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Choosing to Come Back: Second-Generation Egyptians Returning as Social Change Agents

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Thesis

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Abstract

Research has found that upon visiting their parents' homeland, second-generation immigrants were able to gain a better understanding of where they came from, allowing them to reflect upon their own lives in respect to their family history (Marschall, 2017). Some researchers call this journey the 'self-awakening' or 'searching-self' journey (Christou, 2003). The aim of this research is to understand the process of second-generation Egyptians return journey to their parent(s)' homeland in order to create social change. The two main questions posed are: 1) How do second-generation Egyptians construct their narrative identity, and 2) How do they conceptualize themselves as social change agents? The life narratives of four second-generation Egyptian returnees who decided to move to Egypt, their parent(s)' homeland, and partake in social change are explored. Through their narratives it is possible to see the interplay of sociopolitical and historical factors, timing in life, and family, on their decision to move to Egypt, their identity formation, and their understanding of themselves as social change agents. These findings are discussed in terms of their childhood experiences in Egypt, their mothers' experiences in Egypt, their encounters with their family in Egypt, their identity negotiations, agency, and sense of belonging.

Keywords: Second-generation, returnee, Egyptian, migration, narrative, identity, social change, social change agents

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Introduction

In Egypt, the saying goes, if you drink from the Nile, you will surely come back to drink from it again. There may be many ways to interpret this saying. Perhaps for an Egyptian who grew up in Egypt it could mean that wherever they end up traveling to, their roots will always bring them back home. As for a tourist on vacation in Egypt, it could mean that they would be so captivated by the beauty they would surely need to return a visit. But how about second-generation Egyptians who grew up in the West and decided to return to live in their ancestral homeland? Was it the water of the Nile?

There are many stories in novels, movies, and academic literature about life as a diasporic immigrant, stories about how they lived within the host country with only their nostalgic memories of their homeland, and stories of their estrangement upon returning to their birthplace, their homeland. Salman Rushdie (1992) paints his picture of living in exile in his book *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991.* Murid Barghouti (2002) recalls the details of his life in exile and his experience upon returning to Palestine after decades of being away in his book *I Saw Ramallah*. And in both narratives, in parallel with academic literature, there is a tangible difference between the experience migrants have upon returning, and the memories they cherished and held on to throughout their time away from home. Not only have these memories shaped the lives of migrants but the generations that follow as well, as memories of the homeland are passed down (Ahmed, 1999). Anastasia Christou (2003) explains that "[t]he 'roots' of culture are interwoven with family, its existence, and its role. This family capital transfer is what accompanies the 'route' [back home] to identification" (Christou, 2003, p. 124). The entanglement of family, home, return, and identity, for second-generation returnees in

particular, can be more richly captured through the narratives they tell about their life journey and who they are (Adler, 2012).

This research aims to understand the process of a second-generation immigrant returning to their parent(s)' homeland, the formation of their narrative identity, and how they understand themselves as agents of social change. In particular, how do second-generation Egyptian Americans who "returned" to Egypt to create social change, construct their narrative? How do they make sense of themselves as Egyptian and as social change agents?

To clarify, throughout whenever the term "second-generation" is used, it is in reference to the children of the "first-generation" migrants who are the original immigrants to the host country. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to "second-generation" as both those who were born to immigrant parents in the host country, and or those who were not born in the host country but migrated with their parents at a very young age. To use myself as an example of a second-generation Egyptian, my parents, born and raised in Egypt, moved to Chicago where I was born 3 years later. My sisters on the other hand, also second-generation Egyptians, were born in Egypt and Saudi Arabia respectively before moving with my parents to Chicago at ages 3 and 2. Thus, my parents, the first migrants to the U.S., would be considered "first-generation" and my sisters and I "second-generation."

Furthermore, this research will focus on the returnees who moved to Egypt as emerging adults. This is because it is during those years starting from adolescence through emerging adulthood that an individual's narrative identity is in formation (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

Literature Review

Egypt; Statistics, History, and Context of Migration

Migration patterns in Egypt are most often the result of economic, political, and social dysfunctions, such as but not limited to; underemployment and low wages, political corruption, and social inequalities and high marriage costs (Karoui, 2015). According to a household survey on international migration conducted in 2013 the two most common motives for those who migrated from Egypt, since 2000 for the first time, was to improve standard of living and because of low wages in Egypt (CAPMAS & PSCS, 2019). The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) and the Population Statistics and Censuses Sector (PCS) (2019) recently put together the "Migration Booklet in Egypt 2018." According to the data they collected, as of 2017, there were a total of 10,247,303 Egyptians living abroad. The majority of Egyptians living abroad resided in Arab countries, which was 68.4% of the total number of Egyptians living abroad in 2017. The second highest region where Egyptians living abroad resided was in the Americas, at about 18%. Only about 10% resided in European countries, three percent in Asia and Australia, and .4% in the African region (not including the Arab countries in North Africa) (CAPMAS & PSCS, 2019).

Wahba (2014) explains that immigration policies in the Gulf countries are strict and highly regulated. Foreign workers must attain a sponsor in order to stay in the country and labor contracts for foreigners are short-term with the chance of being renewed. Also Gulf countries do not usually allow foreigners to attain citizenship, and those that do, make it very difficult and do not allow dual citizenship, which makes it rare for foreigners to be naturalized (Soudy, 2013). Given all the factors mentioned above, Egyptian migration to neighboring countries is more often temporary than not. On the other hand, migration to Western countries is more often permanent. Not only that, but migration to the West also generally encompasses the entire

household, while migration to Gulf countries usually consists of only the breadwinner (Wahba, 2014).

It is also worth noting the recent historical events in Egypt, that is, the January 25th uprising that took place in 2011. The uprising started for similar if not the same reasons mentioned above for migrating from Egypt, such as low wages, political corruption, underemployment, and social inequalities (Karoui, 2015). Although there was evidence of many Egyptians intending to return from abroad, as a result of the revolution and the promises it brought, and others who actually did return, research shows that their "optimism was short-lived" and most quit Egypt not too long after returning (Karoui, 2015, p. 3). The revolution may have had some influence on the lives, identity negotiation, and connections with the homeland of Egyptians living abroad, but it was not the sole nor the biggest factor of influence (Soudy, 2013). There is evidence though that with the uprising there was an intensification of connections to the homeland within Egyptian families/communities abroad, but it died down, in the same manner the collective identity within Egypt that arose during the initial period of the revolution also died down (Karoui, 2015).

Return Migration and Roots Migration

When it comes to return migration there are several gaps in the literature. Most of the research done on return migrants to Egypt has focused on migrants returning from neighboring countries such as Libya and the Gulf (Wahba, 2014). In addition, most of the research on Egyptian returnees (first-generation) has taken a socio-economic perspective, such as the remittances sent back to family members, and the pattern of self-employment among return migrants versus non-migrants (McCormick & Wahba, 2001, 2003; Soudy, 2013; Wahba, 2014).

Furthermore, most of the literature about migration and return migrants covers the experiences of first-generation returnees, and only a few studies have been done on the experiences of second-generation returnees.

Many migrants travel back home for the nostalgia and memories of their home countries. Traveling back, according to studies, allows migrants to gain a sense of belonging, which often can be described as a coping method for the stress they experience due to the "cultural alienation in the host country" (Marschall, 2017, p. 215). A migrant's desire and longing to return home and the comfort of familiarity are reasons mentioned in many studies as to why migrants may choose to visit or permanently return to their home countries. In much of the literature on home, migration, and return there is always mention of the migrants' "longing for the past" (Kreuzer et al., 2017). Interestingly though, the past here includes both where one grew up (first-generation) and could also mean one's native land (second-generation) where they may not have lived but were passed down stories from the older generations (parents and grandparents) (Ahmed, 1999). One may argue that a second-generation migrant hasn't lived in the homeland before, so there is no need to seek 'comfort in the familiarity' of the homeland. This can be explained by Christou's (2003; 2006) research on Greek-American returnees, which highlighted the effect of ethnic communities and their cultural upbringing on their "Greekness" and their perception of self. Most of the Greek-American returnees she interviewed talked about how they were a part of a big Greek community while growing up in America; an interviewee explained that being a part of such a community molded her into the person she is and the values and traditions that she holds dearly (Christou, 2003). These communities can serve as a bridge, connecting second-generation immigrants to the homeland. Moreover, Wessendorf (2010) noted that among second-

generation Italians in Switzerland the majority preferred friendships with foreigners like them, especially other second-generation Italians, co-ethnics. They explained that they connect better with their co-ethnics because they share a lot of the same cultural beliefs and practices as well as a certain mentality that they don't share with their Swiss peers. Through these co-ethnic social relations, second-generation Italians are able to find ways to "celebrate their Italianness" in a way that is unique to them as a group (Wessendorf, 2010). Not only is their cultural lifestyle different than the majority culture in Switzerland but it is also an expression of being Italian that is different than their parents'. These include for example the music they listen to, the kinds of fashion brands they buy (Italian brand names), and leisure activities such as football (soccer). Wessendorf (2010) found that these relations with co-ethnics can lead to one of two outcomes, one being a factor in integrating happily in Switzerland within the Italian community, and the other being a factor in their decision to move to Italy based on their immersion in Italian culture within their co-ethnic community.

Along with keeping later generations connected to one's culture through being a part of an ethnic-knit community, some immigrant parents make sure to keep their children connected to their roots by planning visits back to the homeland whenever possible (King et al., 2011). A study comparing Egyptians in Qatar and Egyptians in the United States found that the factors which most influenced how second-generation Egyptians negotiated their identity, was their families and their visits to Egypt (Karoui, 2015). Through interviews with second-generation returnees King et al. (2011) often found a 'family narrative of return,' (p.13) where the family (initiated by the parents) always had an intention of returning to the homeland at one point, but never executed it. Wessendorf (2010) also found that most second-generation Italians' parents led

very transnational lives, traveling to Italy often and staying in touch with family back in Italy, they also strongly believed themselves to be sojourners, temporarily staying in Switzerland with the dream of returning to Italy one day. This narrative of return, along with the idyllic summer vacations, fosters the desire for return amongst second-generation children, and is the reason that some second-generation returnees return independent of their parents (King et al., 2011). King et al. (2011) found this common narrative among Greek and Greek Cypriot returnees, as did Wessendorf (2010) among Swiss-Italian returnees. One of Wessendorf's (2010) informants explained that her decision to return was based on the desire to live in a place without longing for another, contrary to her parents' experience. The second-generation Italians in Wessendorf's (2010) study, grew up visiting their southern Italian villages often, they explained that these holiday visits to Italy were the highlight of their year, most associated these visits with very positive memories which played a big role in how they related to Italy. She explains that both their transnational childhood and their parents' belief of returning one day are integral to the second-generation's connection and attachment to the homeland, and that it also plays out in their decision to return even though their parents do not (Wessendorf, 2010). This move to the parents' homeland, where one has roots but has never lived is referred to in the literature as 'roots migration' by many (Wessendorf, 2010).

In another study, McCain and Ray (2003), explain that migrants/second-generation migrants find the need to travel to their parent(s)' homeland in search of information on their family history or to feel connected to their ancestral roots and culture. Studies of "roots tourism," or "heritage tourism" reveal the trends of immigrants and second or third generation immigrants traveling back home for similar reasons. For second-generation migrants, most of these reasons

revolve around the desire to understand their familial/ancestral history, which helps them contemplate their own personal history. First-generation migrants are more likely to be motivated by nostalgia and maintaining ties to their homelands (Marschall, 2017). Wessendorf (2010) explains that as with "roots tourism," "roots migration" is a search for a place where they feel they belong.

Christou (2003) discusses the formation and transformation of the second-generation return migrants' identity through the self-awakening journey they embark on as they return to the ancestral land; pointing out that "the intersection of self and nation prior to but ultimately during the return settlement and eventually throughout the post-adjustment period can be understood as a new spatial formation, wherein identification emerges to be questioned and processed" (p. 117). She terms this spatial construct of the second-generation's return journey as the "unitive homing resolution" which reflects the return-settlement-adjustment process. The three-phase interactive process of the unitive homing resolution consists of the returnee's conscious decision to return to the ancestral homeland, the search for home as a search for identity, and "the hope to resolve the tantalizing and unsparing longing to belong" (Christou, 2003, p. 116). She highlights the return journey as a space where identity metamorphoses, but that this transformation journey starts much earlier, at the time and place of birth where the returnee grew up and continues to the ancestral homeland where they return and start their self-awakening journey. She explains that the "searching-self" journey is manifested as a "searching for roots" journey and is expressed through narratives of returning. She analyzes their self-awakening return journey through the triadic relationship of the returnee as an agent (agent here refers to the independence of travel, whereas at a younger age returning for visits was determined and dependent on the parents), the

ancestral homeland, and the physical return as a mission of identification. One of the participants in her research portrays the result of this resolution two years after returning, in his words, he explains,

> I no longer felt like a foreigner. I no longer felt the agony. I sensed the nostalgia turning into relief. The devastation and despair turned into breath of fresh air. I could finally breathe the oxygen my family shared before me. No more a stranger in a strange land, this is where I belong (Christou, 2003, p. 123).

As roots migrants return to their homeland, Christou (2006) found that some often encounter a myriad of realizations and sentiments, such as disappointment, cultural misunderstandings, constrained agency, and more. She found that there was a common disappointment upon returning when they found that "Greece, Greeks and Greek ways of life are not as 'pure' as they had imagined" (Christou, 2006, p. 832). Their nostalgic memories and sense of belonging that they felt while traveling on vacation, or that they recreated while in America had painted for them an 'ideal' image of living in Greece. Many of the returnees were sure about their decision to return and that it was 'the right decision' (Christou, 2006). Even given their assurance of making the right choice, they were conflicted with the ways of life in Greece, where success and achievement aren't easily achieved through meritocracy like in America, but rather through nepotism, networks, and various forms of corruption (Christou, 2006). Similarly, some Swiss-Italian roots migrants found difficulties adjusting to certain cultural and social norms, particularly gender practices in Italy that made the relocation harder particularly for single females. (Wessendorf, 2010). Wessendorf (2010) found that with the relocation the two most common scenarios were either a returnee finds difficulty integrating due to idealized

expectations of the move or a returnee integrates more easily having relocated with a more realistic understanding of life in the homeland. Either scenario also depends on factors such as the stage in life the returnee is in, financials, and marital status (Wessendorf, 2010).

Disappointed in the way systems work back home, some returnees decide to use the knowledge and experience they gained abroad to advocate for change. We see this with Turkish migrants who have lived in Germany and decided to return to Turkey, "[r]eturnees like Zehra and Berk…they choose to use their perspective to advocate for reform in Turkey. Zehra works directly with an organization aimed at improving citizens' rights in Turkey, while Berk raises his voice against disrespect in daily life" (Rottmann, 2018, p. 163).

Even with the problems that the Greek-Americans faced upon returning to Greece there was a strong belief among the participants that "their future still lies in the 'ancestral' land" (Christou, 2006, p. 832). Bal et al. (1999) explain that this strong belief stems from nostalgic longing and "the active role of individual and cultural memory in integrating the past to the present," using memories of the past to reshape the present (as cited in Christou, 2006, p. 832). Even though this helps explain how the second-generation could feel connected to their ancestral homeland, it is not conclusive to understanding what they believe home means, thus Christou (2006) emphasizes that we still must recognize the subjective experiences of the migrants themselves in order to really understand how they make meaning of where home is. A migrant's identity construct and sense of belonging are closely linked to their negation of home (Liu, 2014). Furthermore, the different aspects of home a migrant experiences such as the physical, social, emotional, and symbolic are mutually interdependent and continuously play a role in how they define and re-define what home means to them (Liu, 2014).

Meaning of Home

So, what is home? How does a migrant understand and experience home? Ahmed (1999) shares that "home can mean where one […] lives, or it can mean where one's family lives, or it can mean one's native country" (p. 38). Similarly, to Ahmed's (1999) experience of home in England, Australia, and Pakistan, home to me could be in Ohio where I grew up and lived for most of my life, in Egypt where my parents migrated from and where I spent my most memorable summers, or Saudi Arabia where I spent the early years of my childhood and made life-long friends.

The definition of home and the experience of it can change from person to person, but Ahmed (1999) explains the different experiences within the following four categories; physical, embodiment, social, and temporal (Kreuzer et al., 2017). The physical can be understood as the native country, the space in which one lives, or the house one dwells in. Embodiment is more in the realm of experience, how one feels about home, about their ability to express themselves, their identity within the social and physical (Kreuzer et al., 2017). Ahmed (1999) takes it further and asks, "how do bodies reinhabit space?" She explains her different experiences of home in Australia and England to be one of sneezing from the Australian dusty wind and her skin pinching in the English cold weather (Ahmed, 1999, p. 342). Or it could be embodied through a sense of self-reliance, or finding home within (Kreuzer et al., 2017). The social is more of the social relations and the community one feels at home with, whether this community is present in the physical structure (i.e., in person) or whether its virtual (i.e., via social media). Lastly, the temporal is the recollection of one's memories of home, the longing for familiarity, or the nostalgic experiences of certain sensations that may be re-created at best through replicated

cultural experiences, such as food (Kreuzer et al., 2017). But this involves "a temporal dislocation: "the past" becomes associated with a home that it is impossible to inhabit…in the present" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 343). Persram (1996) defined home as being the place where one "rest[s] and respite[s], where there is 'being but no longing" (as cited in Ahmed, 1999, p. 339).

What does all of this mean in understanding the experience of migrants and the second-generation? Experiencing home or migration for second-generation can be a matter of generational acts of storytelling about prior histories of movement and dislocation where they connect to their native land (Ahmed, 1999). The stories that are passed down from generation to generation become woven pieces of an individual's identity, their personal history. For example, Huang et al. (2016) found that upon visiting their parents' homeland, second-generation Chinese Americans were able to gain a better understanding of where they came from, allowing them to reflect upon their own lives in respect to their family history (as cited in Marschall, 2017). Through the stories of their parents and their own travels, second-generation returnees begin to piece together their own narrative.

Research conducted on migrants, some which have focused specifically on refugee experiences upon returning home, found that it is likely that after returning because of nostalgia and longing, they find that the home country has changed so much and that they themselves have also changed enough to no longer feel a sense of belonging to their home country. This then may in fact reinforce a sense of belonging in their host country (Marschall, 2017, p. 215). Similar sentiments have been found in studies of second-generation returnees. Christou (2006) found that only upon their return, and disappointment as mentioned earlier, were Greek second-generation returnees able to recognize the influence of their American upbringing (p. 832). One of the

second-generation Italians Wessendorf (2010) interviewed, expressed their experience as similar to a "ping-pong ball, getting thrown back and forth" where in Italy they're seen as Swiss and in Switzerland as Italians (p. 374). This experience, and the sentiment of neither being fully Italian nor fully Swiss, Wessendorf (2010) found, has led some of the second-generation to become more attached to their hometown, the town they grew up in in Switzerland, surrounded by the familiarity of their local community and social relations.

Rottman (2018) followed and studied a group who met at what is called a 'Returner's Meeting' in Istanbul. The group consisted of German-Turks who returned to Turkey and met to share their experiences and concerns, both as Turks who lived in Germany and Turks who were now adjusting to life in Turkey. During the group meetings, there were discussions regarding identity, in terms of where the migrant identified with more, Germany or Turkey. As a result, one of the major themes that arose is the concept of being a 'world citizen.' Although many of the meeting participants agreed with the idea, there was still a collective need for belonging to a place, one of the participants stated that "we still need a place where we feel we belong […] Is it going to be Germany or Turkey? Neither" (Rottmann, 2018, p. 155). The return journey thus can sometimes leave the returnees torn between where their life was and where their heart is, or possibly even feeling like they do not belong in either place.

Sense of Belonging and Acculturation

To understand the experiences of the second-generation and how they made the decision to "return" to their ancestral homeland we must first understand the complex multiplicity of the contextual factors at play. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the immigration to the West includes the entire household (Wahba, 2014). For this reason, Britto and Amer (2007) reiterate

the importance of exploring the family context to better understand how a second-generation immigrant develops their cultural identity, their sense of belonging to one or more groups. We have also seen in the literature on return migration the role that the family and the community play in the experiences of the second-generation. For example, the Greek-American returnees discussed earlier, reflected upon how taking part in cultural traditions with the family and being a part of the Greek community in America has shaped who they were.

Often in the literature, acculturation theory is used to conceptualize the cultural identity formation of second-generation returnees. Acculturation is the process in which immigrants and later generations culturally, socially, and psychologically change in order to balance their cultural heritage whilst adapting to the culture of the larger society they are living in (Berry & Hou, 2016; Berry & Hou 2017**)**. Berry and Hou (2017) explain that there are four acculturation strategies that immigrants use. These strategies are shaped by how much the individual values and hopes to maintain their ethnic cultural identity and how much they would like to engage in the larger society (Berry & Hou, 2017). The four strategies are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Individuals who are integrated have a strong sense of belonging to both the host country and their ethnic group. Individuals who assimilated have a strong sense of belonging to the host country only, with little to no desire to maintain their heritage culture and identity. Those who are separated have a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic group only, with little to no desire to engage with the larger society they live within. Lastly, those who are marginalized have a weak sense of belonging to both the host country and their ethnic group, they have no desire to maintain their heritage culture/identity and avoid engaging with the society they live in (Berry & Hou, 2017). Building on this, Britto and Amer (2007) explain that

an immigrant family has direct influence on how an adolescent acculturates. They can either be a source of relief to the acculturative stress an adolescent is facing by proving the support and care an adolescent would need to navigate between two cultures, and or they could provoke stress by failing to provide the adolescent with the supportive environment needed to acculturate (Britto & Amer, 2007).

Interestingly, Rushdie (1992) reflects the process of acculturation (without defining it as that though) by posing the following questions.

> To be an Indian writer in the [British] society is to face, every day, problems of definition. What does it mean to be 'Indian' outside India? How can culture be preserved without becoming ossified? How should we discuss the need for change within ourselves and our community without seeming to play into the hands of our racial enemies? What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical, of refusing to make any concessions to Western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and practices and turning away from the ones that came here with us? (p. 17).

The questions Rushdie (1992) poses above shed light on the struggles a migrant faces during the acculturation process. The internal and external conflict of trying to decide whether to shed their old skin and take on the culture of the host country, assimilating; balancing between preserving their own culture while still embracing new and different ideas, integrating; separating by rejecting any cultural ideas or practices of the host country, or lastly being lost between both, never whole, marginalization. He questions the consequences of assimilating and or separating, the challenge of balancing integration, and how one may lose oneself in the process.

Although acculturation theory is commonly used to study and understand both migrants' and second-generations' identity formation, some suggest that the model insufficiently addresses the complexity of second-generations' identity formation and negotiation (Younis & Hassan, 2019). Younis and Hassan (2019) argue that contrary to the framework offered through the acculturation model, second-generation minorities are in constant negotiation and renegotiations of their identities. They studied the life narratives of second-generation Western Muslims and explain that national and religious identities form through a dialectical process. In which both forms of identity interplay and constitute one another. These identities, though at times may be in conflict, are nonetheless uniquely whole (Younis & Hassan, 2019). These dialectics can continue even when they argumentatively reject their national association, such as a Muslim in Germany who wishes to only identify as Muslim and not as German, equating their being German to only possessing citizenship (Younis & Hassan, 2019). Furthermore, they explain that sociopolitical context plays a big role on the negotiation of one's identity. For example, one of their interviewees, a second-generation Muslim in Denmark, expressed how partaking in civic engagement is a reflection of her Western identity and her religious identity as a Muslim. To her it was important to showcase the fact that as a Muslim, her religion shared the same values as the Danish, of giving back to the society she belonged to. This response is a direct result of the sociopolitical environment in Denmark which promotes Islamophobia (Younis & Hassan, 2019).

Younis and Hassan (2019) explain that these co-constructed identities transform into new forms of Western symbols, fashion, and language, as we have seen with the different ways Wessendorf's (2010) second-generation Italians 'celebrate their Italianness.' This phenomenon is referred to as a 'third space,' which Younis and Hassan (2019) argue should be studied more in

light of understanding second-generation identity formation, rather than using the acculturation model for this particular group. In the literature, those who grew up in a culture different than that of their parents' are referred to as 'third culture kids' (Fail et al., 2004). It was often found that third culture kids "may have a multiple sense of belonging or no sense of belonging. It has been suggested that their sense of belonging may be in terms of relationships rather than geographical place" (Fail et al., 2004, p. 326). Sense of belonging plays a big factor in sense of identity, to understand how a third culture kid begins to piece together who they are, it is important to also explore their sense of belonging (Fail et al., 2004).

Agency

As this research is focused on second-generation immigrants *choosing* to return to Egypt, their ancestral homeland, as social change *agents*, it is important to further understand the concept of agency. Human agency is an individual's capability to intentionally influence the outcomes of their own lives, to have the power to make their own choices with the foresight of yielding intended results (Bandura, 2006). Adler (2012) explains "[t]he theme of agency is concerned with the individual's autonomy, achievement, mastery, and ability to influence the course of his or her life; it is therefore strongly connected to the individual's sense of meaning and purpose" (p. 368).

Bandura (2006) explains that there are four core properties of human agency which are intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Intentionality is having a goal and setting a plan to see it through. This can also include other agents with shared intentions. Having forethought is being able visualize the outcome of the set plan. This ability to anticipate certain results has a direct effect on the behaviors of an agent, otherwise it would be

difficult to be motivated to put goals into action. The third property of agency is self-reactiveness; beyond the ability to make choices and to create action plans, an agent must also be able to self-regulate and motivate themselves in order to execute their plans. And lastly, self-reflectiveness, to introspect and examine oneself is core to being an agent in order to make changes and adjustments if needed. To evaluate one's thoughts and actions is just as important if not more, to setting plans and executing them (Bandura, 2006).

Bandura (2006) explains that causality, fortuitous events, and environment are all factors of influence in the life-course trajectory of agents. Fortuitous events such as an unintended social encounter can lead to new major life paths such as marriages and careers (Bandura, 2006). But not all fortuitous events are entirely uncontrollable, they can be brought upon through the casually of a certain lifestyle. Lifestyle and life choices are an active cause in the types of experiences and encounters an individual has (Bandura, 2006). An agent's autonomy does not act in a vacuum, nor are their actions entirely circumstantial, Bandura (2006) describes the interplay of the agent's self-influence and circumstantial events as "that individuals are producers as well as products of their life circumstances, they are partial authors of the past conditions that developed them, as well as the future courses their lives take" (p. 165).

Self-efficacy is another critical attribute of an agent, according to Bandura (2006). Self-efficacy, which is how a person sees themselves and their belief that their actions will yield outcomes, plays an important role in occupational development and endeavors (e.g., becoming social change agents) (Bandura, 2006; Garrin, 2013). In order to take actions that bring about change, social change agents need to believe that their actions will yield outcomes otherwise there would be no incentive to influence change.

Garrin (2013) explains the critical role of self-efficacy in social change agents' capacity to create social change, in particular for college students who are to be future social change agents. He explains this through a triadic framework which highlights the interplay of self-efficacy, attribution, and appraisal (Garrin, 2013). Garrin (2013) discusses the interconnectedness of his triadic framework using Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory (SET), Weiner's (1986; 1992) attribution theory, and Smith and Lazarus's (1993) cognitive appraisal theory (as cited in Garrin, 2013, p. 40). The framework adapts the theories in the following manner: self-efficacy is defined by mastery and competence, attribution is defined by both stability (i.e., the capacity in which the conditions could actually change) and locus of control and controllability (i.e., the perception and understanding of control as either internal or external), and appraisal is defined by relevance, accountability, and coping potential. Relevance is an agent's assessment of an issue related to the well-being of the community, accountability is the assessment of who or what is responsible for the issue, and coping potential, refers to how an agent can/should approach the issue, either by altering perceptions or changing contextual factors (Garrin, 2013). Garrin (2013) describes this triadic framework as 'bidirectional' and 'cyclical.' Once self-efficacy is cultivated through the mastery of skills and the belief in one's own competence, an agent may start to internalize their own control over social circumstances, in which case an agent may be able to evaluate future challenges as approachable (Garrin, 2013).

Internalizing the ability to control circumstances is positively correlated with higher self-efficacy, which increases an individual's, or in this case, an agent's motivation to see their goal through till the end. This motivation and increased self-efficacy have been linked to an agent's ability to perceive challenges as only causing eustress rather than distress, and rather than

avoiding challenges, they thus are able to take them on (Garrin, 2013). A study by Guerro et al., (2021) provides evidence for the effect of the triadic factors on the motivation of an emerging adult to become a social change agent. It found that the perception of a task or a social goal as being manageable and within a person's skill set was an important incentive for engaging in social change (Guerro et al., 2021). So, as Garrin (2013) argued, without self-efficacy, and without the ability to appraise accurately, college students as future social change agents, would lack the capacity, motivation, and confidence to set social change goals, let alone to persevere through the change process.

Finally, agency can take different forms. Bandura (2006) explains that social cognitive theory recognizes three types of agency: individual agency, proxy agency, and collective agency. Individual agency is when people exercise their personal agency to influence their own circumstances, fortuitous events, and environmental happenings. When an individual does not have direct influence over certain conditions, which is often the case, they can exercise proxy agency. Proxy agency, similar to advocacy, aims to influence those who do have the means to bring about the desired outcome (Bandura, 2006). And thirdly, collective agency is when people work together to collectively influence their future (Bandura, 2006).

Planned Social Change

Planned positive social change is deliberate and planned initiatives to bring about positive results (Chung & Bemak, 2012). Social change can take place on both micro and macro levels (i.e., an individual level, a community or organizational level, or even on a societal or global level) (Chung & Bemak, 2012). Some argue that the aim of planned social change is to reach social justice, which means to ensure the equitable distribution and access to wealth, services,

and opportunities for those in need (Calley, 2010). Chung & Bemak (2012) explain that social justice and social change are intertwined with one another; that the work of social justice is to create social change with the aim of addressing existing inequalities. They define social change as "the changing or altering of systems (such as institutions and organizations) and structures (such as laws, policies, procedures, social roles, and functions) that hinder, obstruct, block, impede, and interfere with positive and optimal growth, development, opportunities, and physical and psychological well-being for all individuals, families, groups, and communities" (Chung & Bemak, 2012, para. 4). A simpler more basic definition of positive social change, as defined by Walden University (2013), is the "involvement in activities that improve the lives of individuals and communities locally and around the world. It includes a range of activities, such as volunteering or service; donating money, goods, or services; and educating others about a particular issue or cause; etc." (p. 2). An understanding of the above definitions will be used as a point of reference for the purposes of this research.

Community psychologists' approach to planned positive social change is through the shifting of power dynamics, facilitating the empowerment of community members and allowing them to become agents of change themselves (Jason et al., 2019). The raison d'etre of community psychology is to study and understand the interconnectedness of the individual and the environment for the sake of creating social change, notably for individuals and communities of limited resources and constrained opportunities (Jason et al., 2019). By virtue of working collaboratively with a community to remedy and or prevent social problems, community members, empowered, can continue to positively influence their community, and community psychologists can become better sensitized to the community's issues (Jason, 1991, p. 13).

Chung and Bemak (2012) discuss a set of 16 principles for creating social change which they adapted from the work of Homan (2008) (as cited in Chung & Bemak, 2012). These set of principles are skills, characteristics, and approaches to social change that an agent would need to adopt in order to be successful. The fundamental principles of social change explain that social justice is not an arbitrary cause or goal but rather a necessity to address issues that violate basic human rights (Chung & Bemak, 2012). The following few points highlight the key elements of the fundamental principles discussed by Chung and Bemak (2012):

- The work of social change should be approached through an ecological perspective, understanding that the environment has an impact on the individual and vice versa. The effect of change on one person has the potential to create a shock wave in the community, for example if an individual feels empowered to stand up against unequal treatment, discrimination for instance, and speaks out against it, this could lead to others in the community to joining them.
- It is important for social change agents to understand how to exercise their use of power for social justice and not for personal gains. Power is a controversial issue associated with a more negative connotation than a positive one, but within the work of social justice it must be understood that power, just as it is a critical tool to bring about change, it is also a double-edged sword.
- It is also the change agents' responsibility to acknowledge and build on the strengths and assets of a community, not only is this smart use of resources but it also helps foster empowerment within the community.

- Understanding and respecting cultural diversity is another critical principle for social change. Having cultural competency, not only helps to prevent disrespecting others, but it is also an important tool in being able to address the issue at stake, being able to understand and collaboratively learning from the community fosters a healthy relationship and sets the grounds for effective positive change. Cultural competence includes having an ecological perspective and understanding the sociopolitical historical context.
- Lastly, change agents must be aware that "change is a process, not a quick fix" (Chung & Bemak, 2012, para. 31), that change doesn't happen overnight, and that "change can come in small or large quantities" (Chung & Bemak, 2012, para. 32). Change doesn't have to be major to be considered important, it can be incremental change, it can take a long time, or it can even be very small such as an informal conversation with a friend or a family member to spread awareness of an issue.

Social Change Agents

Motives

Guerro et al. (2021) in a recent study on emerging adults and social justice engagement, discuss the elements they found to be the catalyst for emerging adults' involvement in taking action towards social justice, as well as barriers to their involvement. They found that the following were factors influencing participants' motivation to engage in social change action; the political climate at the time, self-efficacy, a social network for social action, personal relevance to the social issue, their knowledge of the resources, lack of personal resources, and identity (Guerro et al., 2021, p. 6). Certain political climates that create a cause for concern, e.g., Trump's anti-immigration policies, can be a motive for people to take action and speak out. Others are

only motivated when the issue is close enough to home, that it becomes a personal concern, leading them to take a stance. Although they may feel sad and/or empathize with people in unjust positions if it's distant enough from them (socially and/or physically) they feel dissociated from the issue. Having friends or a network of people who also partake in social action, and/or having knowledge about social issues and the resources and organizations available for people to use or join in their social justice journey, have also been motivators for participants to engage in social change. In fact, the lack of both the former and the latter, has proven to be a barrier for many. Another barrier to getting involved is limited personal resources, some participants expressed an interest in engaging in social justice activities, but they just merely lacked the time, energy and money, others saw social justice activities as secondary to their 'other responsibilities'. Lastly, the researchers found that a participant's identity as either marginalized or privileged played a big role in whether or not, and how or why, they got involved. Being a part of a marginalized group sometimes motivated them to advocate for their community, this motivation often stemmed from personal experiences, or they choose to stand in solidarity with those directly affected by the issue. Some who are marginalized though, have expressed that they are just wiped out from getting through their daily routine, as a minority, that that in itself "feels like an act of resistance" (Guerro et al., 2021, p. 11), and believe that they're not obligated to become involved further. Some, who identify with being marginalized in some respects and privileged in others, for example an educated African American male, a Caucasian female, or a light-skinned Latino male, are more comfortable being involved in certain settings more than others. Many who saw themselves as privileged, or partly privileged, did express their motivation to use their position of privilege to voice their concerns of social injustices. And although these are all

possible factors for why or how someone may get involved in social justice, there is no one rule of thumb, but the fact remains that identity plays a big role in their decision to become involved (Guerro et al., 2021).

Hall and Keen (2018) also studied the motives of emerging adults in their journey as social change agents. They followed and studied recent graduates, in the U.S., who decided to spend a year, post college, working in a service-learning/volunteer program. They found that students after graduating may experience a loss of community and the needed support to discover their career and purpose (Hall & Keen, 2018). Some graduates pursue these volunteer programs "seeking meaningful work, dialogue, and reflection" (Hall & Keen, 2018, p. 33). They also found that upon completing the program the volunteers benefited from the chance to express themselves among like-minded people and to build friendships (Hall and Keen 2018).

Types and Values

Walden University in 2013 prepared the Social Impact Report to better understand what motivates people to become involved in positive social change (PSC). This report, which presents the results of research conducted across the world, aims to understand the types of social change agents and the motivation behind partaking in positive social change. Walden University identified six types of social change agents, the first type is the Ultracommitted Change-Makers who dedicate their lives to PSC, to them being involved in PSC is a lifelong commitment. Second are the Faith-Inspired Givers who are generally older in age and feel blessed and so want to give back. To them being a part of PSC is a moral obligation. Third are the Socially Conscious Consumers who believe in supporting companies that they perceive are trying to behave socially responsibly. Fourth are the Purposeful Participants, who are only motivated to partake in PSC for

reasons such making their school or even a job application look good. Fifth are the Casual Contributors whose participation in PSC is driven by the issues in their local community as opposed to global concerns. And finally, the Social Change Spectators who may have participated in PSC at one point but do not actively engage in PSC activities, they generally don't believe that they can personally make a difference (Walden University, 2013).

Noel Tichy (1974) did a study on different kinds of professional change agents and their values. He organized the data he collected about the social change agents he interviewed into a framework highlighting the values change agents bring to change, their understanding of the means to create change, the tools they use, as well as their personal attributes and type of work they do (Tichy, 1974). He then used this framework to analyze the congruence of each agent's value-action and cognition-action. To analyze the congruence, he categorized the social change agents into four types which helped in accounting for the different variables. The four types are: outside pressure (OP), people change technology (PCT), organization development (OD), and analysis for the top (AFT). The OP group includes activists, advocate groups, rights activities etc.; their overall goal is to put pressure on the system. A few examples of the tactics they use are mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, and violence. Individuals of the PCT group on the other hand worked mostly to influence individuals within the system. Their work is more focused on the strength of the people within an organization rather than only with the decision-makers of an organization (Tichy, 1974). OD groups consists mostly of individuals who work in the non-profit sector and or referred to themselves as OD consultants. One hundred percent of the OD's interviewed self-reported using team development and role clarification as a tactic, and that their consultation is mostly with the decision-maker of the organization. The AFT group included

individuals who conduct research to determine changes needed in the operations regarding the company's business, systems analyses, studies on policies, and or are analytic consultants such as professors from business school (Tichy, 1974).

Tichy (1974) found that the OP's (outside pressure) had the highest congruence in both the value-action and cognitive-action dimensions. Tichy (1974) argues that "their model is simple and therefore makes for congruence: for example, power is unequally distributed and should be more equal; therefore, engage in power equalization tactics" (p. 179). The other three types measured quite differently in their congruence/incongruence of values-action and cognitive-action. Although many social change agents may hold certain values to a high degree, depending on the position they are in, they may be constricted from putting it into action. Power dynamics is an important factor to consider when analyzing the work of social change agents. For example, "[t]he OD's [organization development] congruence is high on the cognitive-action dimension and low on the value-action dimension" (Tichy, 1974, p.179), because of the restriction of power within the organization/system. They are constrained by their job roles, "most of the OD's indicated that they should be striving for such goals [values] as increased democratic participation…increased individual freedom, aiding society in solving social problems…but they are generally employed by organizations not for these values, but to help with problems effecting efficiency and output [within the system]" (Tichy, 1974, p.179). On the other hand, the PCT's (people change technology) and the AFT's (analysis for the top) don't fall in the same congruence of both dimensions, but they are both more congruent in the value-action aspect than they are in the cognitive-action dimension. This is because although they are more congruent in the value-action dimension than the OD's, they are limited with the tools they use.

For example, there are AFT's (analysis for the top) whose jobs are to compute numbers pertaining to the operations of an organization, or PCT's (people change technology) who work on "job enrichment or behavior modification" (Tichy, 1974, p. 180). The significance of Tichy's (1974) research is that it demonstrates that an agent may hold certain values and knowledge but doesn't always or can't always put them to action. This poses a very important question regarding a social change agent's agency and identity. Is an agent defined by their values or by their actions? As this research aims to understand how social change agents conceptualize themselves as social change agents, it will be important to understand the values they believe in and accordingly whether or not they take action on those values.

Social Change in Egypt

NGOs for Social Change

An active and present source of creating and promoting social change in Egypt and the Middle East are non-governmental organizations, NGOs (Beinin, 2014). NGOs and civil society have a long history in Egypt and the Arab world, with each era presenting new challenges for development organizations (Amer et al., 2014). Through the years, colonization, Western economic dominance, and national states all directly influenced the work and structure of NGOs (Amer et al., 2014; Beinin, 2014). Currently NGOs tackle issues such as poverty, gender inequity, health care, education, and climate change (Amer et al., 2014). But still NGOs and civil society in Egypt continue to face a plethora of challenges and must adhere to restrictive legislation (Beinin, 2014). Not only, but they also tend to be run by professional elites, and members of society who seem to be socially and economically distant from the majority population (Amer et al., 2014; Beinin, 2014). Even though NGOs are still prominent and

continue to tackle many social issues, there has been a paradigm shift promoting social entrepreneurship (Beinin, 2014). In addressing the need for social entrepreneurs and social innovation, there are numerous NGOs in Egypt that offer non-formal education that focuses on entrepreneurial skills and fostering social innovation. This is due to the lack of tools provided and encouragement given through formal education in Egypt to succeed as an entrepreneur (Fakoussa et al., 2020).

Social Entrepreneurs as Social Change Agents

Social entrepreneurship, as an approach to social change, has been on the rise. Research has shown that social entrepreneurship has potential for social and economic development in developing countries as well as in developed countries (Fakoussa et al., 2020). Although there has been some debate in the field of management regarding the dimensions and definition of social entrepreneurship, one research defined it as "a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs" (Mair & Marti, 2006, p.37). With the focus on social issues, particularly in countries with a plethora of social challenges, social entrepreneurship can become a catalyst for addressing social problems (Fakoussa et al., 2020). On the other hand, social entrepreneurship not only encourages social development but also encourages economic development such as contributing to the employment of members of the community and allowing room for innovation.

The major difference between social entrepreneurship and NGOs is that the structure of the social enterprises reduces the dependency on external finances such as donations and grants, and instead, utilize their external monies to grow their business rather than simply survive (Fakoussa et al., 2020). And although there are thousands of non-profits in Egypt, there has been

a shift to social entrepreneurial structure for the aforementioned reasons (Fakoussa et al., 2020). There is an evident redirection from non-profits to social entrepreneurship and an "appetite for social innovation, given that many pressing developmental issues are not being addressed by the public sector" (Fakoussa et al., 2020, p. 702), yet there are still many challenges that face social entrepreneurs starting up their own social enterprises. Research has found that a percentage of Egyptians share the sentiment that "the current political unrest in the country [is] a principal cause of the difficulties in realizing the full potential of social entrepreneurship" (Fakoussa et al., 2020, p. 702).

What distinguishes social entrepreneurship from other business organizations and entrepreneurship in general is that the focus on social value is greater than the focus on economic value. Although this does not mean that all social enterprises do not focus on profit, on the contrary, some models yield for a profit to guarantee financial viability (Mair & Marti, 2006). Social entrepreneurship has a large-scale benefit in that not only does it help alleviate social issues, but it is also a way to develop markets as well as expand economies (Seelos & Mair, 2005). For example, Sekem is a social enterprise in Egypt that started off small and grew into a multi-business firm. Sekem was founded by a single social entrepreneur with the vision of creating a sustainable system and to build a better future for Egypt (Mair & Marti, 2006).

Educators as Social Change Agents

Another type of social change agents discussed in the literature are teachers, or educators. In a study conducted on preservice urban elementary science teachers, researchers explain the importance of educators "having a social justice […] teacher identity," because "this identity is essential for teaching and acting to improve science learning experiences for traditionally

marginalized students, many of which are in urban schools, to have access and opportunity to learn science in empowering and transformative ways" (Moore, 2007, p. 608). The research Moore (2007) conducted on preservice teachers' identity as an agent of change led to many interesting findings. Some of the interviewees had a strong stance on the importance or rather a strong belief in that the responsibility of a teacher was to bring about change. One went so far as to say, "If a teacher does not believe she can bring about change, I would suggest finding a new career… (Clara; BC Final Reflections)" (Moore, 2007, p. 596). As the literature shows there is no one "social change agent mold" that fits all social change agents, so in order to better understand the identity of a social change agent and how they conceptualize themselves as social change agents it is helpful to listen to and understand their own narratives.

Narratives

Narrative identities or life stories are an individual's evolving reconstruction of their past and their imagined future (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Through the reconstruction of their past and their imagined future, individuals are able to give their lives a sense of unity, purpose, and meaning (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Giving individuals the platform to share their stories allows us to understand their subjective experiences, furthermore, to understand the interplay between the micro level experiences of individuals and the macro level societal and cultural contexts they are a part of (Leavy, 2014). Mclean et al. (2007) explain that over time people develop life stories wherein the story and themselves become one and the same. To further elaborate, they explain that over time as we share with ourselves and others' stories of who we are based on past experiences and memories, these stories become a part of how we perceive ourselves and thus influence the experiences we later have. For example, Mclean et al. (2007)

explain this process through a fictional story of a girl who lost her mother. The girl, 20 years old, at first shapes her experience as one of vulnerability with the aim of seeking support from those she relates her story to. As years passed, she reconstructed her story seeking meaning and coherence, later she developed a story that portrays personal growth and acknowledgement of the pain. As she now shares this new version of the story, she has also developed a new self-concept, one of resilience. Her new formed self-concept may then shape her future experiences, particularly new challenges.

Through narratives people explain their adaptation to suffering and the development and formation of their narrative identity, their evolving internalized life story (McAdams & McLean, 2013). McAdams and Mclean (2013) explain that, often, people adapt to life's difficulties by making sense of their situations through reconstructing a positive resolution from a bad experience. When narrating a bad experience, it allows the individual room for self-exploration which often leads them to lessons learned. This experience of learning from a difficult experience allows the individual to gain insight and perhaps enriching their lives in the long run (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

Narrating one's life story is a way individuals are able to make meaning of their experiences (McAdams & Mclean, 2013; Pratt & Fiese, 2004). Family stories that are shared and passed down through generations become interwoven in an individual's identity construction (Pratt & Fiese, 2004). Pratt & Fiese (2004) explain that "family stories serve as an important way of communicating, negotiating, and re-negotiating…. identity among their members" (p. 17). Individuals draw from their cultural, familial, and ancestral histories "from which the person's sense of self is constructed" (Pratt & Fiese, 2004, p.17). Hermans (1996) explains that identity

development is a “dialogic” process, “mutually influenced” by different voices or “perspectives of others” (as cited in Pratt & Fiese, 2004, p.166). Parent’s voices, stories, and experiences are intermeshed in an individual's narrative. Elder (1994) emphasizes four themes of an individual’s life trajectory, “the interplay of human lives and historical times, the timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives, and human agency in choice making” (p.5). These themes become evident throughout the storytelling process.

Elder (1994) explains the importance of paying attention to context when analyzing an individual’s life trajectory, that human lives are “typically embedded in social relationships with kin and friends…. The misfortune and the opportunity of adult children, as well as their personal problems, become intergenerational” (p. 6). Mclean and Syed (2016) further examine the interconnectedness of the macro environment on the development of personal identity through the influence of master narratives. Master narratives connect the individual to cultural structures including mainstream cultures, sub-groups within society, and family (Mclean & Syed, 2016). These narratives provide knowledge and guidance for cultural values, beliefs, behaviors, and activities (Mclean & Syed, 2016). They argue that these master narratives become a part of an individual’s identity negotiations and thus their personal narratives. Furthermore, individuals may deviate from these master narratives by creating alternative narratives, in which they recognize the dominant narrative and consciously oppose it (Mclean & Syed, 2016).

According to some psychologists the ability to construct life narratives emerges first in adolescence and continues through emerging adulthood (McAdams & McLean, 2013). The ability to narrate stories though starts in earlier years during childhood (Habermas & Silveira, 2008). But the coherence of narratives that express introspection and interpretation of events,

emerges in later adolescent years. Although some psychologists may debate about when during adolescence a narrative identity is formed, there is agreement among psychologists and social scientists alike that the narrative identity of an individual continues to evolve throughout adulthood (Habermas & Silveira, 2008; McAdams & McLean, 2013; McLean et al., 2007).

Only through the intricacies of gathering and the analysis of second-generation Western Muslim narratives, were Younis and Hassan (2019) able to explore and shed light on the complexity and fluidity of social identity development of the second-generation. In order to understand the process of a second-generation migrant's return and their conceptualization of becoming a social change agent in their ancestral homeland it is important to listen to their life trajectory, their narrative, to understand the developmental and environmental factors leading to the decision of returning and the shaping of their identity as an agent.

Research Question

As mentioned throughout, the aim of this research is to understand the process of second-generation Egyptians return journey to their parent(s)' homeland to create social change. The two main questions we pose here are: 1) How do second-generation Egyptians construct their narrative identity? 2) How do they conceptualize themselves as social change agents?

Methods

Positionality

It is important to acknowledge my unique positionality as a second-generation returnee who moved to Egypt as a social change agent, myself, to explain my research motivation and how my position may have influenced the research. I have always asked myself, where is home? While I lived in the U.S., I very strongly identified as Egyptian, and never as American, even

though I was born in the U.S. and grew up there for 18 years. My parents were very keen on having us visit every summer, and those visits were the one thing I looked forward to the most, all year long. I was always nostalgic to a place and time I had never lived. And for those 18 years I had always dreamt and longed to move ‘back' to Egypt and partake in social change. I was the only one out of three sisters who felt this way, and I always wondered why.

After finally moving to Egypt, upon finishing my undergraduate studies in the U.S., I was finally able to start to understand myself, put the pieces of my identity together, as Egyptian, as American, and as a social change agent. But I also started wondering how other second-generation social change agent returnee constructed their narrative identities.

Given my position and my own experiences, I was able to relate to many of the returnees’ stories. My ability to relate to their experiences helped me to empathize with them during the interviews, which allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and to feel understood. This was reflected by Ayah when she said at the end of the interview:

> No one really understand, here or there. And so, to talk to you about this stuff and you actually care, like I said, I haven't had much of an opportunity to do that. Not even with my family, like my Egyptian family who lives here (U.S.) …. I felt comfortable sharing these things with you, I wouldn't necessarily have felt comfortable opening up to someone I don’t know…. I felt a level of acceptance or understanding….

My personal position also helped guide me during the interview process and follow-up with questions to understand their story more deeply. As a researcher though, I tried to stay objective, but that is not to deny that my position may have influenced my perspective during the coding and analysis processes. This was also why I decided to ‘share authority’ with the participants and

collaborate with them by getting their feedback on how I represented their story in my findings and make any adjustments if needed based on their feedback (Leavy, 2014).

Participants

The focus of this study is on second-generation Egyptians who moved to Egypt as emerging adults, who have started to develop their identity during adolescence. These participants are also in their early adulthood years that their identity is continuously being shaped by their experiences, by societal expectations, and by formal operational thinking reaching maturity (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Nine interviews with four second-generation young-adult Egyptians were conducted for this study. The four participants were born and raised in the US and decided to move to Egypt to partake in social change.

Participants were recruited through personal networking and snowball sampling. Before selecting the participants, all potential participants who were interested filled out a criteria survey (see Appendix A) online to ensure they fit the description above. Fifteen people filled out the survey, five fit the criteria, and four were available for interviews. Those who fit the criteria were immediately contacted through a follow-up phone call, where the PI further explained the research process and answered any questions the participants had. During the phone call the interview date was set and then the consent form was sent via email, signed, and returned to PI before the first interview.

The four participants were given pseudonyms, Yousef, Mai, Ayah, and Hana. Yousef is 22 years old, he moved to Egypt nine months before the interview. His father is Egyptian, and his mother is American, they met in Dahab, a city by the Red Sea in Egypt, where they got married

and then moved to the US to start a family. Yousef moved his parents back to Dahab, with the exception of his brother.

Mai is 39 years old; she has been living in Egypt for eleven years and plans to move back to the US with her husband. Both her parents had immigrated to the US from Egypt where she was born and lived with them along with her two older brothers. Mai moved back to Egypt, alone, after both her parents had passed away in the US and after she had finished her graduate studies in peace and conflict resolution.

Ayah is 34 years old and lived in Egypt for nine years before moving back to the US in 2020. Her father is Egyptian who had met her American mother in the US where he was studying and working. Ayah moved to Egypt right after undergrad, she saw it as the perfect time in her life to help her connect with who she is, afraid that if she didn't go right away she would always have this tantalizing question of who she is?

Hana is 38 and has been back and forth between the US and Egypt since she got married in 2010 and has been officially settled in Egypt with her husband and two kids for seven years. Same with Ayah Her father is Egyptian who had met her American mother in the US where he was studying and working. Hana had met her current husband when she was a young girl on one of her family trips to Egypt.

Methodological Approach and Interview Structure

This study was conducted using narrative research methods. This method is most suitable to better understand how second-generation Egyptians came to their decision to move to Egypt as social change agents, how they conceptualize themselves as social change agents in Egypt, and the construction of their narrative identity. The aim here of a narrative interview is to capture

the richness of the participants' life's experiences (Adler, 2012). Narrative interviews are exhaustive, participants are usually interviewed in multiple sessions lasting from an hour to an hour and a half on average (Leavy, 2014). Along with considering the length and number of interviews, a researcher's resources and allocated time for the research was also taken into consideration while determining the number of participants to interview (Leavy, 2014). Previous research on similar topics using a narrative methodology were conducted on average one interview per month for a one-researcher project, and an average of seven interviews per month for a three-co-researcher project (Christou, 2006; King et al, 2011; Wessendorf, 2010). Given the previously mentioned factors of narrative interviews, and after doing a total of three pilot interviews with two participants, each interview lasting an average of an hour and a half, it has been concluded that two to three one-hour interviews will be conducted with five participants. Given the time constraint, and the non-responsiveness of the fifth participant, I could only interview four participants with a total of 10 and a half hours of interviews. Each participant was sent a copy of the consent form, which were sent back signed to the PI before the first interview was conducted. At the beginning of each first interview the participants were asked to confirm that they had read the consent form and if they had any questions regarding it. Upon also receiving their verbal consent the PI proceeded to record the interview. Given the current challenges and risks due to COVID-19, all the interviews were conducted via Zoom. The interviews were conducted in English.

As Leavy (2014) noted the extensive nature of oral life history interviews, she explains that most often the interviewers would create an interview guide rather than a list of questions. This guide serves as a prompt for the interviewer whenever needed during the interview, the goal

is to allow the participants to tell their stories with minimal interruptions (Leavy, 2014). The interview guide (see Appendix B) for this research includes the script (in bold), the process, notes, topics, and prompts. The interview was conceptualized as three parts: 1) growing up in America as a second-generation Egyptian, 2) the decision to 'return' to Egypt, experiences, and 3) values of being a social change agent in Egypt. Listening to their experiences growing up in America as a second-generation Egyptian helped in understanding their decision to move to Egypt as social change agents. Their narratives sheds light on their personal agency, values, and the influential factors. Compiling their experiences upon returning helped connect their conceptualization of creating social change in Egypt, their sense of belonging and understanding of home, and values as social change agents.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the recordings were transcribed using a transcription software and proof-read by the PI. The transcriptions were critical for two purposes, first to determine if any follow-up questions were needed to be asked in the consecutive interview, secondly for use in the analysis. Once transcribed each interviewed was analyzed using thematic analysis, a method which helps to identify, analyze, and report patterns found in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six phases of thematic analysis: reading the data to be familiar with it, coming up with initial codes, categorizing the codes under themes, reviewing the themes, refining the themes, and naming them, and finally creating the report. For this research there was a list of pre-determined potential codes (see Appendix C), the list served as a pool of possible codes, the codes listed are all in reference to common codes found in the literature and mentioned in the literature review above. During the analysis process the codes used were more

refined and relevant to the results. Since the narratives were exhaustive covering each returnee's life-trajectory, some codes overlapped with more than one of the major themes. This was reflected in the write-up of the results.

After the write-up of the results, they were sent to each of the participants for a validity check. The purpose of this was to make sure that each returnee confirmed that their voice was represented accurately. After their feedback there were only a couple factual edits, but overall, all were comfortable with the presentation of their interviews and their voice.

Ethical Considerations

The research was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. To ensure confidentiality, all recordings and transcripts are saved in a password protected folder on the PI's personal computer which is also password protected and not accessed by anyone other than the PI.

Results

The overall themes that emerged from the narratives of the four returnees are: 1) childhood family visits to Egypt, 2) their return journey to Egypt, 3) development of becoming social change agents, and 4) identity. Under the umbrella of these themes are sub-themes, some of which overlap with other themes. For example, we can see agency as a sub-theme in their childhood family visits to Egypt, their return journey, and their developing into social change agents. Furthermore, although identity is a theme on its own it was also a sub-theme throughout all the major themes. Throughout their journeys we get a sense of how the returnees' personal values, family history, fortuitous events, and historical context all influence their life-trajectory and narrative identity (Bandura, 2006).

Childhood Family Visits to Egypt

All four second-generation returnees visited Egypt at some point, with their family, when they were young. They also all visited Egypt independently before committing to moving to Egypt. Their stories included details from their childhood trips to Egypt and in these stories, they expressed a deep connection with their parent(s)' own experiences in Egypt. These multiple family trips aided in their image of what Egypt is, and was, and allowed for relationships with their extended family. Some experiences were noted to be more positive than others. Most were greeted with great warmth and a welcoming embrace, however, one returnee (Hana) was constantly harassed and always misunderstood by her family. These vastly different encounters while in Egypt led to very different experiences and sentiments towards the country.

Yousef did not have many trips to Egypt with his parents, yet the few trips he did have were significant in his growing appreciation for his family who resided in the country. One of the earliest times Yousef visited Egypt was when he was still a toddler. His mother was pregnant with his brother and his parents had decided to give birth in Aswan, surrounded by family. Although he was too young to recall details of the trip, he recognizes how it was a bonding moment for him and his brother with their Egyptian grandma. His trips to Egypt after that were few and far between. As he recalls these trips, he shared how he had wished he would have visited and stayed connected to his family in Egypt more than he had;

> I am coming and sometimes I feel like an alien because I haven't spent enough time here really. I have a lot of catching up to do…. it's hard not to feel like a tourist, but everyone welcomes me with open arms, even if they don't speak a lot of English, plenty of kisses and hugs, that's how they communicate.

One of his more memorable trips was when he visited Dahab for the first time, at around age 12. Yousef's parents had met in Dahab where his father was living at the time and his mother was vacationing. Although his father's family is from Aswan, Yousef and his family also have a special connection to Dahab, which is where Yousef settled when he moved back to Egypt.

Mai's travels to Egypt as a kid were influenced by her mother and her mother's connection with her family. During these trips, Mai saw her mother in a different light;

> It was always interesting because she also was a different person when we'd come to Egypt…. In Egypt she was just a strong, independent, confident woman who was not taking shit from anybody, and we would see that at home, like just with us, but we thought that was just like mom zone. But that was her.

Whereas in the U.S. Mai's mother was an immigrant who depended on her children to support her with phone calls and errands because she was less confident and comfortable with the language and culture.

Mai had fond memories of her trips to Egypt, she enjoyed spending time with her aunts, uncles, and cousins, and traveling with them to Port Said. She recalled one summer in particular, when she was much younger and was passed around from one aunt's house to another, while her mom was busy taking care of her grandmother who passed away that same summer,

> She would like drop me off at one aunt and then I wouldn't see her for like three or four days. And like aunts and uncles would just sort of pass me around, part of that was, um, like one of those summers my grandma was really sick, and she had passed away that summer…. So while very sad, I remember that being a very fun summer because it was like all the cousins together, lots of TV haha, but yeah, it would be mostly family time.

For Mai, time in Egypt was time to be with extended family.

Like Mai, Ayah spoke of her visits to Egypt when she was younger with reflections on and appreciation for her family. She often compared her family in Egypt to her family in the U.S,

> I think my strongest impressions of that time were like Egypt was a very exciting place with a lot going on. I remember comparing in my head my Egyptian family with my American family, and appreciating like really appreciating how warm and welcoming my Egyptian family was to us. I think that had a big impression on me. And that's maybe one of the lingering impressions I had, as I grew up of Egypt, the warmth and generosity. Those childhood visits definitely left me very curious, I would say, and open to going…

She noticed how her White-American mother embraced Egyptian culture even though it was different from her own. Ayah saw this embrace as a reflection of how wonderful her mother is. She saw that Egypt can be an intense place for foreigners, that the culture may "feel a little bit invasive" for some, but not her mother;

> My mom just kind of took it for what it was and the whole, you know, the fact that she doesn't speak Arabic….my aunts and uncles, none of them spoke English, but yeah, she, embraced it and all the adventure of life there and has all her funny stories, and they have the stereotypical picture of her on a donkey in the village that my dad had her do. I think she really appreciated Egypt and that, I'm sure, also had like an influence on me.

Ayah later visited Egypt on two occasions by herself without her family. Her dad's niece had stayed with them in the U.S. for a few years, allowing them to connect and bond leading Ayah to later have a reason to visit Egypt on her own;

> Someone who had influence on me was my cousin, my Egyptian cousin. So my, uh, my dad's sister's daughter. Okay. She came to live with us to do her master's [in the U.S.]. She stayed with us five years. So, during my childhood, she was there for middle school and then most of my high school. And then her visa ran out, so she had to go back. But she was a big influence on me. Her practice of Islam I feel was something that also really attracted me. I felt like she was just such a good person and she treated everyone with such respect, and she seemed to have a very sound foundation in the way that she interacted with other people…. during that time, I would say I just I got a lot more curious about like what it means to be Egyptian…. So after she left, I went and visited her.

Hana's visits left a less than favorable impression on her. Her experiences were difficult and quite uncomfortable. She did not find the warmth and comfort amongst her extended family like the other returnees. Hana recalls being cat-called on the street when she was only 11 years old, and this was a very troubling experience for her. What was even more troubling was that this happened when her family was with her, and no one did anything about it. She felt very angry and alone.

> So the problem for me looking, the way that I do is that every time I would go out, I would be like harassed. People would stop and stare. Like I would be 11 and there would be men cat calling me and stuff. And it was like a really really bad experience. And, um, nobody did anything about it, like I wasn't walking in the street by myself, my dad was there or my cousins were there or somebody was with me and nobody reacted whatsoever. And me being like the argumentative person that I was like ready to fight

> someone, and I was like what is going on? What is wrong with people here? And what is wrong with all of you that see it happening and you're not doing anything?…I really didn't enjoy them, my trips, I really didn't. And I don't really get along with my family here. They disagree with a lot of my beliefs and my lifestyle choices.

She also recalled how her mother's experience in Egypt was similar. People would stare at her mother a lot,

> She had a lot of the same experiences that I did, like going to the market was like an event. Cause everybody would comment on you. [But] so she took it very good naturedly. She didn't react the way I did. Um, but after that they didn't come back and she never, uh, I don't think she came back until I was much older, like in my teens for somebody's wedding or something like that….

After discussing her trips to Egypt during the first interview more memories of Hana's trips were unlocked. She remembered how her interactions with her family when she was younger played a role in her not feeling like she belonged amongst them or the culture,

> You had me thinking about like the trips I took here when I was little. And I remember that my cousins would always call me Khawaga. And, um, they got to the point where like they had said it so many times I asked my dad like, what is this? Like, what are they saying? And he's like, oh, that means foreigner, they're just being funny. And, and I remember being really mad about it and, and mad that like he thought I should just like, let it go or whatever. And I think that's kind of how they, they continue to view me even to this day. I think that part probably shaped like why I don't feel like I belong here, like in this culture, because that was my first experience with family.

The Return Journey

Trajectory of the Decision to Return

For the second-generation returnees, the decision to move to Egypt was based on multiple factors that spanned over years, before becoming a reality. It was not a spontaneous decision, some dreamt about it as young children in school, others would have never considered it had it not been for the fortuitous connections they made during their family trips. Nonetheless, to all of my interlocutors, moving to Egypt was a decision that came during a transitional phase in their life, at a time when it felt 'right' and made sense. Their stories included the confluence of historical events with deep questioning of their identity: Who am I? Where do I belong?

Yousef saw life in the US as a "weird bubble where the whole world doesn't touch it," he wanted to go to Egypt, a place he saw was more authentic, more "grounded, closer to the earth, closer to the people where people are more affectionate and less fake with you." To him, Egypt was what it means to accept the world for what it is, the real life where one can mature and grow, not some "dream land" as he saw the US to be.

While in the U.S, Yousef, and his family, were not able to constantly keep in touch with their family back in Egypt, yet he believed that it was important to have a connection with his extended family, "my father…definitely did not have enough connection with his family that he should have had. A whole ocean away and living there the whole time he missed out on a lot of family events." Yousef wanted more connection with his family, it was one of the reasons he decided to move to Egypt:

> It's more like a lack of nourishment. So, I wanted more of it just cause we were almost by ourselves. I had like one great uncle in America. Um, and so it was a lack of nourishment,

> so I needed more, I needed more, it was just me and my brother in the US, so it was more like I was missing out on that kind of thing. I was missing out on all my cousins and like on Facebook you couldn't really get a good a feel for anyone on Facebook. And so, you know, I wanted to see the real thing.

The turning point for Yousef was the COVID-19 pandemic; this historical event, and its resulting isolation fueled Yousef's serious questioning about whether or not the U.S. was home;

> We have nothing here, we have no family this is obviously not a home but maybe it was just like, we had each other and that was ok for a while. But so COVID was like a wakeup call, maybe the States isn't the best place to be in this kinda situation, a lot more lock downs, a lot more difficulties living there anywhere you were..…

It was during this time that Yousef, the producer of his own life, decided it was time to leave;

> And so it was really my decision, I was visiting Egypt applying to college there and visiting family I hadn't seen in years, I got back right before COVID really shut down the whole world….But it was then I decided we should all move to Egypt.

Yousef packed up their house and pets and moved his family, parents and brother, to Dahab.

Unlike Yousef, Mai and her parents stayed in touch with their family in Egypt frequently. They visited Egypt multiple times and were connected to their extended family by keeping in touch and calling them often. Mai was not necessarily missing connection like Yousef was, but she still felt she was missing out on family events. Her decision to return was a journey in itself. Her journey started with herself, what she needed, what she was missing out on. Over the years her path to return became more and more clear to her;

> It was some point in high school, I had put in my head that when I finish school, I would wanna live in Egypt. A big part of it was coming every year. There were people who had passed away. There were people that were born in the family, people who had gotten married. And so just always feeling like I, I missed out on something…. So, there was that like wanting to feel like I was more part of the family, and I don't know, or maybe on some subconscious level, it was like, well, if I live in Egypt, maybe I'll be more Egyptian then or I'm sure identity played into it some way, but not in a way that I was really consciously aware of.

Another reason Mai gave as to why she wanted to move to Egypt was that she believed it would be easier to find a partner there who she could connect with than it would be in the US;

> It was umm I don't know how to word it, like boy related, like knowing that to find a partner that my parents would be okay with and that it would probably be easier to find an Egyptian who's open minded and progressive than it would be to find somebody in the US who would know about my Egyptian side. So like introducing the Egyptian to the American in me would be easier than introducing the American to the Egyptian in me.

After her freshman year of undergraduate studies, Mai took a gap year where she traveled to Egypt and three other countries. During her stay in Egypt, she worked at a shelter for street children; it was during this visit that she experienced what it would be like to live in Egypt as an adult, contrasted to her family trips. The time in Egypt, during her gap year, was a milestone in her life, she got to discover more about herself and where she sees herself going next.

Mai was in graduate school studying peace and conflict resolution when the Arab spring happened, this historical event and alignment with her studies and lingering desire to return made

her decision more concrete, she saw that "this would be an opportunity to sort of start my life there. So, an idea that came to me in high school and just sort of waited for when the time was good." The fact that her family had an apartment there and her aunts and uncles lived nearby brought her some ease in taking the decision.

Ayah's decision to return was a buildup of her curiosity to learn more about herself, her heritage, and her religion. Her desire to learn more about who she was began as a result of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, this historical moment, although traumatizing, catalyzed her need to explore her identity. She was in middle school when September 11 happened, and until this point in time she never felt different from her peers. She did not particularly connect with her Egyptian side or as a Muslim. September 11 was a turning point in her identity formation;

> I remember at that time, when they were talking about Muslims and Islam and like 9/11, I knew that's me. I felt so self-conscious and I was like, did I do something wrong? It started to be important to me that, you know, I need to learn more about who I am. I know that these things that people are saying are not true. I kind of shifted from the phase when I was, maybe, younger where I wanted to be like everybody else. Like I am what I am. I don't need to be like everybody else… and had more of a desire to get to actually know more what it would mean to be Egyptian and Muslim.

In high school and throughout college, Ayah's self-questioning intensified and encompassed both her cultural and religious identity. She compared herself to her brother, who unlike herself, did not have the same need to understand what it means to be Egyptian, "it was never important to him….his friends would like tokenize him as like the Egyptian one, they made a little king Tut head dress for him to wear at prom and stuff like that, but it wasn't important to him to know

what's behind being Egyptian." Whereas Ayah would ask herself, "I was like, well, am I Egyptian? Like my dad is Egyptian. I technically am half Egyptian. But like, am I really? What about me is?"

During her undergraduate studies she started to learn Arabic as a way to explore and better connect with that side of her. Her senior year in college was when the revolution sparked. She followed it closely and it gave her "so much hope and inspiration." When she graduated, she figured she was "not tied down to anything, it's a great time to go for a year," to learn Arabic, understand herself, and begin to answer these tantalizing questions of who she is. As she reflects on when she made the decision she explains how "the alignment of the revolution happening, it (the decision) kind of crystallized and that need to get to know this part of my identity, or I'll regret it for the rest of my life."

Hana, contrary to the other returnees, never saw herself moving to Egypt, in fact she knew she never previously wanted to. During her visits with her family, she had fortuitously met the man who later became her husband, and it was only when he proposed that she considered living in Egypt. Her decision to move to Egypt was a decision based how much she loved her husband and on the practicality of living in Egypt given his work;

> So it wasn't until like we got engaged that we started thinking about, well, like where are we going to live?… I was finishing my first masters at the time, and his business was already well-established, and he was earning a lot more than I was at that stage in my career. So, we decided like, okay, we'll move to Egypt, I'll do something there, I'll be a consultant or whatever. And so that was the only reason I thought about moving back here. Honestly, ~~there,~~ there was never a possibility in my mind or that I would move here.

> Like when people would ask me about Egypt, I would say like, it's really nice to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there…

She knew the transition would be difficult for her, as she did not have friends or family, she was close with, and she did not speak Arabic. She made the decision to move to Egypt with her husband based purely for her relationship and practical/financial reasons.

Upon Returning

Landing in Egypt for each returnee was an entirely new experience, a whole new world unlike the one they had left behind. Each returnee's journey was unique and different, but through the journey itself, and their time in Egypt, they all experienced self-growth.

Yousef, the most recent returnee, found himself settling in quite smoothly. Right away he felt more comfortable within his new community than he did in the US. He quickly felt that sense of home and belonging that he had been missing;

> I felt like I got more here than I did in the US, immediately more community, like I could just talk to anyone that I wanted to, it didn't feel like I had to be cold and alone, or I had to walk past people on the street and not say hi like I did in the States.

He started volunteering and getting involved in the community right away. He was very thankful that he "found a lot of like-minded people that made me feel at home." Yousef compares himself to his brother, who unlike himself felt more connected to his life and friends in the U.S., "my brother yea he really wanted to go back with his friends, live the New York life, play basketball…he identified as someone who played basketball, but no one here played basketball really you know."

Although, Yousef felt like an “alien” coming back because he had not spent enough time in Egypt previously, he quickly felt at home. Nine months into his return, he feels like he belongs. There was a sense of ease in the transition.

Mai also felt a certain ease moving to Egypt, knowing she had her parent’s apartment available to her, and although she was alone, without her parents and her brothers, she didn’t feel alone knowing she had her aunts and uncles nearby. She applied to jobs as soon as she landed, and while waiting to hear back she did some traveling where she fortuitously ended up meeting the man who is now her husband. As exciting as the move was and starting a new chapter of her life, there were still some challenges she faced. Her transitioning to life in Egypt meant “establishing who Mai was on her own in her family [which] I think is still a process to a certain degree, so like establishing [and] figuring out, what are my boundaries both professionally and privately.” Although not a stranger to the place or the language, she quickly realized she had a lot to learn, Mai explains “it was challenging figuring out work culture, figuring out language, not in terms of like the Arabic language, but I mean those nonverbal cues, or if somebody says one thing it actually means something else.”

Ayah is very introspective about her time in Egypt; she moved to Egypt at a transitional time politically, socially, and personally. She was excited about what was to come after the revolution, and about her own experiences. She felt the same warmth and welcoming upon her return, that she felt during her visits. Although she did not know from the start that she would want to stay in Egypt for as long as she did, she did know what she wanted to get out of her time in Egypt. When she recognized that her early experiences did not give her the feel of the land like she wanted, she took steps in a different direction to achieve her goals;

> I did the AUC [Arabic] program for the first semester. I did not like AUC. I didn't feel like it was representative of Egypt. I felt like I was being isolated from what I wanted to get to know and to be learning. And so I left after that first semester, I was like, this is not working for me, and I started to do these private Arabic classes at like a little language institute. It was a shift in my experience, and I did feel like I really got to know Egypt….

Ayah had initially intended to stay in Egypt for the length of the Arabic program at AUC, nine months. During that first year she was going to a language institute and working on social issues such as anti-sexual harassment, and when after her initial year was up, she decided to stay; "so after that first year I decided to stay in Egypt…. even though I had a like theoretical plan to return after nine months, [that changed] the more that I got there…."

Ayah ended up staying in Egypt for nine years, this decision though, did not sit well with her parents, "my parents, very explicitly, every single year of the nine years I was there, were constantly telling me to come back. To the point it weighed on me a lot." And although she did not want to make her parents unhappy, Ayah felt the need to stay; she was compelled to continue her journey and see where life took her. Ayah's narrative of her return journey showed a lot of personal growth and agency.

> I was so curious, and I wanted to learn more and I felt there was no way I could go back now does not feel right at all. But I was hesitant, at the same time, to stay….it was more like I have a life here, my life was important to me, I had friends and a community. I'm always someone who, in my work, I wanna feel like I'm making a difference for people, working towards creating like a world in which there is more social justice. So, I felt like I was doing that to an extent at the NGOs that I worked in.

Ayah realized how her move not only affected her, but many of those who she crossed paths with. She saw that her decision to move to Egypt contradicted many Egyptian's sentiments about migration, including her parent's, especially, her father;

> Egyptians loved the idea of someone who grew up in America coming back. It made everyone feel so good…. you know, cause it's always the other way around, you know, it's always people leaving Egypt, going to the US, going to Europe, trying to find opportunity cause they don't have those opportunities in Egypt. And so it's always this kind story, you know, and that's my dad's story.

Ayah's narrative of return shows a lot of personal growth, self-reflection, and agency. Although she faced many challenges, personally, socially, and professionally, Ayah was very grateful for the time she spent in Egypt. She recognized how much courage she had, allowing herself to step out of her comfort zone, to learn a new language, and navigate through a new culture;

> I remember how I felt so incredibly grateful at that time to be able to have that experience. I remember that very distinctly just being like I've been able to come here and to see what life is like in Egypt and to make this connection. It was something that I would, I think repeat often in my prayers, just being very grateful for being able to, to have that experience… I think learning a new language, you have to have like an openness, like you have to get a vulnerability. And I know that there are a lot of people who are not willing to do that, they don't wanna be vulnerable in that way. And like I'm proud of myself for allowing myself to be like that…

Hana's journey was uniquely different, she got married and moved to Egypt, but she did not settle down until a few years later. For the first five years, Hana and her husband traveled back and forth to the U.S. often. Hana had her two children in the U.S. They finally settled and bought an apartment in Cairo when her eldest started kindergarten. Her transition to Egypt was simultaneous with her transition into the roles of wife and mother;

> I still didn't have any friends or anybody to talk to, or anything like that. So it was really, a very hard time…. I had one child in kindergarten and one child still at home that was now diagnosed as autistic. And I was at home with him all day. And it was quite a challenge.

During her early years in Egypt, she had distressing experiences that were similar to what she experienced in her earlier visits. People continued to stare at her on the streets, to the point where she noticed a guy was following her while she was out running errands. As she recalled this incident, she shared how afraid she was, how she was continually distraught during her early period in Egypt. Her move to a country she had not had the best experiences in previously, her spending a lot of time alone while her husband was at work, and her newfound role as a mother were all challenging experiences that did not leave much room for her to find her own footing. It took her years to find a community within Egypt that she felt she could be herself in;

> Basically my days [were spent] taking care of the kids…. It wasn't until my [youngest] started KG 2, that I decided that he was settled enough that I could actually now do something for myself…. that's when I applied as a professor. So, the community I have here is the one that I've met at work. And that's basically the only community I've had in

> a long, long time, that I've been here. They're special to me because I have a difficult time meeting people and making friends.

Becoming a Social Change Agent

Becoming, or identifying as a social change agent was not a decision these agents made over night. It was a journey of understanding themselves within the world they lived in. Although 'social change agent' was not necessarily the first term they used, based on the work they do and the values they believe in, they fit the definition of social change agents. Even though there was no unanimity to the term used, whether it was peace builder, activist, advocate, social change warrior, or social change agent, they all did have a great sense of responsibility to do something to make the world a better place, to use their resources and their privilege to foster empowerment, open the doors to dialogue, spread awareness, and preserve the environment.

All agents were either directly or indirectly connected to the social issues they worked towards solving. Yousef, as an architect, was invested in sustainable architecture, and leading a sustainable lifestyle. Mai, as a member of a minority group in the U.S., was able to connect with and work on issues that impact minorities in Egypt. Ayah, as a woman, a Muslim, and a social change agent, was invested "being rooted" in any community she works with needs. Hana, as a mother and an educator, was concerned with creating and advocating for inclusivity.

Yousef saw that being a social change agent meant, as "cliche" as it may be, "be[ing] the change you want to see in the world." He believes he can "make the world better with architecture," and to him it is quite "obvious" what he has to do;

> Obvious things go from little things to big things, an obvious thing to do would to be, not use so much plastic, get reusable bags. A bigger thing to do might be to design your

> house in a way that doesn't use as much AC from the ground up and so you don't have to use so much electricity and be wasteful and stuff like this.

Yousef felt a great sense of belonging upon moving to Egypt and connecting with a local community that also believes in sustainable architecture.

Mai at a young age witnessed firsthand the prejudices within the Egyptian society during her summer visits. She described the social change work she does in Egypt and reflected on moments from her childhood that influenced her becoming a social change agent;

> I've mostly been doing peace building work between Muslims and Christians in Egypt, specifically in Upper Egypt. Projects that build relationships between them because they live, Muslims and Christians, they live in the same communities, but there can be neighbors that share a physical wall, but they don't know anything about each other…. I grew up seeing this get worse, which is a big reason why I wanted to work on this. One of my aunts lives in a building with Christians that I remembered I would pass by one of their places and everybody used to have their doors open and I would just walk in and, say hi, have a cup of tea, and then go up to my aunt. And then at some point in high school doors started closing and I wasn't allowed to do that anymore. So [I] want[ed] to be a part of something that would open the doors again.

For Mai, being a social change agent is "just a process of seeing something that I didn't think was good and wanting to be proactive about it." Mai ended up studying peace and conflict resolution in graduate school before moving back to Egypt. She decided on pursing this degree as she reflected on her values, and pieced together that peace was a fundamental value she believed in. Creating peace and wanting to "stand up for a group that doesn't always get to have

their voice heard," were reasons why Mai decided to become a social change agent. As a member of a minority group in the US herself, she was able to relate to the injustices brought on from prejudices within the society in Egypt.

> I think I might also feel it because in the US I'm considered a minority. And so, I can feel, sort of, the struggle and feel, sort of, the daily fear that a lot of Christians in this country, are feeling. I realized it once I started working that I had this unique perspective that I could use my, my role and privilege to help, sort of, bridge that, that gap that existed between the two.

Mai is a part ~~of apart~~ of several networks of peace builders, both in Egypt and internationally, who she stays in contact with and attends conferences with annually. She explained that she feels a great sense of belonging among her networks of peace builders, among people who believe in peace and social justice as she does.

Since high school, Ayah, had known that she was interested in helping others, she volunteered a lot then, but it wasn't until her undergraduate studies and her experiences in college did her belief and understanding of social justice solidify.

> I majored in international development studies, that major at UCLA, was an equity oriented major because they did focus on the inequities that were caused by the systemic inequities that maintained the dichotomy between developed and developing nations.

As a part of the Muslim Student Association on campus, she tutored and mentored students from underserved communities. She truly appreciated having that community who thought the same way about recognizing their privilege and using what they "were given to help empower others,"

> It was nice because they came to it from also like a religious perspective, the idea that, you know, recognize your privilege, whatever privilege you're given, it's been given to you, like it's not anything you earned, anything you deserve. And so actually you have like a right to use what you were given to help empower others. And it's not charity and it's not something you're doing out of the kindness of your heart, it's something that you're actually, kind of instructed to do in Islam almost. That is what I believe too.

It was significant for Ayah to be a part of a community that strives to create positive social change, she explained how "the idea that community and we all believe in the same thing and like our hearts are oriented in the same direction," is something that is important in her feeling a sense of belonging.

Hana's path to becoming a social change agent was not one she had anticipated, but one she found as part of her role as a parent and an educator. When she faced issues with the schools in Egypt discriminating against her son because he has a learning disability, she saw it her responsibility to advocate for him and to educate others on learning disabilities and inclusive education. So went on to pursue a Masters in order to educate herself about inclusive education, in pursuit of gaining the tools and the knowledge to advocate for her son and the neuro divergent. She then went on to do her PhD in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. By combing both disciplines, as a social change agent she focuses on creating an inclusive environment within her classroom and professional community. She aims to prepare her "students with special educational needs to enter the workforce after they finish their education." It was within her professional community whilst advocating for equity that Hana began to feel a sense of belonging.

Identity

What Does it Mean to be Egyptian?

During each second-generation returnee's journey, they all experienced different meanings as to what it is to be Egyptian. Some based it on how others saw them, some based it on how they felt, and others based it on the values they believed in. Being Egyptian encompassed different factors for each, but what they all had in common was that their experiences in Egypt helped them develop and continue to negotiate their understanding of how they identified themselves.

Yousef, Ayah, and Hana realized their unique position, not only as second-generation Egyptians, but as multiracial second-generation Egyptians. All three are only Egyptian through their fathers who were the first-generation immigrants, in their family, to the U.S. When Yousef moved to Egypt, he felt like he had to prove to the people that he is in fact Egyptian. He said as he laughed;

> In the States, I am very American, I come here I can tell everyone can tell, but I tell people 'ana nos Masry' (I'm half Egyptian) but they all go 'ok ok'… And I kind of have to prove it to them even though I got the eyes and everything you know, Egyptian eyes.

When asked what he is, he has an answer ready, but he dives a little deeper and explains how he feels, he also explains how he is not bound to just one place;

> When people ask me what I am, yeah I'll say I'm from New York, I'm half Egyptian. Um, but like inside, I don't know. I feel like an enigma…I feel like I'll never like really belong to one place, even if I settled down for super long, in a way it's a, it's a blessing. I can go anywhere. I can be anything. I can just be myself, once you're like not beholden to one

> place or another you can completely be whoever you really are, instead of labeling yourself, instead of saying, I should be a New Yorker and eat meatball subs, or whatever, or I should be Egyptian and eat koshary (an Egyptian pasta dish) every day, you can just do whatever you want, really.

Ayah, during her summer visits, noticed how her family in Egypt treated one another, and this was something she continued to observe when she traveled there during college and when she later moved to Egypt. She began to see the communal lifestyle in Egypt as a value that she, herself, appreciated and saw that she would like to integrate that into her own value system;

> I really appreciated how they just kind of take care of each other in the most basic of ways, if someone's going to buy something, you know, they'll buy meat for the whole family or they'll get bread for the whole family. And um, you know, this person comes over to get their share of the bread or this person comes over to get their share the meat… Or my aunt will cook for her daughter who just had a baby…. In terms of like, feeling a sense of belonging in Egypt…the more that I lived there one thing I was able to reconcile for myself was like, okay, I did get a connection with this sense of like Egyptian identity and or Egyptian culture, and that's what I wanted to know, you know. I think I came to the conclusion that I am this person that lives in kind of an in between space.

What bothered Ayah though was that she found herself being labeled as Egyptian for doing certain activities that fit a certain class;

> People would always say to me, ‘ah enty 5alas ba2ety masreya’ (oh you’ve become Egyptian) because I'd like do certain things. I remember one of the NGOs I worked at, some of the friends I made were like Egyptian-Egyptian, and they would joke that I was

> the most Egyptian out of them. The reason they would say that was because I would take mowaslat (public transportation). Or I'd visit my family in Damanhoor (a city on the countryside). I feel like, on their end, it was a classist kind of thing. And me doing certain things that people of their social class didn't do made it more Egyptian. It's like you guys are Egyptian too, you're just, you're a different class in Egypt…And I think in as much as like, you know, I felt Egyptian, I definitely just always felt Egyptian-American the entire time I was there.

Hana also struggled with fully identifying in either places, she paints a picture of her neither here nor there relationship with both the US and Egypt;

> If you imagine them as being two puddles, I'm standing with one foot in each, right? I'm not completely immersed in either one, so I have an outsider's perspective on both. When you can put yourself in the outside perspective it's hard for you to feel like you truly belong there completely.

Hana's identity negotiations and renegotiations are clearly seen as she shares her thoughts on the subject after teaching her class about cultural identities;

> I was actually just talking about this in class yesterday with my class. I identify as Egyptian American. But I have always seen myself as being an observer of both of those groups. I don't really consider myself a part of either fully, you know, I have one foot in each and that makes me not fully anywhere. So I look at both cultural identities very critically…. When I'm in the states, I feel more comfortable. So I guess that means that I identify more that way. But I would never tell anybody when I'm there that I'm American. I always say I'm Egyptian American. Like I always have to qualify it, I am different. And

> here, I tell people I am American because, obviously, if they're asking they don't think I'm Egyptian, and if we get real into it, then I tell them I am half and half, 'oh, okay', like that explains it.

The people Hana is surrounded by were just as confused as to who she was and how they should interact with her, which proved to be an issue during her transition/move to Egypt;

> I very much feel that I'm very much a mystery to people here. And so they don't know how to treat me. They don't know if they should try to talk to me in English. They don't know if they should try to talk to me in Arabic. They don't know what I am at all…So yeah, I think that's another big problem with the transition is that people don't have a nice stereotype or pigeonhole to put me in. So, all of my interactions with people, even people I know, are very awkward, because they don't have norms to use to guide them or to interpret me. And so it's just very tiring, you know?

With Mai's identity negotiations, we can clearly see her thought process and struggles to figure out who she is. As she related her experiences, she explained her want to be 'claimed.' We can also see her personal growth as she realized what was more important to her;

> If there's a spectrum, on one side is Egyptian and the other side is American. I don't know where I am on this spectrum. Cause whenever I'm in the US, I feel very connected to Egypt. Whenever I'm in Egypt, my Egyptian-ness is always questioned or whatever, 'let you be on north Africa, but we really won't claim you for our own'.

Even after living in Egypt for several years, Mai was always being questioned about where she is from because of her accent. At work, as she facilitated sessions, she learned to always introduce herself as Egyptian American and 'hence the funny accent;'

> In my work I do a lot of facilitation, and I found, when I first started facilitating, people wouldn't listen to like the first 10 minutes of whatever it was I was saying, until one person would ask, ‘where are you from’ to sort of figure my accent out, cause my accent in Arabic, it's unfamiliar. [After that initial experience] I found that when I would introduce myself, I would say, from the get-go, ‘I was born and raised in the US, that's why you might think I talk funny.’

After 12 years of living in Egypt, and her Arabic naturally improving, she still felt the need to introduce herself that way, but recently she got different feedback;

> They were sorta like, you know, ‘you have an accent, but why did you say we wouldn't understand you?’ And I'm like, ‘I don't know. I'm used to people not understanding what I'm saying.’ ‘No, it's fine.’ So, then I started to try not to introduce myself that way. And I found that at the very end, they would just be like, ‘oh, you have an interesting accent, is that common in Cairo?’ And I'm like, 'oh, okay. You placed me in the country’…. Even though I say I don't care, I know there's like still a part of me that wants to be claimed…. I might want to try and prove myself professionally as a peace builder, but I don't find myself like trying to prove how Egyptian I am…. I think I had to live in Egypt to realize that there isn’t any one way to “be” Egyptian, which probably helped me in arriving at not putting so much stock in being seen as Egyptian.

What Does it Mean to be a Social Change Agent?

Although each social change agent journey to become an agent was different and unique, they all believe that to be a social change agent is to act upon their values. Whether they act upon them and spread awareness in their immediate social circles, or if they incorporate these values

in their daily lives, or on a bigger community and societal level, there was a consensus among all participants that what defines an agent is not just their values, but the actions they take based on these values.

Yousef explained in a straightforward manner the importance his values are in how he sees himself as a social change agent;

> I am a social change agent and the way I improve myself is through my values. A social change agent needs to value, honestly, God given rights, the abilities that He's given us… this is the most important thing to value because they allow good change to flow through us. Otherwise, we value, like as a society, a lot of times we will say we value these things like God given rights, or we might say we value freedoms, but then we act like we value gold more over human life…. And so as a social change warrior, you need to allow society to change how it will, you can't control society. Otherwise people will use the control over society to change it to just get gold basically, and just get wealth and just get shallow things…. personally having the values is very important step and it may be the first step, of course, in becoming a social change agent. And I think once you truly hold those values within your personality, then the change will happen naturally. These values are evident given by God. And once you acknowledge that, you will see God's will using you as a tool to change society in a step towards these values.

As Mai and Ayah shared their beliefs of what it means to be a social change agent, they explained how their experiences as agents in Egypt, in particular, shaped their understanding of who they were as agents. They both spent around a decade in Egypt working in the development sector, in either NGOs or social enterprises. They both faced many physical and mental burdens

during their time in Egypt as social change agents. Along with the many challenges they faced they reflected a lot upon how one should adapt to these challenges.

Mai expressed how being a social change agent in Egypt, although rewarding, came with its fair share of challenges. Mai had moved to Egypt the Fall after the Arab Spring, at a time Egypt was going through a transitional phase. There were still a lot of security issues that affected social change agents in particular. At that time there were NGO raids and random security checks everywhere you went. Mai explained how the political and social climate was quite stressful and that it also took a physical toll on her. Just leaving her house and making sure she was prepared for the day was an extra element of stress that she only experienced in Egypt;

> There was a time where I was also leaving my cell phone at home because security was stopping people randomly to look through their phones…. And so like little things like that that are always going through your mind or, you know, what do I have in my bag today? Is it possible for me to go on the Metro or are they going to stop me? Are they going to hassle me, do I have to spend more money and take a taxi? Am I wearing clothing that is not going to get me harassed in the streets?

Mai shared an interesting analogy, she had heard from someone, of how she viewed her and others' relationship with Egypt;

> Loving Egypt is sort of like being in an abusive relationship. Like she really knocks you down and you still make excuses for her. Like, oh, you know, she, she was just tired today and she really didn't know how to vocalize how she was feeling. She really gives you a beating.

She continued with the same analogy and explained what it means to her to be a social change agent in Egypt;

> So that she's a little less abusive if you have people around you. If I did something that helps a bubble form some sort of support, so they can [help] each other…. that is amazing…. what it means to me is helping people take control of their communities and realizing what sort of beautiful resources they have around them.

Ayah had moved to Egypt around the same time as Mai had, during a transitional phase, the Fall after the revolution. Given the same political and social climate, Ayah had her own "evolution" as a social change agent. Her experiences in Egypt directly shaped her beliefs and what it means to her to be a social change agent. She began to recognize the importance of change starting at a micro level;

> I had a kind of an evolution where I figured out, maybe, this really large-scale political change, maybe it's not happening now, maybe it's, not the right time, but, and I kind of started to also feel, for a revolution to be successful in the first place…. there has to be change at the level of each individual.

Ayah defines "social justice oriented change" as being "able to access their agency and take an active role in just building or pursuing the lives that they would want for themselves," this means being "rooted in working towards what the people want for themselves" and not imposing one's own views.

There were times when Ayah questioned how much she, one single person, can really do, she recognizes that social change agents need to be resilient;

> You have to be able to weather the ups and downs because social change is such a long process and it's not something that's gonna happen overnight, so many disparate efforts over a long period of time. And so if you're not in it for the long haul, it's almost like there's no point. You have to go into it with the understanding or like the expectation that it will be like that.

For Ayah, being a social change agent, is not just a career, to her, it's a responsibility;

> How I see it for me is, I see a problem, this is something that needs to be changed, the situation of injustice, I need to do something about it. To me it's tied back to what I see in Islam as like my responsibility to do that.

Hana sees the importance of even the smallest acts, such as starting with your inner most circle as just as important as working on a macro scale. She believes in applying her values as an agent in as many aspects of her life as possible;

> I think if you want to see yourself as like a social change agent, you have to actually be doing something. Now, the something you do doesn't have to be enormous. It could be advocating for your kids' rights at your school. Or it could just be talking to your friends about your kid having autism or dyslexia or whatever it is, and not speaking about it in derogatory terms. You know? You don't have to do a lot, but you have to do something. If you believe in social change but you don't do anything, then you're not a change agent….

For Hana, being a social change agent is not about the praise, it's about catalyzing social justice and equity;

> In professional circles, whenever I tell people my research interests, or advocate for autism and things like that, there's a lot of appreciation and kind of a lot of praise that

goes along with it. Which I find kind of strange, honestly, because to me like you shouldn't be praised that you're doing something amazing, just for trying to get people the rights they already are entitled to.

All four, at one point in their narrative journey, became more concerned with their identity as social change agents than with their cultural identity. As they struggle to understand themselves in respect to what makes them Egyptian, we can see, in particular narratives that at one point they start to accept that there will always be something that will set them apart from the rest, but they are more concerned with establishing themselves within the social change causes they work for. Feeling Egyptian was very much correlated to being 'seen' or 'claimed' as Egyptian by Egyptians. And although it was easier to 'claim' being Egyptian while in the U.S., it proved more challenging while living in Egypt. Whether or not though, they were 'seen' or 'claimed' as Egyptian, what mattered most to all our returnee agents, was making a difference in society, creating positive change.

Discussion

Through the stories of Yousef, Mai, Ayah, and Hana, we can see the complex interaction between family, sense of belonging, decision to return, on their identities, both in terms of culture and as a social change agent. We found that their mothers' experiences, their encounters with their family in Egypt, and their need to belong and be present for family events greatly influenced and shaped the returnees' own experiences and their desire, or lack thereof, to return. These second-generation Egyptian identity negotiations were evident throughout their narratives. And although all four return journeys were different, they all found a great sense of belonging amongst communities that shared the same social justice beliefs.

The Value of Narrative Research

Narrative research, in this study, was most appropriate, because, as Leavy (2014) explained, it allowed us to examine the micro and macro factors at play in their decision making and identify formation. We were able to connect the dots in their personal history as well as their family's that influenced their understanding of who they are, as well as the environmental factors that catalyzed their 'self-searching' journey. By sharing their stories, the returnees were also able to reflect more deeply upon their journeys. By narrating their stories out loud, they began to piece together aspects of their lives to make sense of their experiences. We saw this with Hana, when after the first interview, returned to the second interview with memories she had unlocked about her encounters with her family in Egypt. She was then able to piece together how these encounters shaped her sentiments towards ~~to~~ family and Egypt later in life. All four returnees at one point during the interviews expressed how much they appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences, and how it enabled them to reflect on what mattered the most to them. Collecting narratives, not only allows the researcher to better understand the intricacies of a returnee's journey, but it allows the returnees themselves to create meaning, interpret experience, and find a sense of unity or purpose in their stories (McAdams & McLean, 2013). This was evident with Mai who as she was discussing what it meant to be Egyptian, recognized that she would always be seen as 'different' and that made her realize that what mattered to her more, was proving herself as a social change agent.

Childhood Visits and Mother's Experiences

All four returnees had visited Egypt with their families, at least a couple of times when they were young. Three of the returnees shared similar recollections of warm and welcoming

experiences during their family visits to Egypt. As Wessendorf (2010) explained, these "positive experiences during holidays and a feeling of embeddedness within a network of relatives and friends…. are among the driving factors leading to roots migration" (p.375). Hana, though, recalled harsher memories that stayed with her and that was echoed in her experiences when she moved to Egypt as an adult.

What is striking though, is that all four returnees' experiences while in Egypt were very similar to their own mothers' experiences. When narrating their stories and describing their relationship to Egypt and their childhood visits, each returnee, on their own, shared their mother's experiences. The fact that each returnee found it important to share their mother's experiences, and reflected on it, signifies how much a parent's own story plays a role in a person's narrative. It becomes a part of how they understand themselves and their parents, and also influences their own personal experiences (Pratt and Fiese, 2004). Individuals draw certain elements from their family's stories that help create meaning for their own experiences (Mclean & Syed, 2016; Pratt & Fiese, 2004).

Perhaps their mothers' experiences and sentiments regarding Egypt were projected onto them, or they were just influenced by what they saw/heard in their mother's experiences, or maybe aspects of their mothers' experiences that resonated with their own. These connections may have been a factor in their decision to move back, having seen how their own mothers interacted and felt about the place. As Elder (1994) explained, the life course is greatly influenced by linked or interdependent lives of individuals, mostly that of family. Not only did Mai notice how her mom was more confident and independent while in Egypt, which was a different light than she was accustomed to seeing in the U.S., upon returning to Egypt we also

see Mai relating her own strength and independence. Her mom had a very clear and obvious presence in the family, and very early on, when Mai moved to Egypt, she began to establish her own role within the family. Ayah very notably appreciated how she saw her mom embrace Egypt in a way she did not notice most foreigners do. Throughout Ayah's journey in Egypt and her recollection of the years she spent in Egypt, she also exhibited similar appreciation and embracing of Egypt for all the warmth and the challenges that accompanied living there. Hana's own painful childhood memories, and struggles upon returning, involved a lot of harassment and catcalling on the streets, a lot of misunderstanding and tension amongst her family in Egypt because she was different. Which is very similar to her own sharing of her mother's experience after having living in Egypt for a year, and then later not visiting again. Both Hana and her mother did not want to live in Egypt and would prefer not to. Prior research has found that parents' memories influenced second-generation returnees' own experiences and need for return (King et al., 2011), and also that the stories of earlier generations became a part of the second-generations narrative (Ahmed, 1999). The results of the current study confirm these findings, and also shed light on how much parents' own experiences can become connected to a second-generation returnee's relationship to the homeland.

Role of Family

In the literature, we saw that many first-generation migrants kept in touch with their family back home (Wahba, 2014; Wessendorf, 2010). This was true amongst the returnees' parents as well. Most of the returnees' Egyptian parents tried to keep touch with their families and sent back remittances. As the returnees constructed and shared their narrative, we saw that family played a big role in each returnee's connection, and lack of connection to Egypt. Yousef

felt like he and his brother were “lacking the nourishment” of a family, grandparents, uncles and cousins, his need for a family connection, or family nourishment was a great driving force in his decision to move to Egypt. Both Yousef and Mai felt they were missing out on family events, this need to be a part of the family and a part of family events is important to them, particularly because they did not have any family in the U.S. In both their cases we can see how the need for family, the need for belonging to a greater whole effected their experiences as second-generation Egyptians in the U.S. and influenced their decision to return. Ayah’s connection with her cousin helped her learn more about herself and her culture and open a gateway for her to visit Egypt on her own.

Yousef, Mai, and Ayah’s warm and welcoming embraces from their family upon visiting and returning to Egypt fulfilled a need and a sense of acceptance, making their transition smoother and easier, although, not challenge-free. These warm embraces were also significant among King and Christou’s (2014) second-generation Greek returnees, positively influencing their memories and experiences in Greece. Whereas with Hana, she and her family did not see eye to eye much. Referring to her as the “foreigner” alienated her from them and from the culture. As evident with our returnees, the encounters they each experienced with their families as they were younger, both directly and indirectly influenced their decision to return. Similarly, this echoes their experiences transitioning into their new lives in Egypt upon their return. Each returnee's experience with their family while visiting as children, left a long-lasting impression that continued to affect their relationship (or lack thereof) with them and with Egypt. Their narratives and the role family played in their narratives, truly reflects what Anastasia Christou (2003) explained about how “[t]he ‘roots’ of culture are interwoven with family, its existence,

and its role. This family capital transfer is what accompanies the 'route' [back home] to identification" (Christou, 2003, p. 124). Although these stories are not enough to generalize, one may theorize the correlation of a positive connection with extended family and a greater sense of belonging in the home country.

Historical Events

One of the benefits of narrative research, is being able to connect the micro and macro factors that influence an individual's life-trajectory (Leavy, 2014). In the narratives here, we clearly see the influences of major historical events, on the lives, decisions, and identity formation of the returnees.

As seen in the literature and was evident with Mai and Ayah, the revolution played a role in their optimism and hopes as social change agents who moved to Egypt later that same year (Karoui, 2015; Soudy, 2013). Although it was not the primary factor in their decision to move, they both followed the revolution and were excited to become a part of the change that was to follow. We could also see how other historical events were a part of Yousef and Ayah's narrative. Yousef's decision to move was greatly influenced by the reality of COVID-19, he had been wanting to return to Egypt for some time before the lockdown, but it was not until the lockdown that it was clear to him that the U.S. is not the place for him and his family to continue living. Ayah started questioning who she was and grew more curious about her Egyptian and Islamic culture after the events of September 11. These historical events in their narratives became a catalyst in their decisions and their identity negations.

The interaction of a decision to return with historical events and/or developmental phases in life, demonstrate the importance of understanding the context of each returnee's narrative

(Elder, 1994; Mclean & Syed, 2016). Historical events and phase in life not only influenced their decision, but also their experiences. Mai and Ayah's experiences for example, both personal and as social change agents were impacted by the revolution in ways that were unique and different from the other returnees. Hana, on the other hand, entered the new role developmental phase of wife and mother upon her return, and it made her transition more challenging. Time in life, time in history, and environmental factors cannot be overlooked in understanding the decision to return and the experiences that follow (Elder, 1994; Mclean & Syed, 2016).

Cultural Identity

Throughout the narratives we could see the negation and renegotiation of each returnee's conception of themselves. As Younis and Hassan (2019) explain, second-generation immigrant's identity formation, particularly national and religious identity, is a dialectic process, one that is affected by the individual's personal experiences. This was evident throughout the narratives between their identities as Egyptian and American. During their experiences in Egypt, the returnees continued to form and reform their understanding of themselves, as Egyptians, as Americans, and as social change agents. By reflecting on how others perceived them, their own personal values, and their experiences in Egypt, the returnees started to piece together their own identity. Yousef, Ayah, and Mai, all discussed how they all saw that there was no one way to 'be' Egyptian, they started to care less about how people saw them and more about how they felt amongst their own communities. Younis and Hassan (2019) also note the interplay of the sociopolitical context in identity negotiations, this was particularly evident with Ayah who began to try to understand who she was as a result of September 11.

Another interesting finding was that Yousef and Ayah, when discussing their identity negotiations and sense of belonging, used their siblings as a point of comparison. Family stories, and conversations within the household, become a part of an individual's identity formation and understanding (Pratt & Fiese, 2004). Both Yousef and Ayah noted how it was important for them to connect to their Egyptian heritage to understand themselves more, in contrast to their siblings who identified with the American culture without ever needing to question what it meant to be Egyptian. And as Ayah explained, her brother's only connection to identifying as Egyptian was being called 'King Tut' by his friends.

Being exposed to different cultures becomes a part of an individual's identity negotiation, identifying with parts of one culture more than another (Fail et. al., 2004), or through creating a 'third space' (Younis and Hassan, 2019). The current study found that the second-generation returnees either felt like 'global citizens' or felt that they did not belong anywhere, parallel with the literature on third culture kids (Fail et. al., 2004). This struggle was evident when Hana explained that even though she feels more comfortable in the U.S., she always identified as Egyptian-American, yet she always felt like an outsider in both cultures.

Mai's journey back to Egypt, was not only motivated by 'self-searching' but also by the belief that it would be easier for her to find a partner in Egypt than in the U.S. As we saw earlier, Mai had to consider where she could find a partner who would be able to understand and relate to her experience, explaining, that from a young age she believed that "introducing the Egyptian to the American in me would be easier than introducing the American to the Egyptian in me."

For the returnees, feeling Egyptian was very much correlated to being 'seen' or 'claimed' as Egyptian by Egyptians. This sense of being 'seen' or 'claimed' can be understood using

Mclean and Syed's (2016) master narratives. Master narratives here provides us with a framework to understand the process negotiation between culture and identity development. In the current study, we can see the second-generation returnees navigating through their identities in reference to the two cultures. With Ayah for example, she discussed how she analyzed and adopted different values of each culture, and Hana with a critical lens observed both cultures and created her own 'alternative narrative' (Mclean &Syed, 2016). And although it was easier to 'claim' being Egyptian while in the U.S., it proved more challenging while living in Egypt. Whether or not though, they were 'seen' or 'claimed' as Egyptian, what mattered most to all our returnee agents, was making a difference in society, creating positive change. As returnees struggled to understand themselves in respect to what makes them Egyptian, at some point they started to accept that there would always be something that set them apart, and they became more concerned with establishing themselves within the social change causes they were working for.

Their identities as social change agents developed differently for each agent, but they all exhibited a sense of responsibility to do the work they do as change agents. What was most striking was how they all believed that it was their responsibility to do their part, to use their privilege, to make a difference. They were all driven to become agents as a fulfillment of their moral duty, as Samaritans, as educators, as a minority, as females, and or as parents. As described by Geurro et al., (2021), their identities as part a minority group, and as privileged were great motivational factors in the work they did. Another motivator Guerro et al. (2021) discussed, and which was evident in this study, was the influence of personal relevance to the motivation of

engaging in social change. For example, Hana, as a parent of a child with autism, found her role, naturally, as an advocate for inclusion.

Agency

In parallel with the literature, we can see many of the factors that influence the life-trajectory of agents that Bandura (2006) defines, as well as Garrin's (2013) triadic framework of self-efficacy. Agency was an underlying theme throughout all the narratives. Before becoming social change agents and even before deciding to move to Egypt, all the returnees were taking active roles in their own lives. We could see this in the trajectory of their decision to move to Egypt. Yousef was actively looking for ways to pursue his architectural education and career, Mai took a gap year while in college to figure out what she wanted, Ayah continued to seek out ways to understand her identity as a Muslim Egyptian American, and Hana built a life for herself and her family. Agency is significant because without it, taking control of their own lives and pursuing their own visions for themselves, they would not have been able to believe in themselves as social change agents. Through the narratives we can see how self-efficacy, which as Bandura (2006) and Garrin (2013) state, is an essential attribute of an agent, is particularly important to being a social change agent. To make a difference and work towards positive change, the returnees had to be able to believe that they could also make their own decisions and see them through in their own personal lives (Garrin, 2013).

Social Change

Yousef, Mai, Ayah, and Hana, exhibited many if not all of the fundamental principles of social change discussed by Chung and Bemak (2012). Their motives to be social change agents,

as stated earlier, were greatly influenced by their sense of responsibility to help out when they saw an injustice.

According to the Walden University Social Impact Report (2013), all four agents would fit under the 'ultracommitted' type. Ultracommitted social change agents participate in social change activities as a moral responsibility. The returnees saw their work as social change agents not just a job, but it was how they lived their lives. All four believed, that a social change agent must act upon their values, otherwise they cannot be defined as social change agents. Even if it's as small as being the change, or spreading awareness to the people closest to you, it is a must to act on your values in order to be a social change agent. The agents in this study were aware of and believed in the importance of even the smallest acts, they all understood that "change is a process, not a quick fix" which is one of the fundamental principles of a social change agent (Chung & Bemak, 2012). All of the agents in this study adopted the fundamental principles discussed by Chung and Bemak (2012) and that were presented in the literature review above. Not only are the principles and values of social change important to becoming a social change agent, particularly an ultracommitted social change agent, but it is also a mindset, a way of life, a perspective that intertwines all aspects of their lives (Walden University, 2013).

Sense of Belonging Through a Social Change Community

The most significant finding regarding community and sense of belonging, was that all interviewees discussed how they appreciated the communities that shared their social justice beliefs. Similarly, Hall and Keen (2018) found amongst the recent graduates who decided to join a yearlong volunteer program that it was important for them to be a part of a community who were like-minded in regards to their belief in social justice. Building friends and being able to

have dialogues with people who believe in PSC was, along with the sense of responsibility to partake in PSC, were significant to their identity formation and sense of belonging (Hall & Keen, 2018).

It was those communities, social justice oriented communities, within Egypt and outside of Egypt that Yousef, Mai, Ayah, and Hana felt they belonged to the most. Those were the communities they were relieved to be a part of, people who were like minded in wanting to create positive social change. As all returnees struggled to figure out their national identities, what proved to be most important to them was their identities as social change agents.

Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

Because narrative interviews are long, the number that can be conducted is limited. In addition, it also proved challenging to reach this particular segment of the population within the given timeframe of four months. I recommend conducting more interviews with second-generation Egyptian returnees who are social change agents, using the themes that emerged from this research. It would be worth creating a more concise survey interview in order to be able to interview a larger sample and to further explore the themes that were established in this research. By conducting more interviews and gathering more data, we can better understand the experiences of social change agent returnees. Given the small sample that were interviewed in the present research, the findings cannot be generalized. But there are many interesting findings worth exploring further, such as identity formation of this population, the role family (parents and extended) play in later generations experiences and sense of belonging, and the challenges they face as social change agents in Egypt.

It would also be worthwhile to do a longitudinal study, to go back and interview the same returnees in five, seven, or ten years, to follow up on their understanding of who they are as both Egyptians and social change agents later in life, and their experiences in Egypt, finding out if they left or stayed. It would also be interesting to ask them about how they have raised their children, the third-generation; have they used their own experiences as second-generation Egyptian returnees, to help the third-generation understand who they are? Another suggestion is to do a comparative study on second-generation returnees of multiracial parents and same race parents. How does race play into their identity formation, and their connection with the U.S. and Egypt?

Recommendations to Support Social Change Agent Returnees

Below are some recommendations as to how to support social change agent returnees, based on this research.

- The most significant finding was the great sense of belonging the returnees felt amongst social justice oriented communities. Creating spaces for social change agent returnees, which serve as support systems, is likely to be helpful. These spaces can be a network community, where they can gather, discuss, and support the work that each other does. This network/community would be founded on the purpose to help mediate the struggles both returnees and or expats face as social change agents who had never previously lived in Egypt.
- This study, and further studies on this topic, can be used by parents to better understand how later generation identity negotiations are influenced by their own experiences and sentiments as parents influence their children's experiences later in life. This study can

also help parents understand the need for ‘self-searching’ journey, and concurrently support their children on such a journey.

- The returnees struggled to be ‘claimed’ and felt that they needed to ‘prove’ themselves as Egyptians or were being judged as Egyptian for certain activities they did. An awareness campaigns that promotes tolerance and acceptance, would be helpful. It is important as a society that we work toward understanding there is no one way to ‘be Egyptian.’ Such a campaign could be started in schools, social media, and or TV. Beyond the returnees, this campaign would also be helpful to other groups who are seen as ‘other.’

Conclusion

As migration becomes more and more common to the human experience, it is important to understand how migrants and their children navigate issues of identity and the return to their homeland. By collecting narratives of four returnees, we are able to gain an understanding of the complexities of factors influencing their identity formation and decision to return. The themes that emerged from this study were very interesting and need more exploration, not only related to identity formation, but also how becoming a social change agent impacted the experience of returning. The most significant finding of this research was that upon their return and identity negotiations, all returnees found their identities as social change agents more representative of who they were than their cultural identity. By understanding more how returnees form their identity as social change agents, and their experiences as social change agents in Egypt, we can provide better support and services for them, and for all who make the journey back to their parents’ homes in order to create social change.

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Appendix A

Criteria Survey

- Name: *(Open ended)*
- Age: *(Open ended)*
- Where were you born? *(Open ended)*
- From what age did you live in the US, until what age? *(Open ended)*
- Did you live outside of the US before moving to Egypt? *(Yes/No)*
    - If yes, where and at what age? *(Open ended)*
- How old were you when you moved to Egypt? *(Open ended)*
- Why did you move to Egypt? [check all that apply] *(Drop down options: I moved back with my family, I wanted to get to know the culture, I moved back to partake in social change, I always dreamt of moving back, other)*
    - If other, explain: *(Open ended)*
- Whose decision mainly was it to move back to Egypt? *(Drop down options: mine, my parents', my spouse, other)*
    - If other, who/what?
- Occupation: *(Open ended)*
- Are you a student? *(Yes/No)*
    - If yes, what are you studying? *(Open ended)*
- Do you consider yourself a social change agent? *(Yes/No, I don't know what a social change agent is)*
- Comments: *(Open ended)*

Appendix B

Interview Guide

1. First explain the aim of the research, understanding the decision to return and the experiences upon return while exploring sense of belonging and home and understanding their journey as a social change agent

- *That this is a narrative research so the aim here is to hear their story, how they tell it, how they narrate it*

2. Consent

3. Based on survey answer, start off by confirming their second-generation status, how long they have been in Egypt, and their being a social change agent

Growing up Second-generation

- **Tell me what it was like growing up as a second-generation Egyptian in the US**
  - Years allocation *(if they moved around; when, where, how long, how old were they at each transition)*
    - *If they grew up in more than one place, ask them about what it was like growing up in each place?*
  - *If they need help starting maybe have them start with a quick timeline of time and place and then go back and talk about each place and phase of life, or ask them about what it was like leading up to their decision to return*
  - Parents' influence
    - Parents' relationship with the homeland? *(How did that affect them?)*
    - How do/did parents identify (culturally)?
    - Hopes of returning to the homeland one day? *How did that affect them?*
    - Stories passed down
  - Visits to Egypt
    - How often?
    - Who's decision?
    - Memories/stories/impressions that stuck from the visits
    - *Did it play a role in their decision to return?*
  - Cultural upbringing
    - How much was culture (religion) emphasized?
      - *(What was its effect on agency, particularly if the interviewee is female)*
    - What language did you speak at home?
      - Pop culture
  - Community
    - Tell me about your friends growing up
      - *(Were their friends co-ethnic, dominant-ethnic, second-generation interethnic, etc.)*
    - What communities were you a part of growing up *(cultural groups? religious communities?)*

- Which community did you most identify with growing up? Now?
- How would you describe your cultural identity?
- 'Fitting in'
- *(Look out for acculturation/assimilation examples)*

Moving to Egypt

- **Tell me about your decision to move 'back' to Egypt**
  - Topics, or questions if they need help
    - What influenced your decision?
    - When did you decide?
      - *(Did they always know?)*
    - What was the transition like?
    - What were your sentiments upon moving, what are they now?
    - How long have you been in Egypt for?
    - What have you done while in Egypt, school/career wise?

Social change agents

- **Tell me what you think social change is**
- **Tell me about how you decided to become a social change agent**
  - How do you define (see yourself) as a social change agent?
    - Identity?
  - What values do you believe in as a social change agent?
    - Is a social change agent defined by their values or by acting upon those values?
    - *Explore what kind of social change agents they are*
      - *Probe for action and value (in analysis look for congruence, do they define themselves as social change agents in regard to values actions or both)*
  - **Tell me about being a social change agent in Egypt**
    - **Why did you want to be a social change agent in Egypt?**
    - *Rewards vs Challenges*
      - *Values vs action*
    - **What does the role of being a social change agent in Egypt mean to you?**

Sense of belonging/Home

- **As a second-generation Egyptian how would you explain the feeling of home? or How would you define home?**
  - Do you think your work as a social change agent plays a role your sense of home/ belonging?

Appendix C

Potential Codes for Analysis

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Experiences as second-generation Egyptians in America	Parents' Influence	• Parents' relationship with the homeland • Parents cultural identity • 'Family narrative of return' (King et al., 2011) • Parents' nostalgia
	Visits to Egypt	• Positive memories
	Cultural upbringing	• Language spoken at home • Pop culture • Community* - Co-ethnic/inter-ethnic friends
	Acculturating patterns*	• Assimilation • Integration • Marginalization • Separation • 'Third space'
Return journey		Decision to move 'back' to Egypt • Influences, timing, phase in life Experience upon return • Disappointments, hardships/challenges, sense of belonging
Social change agency		Definition of social change
		Identity as social change agent
		Social change in Egypt - Challenges - Sense of belonging*
		Principles of social change
Home*		• Physical • Embodiment • Social • Temporal
Narrative codes		• Agency
		• Self-efficacy
		• Meaning Making
		• Coherence
		• Linked lives
		• Personal growth - e.g., insight, processing
		• Fortuitous events and causality

**Codes that also fall under the theme 'sense of belonging'*