubarak's Egypt is reflected in folk conceptions provided by Unni Wikan's ethnography in *Life Among the Poor in Cairo* (1980). Wikan did her fieldwork among 'poor Egyptians' in a Cairo neighbourhood. She found that the child's blood comes from the father, '*iddamm min ilabb*'. In contrast with the mother who stands out as the loving one, as a stable source of love, security and support, the father is demanding and punitive. From the outset, a child's relationship to its father 'must, for purely structural reasons, have the character of an enforced, one-sided dependence' (71). While these folk conceptions are not representative of the range of experiences of the relationship between father and children in Egypt, they are indicative of the father's strong pater role.

In the last few years of Mubarak's rule, moreover, one sees him trying to fuse his pater and genitor roles together. In late 2006, the hereditary succession of Mubarak's son, Gamal, was deemed 'inevitable' (Brownlee 2007/2008, 36). Gamal Mubarak entered the public arena in the mid-1990s through non-governmental activities and then rose to prominence when he joined his father's ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), eventually becoming one of its three Deputy Secretaries General in addition to heading one of its most important organs, the Policy Committee. All throughout, Hosni Mubarak facilitated various constitutional alterations in order to bolster the younger Mubarak's heir apparency.

While the Egyptian nation has known several identificatory fathers, including Saad Zaghlul and Gamal Abdel Nasser, the popular pan-Arab leader, few ruled for so long and none sought to combine the pater and genitor roles. Most analyses of Mubarak's regime cite hereditary succession as one of the key factors in its unravelling. Did Mubarak's attempt to become genitor constitute the final nail in his coffin as identificatory father, or alternately his symbolic decapitation? I suggest that a rupture in his paternal relationship with the nation occurred when he laid the final groundwork for his son to rule. This can serve to explain how he 'suddenly' became so 'old' and why he was no longer himself but already a (grand)father as the events of the revolution unfolded. It gives a deeper structural view of the weight of age and generation in prevalent explanations of the revolution, epitomized by such statements as: 'The old men who dominate the rest suddenly look their age, and the distance between them and most of their populations, born decades after them, has never been greater' (Khalidi 2011, 1). Mubarak disrupted the father/son hierarchy, on the one hand, and the

metaphorical lineage of the nation, on the other, by privileging his biological son instead of his metaphorical son. He interposed his biological son between himself and the nation, his metaphorical son, thus giving way to a gnawing gap between the former and the latter.

Kinship transformations and the revolution in Egypt

In an interview with anthropologist Talal Asad about the revolution, the latter says that being a part of the revolution is not like being in love, as the Egyptian novelist Alaa Al Aswani had previously suggested, but 'rather it is more like a religious experience' (Schneider 2011). Asad's words capture the fluidity and malleability of kinship and its openness to continuous transformations and adaptations. During the revolution, familial sentiments and 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' (Schneider 1972, 263) pervaded the nation as both young and old risked their lives in the name of the nation.

In this final section, I rely on two recent ethnographic examples from Cairo in order to draw attention to the creative potentialities and active processes by which certain relationships within the family and the nation are endowed with emotional power. These processes reveal 'the power of metaphor and the transformation of kinship' (Carsten 2004, 136). Kinship remains salient in the aftermath of the revolution because its symbolic force springs from the emotional and practical circumstances of people's everyday lives (Carsten 2004, 154).

At the very outset of this paper, I asked what the 'youth' were standing for during the period of the revolution. I now suggest that they were not standing 'for the terrors of the present, the errors of the past, the prospect of a future' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 268), but rather for themselves, their parents, their families and their nation. The overlap of youth, family and nation is apparent in the workshops that Julia Elyachar observes in *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development and the State in Cairo* (2005). Elyachar shows how workshop markets do not respond to the abstract model of supply and demand curves, but how they are rather historically constituted through family and work histories (96). Mastery of the workshop is the same as mastery of the home. There is an isomorphism between the 'I' of the workshop master, the workshop and the house, which Elyachar suggests is parallel to familial discourse in Egypt whereby father, the house and the family are synonymous (101). When a workshop master dies, his apprentice stands in his place by 'standing at the machine' (109). Being able to 'stand at the machine' implies the ability physically to stand at the machine with tools in hand, and direct the workshop and labour process (109). In other words, one who 'stands at the machine' is master of the workshop. Oftentimes when a workshop master dies, however, his biological sons reappear and assert their authority over the workshop as their legal property. Elyachar contrasts this lineage of property with lineage of craft. The apprentice-cum-master then does not have to submit to the authority of property 'possessed by someone who [is] not master of the trade' (109), and leaves the workshop to work for another master or to try to set up his own workshop.

The ethnographic notion of what makes a master can be carried over into the family and, by extension, the nation. I suggest that the youth of the revolution, as well as their siblings and parents, sought to 'stand at the machine'; that is, they sought to stand in the place of their master, partly because they resisted someone who was not a master of the trade, someone who would have no basis other than patrilineage to claim authority. Elyachar's notion of mastery further elucidates the form of authority a workshop

master, and by extension a master of the family or house, may possess: an authority that does not rest on the lineage of property alone, but on the lineage of craft as well. In this sense, the father/son relationship particularly and kinship more broadly can be structured around the metaphorical ability to 'stand at the machine' rather than just around the thickness of blood or property.

The day following Mubarak's resignation, domestic processes were also at play in Tahrir Square, the epicentre of the revolution, where hundreds of young people turned out for 'Tahrir Beautification Day' in order to clean the square and reclaim public space from decades of neglect by the Mubarak regime. They swept the streets, picked up rubbish, and painted curbs, bridges, murals, signposts and tree trunks. This famous scene of 'diligent scrubbing and sweeping' reveals the freedom young people felt for the first time in their lives when they could work, laugh and play together in public space without 'an overwhelming sense of state surveillance or upper-class disgust' (Winegar 2011). More significantly, people treated the square, other plazas and avenues as they would treat their 'own home', unequivocally admitting that these public spaces are '[their] home' (Winegar 2011). Once more, the metaphor of the nation as a family is very much alive through such domestic processes, by which kinship and nation are mutually transformed and adapted.

Conclusion

In this paper, I used kinship in its widest possible terms in order to re-examine the role of youth in the Egypt revolution, on the one hand, and the end of Mubarak's totalizing and patricentric regime, on the other. In the spirit of post-Schneiderian kinship, I found that age and generation are not relevant in understanding 'youth and the revolution in Egypt' given that they are based in biology. Rather, I found that notions of relatedness, including 'relationality' and 'connectivity', are more relevant for understanding the experiences and subjectivities of those who are deemed 'young' in a non-Western, Arab context. Despite a dearth of recent and critical ethnographic portrayals of youth and kinship in Cairo, I used ethnographic evidence from contexts in other Arab societies, revealing that the cross-subjective enactment of a 'young' self tends to be fused with kinship rules, moralities and idioms such that what appears to be the act of an autonomous young person is actually a collaborative exercise of self that implicates the youth's siblings, parents and wider community.

Similarly, the unravelling of Mubarak's regime is metaphorically conjoined with a kinship relationship: that of father and son. I proposed that the drama of the end of Mubarak's regime was cloaked in the idiom of kinship and specifically the idiom of father and son. Mubarak's efforts to combine his role of pater and genitor by privileging his biological son (Gamal) instead of his spiritual son (the nation) disrupted the order of the father that had prevailed in the modern history of the nation since independence. If Saad Zaghlul and the Wafd party fathered the birth of the nation in 1919, then the nation metaphorically killed its father in 2011. At this juncture in time, I further suggest that Egypt is moving away from patricentric rule, and similar to post-Nazi Germany, any subjective identification with a national leader/father in the near future will not be structured around the father/son hierarchy (Borneman 2004a, 95). In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the High Council of the Armed Forces has been ruling Egypt and has positioned itself as the pater, the source of discipline and order. Authority in Egypt for the time being is no longer phallic.

Finally, I sought to show that kinship and nation are mutually susceptible to manipulations and transformations in the aftermath of the revolution. Young and old people alike are now free to treat their nation as their own 'home' and to challenge authority that is illegitimate, whether it is the authority of a workshop master or an identificatory father. Being able to 'stand at the machine' is a craft that can be learned, rather than just being passed on through lineage. This new notion of mastery, or authority, may have implications for kinship and the nation for many years to come.

This paper is an enquiry into the 'anthropology of ends' that has been taken up most recently and seriously by Borneman (2004a, 95). While it is not a historical or causal account of the end of Mubarak's rule, it is an attempt at an 'analytics of symbolic forms' (65). Such an endeavour is necessarily undermined by the freshness of events; Mubarak's first courtroom appearance took place only one year ago and his resignation occurred in February 2011. Nevertheless, it reinvigorates the relevance of kinship to contemporary political events. Moreover, it problematizes the dominant construction of the revolution as a youth revolution. While the latter played a political role in the overthrow of the regime, their visibility and iconography may have served only to topple the old 'order of the father' rather than to construct a new regime.

References

Al-Akhras, Muhammad Safah. 1980. *Tarkib al-A'ila al-Arabiya wa-Wazifatuha*. Damascus: Manshurat Wizarat al-Thaqafa wa-l Irshad al-Qawmi.

Amin, Samir. 2011. "Thawrit Misr wa-ma Ba'daha." *Middle East Transparent* (2011). Accessed August 24, 2011. http://www.metransparent.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=15251&lang=ar/.

Armbrust, Walter. 2011. "The Revolution Against Neoliberalism." *Jadaliyya*. Accessed April 12, 2011. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/717/the-revolution-against-neoliberalism-/.

Baron, Beth. 2005. *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender and Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Beaumont, Peter. 2011. "Mohammed Bouazizi: The Dutiful Son Whose Death Changed Tunisia's Fate." *The Guardian*. Accessed August 24, 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/20/tunisian-fruit-seller-mohammed-bouazizi/.

Borneman, John. 2004a. "*Gottvater, Landesvater, Familienvater:* Identification and Authority in Germany." In *Death of the Father: An Anthropology of the End in Political Authority*, edited by John Borneman, 63–103. New York, NY: Berghahn.

Borneman, John. 2004b. "Introduction: Theorizing Regime Ends." In *Death of the Father: An Anthropology of the End in Political Authority*, edited by John Borneman, 1–28. New York, NY: Berghahn.

Bourdieu, Pierre. [1984] 1993. *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage.

Brownlee, Jason. 2007/2008. "The Heir Apparency of Gamal Mubarak." *Arab Studies Journal* 15 (2)/16 (1): 36–56.

Carsten, Janet. 2000. "Introduction: Cultures of Relatedness." In *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, edited by Janet Carsten, 1–36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carsten, Janet. 2004. *After Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 2006. "Reflections on Youth, From the Past to the Postcolony." In *Frontiers of Capital: Ethnographic Reflections on the New Economy*, edited by Melissa S. Fischer and Greg Downey, 267–281. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dream TV. 2011. "Wael Ghonim's Dream Interview – Part 2". Accessed August 24, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW59LZsjE_g/.

El Dahshan, Mohamed. 2011. "The 'Demubarakization' of Egypt." *The New York Times* (2011). Accessed August 24, 2011. http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/01/the-demubarakization-of-egypt/.

El-Mahdi, Rabab. 2011. "Orientalising the Egyptian Uprising." *Jadaliyya*. Accessed April 12, 2011. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1214/orientalising-the-egyptian-uprising/.

El-Shakry, Omnia. 2011. "Egypt's Three Revolutions: The Force of History Behind this Popular Uprising." *Jadaliyya*. Accessed April 12, 2011. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/569/egypts-three-revolutions_the-force-of-history-behi/.

Eltahawy, Mona. 2011. "Tunisia, Arab Youth, Rebellion and Twitter." *Time Video*. Accessed April 12, 2011. http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,756243856001_2043530,00.html/.

Elyachar, Julia. 2005. *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development and the State in Cairo*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fernandez, James W. 1986. *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Günay, Cengiz. 2011. "Mubarak's Egypt: Bad Paternalism, and the Army's Interest in Managed Transition." *Open Democracy*. Accessed April 12, 2011. http://www.opendemocracy.net/cengiz-günay/mubaraks-egypt-bad-paternalism-and-armys-interest-in-managed-transition/.

Hanafi, Sari. 2012. "The Arab Revolutions; The Emergence of a New Political Subjectivity." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5 (2): 198–213.

Hermez, Sami. 2011. "Sacrifice and the Ripple Effect of Tunisian Self-Immolation." American Anthropological Association. Accessed April 12, 2011. http://blog.aaanet.org/2011/02/16/sacrifice-and-the-ripple-effect-of-tunisian-self-immolation/.

Herrera, Linda. 2011. "Two Faces of Revolution." *Closer*. Accessed April 12, 2011. http://religionresearch.org/martijn/2011/02/01/two-faces-of-revolution/.

Holy, Ladislav. 1996. *Anthropological Perspectives on Kinship*. London: Pluto.

Ibrahim, Barbara. 2012. "Response to: 'Youth and the Revolution in Egypt: What Kinship Tells Us.'" Paper presented at the Conference on Narrating the Arab Spring: New questions, New Modes of Resistance and Activism, New Politics, Cairo University, Cairo.

Iris-Klein, Jean. 2000. "Mothercraft, Statecraft, and Subjectivity in the Palestinian Intifada." *American Ethnologist* 27 (1): 100–127.

Joseph, Suad. 1994. "Brother/Sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon." *American Ethnologist* 20 (1): 50–73.

Joseph, Suad. 1999. "Introduction: Theories and Dynamics of Gender, Self, and Identity in Arab Families." In *Intimate Selving in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity*, edited by Suad Joseph, 1–17. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Joseph, Suad. 2010. "The Future Today: Youth and Adolescents of the Middle East and North Africa." Unpublished paper.

Khalidi, Rashid. 2011. "Preliminary Historical Observations on the Arab Revolutions of 2011." Unpublished paper.

Mubarak, Hosni. 2011. "Hosni Mubarak's Speech to the Egyptian People: 'I Will Not … Accept to Hear Foreign Dictations.'" (Transcript). *The Washington Post*. Accessed August 24, 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/10/AR2011021005290.html/.

Neyzi, Leyla. 2001. "Object or Subject? The Paradox of 'Youth' in Turkey." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33 (3): 411–432.

Pollard, Lisa. 2005. *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805–1923.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schneider, David. 1972. "What is Kinship All About?" In *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Robert Parkin and Linda Stone, 257–274. Oxford: Blackwell.

Schneider, Nathan. 2011. "The Suspicious Revolution: An Interview with Talal Asad." *The Immanent Frame*. Retrieved 24/08/11, from http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/08/03/the-suspicious-revolution-interview-with-talal-asad/.

Shahine, Selim H. 2011. "Youth and the Revolution in Egypt." *Anthropology Today* 27 (2): 1–3.

Shehata, Dina. 2011. "The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak's Reign Came to an End." *Foreign Affairs* May/June: 26–32.

Singerman, Diane. 2007. *The Economic Imperatives of Marriage: Emerging Practices and Identities among Youth in the Middle East* (Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Stone, Linda. 2004a. "Introduction: Contemporary Directions in Kinship." In *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Robert Parkin and Linda Stone, 331–341. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stone, Linda. 2004b. “Introduction: The Demise and Revival of Kinship.” In *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Robert Parkin and Linda Stone, 241–256. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sukarieh, Mayssun. 2011. “Min Qamus al-Isti’mar al-Jadid.” *Idafat* 4–6. Accessed April 15, 2011. http://www.adabmag.com/node/210/.

Swedenburg, Ted. 2007. “Imagined Youths.” *Middle East Report* 245.

Wikan, Unni. 1980. *Life Among the Poor in Cairo*. New York, NY: Tavistock.

Winegar, Jessica. 2011. “Taking Out the Trash: Youth Clean Up Egypt after Mubarak.” *Middle East Report* 259.

Winegar, Jessica. 2012. “The Privilege of Revolution: Gender, Class, Space, and Affect in Egypt.” *American Ethnologist* 39 (1): 67–70.