3-7-2022

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Recommended Citation

APA Citation
Fox, K. & Ebada, Y. (2022). Egyptian Female Podcasters: Shaping Feminist Identities. *Learning, Media and Technology, 47*(1), 53–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2021.2020286
https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/3594

MLA Citation
Fox, Kim, et al. "Egyptian Female Podcasters: Shaping Feminist Identities." *Learning, Media and Technology,* vol. 47,no. 1, 2022, pp. 53–64.
https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/3594

Egyptian Female Podcasters: Shaping Feminist Identities

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Abstract

The objective of the research study was to explore how young female podcasters in Egypt acquire feminist knowledge, how their feminist identity has been shaped and, specifically, how podcasts were used for digital feminism. With audio production genres and feminist epistemology frameworks, our analysis shows how podcasts were knowingly utilized as a tool for cyberactivism. The study found that the podcaster's feminist identities embodied Westernized and/or Black feminist epistemologies, while also indicating a deeper recognition of Egyptian feminism attained during their college careers. The researchers conclude that production of podcasts, informed by feminist pedagogy and epistemologies, was an empowering mechanism for the audio content creators.

Keywords: podcasting, digital feminism, audio storytelling, Egypt, Middle East, intersectionality, cyberactivism

Introduction

In July 2020, a 22-year-old Egyptian woman, Nadeen Ashraf, exposed a sexual predator on Instagram and instigated a #MeToo movement in Egypt (*New York Times*, October 2, 2020). Other Egyptian women shared their experiences with sexual harassment and sexual assault, and extended their support for the victims. The case gained international attention (*Washington Post*, August 1, 2020) and spawned a renewed interest in feminism in Egypt and digital feminism in particular.

The purpose of this research study was to explore digital feminism, as expressed through podcast production. The study explored how four young Egyptian women used podcasts as a tool to express their feminist identities in a Muslim majority country with a long history of both patriarchy and feminism (Badran 1995). This article describes how podcasts, as digital media, amplified the feminist perspectives of the participants.

To start, students in an audio production course in the journalism and mass communication department at a university in Cairo have produced podcasts as an assignment since 2009. Students navigate the production of narrative nonfiction pieces from concept to completion, with support from their professor, who is one of the authors of this article, including the selection of their topics. Four students in this course participated in the research study described in this article; each selected topics with a feminist perspective. Through a survey, a semi-structured interview, and a qualitative critical textual analysis of the podcast scripts, the researchers set out to determine the feminist identities and epistemologies expressed by the podcasters. The importance of this case-based research is to identify the inception of feminist embodiment and epistemology in young female podcasters in Egypt.

Much research has been published on Western and Black feminisms (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 1990), digital feminism (Weber 2016; McLean, Maalsen, and Grech 2016; Kim and Ringrose 2018) and digital feminism in Egypt (Ibrahim 2019; Bali 2019). Separately, podcasts as teaching approaches have been explored in the scholarly literature, including writing enhancement, listening to augment reading material, and producing audio narratives (Richardson 2017; Cebeci and Tekdal 2006; Bell 2019; Fox 2020). However, research on podcasters in Africa is markedly understudied and is in its infancy in Egypt.

The study described in this article addressed the following research questions: (1) what is the birthing point for feminist epistemology for some young females in Egypt?; (2) was feminist identity the catalyst for the female podcasters' feminist approaches in their podcasts?; (3) how were podcasts utilized to amplify digital feminism?

Literature Review

This literature review begins by examining feminist epistemologies, with a particular focus on intersectionality, as well as the specific history of feminism in Egypt. The literature review also describes feminist and other relevant pedagogies related to digital podcasting.

Feminist epistemologies

Humans make decisions and act based on their life experiences, and hence, the belief in 'objective' knowledge is contested. Epistemologies can be described as theories of knowledge that impact who can know, what they can know, and how they have come to know (Harding 1987). Haraway (1988) contends that "feminist objectivity" is about "situated knowledge" (583) and that a feminist standpoint provides more complete accounts of the world. Differences among

women cannot be collapsed, however. Gender hierarchies are connected to other social

categorizations including class, culture, age, race, and sexuality (Yadav 2018; Crenshaw 1989);

individuality (un-gendered and responsible individualism) also plays a role (Scharff 2011).

The stereotypical image of a feminist as a white, able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual,

and middle-aged woman (Aapola, Gonick, and Harris 2005) has resulted, for example, in many

women of color distancing themselves from a feminist identity (Aronson 2003). Black feminists

have created self-identified standpoints based on their experiences of sexism and racism (Collins

1990 and Wallace 2009). Recent feminist studies suggest that a single axis approach regarding

feminist epistemologies is outdated and "can be understood as a tool of epistemic oppression."

An intersectional approach investigates a wide range of epistemic practices and does not restrict

itself to "knowing and knowledge production" (Pohlhaus and Schroer 2021).

It is important to discuss Muslim feminism here as Egypt is a Muslim majority country

and has a rich history of feminism despite a patriarchal culture. On March 27, 2021, Egyptian

feminist trailblazer Nawal El Saadawi said on NPR, "feminism is not a Western invention.

Feminism was not invented by American women, as many people think. No, feminism [is]

embedded in the culture and in the struggle of all women all over the world." Arab societies are

characterized as collectivistic. Egyptian society centers around the "family collective;" both

women and men associate themselves into this collective and tend not to recognize themselves as

individuals (Botman 1999). The group values sometimes originate in schools and with the

prevalence of social media, digital collectivism has grown among young adults (Piwko 2020; Kim and Ringrose 2018).

A rise in "feminist consciousness" in Egypt was observed in the 19th century with women beginning to question patriarchy through poems, stories and teaching. Huda Sha'rawi founded the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) and led feminist movements up until her death in 1947 (Badran 1995). Before the EFU's inauguration, women engaged in "hidden feminist activism" (Badran 1995, 91) such as Nabawiyah Musa's fight for women's education in the first half of the 20th century (Badran 1995; Civantos 2013) and feminist poet and editor Doria Shafik's contributions in the mid-20th century (Ahmed and Ali 1992). Many 21st century Egyptian feminists, such as Ashraf, Mozn Hassan, the founder of *Nazra for Feminist Studies*, and Mona Eltahawy, an American Egyptian journalist, have written about Arab and Muslim cyberactivism and advocated for Egyptian and Arab women's rights (Otterman 2011; Eltahawy 2018). They have reiterated the significant role of Egyptian women in their lives. Anishchenkova (2017) contends that Western feminism is often amplified as "successful" and Islamic (Arab and Egyptian) feminism as "doomed to fail," noting that the latter "should be understood within the framework of plurality and internal complexity" (88). As early as the nineteenth century, Egyptian women noticed that activism, including Wafdist, feminist, Islamist, and social activism, were an "an integral part of nationalism and nation building" (Baron 2005, 105). Egyptian feminism is longstanding, complex and must take into account diverse cultural influences such as locality and religion (Anishchenkova 2017).

Pedagogy and podcasting

An engaging and liberatory classroom characterizes feminist pedagogy; the tenets of the

feminist pedagogical experience are community, empowerment, and leadership (Shrewsbury

1987). Along with those tenets comes a shared power dynamic that leads to independence.

There is overlapping between feminist pedagogy and active and authentic learning. For example,

active and authentic learning theories underpin pedagogical approaches such as reflective and

evaluative learning, a focus on student agency, and scaffolding, where students incrementally

build new knowledge, usually in collaboration with the instructor and their peers (Vanhorn, et al.

2019). Authentic learning also includes addressing real-world issues and problems that reflect

the work of professionals in the discipline, as well as sharing findings with audiences beyond the

classroom. The goal of authentic learning strategies is to empower students through choice to

direct their own learning through relevant project work (Vanhorn et al. 2019).

Podcasting is a particular example of active and authentic learning, with radio/podcast

production found to result in deep learning (Fox 2020). The popularity of free sound-sharing

platforms (including SoundCloud, a public-facing outlet where our podcasters stories were

published) has confirmed the rise, demand and impact of audio storytelling, including podcasts,

as a tool to connect smaller, specific, and similar minded groups (Wrather 2016). However, little

research on podcasting in Egypt, Africa, or indeed the Global South has been published. In one

study in Nigeria, researchers surveyed interdisciplinary faculty and students at one university to

determine their knowledge about, motivations for and challenges related to podcasting (Frederick and Okpulo 2014).

Linking podcasting to the earlier discussion of feminism and activism, research on podcasts as counterpublics has explored the immersive affordance of the medium in relation to feminist listeners and podcast creators, as well as how dialogue in the public sphere is furthered through podcasts (Koning 2018; Sienkiewicz and Jaramillo 2019). Narrative podcasts blend both research and storytelling, and can be used as a tool of online activism to create social change (McHugh 2017) and to provide a platform for subjugated groups (Van Borek and James 2019). Online activism has been used to create a space for open dialogue, to unify and as a means for truthful expression for females in the Middle East since the Arab Spring, acting as a conduit for solidarity and resistance (Koo 2020; Newsom and Lengel 2012). One study of cyber advocacy relating to sexual harassment in Egypt concluded that women were empowered to use social media as a tool against repression and as an opportunity for self-expression (Ibrahim 2019). Another study addressing digital feminism and postcolonial digital literacy accentuated the intersection between the two along with "identities, empathy, bias and equity" (Bali 2019).

Methods

This research study explored four podcasts, produced by Egyptian female podcasters and created as part of a class assignment where students chose their own podcast topics. A case study method was selected, allowing for in-depth qualitative analysis of podcasts and a space for the voices of the podcasters and the background to the podcasts to be heard. Using purposive

sampling, the research study explored the various feminist identities and epistemologies adopted by each podcaster, whether and how these influenced their choice of podcast topics, and whether and how feminist themes emerged in their podcasts. We also sought to explore how the podcasters came to know about feminism in Egypt—through their lived experiences and/or their exposure to it.

Positionality

Both of the authors have taught journalism and one of the authors has taught audio production. Though the podcast teaching approach did not explicitly foreground feminist pedagogy, the active, authentic and deep learning model encompassed feminist pedagogy principles. For example, feminist pedagogy engenders a respectful, collective space for critical thinking (Shrewsbury 1987). The classroom environment created for the podcasters included space for free thinking, with the professor more often playing the role of a coach, thus empowering students to embrace their evocative stories. The researchers did not have knowledge of the students' possible prior exposure to feminist ideas.

As an upper-level journalism course, students were expected to possess the ability to tell stories. However, it was presumed that they did not have previous knowledge of audio storytelling or podcasting. As such, the scaffolding, reflection and feedback teaching approach was foundational for this assignment. For example, students would submit their interviews along with their reflection of the interview process and then received collective feedback on the interview. The same process took place after the submission of the draft script, as well as after

the rough assembly of the final version of the podcast. In the classroom, students listened to diverse podcasts—interviews, discussions and documentaries—including audio pieces produced by former students. The course was skills-based where the students learned and practiced interviewing techniques, conducted research, wrote and narrated scripts, and edited the podcasts.

Participants

The participants in this research study are four female students who were enrolled in an audio production course in the journalism and mass communication department at a university in Cairo, Egypt. At the time the research was undertaken, the participants ranged in age from 26 to 28; three resided in Egypt and one resided in the United States. All had previously completed bachelor's and master's degrees; one was pursuing a doctoral degree. The podcast topics were diverse: Egyptian students' semester abroad experiences; dating and arranged marriage in Egypt; the daily life of a female Egyptian street food vendor; and the impact of the January 25th Revolution on Egyptian women. The podcasts are open to the public via SoundCloud.

Qualitative critical analysis

For each of the participants/podcasters, one podcast episode was examined for this study. Purposive sampling was employed: each of the selected podcasts had won international recognition, implying that the podcasts were well produced. The researchers listened to each podcast episode, read the scripts, and conducted a qualitative critical analysis (Lindlof and Taylor 2018) to determine whether and to what extent the podcasters adopted various feminist epistemologies, standpoints, and identities. The rationale for this methodology was to determine how the podcasters communicated feminist epistemologies, standpoints, and identities in their

podcast production via text, narration, selection of interview participants, use of music, and/or natural sounds.

Downing and Roush's (1985) five stages of feminist identity development (FID) model was used to analyze each podcast (Fischer et al. 2000). The five FID stages are: passive acceptance; revelation; embeddedness-emanation; synthesis; and active commitment. The researchers sought to discover whether and to what extent each participant chose societal inequities for their podcast topics, how each participant's life experiences influenced their feminist identity and epistemology, their knowledge of feminism and how they reached their understanding of it.

In addition, researchers used specific criteria for reviewing each podcast's audio content from *RadioDoc Review*, selected due to the publication's reputation for "expert critical analysis" on audio documentaries (McHugh 2014, 31). Three of the ten *RadioDoc Review* criteria for reviewing audio content were used to review the podcasts in this study. The three criteria selected (as most relevant to the research aims) are: storytelling strength, focusing on the narrative; audience engagement, focusing on ability to connect to the audience; and emotiveness and empathy, focusing on affect and connectedness.

Questionnaire and interviews

A brief questionnaire was designed to ask participants about their selection of podcast topic, their understanding of feminism, their reflection on feminism since the podcast production, whether and to what extent they had built on their definition of feminism, and whether and how

they embody feminist perspectives. The questionnaire was approved by the university's

Institutional Review Board (IRB, # 2019-2020-011).

Finally, each podcaster participated in a semi-structured, remote, recorded interview to

follow-up on their questionnaire responses. Interviews with the participants were conducted in

December 2020 and January 2021. During the semi-structured interview, participants were

invited to further describe their selection of podcast topic, their childhood and family dynamics,

middle school to high school years, and female influences, reflecting on how their feminist

perspectives had developed and changed (or not) since production of their podcast.

Given the personal nature of the semi-structured interviews, and the details shared in the public

podcasts, the researchers obtained consent at the start of the study but also shared this paper with

each participant. Following their review, all four participants consented to the analysis and

agreed to the inclusion of their podcast links and scripts, as well as descriptions of interviews and

survey results. Specific individuals referred to within the podcasts have been anonymized in our

writing. The podcasters' stories and views belong to them.

Results and Discussion

It was through the layered lens of feminist pedagogy and active and authentic learning

theory that the student podcasters produced their projects. As outlined by Shrewsbury, the

students took agency of their choice of podcast topics, while also negotiating inclusion of their

lived experiences, showing evidence of feminist empowerment and leadership. The scaffolded

design of the podcasting assignment, a principle of authentic learning theory, provided space for

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the students to not only listen to professional audio content, but to review how that aural content was displayed in the public sphere, where the students' digital content would also live. The public-facing nature of their podcasts was a factor in the amplification of their digital feminism. Finally, deep learning, which was previously mentioned, also played a role in the podcasters' creation experience with the incorporation of reflections at the culmination of the assignment.

Each of the female podcasters used their podcast to develop and reinforce their feminist epistemologies and understanding. Additionally, in the questionnaire responses and in the semi-structured interviews, the podcasters described feminist identities that were developed through their life experiences, their upbringing, family dynamics, college years, and time spent abroad. The podcasters also leveraged the affordances of the audio medium by integrating some of the *RadioDoc Review* genre conventions to engage listeners: powerful narratives, sometimes personal; well-developed scenes to draw the listener in emotionally. Finally, the podcasters signaled their belief in the possibility of a feminist society.

The remainder of the results and discussion section will present each case study with podcast content, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Links to all podcasts are included at the end of this article.

Case Studies

The Diaries of AUCians Abroad (2015)

In Kanzy Mahmoud's 12-minute podcast she recounts her semester abroad in the U.S. using a first-person narrative, and includes the study-abroad experience of others. She addresses

transitioning to the U.S. and trying to get internships there, and the mood of the podcast is upbeat when she addresses the topic of independence. Of her return to Egypt from the U.S. she says, "I felt trapped and I could no longer relate to many people." The other two females included in this podcast expressed similar thoughts. For example, one mentions re-acclimatizing to Egypt from the U.S. and how she felt constrained by "boundaries," while the other says, "I don't think it's natural that we live with our parents until marriage." The podcast ends with a feminist soliloquy as Kanzy speaks directly to the listener over semi-somber music. She notes that women deserve respect because "they are considered the main pillar for the development of any community." Her production aesthetics tie into the emotive and empathic conventions of the genre. By altering the music to match the script, Kanzy appears to be on a podium in a public square, engaging her audience directly.

Kanzy also discusses the negative impact of society not allowing Egyptian women to have the same liberties as Egyptian men: "in order to have any chance of development as a nation, we need to change the way we think, especially when it comes to women."

Kanzy answered "no" to the question whether she consciously took a feminist perspective during the production of her podcast, but according to her interview she was convinced that gender inequality exists: "the society around us tells us sometimes that men have more liberties." Kanzy, who attended a German primary and secondary school, admitted that she was aware of the idea of feminism when she was younger and knew about Sha'rawi and Qasim Amin, an Egyptian male feminist. It wasn't until she was in college that she got "a deeper study and a

deeper meaning behind it." In her interview, she indicated that while growing up she was treated

differently to another male family member: "He has more independence. He has more freedom."

Referring to household roles: "sometimes he's not being asked stuff that has been asked of me.

For example, to help with cooking or to help with cleaning." She recognized that her family

members were doing what they thought was best and went on to say:

> *I know, I know. It's not meant badly, but that is a bit frustrating. Because for me, like we*
> *should both do the same thing. We should both have the same assignments. Although,*
> *although I would give it to them some things I cannot perform as a woman, maybe a*
> *hardcore labor or something, and he can, but I would be happy to have the option and*
> *the freedom.*

In our analysis, Kanzy's questioning of gender roles depicted the second stage of the

feminist identity development model: revelation (Downing and Roush 1985). In the US, she and

her interviewees adopted what might be termed "responsible individualism" (Scharff 2011) or a

more westernized form of feminism. But on her return, she felt "trapped" with having to follow

the cultural constraints of the nation—a long standing tradition of the male-dominated society –

under which Egyptian women of different classes, religion, and ethnicities started realizing

during the rise of feminism consciousness in the 19th century that their lives were "controlled"

(Badran 1995). This corresponds with Anishchenkova's focus on "women's struggle with men

for human rights" (2017) and also speaks to what Badran referred to as gender segregation in

Egypt (1995).

Kanzy's feminism includes elements of Black feminism connected to Crenshaw's

intersectionality theory, linking age, culture and sexuality (1989). Her use of the *RadioDoc*

Review genre conventions of storytelling adds strength and clarity to her message, showing that

podcasts can be a tool to amplify digital advocacy and feminist perspectives, and that

marginalized groups can use online activism to try to create social change (Newsom and Lengel 2012).

28 and Single (2013)

Nazly Abaza's podcast deals with blind dating and arranged marriages in Egypt and focuses on a female relative who was pressured by other family members to find a husband while she was still in college. The narrative nonfiction podcast provides multiple perspectives from Nazly's family members, conspiring to set up her relative with a blind date. In the podcast, both Nazly and her relative espouse feminist views. Nazly says they feel arranged marriage has "a lack of agency and freedom for both parties." Her female relative describes her joy at being 28 and single because she gets "to travel a lot" and "do a lot of things." Additionally, she expresses her sense of independence when she describes ending a relationship after a few dates. Her relative remarks that because she doesn't adhere to cultural norms, she's considered controversial: "Before society I have a problem because I am not married, I am 28 and I am not married, everyone is like, 'wow, are you ok?'"

At one point in the podcast, the same scene is described by several people, creating a heightened level of tension and suspense. This shows storytelling strength. Nazly also provides emotiveness by incorporating bursts of humor throughout the narration, while layering in upbeat music. For example, in the conclusion, she laughs when another female relative insinuates that they might try to set Nazly up on a few dates next. The last scene also indicates that the young females want a say in determining their life-long partners.

In response to the question of whether she knowingly took a feminist perspective during the production of the podcast, Nazly answered "somewhat," stating that because she is a feminist, traces of her feminist standpoint will appear in whatever she does unconsciously. In our analysis, then, in terms of feminist identity, Nazly appears to have reached the fourth stage (synthesis) of the FID model where "a positive feminist identity" is developed (Fischer et al. 2000, 16). Her feminist epistemology could also be related to Black feminism as she adopts a "natural attitude" toward feminism (hooks 1981; Wallace 2009).

Even though in her interview Nazly claims that she does not oppose arranged marriages, she was pleased that her parents had not set her up with a partner because "they respect my boundaries." She went on to say, "So, yes. I think as long as it's like this, everyone has an agency to do what they want to do within this setup, that's fine." Here traces of Western feminist epistemologies are evident.

While Western culture emphasizes personal choice (independence) and is progressive (Scharff 2011; Kitayama and Uskul 2011; Triandis 1989), the expectation that women will "live domestically centered lives" has been at the forefront of Egyptian culture since the rise of feminist consciousness in the 19th century (Badran 1995, 45). As an Egyptian female, Nazly was aware of social constraints that might not pertain in Western culture:

> *...when deciding what to wear in the street. [I] can't go running in shorts. You know, like, it's not as if it's always easy, and it's not as if patriarchy exists everywhere. So even if I'm like, yes I'm a feminist and I go out and act like that in the streets, it's not always going to be received well, and I might get harassed for it, I might get hurt for it, it might be more than just verbal violence, it might be physical violence.*

Nazly's position on feminism has developed as a result of her Egyptian societal experiences. Women often adjust their feminist standpoints to fit their culture, race, age and class (Crenshaw 1989; Yadav 2018), creating a melting pot of ideologies (Anishchenkova 2017). In her interview, Nazly professed to being a postcolonial feminist, saying: "I think women experience things very differently depending on where they grow up. So, I think postcolonial feminism tries to take into account the fact that we shouldn't have that hegemony within feminist theory, [and] that maybe what would work in North America might not work when you apply it to, for example, Egypt."

Life, Bread and Gold: The Story of an Egyptian Street Food Vendor (2015)

Feminist perspectives appeared in Sarah El Safty's podcast via her primary participant, a female street vendor. This participant opened a food stand in downtown Cairo to follow her aspirations and meet the challenges of providing for her mother. In the podcast, Sarah suggested that the woman could have alleviated some of the stress of her situation: "I also wonder why in a society so dependent on men, she didn't take the easy way out and just get married." Through music, natural sounds and sound bites from the interviewee, listeners aurally experience her struggles as well as her determination to be successful, fulfilling both the storytelling and the emotiveness and empathy genre conventions. Moreover, there are several moments in the podcast when emotions are magnified as the interviewee speaks passionately, and it's discernible that English isn't her first language, "I am only started this so I can buy for things and I am patient with this work so I could continue and follow my dreams of working in the media."

When asked if she intentionally took a feminist standpoint in her podcast, Sarah answered "yes" in the questionnaire. She considered her main interviewee a brave woman for spending all day on the streets of Cairo and wondered: "Is she getting, like, sexually harassed every single day? How is she doing that?" Despite consistent high rates of sexual harassment in Cairo (Arab Barometer 2020), Sarah's main interviewee prospered and avoided being sexually harassed, "So, I was very surprised when she told me no, like, she had built a community around her where they protected her, and like, she didn't experience that."

Sarah acknowledged that while she experienced subjugation because of her gender, her experiences were not comparable with those her interviewee faced: through their interview "I immediately noticed my own privilege." Growing up, Sarah could not point to specific feminist role models, but she was inspired by various people and characterized herself as an "independent thinker." In her interview she said, "I grew up just wanting to do something with my life, you know, and I don't think that has anything to do with being a girl or a boy or whatever." We suggest that in this sense Sarah manifested a Western feminist epistemology, an un-gendered individualism (Scharff 2011; McRobbie 2009).

At the time of the podcast, Sarah had started to observe gender inequality and was questioning it. We would consider that this characterizes the second stage of the FID model: revelation. Her feminist standpoint developed as a result of recognizing her social status relative to the woman street vendor, and this suggests an intersectional influence: an awareness of how race, class, age, culture, and other traits overlap, intersect, and evolve, as a result of multiple histories of oppression, establishing multi-dimensional feminist epistemologies (Crenshaw 1989; Yadav 2018; Botman 1999; Pohlhaus and Schroer 2021).

The Egyptian Revolution in the Eyes of Women (2014)

In Jeje Rajab's podcast, feminist perspectives appear in the narratives of her three interviewees, two female and one male, and in Jeje's own first-person narrative of the Egyptian revolution. Despite the participation of Egyptian women in protests since at least the 20th century, one of her female interviewees remembered that, "It shocked me seeing this huge number of women; at the beginning I thought it was only men who would be there" (Rajab 2014). Jeje's podcast documents a different side to the revolution that changed how women experienced it: sexual harassment. Her male interviewee was the founder of an anti-sexual harassment movement and explained that Egyptian women were harassed when they participated in protests because men have a "lack of power and that leads them to harass others to feel they are strong and in control."

All three genre conventions were present in Jeje's podcast with a riveting story – including first-hand accounts from her interviewees – told in a manner that elicited emotion. She used a consistent tone in her delivery, along with slow string music. The conclusion was a warning to young women about the dangers of the protests, thus seeking to engage her audience, and showing the use of the podcast format to advocate for and promote feminist ideas.

Jeje answered "yes" when asked whether she intended a feminist standpoint in the production of her podcast. She said she "somewhat" embodied a feminist perspective, but one that was intersectional, suggesting that her feminist identity was developed—the synthesis stage (Fischer et al. 2000; Downing and Roush 1985). In her interview, Jeje said she selected the topic because she had her own, unmediated experience of sexual assault and harassment during the

revolution. Despite knowing how dangerous it was to attend without male friends and colleagues, she instinctively chose to participate with her female friends, "I don't know why there was something comforting [about] going with girls. We all know what to worry about, even some unspoken rules."

Muslim majority countries are often described as collectivistic, emphasizing group values (Piwko 2020). Ibrahim (2019) and Koo (2020) have also written about these female collectivist gatherings and embraced them as a form of empowerment: "more can be achieved by networking with other individuals/groups to act together (macro)." Jeje had adopted the third stage of the FID model: embeddedness or "feelings of connectedness with other women" (Fischer et al. 2000, 16).

Jeje also reported that she was a curious individual growing up and questioned everything, including religion. Patriarchy, as previously outlined (Badran 1995; Botman 1999; Baron 2005), was especially apparent in the villages in Egypt where Jeje was raised. Her home was a traditional, practicing Muslim household. In Middle Eastern culture, it is unorthodox to question religion, but this is exactly what Jeje did as a child. She said, "it would make people really, really angry when I'm asking or questioning something. It's not that I say it is bad, I just want you to explain it to me. But people take this in a wrong way." This links with Pohlhaus and Schroer's definition of intersectionality as "paying no mind to" (2021). She explained that she understood the cultural dynamics of her village, yet she was compelled to follow her feminist beliefs. Her father:

has a status and, like, all of these things and in villages, these things I respect. So, I understand the pressure that he's under. But at the same time, I own my own life. I feel bad for him, that I am different than what would make his life easier or their life easier. But at the same time, I think at the end of the day, it's my life.

Unlike the other three podcasters, Jeje actively decided to lead a non-traditional Egyptian life. For her: "the concept of feminism is not something that I learned growing up at all, I think I discovered it more by fighting with my family." We suggest this was where Jeje's "revelation" took place (the second stage of the FID model) and where she started questioning gender roles.

Jeje's youthful feminism correlates with individualism (Scharff 2011) as well as identity (Anishchenkova 2017). On reflection, she attributed her self-discovery and feminist identity to "how I saw my mom and other women around me lead a strong life that didn't have to fit 'completely' with the norm."

Discussion

This research has illustrated that these four female podcasters had different but overlaying feminist identities. Our lives are intersectional and the same can be said for feminism. The semi-structured interviews demonstrated that all the podcasters' upbringings, life experiences, as well as their recognition and questioning of gender roles when they were younger, influenced their feminist identities and epistemologies and resulted in their choice of podcast topics, addressing RQ1. Additionally, all podcasters adopted at least one of the stages of FID model prior to the podcast production, confirming that feminist identity was an impetus for their approaches to the podcast process, addressing RQ2. The use of the *RadioDoc Review*

convention genres exemplified that strong narratives and empathy can be used to challenge civil society and amplify feminist ideas digitally, addressing RQ3.

Feminist pedagogy informed the approach to developing the podcasts through the cultivation of an engaging educational space where students could liberally interrogate their topics and podcast techniques. In addition, active, authentic and deep learning approaches were instrumental in supporting the podcasters with their storytelling. The podcast assignment was scaffolded so that students received collective feedback after completing segments of the assignment. The feedback and reflection allowed the students to move forward on the project with confidence.

Conclusion

All podcasters in this study adopted feminist perspectives in their podcast productions, either in the first-person narrative or through their interviewees, addressing how gender inequality negatively affects individuals and society as a whole. They also subtly shifted the patriarchal power dynamic. The podcasts were used to center feminism and, in some instances, to discuss central issues for Egyptian women, such as sexual harassment. These podcasts could be considered as forms of digital social capital for the podcasters and their audiences, who could be considered 'counterpublics' (Koning 2018; Sienkiewicz and Jaramillo 2019). The use of feminist pedagogy and active and authentic learning allowed 'real-world' issues such as marriage and sexism to be addressed.

A research limitation of the study is that most of the podcasters are from a similar social class, all have undergraduate degrees from one of the most prestigious universities in Egypt, and

all have master's degrees. They have been exposed to Western culture and they have all lived abroad. For future research, it would be valuable to interview podcasters from Egypt from different social backgrounds and perhaps who have not been exposed to Western culture because, as suggested earlier, that also influences feminist identities.

This research revealed that podcasts are a valuable contribution to the digital public sphere in Egypt. All four podcasts have attributes that model the *RadioDoc* audio content criteria including storytelling strength, audience engagement, and emotiveness and empathy, which were utilized to amplify and convey the podcasters' messages, including feminist ideals. The researchers analyzed how the podcasters directed their learning actively through their choice of soundbites, tone, music, and emotion: all elements in their podcasts that were used to engage listeners. Egyptian female podcasters are using podcasts to amplify their voices and plant the seeds of gender equality activism and empowerment. The variety of podcast case studies in this study show that intersectionality – the relationship of gender with other oppressions involving religion, culture, and class - shapes the feminist standpoints that young Egyptian females adopt.

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