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RECONSIDERING DE-POLITICIZATION

HARASSMAP'S BYSTANDER APPROACH AND CREATING CRITICAL MASS TO COMBAT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN EGYPT¹

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the community-based work of anti-sexual harassment initiatives represents a political process toward ending sexual harassment in Egypt. Since the Egyptian Revolution, community-based initiatives have employed strategies to transform social perceptions and behaviors regarding public sexual harassment. The strategies of these new initiatives, like HarassMap, include conducting street outreach campaigns and employing technological platforms to reframe the nature of social responsibility and to disrupt gendered stereotypes. Yet, a number of scholars have challenged this community-based anti-harassment work, particularly the early work of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR), for avoiding political engagement and failing to address structural gender inequalities. Drawing on Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) argument regarding norm emergence, this paper maintains that anti-sexual harassment initiatives, like HarassMap, employ an approach to social change that aims to build a critical mass around new social norms. By undermining patriarchal norms that blame victims and encouraging people to intervene against public sexual harassment, HarassMap is creating a new vision of social responsibility. When a tipping point is reached, HarassMap activists believe that public outcry will then force

1. Material presented in this article is based on the author's doctoral dissertation research project, supported by the (US) National Science Foundation under grant number 1357477.

political and legal reform from the state to protect women in public space. Such community-based approaches are political but the reform entities like HarassMap seek results only when there is enough public will for change.

Since the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, the phenomenon of public sexual harassment in Egypt has received increasing attention. As early as 2008, the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR), one of the first advocacy NGOs to specifically campaign against public sexual harassment, issued a report in which 83% of Egyptian and 98% of foreign women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment.² ECWR's campaign, "Making Our Streets Safe for Everyone," framed sexual harassment as a largely social/cultural and psychological problem and made use of innovative community-oriented and technological techniques for raising public awareness.³ However, critics of ECWR's campaign argued the focus on the social and cultural reasons for sexual harassment resulted in social or cultural (and not political or economic) interventions that effectively depoliticized the problem.⁴ Salient features of this critique posited that ECWR disconnected everyday sexual harassment from state sponsored sexual violence by focusing on anonymous street harassment targeting "men with bad cultural attitudes," and that they did not address structural gender inequalities.⁵

Following the Revolution, UN Women conducted a new study in 2013, showing public sexual harassment, particularly in the street and on transportation, to be almost universally experienced with 99% of their study sample reporting to have been sexually harassed.⁶ Almost half of UN Women's study sample indicated that sexual harassment increased following the Revolution, though it is unclear how respondents arrived at this conclusion. It is probable that the Revolution helped to raise public awareness of sexual harassment, resulting in a higher level of reporting. More importantly, the Revolution presented a unique opportunity for the rise of numerous community-based anti-sexual harassment initiatives that aimed at reshaping historic social norms and behaviors around public sexual harassment⁷. Such initiatives made strategic decisions in avoiding political engagements to combat sexual harassment.

Engaging with critiques of anti-sexual harassment activism, this paper explores whether community-oriented approaches both before and after the Revolution have depoliticized the problem of sexual harassment. It confronts

2. Hassan *et al.* 2008.

3. ECWR 2009; Rizzo *et al.* 2008 & 2012.

4. Tadros 2013a. Tadros's argument did not mention ECWR, per se, but social interventions more generally. Her analysis examined how personal political sentiments impacted perceptions of sexual harassment, and raised concerns that the lack of clear boundaries between politically motivated and everyday forms of sexual harassment created the kind of confusion that allowed for the reproduction of politically motivated sexual harassment.

5. Abu Lughod 2011, p. 14 & 2013, p. 156.

6. El-Deeb 2013.

7. ElSayed & Rizzo 2014, unpublished manuscript.

claims that the anti-sexual harassment efforts of ECWR were depoliticizing, and argues more broadly that interventions seeking to change sociocultural norms and behaviors are more political than critics might claim. This analysis is premised on the need to reconsider what constitutes the “political” and the meaning of depoliticization. To do so, it highlights the “diversity of participatory modalities that have the potential to mobilize the moral registers of the ordinary;” that is, interventions focused on the “ordinary,” that redefine the nature of social practice and responsibility, and that incite people to action can be political.⁸ Critiques of anti-sexual harassment activism rest on a particular fissure between culture and politics, where social/cultural negotiations are not often viewed as inherently political acts.⁹ Concomitantly, the political sphere is not seen as the “institutional crystallization...of something that happens elsewhere, in multiple local sites of contestation, such as workplaces, families, associational groups, and institutions...”¹⁰ This paper argues that community-based activism focused on redefining cultural norms of sexual harassment is a political process that does not ignore structural gender discrimination and that has intended long term political and legal effects.

The independent initiative HarassMap serves as the primary case study in this paper given the philosophically developed nature of its strategic approach. Through street and community activism that engages bystanders, HarassMap employs strategies that seek to both challenge and refashion long-held norms that make sexual harassment socially acceptable. This includes disrupting patriarchal (binary) gender norms and encouraging intra-community social responsibility. Through the negotiation of new norms and building a socially responsible public concerned with the welfare of community members and that will speak up against sexual harassment, HarassMap aims to generate a critical mass that will eventually demand political and legal change from state institutions. In the following discussion, theories of norm change, bystander publics, and critical mass are drawn on to explore the political nature of HarassMap’s community activism, as well as its attempt to transform the level of state/legal engagement on the problem of public sexual harassment. It should be noted here that this paper does not examine HarassMap’s effectiveness in achieving this, only the political nature of this attempt. Moreover, entities like HarassMap do not have an explicit agenda of change within the political sphere, yet they have argued that political change can only be sustainably achieved if people themselves view sexual harassment differently.

8. Ahmad 2014, p. 427. Ahmad’s analysis centers on public responses to the 2007 protests that resulted in violent conflict between government and opposition forces in Karachi, Pakistan. Rather than participate in protest and conflict, she argued that a portion of the Karachi population voluntarily chose domestic confinement. This domestic confinement, she argued, represented a form of political engagement.

9. Alvarez *et al.* 1998; Rubin 1996; Swidler 1995.

10. Rubin 1996, p. 89, citing Foucault 1990, pp. 93-96.

CRITIQUES OF ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACTIVISM

Tadros argued that sexual harassment in Egypt is comprised of both socially and politically motivated forms.¹¹ Socially motivated sexual harassment includes everyday street harassment that commonly involves comments, ogling, and touching, among other acts.¹² Politically motivated sexual harassment, on the other hand, largely occurs within the context of protest, involves groups of men harassing women, and is believed by many activists to be instigated and paid for by the state to drive women out of the public space.¹³ For Tadros, it was critical to make this distinction visible, in order to avoid public confusion and make it clear that the state was itself a transgressor of women's bodily integrity and that it was firmly implicated in gendering respectability.¹⁴ Both forms of sexual harassment have been evident in Egypt since 2005, if not before. The Black Wednesday incident of that year marks one of the first sexual harassment cases that activists cite where the Egyptian state hired *baltagiyya* (thugs) to harass female activists protesting the constitutional referendum outside of the Press Syndicate. In 2006, the mass street sexual harassment incident in the Downtown area during the Eid holiday highlighted sexual harassment as a growing social problem.¹⁵

In this period, ECWR formed its campaign to define and combat street sexual harassment. According to Rizzo *et al.*,¹⁶ ECWR was unique because of its creative community-based techniques, involving awareness days that utilized art and music, organizing volunteer activities, and collaborating with the corporate sector for pro bono services in its fight against sexual harassment. ECWR's approach emphasized "the importance of addressing a culture that tolerated sexual harassment."¹⁷ Yet the campaign was criticized for not situating sexual harassment within the larger system of gender violence that included government repression and state-perpetrated sexual violence.¹⁸ Abu Lughod argued that this social/cultural approach, embedded in transnational development spheres and capitalist enterprise, helped to create victimized women and culturally bad men. For Amar, through their fixation on the "libidinal perversion of working class boys" and "time bomb masculinity," ECWR was complicit in depoliticizing sexual harassment by not challenging the state's use of sexual violence and torture, instead demanding increased interventions by the brutal security state to protect women in public.¹⁹ However, ECWR's choice to work at the community-level was made within the context of state repression of civil

11. Tadros 2013a&b & 2014.

12. Hassan *et al.* 2008; El Deeb 2013; Fahmy *et al.* 2014.

13. Langohr 2013 & 2014; Tadros 2013b; Ahmed-Zaki & Abd Alhamid 2014.

14. Amar 2011.

15. Rizzo *et al.* 2012b.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

18. Abu Lughod 2010, p. 14.

19. Amar 2011, p. 314-316.



This Image is from HarassMap's summer 2015 campaign "المتحرش مجرم" ("The harasser is a criminal") and is an example of reaching out to bystanders. The campaign was designed not only to inform people about the new law criminalizing sexual harassment, but to also give people tips with respect to how they can help in ways that do not necessarily require them to go straight to the police, since that can be a problem.

society, where NGOs were silenced, restrained and co-opted by the state in Egypt's corporatist climate.²⁰ ECWR activists invested in the anti-sexual harassment campaign were concerned about the effectiveness of political advocacy within a political structure that only disenfranchised NGOs.

Between 2010 and 2012, immediately prior to and following the 2011 Revolution, there was an increase in the number of independent initiatives that arose to combat sexual harassment. Here, the pre-Revolutionary corporatist political environment, marked by fluctuations in state repression and inclusion of oppositional forces in the political process, was temporarily disrupted by the ensuing political instability of the Revolution.²¹ ElSayed and Rizzo argued that women's activism in this period was still excluded from the political process, their demands for greater equality ignored, and that tensions between secular and religious forces over the nature of women's rights all generated a distinct set of political constraints, but contributed to a unique opportunity for community-based initiatives. What became apparent through-

20. Abdelrahman 2004; Bianchi 1989.

21. ElSayed & Rizzo 2014, unpublished manuscript.

out the years of protest, from 2011-2014, was the overt targeting of women at protest sites.²² Activists at this time were vehement in their condemnation of the state for conducting virginity tests on female protestors, as well as what they believed were state actors hiring *baltigiyya* to attack women at protests, although there has since been some nuanced recognition that the mass assaults and rapes in Tahrir were comprised of a mix of state hired thugs and opportunists.²³ In this context, initiatives quickly arose to assist the victims, or survivors, of such protest violence, including Operations Anti-Sexual Harassment (OpAntish) and Tahrir Bodyguard. Consisting of a large volunteer corps of activists and concerned members of the public, these initiatives were short-lived, emerging in response to the urgency of the situation for women in Tahrir. Both initiatives found it difficult to translate their work to non-Revolutionary protest settings and other forms of non-protest related activism.

Other independent initiatives that arose at this time, such as HarassMap, Imprint Movement (Harakat Bassma), and Anti-Sexual Harassment Movement (Ded el-Taharrush), concentrated their efforts on changing social perceptions and behaviors within communities rather than on lobbying political officials. At the same time, a number of advocacy NGOs incorporated sexual harassment within their overall agendas of combatting gender violence. For example, Nazra for Feminist Studies began advocating with state authorities to establish a national strategy to combat all forms of sexual violence, including sexual harassment.²⁴ However, Fatma Khafagy, the Ombudsman from the National Council for Women (NCW), voiced her disappointment that anti-sexual harassment activists still largely presented the problem as a cultural issue, outside of the political, economic and sociological contexts within which it is embedded.²⁵ From her perspective, ending sexual harassment required a more holistic and scientific understanding of its underlying facets, which she argued to be absent in the current work of anti-sexual harassment NGOs and initiatives. Tadros also raised concerns that social interventions focusing on “society” or “youth,” without the concomitant political analysis, reproduced patriarchal practices, such as protecting women by restricting their access to the public space.²⁶ Recent analysis by Skalli, though, noted that post-Revolutionary youth initiatives were actively involved in disrupting gendered norms, suggesting that they have not been ignoring structural gender inequality.²⁷

There can be no doubt that understanding the relationship between socially-motivated street sexual harassment and politically-motivated state sexual violence since the Revolution is of vital import. The Revolution

22. Langohr 2013; Hafez 2014.

23. Interview 2014, Amal ElMohandes from Nazra for Feminist Studies; Personal conversations 2014 with Hussein el-Shafei and Noora Flinkman from HarassMap.

24. Langohr 2014; Interview 2014, Farah Shash from El-Nadim.

25. Interview June 2014.

26. Tadros 2013a, p. 6.

27. Skalli 2014.

witnessed an escalation in the violent nature, if not the actual numbers, of documented sexual harassment and assault events, particularly in the context of protest. Not only is the Egyptian government believed to have orchestrated much of the Tahrir mob sexual violence to curtail women's public participation, the state is seen as having created an atmosphere of impunity for those who harass on a daily basis in the streets given inadequate and cumbersome legal structures and lax enforcement practices. Yet, a growing literature has also demonstrated that sexual harassment is a large-scale daily occurrence with a base in unequal gender norms that are reproduced at the everyday level.²⁸ Tadros argued that politically motivated assaults and everyday sexual harassment exist within the same system of power, violence and social norms that condone assault.²⁹ While socially motivated and politically motivated sexual harassment may be distinct aspects of sexual harassment, they are similar, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing expressions of discriminatory gendered norms that disadvantage women in the public space. As facets of this larger system of gender-based violence, both state sponsored and everyday forms of sexual harassment highlight the integrated nature of sociocultural and political spheres. Anti-sexual harassment interventions, therefore, take place within this single, socially and politically integrated system of gender-based violence and their work impacts both the social and political realms.

NORMS, BYSTANDERS AND CRITICAL MASS: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Finnemore and Sikkink define norms "...as a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity," which are both regulative and evaluative, encompassing behavior and values.³⁰ Theories of norm change frequently center on the top-down, or trickle-down, flow of transnational ethics to states and local populations, i.e. the adoption of, and adherence to, international conventions and the codification of rights-based principles into local constitutional and legalistic frameworks.³¹ Civil society plays a significant role in the internalization, or socialization, process of norms. As norm entrepreneurs they help to create, frame, and spread new norms by convincing people of their rightness, and serve as pressure groups working in conjunction with other local, regional and international organizations to compel state adherence to these norms.³² This includes refashioning problematic norms through framing practices that either draw on or directly challenge long-standing/old/

28. Ilahi 2008; Peoples 2008; Rizzo *et al.* 2012a&b.

29. Tadros 2014:10.

30. Finnemore 1996, p. 891.

31. Zwingel 2012.

32. Acharya 2004; Risse & Sikkink 1999.

deep-rooted norms and values, or some hybrid mix of the two.³³ Negotiating new norms and redefining social behaviors and values is an inherently political process as "...meanings are always constitutive of processes that seek to redefine social power."³⁴ Yet, it is often institutionalization that is viewed as a key facet of how norms are woven into the sociopolitical context.

Anti-sexual harassment activists working at community level question the extent to which politico-legal instruments alone can reshape social norms among the public/society.³⁵ An account of a sexual harassment incident witnessed by the HarassMap Community Outreach Director, Hussein el-Shafei, serves as an important example of what activists see as the insufficiency of the law in deterring sexual harassment. While traveling by microbus from Alexandria to Cairo, a woman vehemently accused a man sitting behind her of sexually harassing her. The microbus stopped while passengers attempted to calm the woman and urge her to let it go, asserting their desire to get home. The woman demanded the man be forced off but he loudly declared that he would not leave. When the bus took off with the man still aboard, the woman made a phone call that passengers could hear where she insisted the police be waiting at their arrival point to arrest the man. At this point, the man shouted to be let off the bus, yelling that the woman "would send him to hell." The passengers all agreed it would be better for him to run off into the desert than be arrested. To el-Shafei, aside from showing no concern for the woman, passengers did not see sexual harassment as a crime and definitely not something worth being arrested and prosecuted for. Despite the existence of laws forbidding "indecent assault," HarassMap activists argue that people do not see sexual harassment as problematic, or as a punishable offense. According to al-Shafei, "people don't want to stop harassing, they just don't want to get caught."³⁶

Efforts focused on bystander behavior, such as the bus passengers in the above example, are critical for anti-sexual harassment initiatives. Social-psychological research has extensively explored the phenomenon commonly known as the "bystander effect," or standing on the sidelines and failing to assist someone in need when others are around.³⁷ Numerous reasons exist to explain the bystander effect, including inhibition, fear of embarrassment, diffusing responsibility to others in the crowd, the high cost of intervention, lack of competence to intervene, and social control from the crowd itself.³⁸ Despite this, research has shown that bystanders may speak up when witnessing the

33. Feree 2003; Levitt & Merry 2009.

34. Alvarez *et al.* 1998, p. 7.

35. Scott 2000. Scott underscores the complexity of the law in shaping public behaviors, noting that people maintain a hierarchy of norms or values that not only guide their personal observance of the law but also how they police each other in adhering to the law.

36. Personal conversation, August 2014.

37. Chekroun & Brauer 2002.

38. Darley & Latane 1968; Thornberg 2007.

breaking of a norm if they feel personally invested in the norm.³⁹ Sexual violence research has also highlighted the importance of bystander behavior in changing larger community norms.⁴⁰ Moreover, social activists may take their cues from the responses of observant or watchful bystanders – bystander reactions may direct social interventions.⁴¹ The concept of “bystander public” is significant here. It is composed of non-adherents to a movement or an issue, or “distal spectators” that may bear witness and respond to political or social movement issues, and may become movement beneficiaries and adherents.⁴²

Bystander publics are those segments of the public that social movements seek to mobilize for their cause. These are individuals with some level of social and political consciousness, and though they are generally non-engaged, they may emerge as observers and commentators to the breakdown – and restoration – of public order.⁴³ Their reactions can quickly politicize an issue/event, or even influence the behavior of law enforcement entities.⁴⁴ Bystander publics are also necessary in the refashioning of dominant social norms. For new norms to take hold a critical mass of support is required; once a tipping point is reached, institutionalization through legal codification is possible.⁴⁵ Critical mass has been defined as *“a loose metaphorical way to refer to the idea that some threshold of participants or actions has to be crossed before a social movement ‘explodes’ into being.”*⁴⁶ Literature on critical mass often does not examine the grassroots origins of new norms. However, we can still note bystander publics’ meaningful role in facilitating the emergence of new sociopolitical or cultural norms, and as integral features of the critical mass of support that may result from this. Bystander reactions are dialectically shaped by social activism and politico-legal practices, which shape them in return.

HARASSMAP: BACKGROUND AND MISSION

In late October 2010, just three months prior to the Revolution, HarassMap launched operations by going live with their Ushahidi-powered, online crowd-mapping platform. Three of HarassMap’s four co-founders were previously employed by the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights (ECWR), and had started and managed the latter’s campaign “Making Our Streets Safe for Everyone.” ECWR’s strengths included strategies common among advocacy

39. Chekroun & Brauer 2012.

40. Banyard *et al.* 2004.

41. Braun & Koopman 2012 & 2014.

42. McCarthy & Zald 1977; Snow *et al.* 1981.

43. Snow *et al.* 1981.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Finnemore & Sikkink 1998.

46. Oliver *et al.* 1985.

NGOs at the time, such as lobbying, conducting training workshops, engaging in research, writing reports, and providing legal services to women in need. In the early days of the “Making Our Streets Safe for Everyone” campaign, it differed from the rest of ECWR’s work by relying on volunteers and utilizing community-based techniques to engage the public, which the program managers felt was a missing component in civil society work in Egypt.⁴⁷ As the program developed, was funded and took on professional staff, program activities fell more in line with the typical advocacy work that was common practice among advocacy NGOs.

HarassMap’s co-founders carried this community-focus over to their new initiative. The societal element was essential to the activism the co-founders wanted to carry out. Much of the attention that HarassMap received from Western media and the international development community has lauded their unique crowd-mapping approach to make visible the everyday problem of sexual harassment. However, according to Co-Founder and Executive Director of HarassMap, Rebecca Chiao, the technological piece was considered “a bonus” to the offline work they wanted to do in neighborhoods, to change societal attitudes around sexual harassment.⁴⁸ Political and legal advocacy on gender-based violence, which included the growing problem of public sexual harassment, was already occurring with a number of NGOs, such as El-Nadim Center, a pioneer for their work on torture and sexual and domestic violence. In late 2008, 16 NGOs formed the Taskforce for the Prohibition of Sexual Violence coordinated by the New Women Foundation; part of its mission was drafting and advocating for amendments to penal code articles centered on gender-based violence.⁴⁹ Within this context, HarassMap’s co-founders considered a focus on community and social perceptions another vital step toward changing the larger sociopolitical climate.

For HarassMap activists, the fundamental reason street sexual harassment exists is the large-scale social tolerance of the practice. HarassMap argues that people ultimately allow the practice of sexual harassment to continue by failing to speak up and intervene on behalf of the harassed when they see it occur. Their primary mission, therefore, centers on reshaping bystander beliefs and behaviors to encourage people to see sexual harassment as a crime and to speak up and provide support and assistance to those who are harassed in public. Underpinning this focus on bystander beliefs and behaviors is concern that political and legal structures alone are not sufficient to change societal norms that make sexual harassment an acceptable practice. Enforcement of the law in sexual harassment cases was, and still is, seen as highly problematic. The 2008 ECWR study (the first published on the phenomenon in Egypt) indicated that 97% of Egyptian and 87% of foreign women surveyed did not

47. Rizzo *et al.* 2012a&b.

48. Interview, March 2014.

49. FIDH 2014.

report sexual harassment to the police.⁵⁰ This was reconfirmed by the 2014 HarassMap study that showed only 2% of their study sample reported sexual harassment to the police.⁵¹ ECWR's study highlighted that police tended to mock women filing reports, that women did not believe the police would help them, and that foreign women identified police officers themselves as harassers. HarassMap's study also highlighted a common preference for alternative, anonymous reporting methods, rather than going to the police, as the latter did not treat the issue seriously. According to Chiao, effective enforcement of the law depends on the police believing something wrong has been done. Here she claimed that belief in the wrongness of certain actions stems from social roots, and that police officers themselves are no different from other members of their society. They do not always know the law or believe in it.⁵²

CREATING NEW SOCIAL NORMS

Part of HarassMap's approach to encouraging bystanders to speak up involves constructing and promoting new norms regarding sexual harassment. This includes 1) reconceptualizing sexual harassment, *taharrush*, so that non-physical acts, such as comments and staring, are viewed as forms of violence and violations of women's personal space, i.e. trying to move away from the related concept of *mu'aksa* (flirtation/teasing); 2) undermining common stereotypes inherent in the rationales that minimize or justify sexual harassment, and engaging with people to help them see sexual violence in new ways, 3) challenging victim-blaming through positive rhetoric that promotes the strength of those who experience sexual harassment, as well as confronting the binary system of gender that disadvantages women and limits their public participation, 4) promoting the view/framing of everyday sexual harassment as a crime with social and legal ramifications, including inciting new forms of social pressure to deter sexual harassment, and 5) urging all individuals to speak up or intervene against sexual harassment of themselves or others, which may include encouraging people to file a police report, developing sexual harassment policies within organizations, and promoting speaking up as "cool."

In part, the work of promoting new norms involves extensive messaging campaigns that are frequently deployed through HarassMap's social media sites, primarily Facebook and Twitter, with some engagement on Tumblr. Since 2012, HarassMap has engaged in a number of major campaigns, including "*byitharrash lih?*" (Why Does He Harass, referred to by HarassMap activists as "Debunking Myths"), "*salahha fi dimaghak*" (Fix it in Your Head/Get it Right), "*mesh sakta*" (I Won't Be Silent), as well as a more recent campaign linked to

50. Hassan *et al.* 2008.

51. Fahmy *et al.* 2014.

52. Interview, March 2012.

International End Sexual Harassment Week, called “*di mesh mu’aksa, da taharrush*” (This is Not Flirtation, It’s Sexual Harassment). The “*byitharrash lih*” campaign argued that reasons people often give for sexual harassment, including poverty, illiteracy, delayed marriage, sexual frustration, the breakdown of security, and women’s clothes, bodies and public presence, were nothing more than myths. For example, in one campaign message, HarassMap directly confronted a frequent economic rationale given for why men harass, asking “If the reason for sexual harassment is poverty, then why do company directors harass women?” Similarly, they sought to undermine a related notion that the lack of jobs leads to the inability for young men to marry, thus creating pent-up sexual frustration in men that contributes to sexual harassment, stating “If the reason for sexual harassment is delayed marriage, then why do fathers harass women?”

In late 2013, the joint campaign “*Sallahha fi dimaghak*,” organized with Nazra for Feminist Studies, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, and Tahrir Bodyguard, aimed at solidifying differing concepts of sexual violence and challenging gender inequality. The campaign differentiated between the often-conflated terms *taharrush ginsy* (sexual harassment), ‘*etida’ ginsy* (sexual assault), and *ightisab* (rape).⁵³ A workshop organized by HarassMap during the campaign, “The Gender Box,” was designed to engage people on cultural stereotypes around femininity and masculinity, and the violence both women and men experience for non-conformity. The “*mesh sakta*” campaign was the first to target women. Comprised of a series of posters, photos and videos offering positive feedback and reinforcing the idea of speaking up, the campaign provided tips and advice for how to confront sexual harassment through a crowd-sourced method where interested individuals publicly shared their ideas with each other. Lastly, the most recent campaign, “*di mesh mu’aksa, da taharrush*,” continues the work of defining *taharrush* as everyday street sexual harassment, which includes verbal harassment, and distinguishing this from wanted/consensual flirtation. As part of this, campaign messages highlight the kinds of comments that women hear, in everyday vernacular, as sexually harassing, such as “*makina*,” literally translating to machine and meaning slut. The goal of the campaign is getting anyone who hears such comments to speak up, whether victims or bystanders.

Additionally, getting bystanders to see everyday sexual harassment as a crime has been important in also encouraging them to speak up against the problem. In particular, contrasting the active response of bystanders in cases of theft with the lack of response to sexual harassment is a prevalent framing technique. Through campaign messaging, they associate bodily violations with property theft. For example, in one campaign poster from *Sallahha fi dimaghak*, HarassMap (and their campaign partners) noted “He who

53. Nazra 2014.



This image addresses the issue of people connecting women's style of dress in public to sexual harassment. It is an example of how HarassMap seeks to shift social norms with respect to victim-blaming. It was part of the "صلحها في دماغك" ("Fix it in your head") campaign from Nov-Dec 2013. This was part of the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence" initiative, run jointly by HarassMap, Nazra for Feminist Studies, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and Tahrir Bodyguard.

pickpockets/steals your wallet is a criminal" and "He who pickpockets/steals your body and rapes your smile is a criminal."

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION AND CREATING CRITICAL MASS

Despite fears that anti-sexual harassment work creates unruly men in need of control and/or reform, the target of HarassMap interventions is usually not men who harass or even women who may be victims/survivors of sexual harassment. In order to end the social acceptability of sexual harassment, HarassMap's philosophical position is that all members of society need to take on personal responsibility for speaking up against the practice, especially those on the sidelines who ignore or watch sexual harassment incidents but do nothing. To HarassMap, getting everyone to believe that sexual harassment is a crime and to overcome their fear and bias would be a critical norm change that would make them willing to take a stand, speak up against harassers and offer support to those who are sexually harassed.

The primary goal of HarassMap's Community Outreach unit is to facilitate the establishment of a disciplinary ethic and sense of moral responsibility by encouraging bystanders to intervene, help their community members in need, and not stand for criminal behavior in their neighborhoods. Twice a year, HarassMap trains a corps of "captains" that lead local teams of volunteers in their neighborhoods to conduct monthly street outreach campaigns. Monthly mobile trainings of all volunteers are also undertaken across all governorates of Egypt. Volunteers are recruited through social media, and volunteer teams utilize social media when conducting their own community outreach efforts by posting photos and messages from the street. Through community outreach efforts, bystanders are transformed into movement adherents and they encourage other bystanders to do the same. Minimally, volunteers seek to convince bystanders to voice their dissent or outrage at public breaches of social values around women's bodily integrity. Captains and volunteers are trained on issues of gender inequality and violence and effective responses to gendered stereotypes often given by community members. Furthermore, volunteers are trained to engage the public on norms around sexual harassment but to avoid confrontational or argumentative styles, keep conversations from diverging into victim-blaming, and to end conversations by eliciting agreement from bystanders that they will not remain silent and will speak up when they witness sexual harassment occurring.

Two new related programs, Safe Schools and Universities (SSU) and Safe Areas (SA), further widen the scope of combatting the bystander effect on a larger scale. The SSU and SA programs work to engage individuals from a young age on bodily integrity and harassing behaviors, as well as to encourage businesses and other public entities to develop zero tolerance policies and due process against sexual harassment. Safe Area program strategies include working with small businesses on a street-by-street basis to build support networks among business owners to both prevent backlashes from those who harass, as well as to serve as positive role models to other businesses to institute anti-sexual harassment policies. A recent messaging campaign tied to SSU, "*'ayizeen siyasa gowa al-gam'a*" (We Want a Policy in the University), calls on Egyptian universities to develop such policies.⁵⁴

It is important to note that HarassMap's crowd-mapping platform, for which it gained international attention, is a critical space and tool for changing social perceptions. An interactive online platform that brings together GIS and SMS technology, it gives people the ability to anonymously report and map their stories online or via text message, which then become publically viewable via

54. In 2014, Cairo University received national and international media attention for a sexual harassment incident against a young woman that entered the College of Law and subsequently removed her outer *'abaya*, while still remaining fully clothed and in hijab. Following the incident, a group of faculty members, working with anti-sexual harassment initiatives, devised an anti-sexual harassment policy.

Google Maps on HarassMap's website. Skalli noted that this online tool was intended to provide a safe space for women to tell their story without shame or reprisal.⁵⁵ The idea of safety is important given the lack of support from law enforcement for those who attempt to file reports through official channels. In this situation, Young states that the map serves as an alternative documentation tool, *"allowing victims to bypass institutional constraints... that may prevent them from reporting."*⁵⁶ The map also gives individuals the ability to directly challenge victim-blaming rhetoric, and to speak up about their fears, frustrations and anger at their harasser, at society for normalizing the practice of sexual harassment, and at the lack of effective legal remedies.

Recent criticism of bystander intervention argues that it does not solve the underlying problem of sexual violence. Elk and Devereaux noted that there is inherent danger to the bystander in asking them to intervene in cases of sexual violence, like rape, and that bystanders, like victims, do not receive adequate support.⁵⁷ They state that this only shifts where victim-blaming rhetoric is directed, i.e. at bystanders that fail to provide assistance when needed. In their estimation, bystander interventions appear to be nothing more than another form of vigilantism, which they claim is a feature of the "carceral" state, singularly designed to punish, rather than rehabilitate, offenders. "Even where bystander intervention is successful, disrupting one assault is not the same as ending violence. It's not even violence prevention" (Elk & Devereaux 2014). Ultimately, they argue bystander interventions don't force people to look at themselves and address the violence they are capable of committing.

Such arguments elide the complexities around social movement messaging and bystander behavior. They do not clarify what constitutes bystander interventions. There is a sense that physical intervention is required, yet other forms of intervention that are equally as helpful or lifesaving, and do not lead bystanders to put their bodies in harm's way, are not discussed. Moreover, bystanders in Egypt are not necessarily averse to intervening physically if they feel it is warranted by the situation. This is the case with theft, where it is popularly known and regularly witnessed by many, that whole neighborhoods will rally to catch a thief, with young men often forming small ad hoc posses and wielding sticks, iron bars, and chains, to do so.⁵⁸

HarassMap's rhetoric of bystander intervention implicitly accepts that within a group of bystanders there will be harassers. To avoid accusatory rhetoric that blames particular groups of people for sexual harassment, their discourse

55. Skalli 2014, p. 251.

56. Young 2014, p. 6.

57. Elk & Devereaux 2014.

58. Michael 2013. AP reported story of a Delta town where villagers lynched a man for stealing a car. The story is an extreme example of how community members intervene against cases of theft, though the focus on the lynching in the AP story was intended to signify the increasing lawlessness in the post-revolutionary period. Such responses are not typical of interventions against theft.



This Image Is From Harassmap's Spring 2014 "مش ساكنة" ("Not Keeping Silent") Campaign, Which Was Specifically Aimed At Women. However, Part Of Its Goal Was Not Only To Help Empower Women, But Also To Provide Tips To Everyone About How To Step In To Offer Assistance. This Image Reflects Harassmap's Fundamental Mission Of Ending The Acceptability Of Sexual Harassment By Asking People (Bystanders) To Speak Up When They See Sexual Harassment Happen.

instead centers on the need to recognize that each individual has a responsibility to all other members in their community. Rather than shifting blame, this message is subtly refashioning the nature of social responsibility by asking people to reconsider their own inherent biases that keep them silent or that prevent them from seeing the basic humanity of the victims of sexual violence. The problem of viewing bystander approaches as a practice that shifts victim-blaming and that does not address an individual's inner potential for violence, is that it draws on a particularly Western-inspired binary of the individual versus the community. Notions of individual responsibility only promote the need for people to control themselves and divorce them from any responsibility to the community in which they belong. For this reason, promoting community responsibility is often viewed as ineffective and as another form of hegemony.

Building a critical mass of bystander publics represents HarassMap's ultimate goal to end the social acceptability of sexual harassment in Egypt. At the heart of this, attempts at social change involve building enough ground level support so that new norms and behaviors introduced by the initiatives will take hold on an individual-by-individual basis and eventually become ordinary

among the wider public. Once this occurs and enough individuals either believe or practice the new norms promoted by HarassMap and other similar initiatives, a tipping point will be reached. Here, when enough people are unsatisfied with social, political or legal practices that do not align with new norms, they will then demand change. This critical mass is seen as essential for bringing about political and legal change since HarassMap activists argue that the government has no incentive to change, despite the hard work of formal civil society entities. Here, a critical mass that supports new normative practices has the ability to threaten the legitimacy of the government. It is assumed 1) that the state will adhere to the social will of the people and encode new norms in political and legal instruments, and 2) that state officials are themselves members of society, and will adopt the new norms within their own system of values.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued for the need to rethink the political and depoliticization with respect to the social/cultural interventions of anti-sexual harassment activism in Egypt. Such interventions do not directly challenge or advocate for change with the state yet they are still political processes that seek to transform the nature of public beliefs and practice, as well as state engagement on the problem of sexual harassment. The relationship of socially- and politically-motivated sexual harassment, in terms of causal factors and shared norms that make sexual harassment acceptable and reinforce patriarchal practices, underscore the integrated nature of the social and political spheres. Given this integrated nature of the social and political, interventions that center on reshaping social and cultural norms undoubtedly impact political practice. HarassMap's approach in changing social norms, encouraging bystanders to speak up, and generating a critical mass does not depoliticize the problem of sexual harassment, in the sense that the ultimate goal of their activism is to force the state to ensure an environment where its citizens feel safe from public violence. HarassMap activists are attempting to achieve this through a ground-up approach that fundamentally refashions the norms underpinning the current sociopolitical system in which sexual harassment is tolerated, not seen as a crime, and where no one is held accountable for it (even the state). Here, political change and a more concerned state response is an after-effect of HarassMap's community activism – it results when the public itself speaks up and demands that the State enact equitable laws and actively enforce them, so that public space is free from sexual violence.

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