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Die-Hard Mubarak Supporters: A Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

This study examined the persistent sympathetic response of some Egyptian citizens towards ousted president Hosni Mubarak despite his indictment for killing hundreds of peaceful demonstrators. These individuals have been occasionally characterized as victims of the so-called "Stockholm Syndrome," which was defined by mental health professionals as the tendency of victims to develop positive emotional bond towards their victimizers. However, a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with ten Mubarak supporters suggests that their sympathetic response towards the former president might be attributed to their observance of certain collectivistic values, such as filial piety and communalism. These collectivistic values might help explain why these supporters respected Mubarak as both a father and authority figure. Further, the analysis suggests that this sympathetic response was influenced by religious values and outgroup blaming. Social and political implications of this study are discussed.

Keywords: collectivism, filial piety, communalism, Mubarak, Egyptian revolution, authoritarianism, Stockholm Syndrome

In response to the massive demonstrations that demanded his ouster, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was forced to resign in 2011 (Shehata, 2011). These demonstrations were mainly led by despondent youths who were furious about troubling social issues, such as high unemployment rate, corruption, election fraud, and police brutality (Heiss, 2012). Few months after his resignation, Mubarak was arrested and tried for killing peaceful demonstrators (Gvosdev, 2011). Many Egyptian citizens were relieved by his ouster, as they accused him of having led a brutal and corrupt police state for thirty years (Fahmy, 2012). They also blamed him for the decline of the educational and health care systems and for grooming his younger son to inherit the presidency of Egypt (Heiss, 2012). On the other hand, many Egyptian citizens were upset about the way Mubarak was treated and expressed deep sympathy for him. During his trial, his supporters carried banners that read: "We are your children Mubarak;" "An insult to Mubarak is an insult to all Egyptians;" "Mubarak is the symbol of war and peace;" and "The people demand the honoring of Mubarak." In the social media sphere, there were many Facebook posts that reflected high positive regard for Mubarak, such as the following post reflecting a common Egyptian belief, in which he was indirectly compared to a deceased mother: "You only know the importance of your mother when

she dies and is then replaced by a step-mother" (translation by the author). Another post praised what was perceived as a caring attitude: "Mubarak complied with the order of the military to step down because he wanted to avoid Egyptian bloodshed. He stayed in Egypt despite knowing that he would be jailed because he wanted to protect Egyptians" (translation by the author). Further, some Egyptian intellectuals (e.g., Gaber, 2011) expressed their concerns that it would be difficult for Egyptians to find a new symbol after Mubarak. Gaber also warned that the fall of Mubarak as an authority figure equated abolishing parental authority. Unfortunately, this social and political phenomenon so far has not been subjected to any psychological study. The present study therefore aimed to examine the psychological reasons behind these supporters' persistent support for Mubarak despite the serious accusations he faced. Specifically, this study sought to understand the influences of Egyptian cultural practices and habits in producing this psychological response.

Right Wing Authoritarianism and System-Justification Theory

Given their perception that Mubarak was a dictator who oppressed Egyptians, it was very difficult for many Western and even some Egyptian observers to understand why some Egyptian citizens continued to sympathize with the ousted president. Many explanations were offered to describe this sympathetic response: For example, these die-hard supporters were occasionally described as victims of Stockholm Syndrome (e.g., Barhan, 2013; Jefferson, 2011; Makiya, 2012). This syndrome is defined by mental health professionals as the tendency of victims to develop positive emotional bond towards their victimizers (de Fabrique, Van Hasselt, Vecchi, & Romano, 2007; Graham, Rawlings, & Rigsby, 1994). However, it can also be used to pathologize certain social behaviors and discredit any alternative non-pathological explanations that could be given for these behaviors (Adorjan, Christensen, Kelly, & Pawluch, 2012). In Egypt, this label might have been used by some members of both Western and Egyptian media to stigmatize, marginalize, and discredit Mubarak supporters.

The social psychological literature can offer us a less pathologizing explanation for this sympathetic response toward Mubarak. For example, work on right wing authoritarianism could explain this phenomenon. Specifically, one could argue that Egyptian citizens who supported Mubarak might do so due to a high degree of submission to societally-established authorities, and because they strictly adhere to social conventions that are endorsed by mainstream society (see Altemeyer, 1981). This sympathetic response could also be explained with system justi-fication theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), which posits that people are motivated to preserve the belief that existing social arrangements are fair, legitimate, justifiable, and necessary. However, while these two theories seem plausible and may offer us universal explanations of such sympathetic responses toward repressive leaders, they do not capture specific cultural influences that might deepen our understanding of this phenomenon in this partic-ular context and account for its cultural complexity.

The concept of collectivism, then, might provide a deeper cultural explanation of this sympathetic response and might also enrich the understanding offered by the above-mentioned universal theories. Moreover, a cultural ap-proach to this phenomenon suggests the role of family values, religious beliefs, folklore, and traditions in shaping the sympathetic response among some Egyptians toward Mubarak.

Collectivistic Values and Reverence to Authority

Several psychological studies suggest that members of Egyptian society are more likely to adopt a collectivistic, rather than an individualistic, approach towards life (e.g., Abudabbeh, 1996; Buda & Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1998; Oyserman, 1993; Rugh 1984). Contrary to the individualistic orientation, which values independence, autonomy,

self-reliance, self-discovery, self-sufficiency, and individuality, the collectivistic orientation gives more priority to interdependence, collectivism, communalism, and growth through joining with others (Sue & Sue, 2003). Individuals with a collectivistic self-construal also give more priority to relatedness over independence and the group's interests over their own interests (Triandis, 2001). A person with collectivistic self has been described as having porous outer ego boundaries (Roland, 1988), being more open to affective exchange with others, and having more sensitivity to the expectations and needs of others (Triandis, 1989).

Triandis (2001) argued that child rearing practices of collectivistic families emphasize conformity, obedience, security, and reliability. Subsequently, collectivistic individuals may adopt an "authority-directed orientation to life" through observing filial piety and emphasizing harmony with authority (Dien, 1999). Filial piety usually takes the form of honoring one's parents, caring for them when they get older, and carrying their wishes and dreams after their deaths (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Filial piety is also seen as the foundation for loyalty to the state, and as a result, rulers are more likely to be perceived as the parents of society (Dien, 1999). In other words, a person with filial piety is expected to extend his/her filial piety to the state and become a loyal subject to authority figures (Dien, 1999). The idea that filial piety could be extended to authority outside the family had been highlighted in numerous studies. For example, Kim and Turiel (1996) noted that the Korean culture expected children to defer to authority and respect people with higher position in social hierarchy. Similarly, Ho (1994) argued that filial piety could lead to authoritarian moralism, which embodied two features that are central to traditional Chinese culture: absolute authority to both parents and educational or sociopolitical institutes, and the perceived necessity of a moral upbringing. Ho (1994) also found a positive correlation between filial piety and authoritarianism in a Taiwanese sample. In sum, collectivism and, more specifically, filial piety might be a cultural manifestation of more general forms of authoritarianism that social psychologists have studied (e.g., Altemeyer, 1981). This orientation could help explain the sympathetic response to Mubarak from an Egyptian perspective. Specifically, it is possible that Mubarak supporters extended their filial piety to the former president by perceiving him as a father figure who deserved respect, support, and sympathy.

Communalism is another cultural factor that could help explain the sympathetic response towards Mubarak. According to Schwartz et al. (2010), filial piety and communalism could both be considered "birds of a collectivistic feather" because they both stress the importance of common ties over individual desires and the priority of the needs of family or important groups (such as religious groups or clans) over individual needs. Schwartz et al. (2010) also showed empirically (at least among U.S. samples) that these two values load onto one factor, which they called family/relationship primacy, and which is correlated with collectivism. Jagers and Mock (1995) defined communalism as a cultural orientation to life that stresses the superiority of community needs over individual needs and desires. Communalistic societies also emphasize the sanctity of authority. The following excerpt from Moemeka (1998, p. 129) describes this sanctification:

> In communalistic communities, leaders are not just citizens of the community. They are both temporal and spiritual leaders. As a result, they are seen as representing Divine Providence, and, therefore, given the honor and prestige that befits that position. No community can remain supreme for long without a leader who commands the recognition and respect of its members.

Moemeka (1998) also asserted that communalistic societies believe in the philosophy of leadership by the elderly. Similarly, Ezenweke and Nwadialor (2013) argued that the elders in Nigeria were granted leadership over the affairs of people because they were considered the custodians of communal wisdom. They also argued that respect with the elders helped maintain Nigerian customs and traditions. It is possible that Mubarak supporters observed

communal values that prepared them to sanctify Mubarak as an elderly leader, who should be respected and obeyed. The Egyptian revolution might have challenged these individuals' sense of communalism by deposing their sanctified leader. In response to this new and harsh reality, they might have sympathized with him.

In sum, the relationship between collectivism and the necessity of maintaining harmony with authority has been highlighted in numerous studies (e.g., Chirkov, Lynch, & Niwa, 2005; Shweder & Levine, 1984). However, these cultural explanations of submission to authority have not yet been studied in the Egyptian context. Accordingly, the present study examined the role of collectivistic values, such as filial piety and communalism, in shaping the sympathetic response of Mubarak supporters towards the former president. In a sense, the goal of this study was to enrich the explanations offered by universal psychological theories, such as right wing authoritarianism and system justification theory, by using a qualitative approach that could yield a deeper cultural understanding of this phenomenon, explore the meaning Mubarak supporters ascribed to the values underlying this support, and how these values are used to explain their sympathetic response. The qualitative approach chosen for this study also allowed for an in-depth exploration of the applicability and meaning of these values in this context, and the integration of culturally-based theoretical explanations of this sympathetic response with more general social psychological theories.

Method

Participants

Interviews were conducted with 10 participants. At first, an attempt was made to recruit members of a social network (Facebook) group that openly expressed support for, and sympathy with the former president. This group was called in Arabic "asfeen ya rayes," or "We are Sorry, Mr. President." This group had 100,000 members when it was launched shortly after the eruption of the Egyptian revolution, but the number of its members had jumped to a million members by the second anniversary of the Egyptian revolution. The author directly contacted members who made supportive comments about the former president by sending them instant messages. He introduced himself as an Egyptian researcher who was interested in understanding their rationale for continuing to support the former president. Out of 27 requests for interviews, only 6 participants agreed to be interviewed. In addition to the six individuals who agreed to participate in this study, snowball sampling was also used to recruit four more individuals who openly supported the former president. At the end, four women and six men were interviewed for the study (see Table 1). Their age range was 22 -55 years old, and they resided in five major Egyptian governorates. They also represented different socioeconomic strata according to the occupations they held.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation	Location
A	Female	29	Investment banker	Cairo
B	Male	39	Janitor	Giza
C	Male	24	Construction worker	Cairo
D	Female	40	Teacher	Cairo
E	Male	41	Military officer	Alexandria
F	Female	27	Translator	Cairo
G	Female	55	Employee	Cairo
H	Male	48	Translator	Sharqiya
I	Male	22	College student	Giza
J	Male	42	College professor	Menofiya

Procedure

Interviews

Participants were given the option to be interviewed at a university office or via telephone. Six interviews were privately and confidentially conducted in Arabic by the author in his university office. At the time of the interview, only the interviewer and interviewee were present in the room and doors were closed. Four interviews were conducted in Arabic via telephone. Each interview took about 60 minutes, including a 5-minute break. No financial incentives were provided. The interviews were semi-structured and contained open-ended questions that sought to generate answers about the participants' perceptions of the former president and why they continued to support him. Specifically, the main questions were: Can you tell me why you continue to support Mubarak? What is your opinion about the way his presidency ended? What do you think about his trial? How do you see him as a person? How do you perceive the youth who opposed him? Can you explain what the removal of Mubarak meant to you?

Safeguards and Ethical Guidelines

Participants signed an informed consent form that had been approved by the University's Institutional Review Board and included details of the interview, such as its purpose, recording process, and expected timeframe. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable, and that code letters instead of names would be used when reporting their data, in order to preserve anonymity. Participants were also assured that they had the right to refuse being taped. Six participants indeed refused to be taped, but they allowed note-taking. In order to ensure accurate note-taking, the author wrote participants' utterances verbatim, using legible Arabic handwriting. Further, the author periodically restated the quotes to participants and asked them to confirm or correct them. While translating the notes into English, the author did not include segments that were not clearly written and refrained from paraphrasing them.

Analysis of Interview Transcripts and Notes

The analysis followed a procedure of thematic analysis that was adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006). After translating all transcripts and notes to English, the author immersed himself in reading and re-reading the materials. Next, the author generated initial codes, which represented patterned responses within the data set that helped answer the research question of this study (i.e., why did these individuals continue to support the ousted

president?). The codes were then sorted into potential themes. These themes were identified using both a theoretical (deductive) thematic approach and an inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The deductive thematic approach generated themes that were driven by the researcher's theoretical framework (Boyatzis, 1998), namely a focus on the possible influence of collectivism and authoritarianism in producing the sympathetic response to Mubarak. The inductive approach resulted in identifying additional, unexpected themes in an effort to integrate them with the initial theoretical understanding. The resulting themes were then reviewed and refined numerous times after incorporating the comments of reviewers. Next, the themes were defined and named by identifying the essence of what each theme is about. A final analysis of the themes was then linked to the research question and the appropriate literature, and this led to the production of this report, which represents a rich description of the data and its themes. Each theme is described in the following, along with excerpts from different interviews that exemplify the themes.

Results

As shown in Table 2, three major themes describing participants' justification for their persistent support and sympathy for Mubarak were identified. Rich and clear quotes that exemplified the themes are presented below. The quotes were selected so as to represent as many participants as possible.

Table 2

Thematic Analysis of the Sympathetic Response of Mubarak Supporters: Overview of Themes

Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1: Respect	a. Respect for a father figure
	b. Respect for a country symbol
	c. Respect for old customs and traditions
Theme 2: Religion	a. Religion orders reverence to authority figures.
	b. Religion orders reverence to the elderly
Theme 3: Response to outgroup action (Conspiracy thinking)	N/A

Theme 1: Respect

The overarching theme of respect was related to the theoretical framework that guided this study. Overall, this theme revealed how cultural values, such as filial piety and communalism, can add to our understanding of the universal concept of authoritarianism, as they all explain submission to established authorities. This theme was differentiated into three subthemes: participants supported Mubarak because they respect him as a father figure, as a country symbol, and/or because they respect the country's traditions and customs.

Subtheme 1a: Respect for Mubarak as a Father Figure

Some participants stressed that Mubarak should always be treated as a father figure because he protected and cared for Egyptians. Some participants provided evidence that he was a caring father, as illustrated by the following quote:

> He [Mubarak] could have easily ordered the army to crush his opponents as Assad [the current leader of
> Syria] and Gaddafi [the former leader of Libya] did. He decided to step down to avoid potential blood-
> shed. He chose not to hurt his people. (Participant A)

Perhaps this father role figure was granted to Mubarak because of the sense of stability he gave many Egyptians
during his 30-year reign. For example, Participant F argued that Mubarak successfully maintained the security of
Egypt in a region that was marred by political conflict and civil wars. Participants also argued that certain rules
and manners should have been observed in treating father figures like Mubarak. For example, Participant G
lamented the youths' alleged lack of these manners:

> When I was young I learned certain manners in dealing with old people. For example, when I talk with
> them, I would never raise my voice; I would always give them appropriate titles; I would never ignore
> them; and I would never interrupt them. This is why I thought it was the end of the world when I saw these
> children [referring to the revolutionary youths] boldly asking Mubarak to step down and when they used
> foul language to address him.

Participant B also complained that the young revolutionaries did not respect Mubarak's old age (Mubarak was 82
years old when the revolution erupted). For this participant, respect should always be expected for the elderly
regardless of their socioeconomic class, religion, or gender, as illustrated by the following quote:

> When I buy vegetables from an old man, I say, 'Uncle, can you please give me this or that?' I call him
> uncle out of respect for his age despite possible difference in class. Mubarak is an old man that should
> be respected for his age the same way we respect any other old man no matter what kind of a job he has.

Overall, this subtheme illustrates how participants' filial piety might have led them to maintain harmony with an
authority figure like Mubarak and revere him as a father. In a sense, this collectivistic value might represent a
cultural manifestation of authoritarianism

Subtheme 1b: Respect for Mubarak as a Country Symbol

Most participants stressed that Mubarak was a national symbol that should be respected despite any shortcomings
he had. This characterization was mainly attributed to his long history of military and political services to Egypt.
For example, Participant I believed that Mubarak represented the eagle placed in the Egyptian flag. It is worth
noting that the eagle figure in this flag represents the powerful military figure Saladin who led the Arab World's
war against the Crusades in the 12th century. Participant B also credited Mubarak with what he described as
"Egypt's victory" over Israel in 1973 and argued that this victory restored Egyptians' dignity and pride after their
earlier defeat in 1967. Further, Participant E praised the resilience of Mubarak as a national symbol, arguing that
he appeared strong-willed with high spirit despite facing a very difficult trial. Perhaps he was alluding to the fact
that Mubarak did not lose his composure during his trial and often approached the situation with emotional stability.
Participant J asserted that Egyptian presidents should always be respected as national symbols even if they do
not have a military history. Overall, this subtheme suggests that the participants' communal values might have
contributed to their sanctification of authority, as exemplified by their praise of Mubarak as a decorated war hero
and a role model. These communal values might also represent a cultural manifestation of authoritarianism.

Subtheme 1c: Respect for Old Customs and Traditions

Participants believed that the overthrowing of Mubarak represented a major break from certain Egyptian traditions that have required people's submission to country leaders. These traditions, according to Participant F, can be traced back to the distant past as illustrated by the following quote:

> Since the Pharaoh era, Egypt has always been ruled by one ruler to whom people gave reverence and respect. It is not easy to suddenly change this because it goes against our nature. There has always been one King, Sultan, Khedive, Emir, or President.

Participants also described the negative repercussions of breaking these traditions: For example, Participant C argued that the overthrowing of Mubarak violated the tradition of *Eshrah,* which can be described as the deep emotional bond that people share with others. The concept of Eshrah is a cultural tradition that was kept through generations in Egypt and the Arab world and denotes the expectation that people would not betray each other despite any circumstances if they lived together for a very long period. Participants attributed the violation of these traditions to negative foreign influences, as expressed for example by Participant D: "Did you take a good look at the youth who started this revolution? They have been heavily influenced by the West, which has spoiled their beliefs. They are not true Egyptians." The latter quote also overlaps with the conspiracy thinking captured in Theme 3 as discussed below. Overall, this subtheme illustrates the role of Egyptian traditions in shaping the desire to maintain harmony with authority figures and might represent another cultural manifestation of authoritarianism.

In reflecting on Theme 1, it becomes clear that participants attributed their support of Mubarak to their respect of common cultural values and traditions that prepared them to revere Mubarak as both a father figure and a national symbol. These collectivistic values and cultural traditions could deepen the explanation already offered by social psychological theories on authoritarianism. Further, these values may or may not be related to religious doctrine. The influence of religion in facilitating this response is discussed in the next theme.

Theme 2: Religion

This theme revealed the influence of religious values in shaping the sympathetic response to Mubarak This theme was not based on the initial theoretical framework for this study, but instead emerged from the participants' responses. It overlapped to some extent with Theme 1, as it also reflects authoritarianism. Specifically, participants used their religious reasoning to justify their submission to Mubarak as an authority figure. However, because of the distinct focus on religion it is treated as a separate (though related) theme. This theme was differentiated into two subthemes discussed in the following.

Subtheme 2a: Religion Orders Reverence to Authority Figures

While participants were not asked about their religious affiliations, they often disclosed these affiliations during the interviews. Specifically, some study participants used their Islamic or Christian religious beliefs to justify their sympathy towards Mubarak. For example, Participant H said: "According to the Holy Quran, people should obey Allah, the Prophet and those who lead us." On the other hand, Participant C noted that Christianity urged the respect of rulers as evidenced by the late Coptic Orthodox Pope's persistent support of Mubarak. Participant A also accused Egyptian revolutionaries of violating religious rules about obeying rulers as illustrated by the following quote: "These Facebook people who started this so called revolution are infidels because they do not know what their religion says. They are out of the religion." Finally, Participant D went even further and proposed a tough punishment

for such violations: "The Islamic rule is very clear about going against the Muslim leader. People who do this should be given the death penalty."

Subtheme 2b: Religion Orders Reverence to the Elderly

Some participants stressed that aging individuals, such as Mubarak, should be revered due to religious reasons. For example, Participant F stressed the respect for the elderly that religion promotes, by referring to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad who said: "He is not one of us, who does not respect our elder and have mercy on our young ones." Participant C also stressed the religious importance of elderly figures like parents, as illustrated by the following statement:

> As you know, your father or mother when they die they beg God to forgive you for all your sins. They have a great value in the eyes of God. How can we treat a father figure like this? We are certainly not going to heaven.

Notably, this latter quote in particular seems to overlap with Subtheme 1a (Respect for father figures). In reflecting on the two subthemes that together make up the second theme, it becomes clear that some participants attributed their support of Mubarak to their observance of religious beliefs, which prepared them to revere and have compassion for Mubarak, as both an authority and elderly figure.

In sum, Theme 2 also adds further theoretical nuance to explanations offered by the universal theory of authoritarianism as an explanation for submission to authorities. Specifically, participants' religious beliefs prepared them to respect Mubarak as both an authority and elderly figure. As such, participants' religious values might represent another cultural manifestation of authoritarianism in this Egyptian context. This theme also overlaps with Theme 1 as they both reflect values that stressed submission to authority figures, although rooted in different sources of beliefs.

Theme 3: Response to Outgroup Actions (Conspiracy Thinking)

This theme, which emerged from participants' responses and was not drawn from the initial theoretical framework of this study, captured participants' support for Mubarak based on responses to perceived outgroup actions. Specifically, some participants seemed to engage in conspiracy thinking, describing threatening outgroup actions that were taken against Mubarak in an effort to protect and absolve him from any wrongdoing. Douglas and Sutton (2008) defined conspiracy theory as a proposed plot by powerful people or organizations working on a secret mission to accomplish hidden and harmful goals. Many participants strongly believed that foreign forces were behind the unrest that had happened in the Arab world following what is known as the "Arab Spring." For example, Participant C complained about the "lies" that were spread about Mubarak's wealth by the foreign media and opposition forces. Similarly, Participant F accused Hillary Clinton (the former U.S. Secretary of State) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of dividing Egypt, as illustrated by the following quote: "Most of these so called revolutionaries were paid by Hillary Clinton and the CIA to divide Egypt. They always want to destroy us." Participant H also accused the CIA of conspiring to destroy the Middle East. These outgroup threats were linked to historical events, as Participant A describes:

> Egypt has been always targeted by many foreign forces, such as the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, British, and the French, due to its strategic location and treasures. I am not surprised that this is happening again in the 21st century. We have been good in fighting these forces, but I am not sure what will happen now.

Some participants expressed their belief in the existence of a secret society that threatened the unity and fabric of the Egyptian community, as illustrated by the following quote from Participant G: "We all know what the "Masonic group" wants to do to Egypt. They want to keep it under its control. Egypt has been always independent and they finally got what they want thanks to some immature youths." This conspiracy thinking might have also served to protect Mubarak from his own people, as this participant suggests:

> So the youths were blocking the roads everyday to protest about silly things. They were destroying business and failing the country. It got so ridiculous we were expecting to see the kids in kindergarten protesting against the delay in their lunch. (Participant J)

Some participants also engaged in conspiracy thinking when defending police brutality and corruption that marred Mubarak's rule. For example, Participant D stated that police brutality had always been the best way to keep order in Egypt. In contrast, Participant A argued that Mubarak did not fight corruption because he did not want to upset the majority of Egyptians, whom she accused of being corrupt as well.

Overall, this theme extends our understanding of authoritarianism and illustrates that in certain political and historical contexts conspiracy thinking and outgroup blaming can also be used to justify submission to an authority figure like Mubarak.

Discussion

Thematic analysis of interviews conducted with selected Mubarak supporters suggested that their sympathetic response to the former leader might be attributed to collectivistic values that prepared them to perceive him as a father figure and submit to his authority. The analysis also suggested that religious beliefs and outgroup blaming might have increased participants' submission to authority. The major contribution of this study lays in its effort to give a cultural understanding of this sympathetic response that would enrich the explanations offered by universal social psychology theories (e.g., right wing authoritarianism and system justification theory) by revealing culturally-shaped manifestations of this phenomenon. Specifically, the themes reflected the role of collectivistic self-construal, religious beliefs, certain family values, and common cultural traditions, such as *Eshrah*, in shaping the sympathetic response to Mubarak.

In relating Theme 1 (respect) to Theme 2 (religion), it appeared that participants' collectivistic values, such as filial piety and communalism, were influenced by certain religious values. Specifically, participants believed that religious teachings (both Islamic and Christian) ordered them to obey, respect, and defend Mubarak as a father, authority, and elderly figure. They also believed that these teachings did not condone the removal of Mubarak from power. The idea that religious observance could predict deference and respect for law and order has been highlighted in numerous studies (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996; Peterson, Doty, & Winter, 1993; Van Pachterbeke, Freyer, & Saroglou, 2011). Participants' religious values seemed to correspond to their Muslim or Christian beliefs, but they can also be traced to the Pharaoh era, when Egyptian kings were revered as sacred leaders. Therefore, participants' collectivistic and religious values might represent cultural manifestations of authoritarianism and can further enhance the explanations offered by universal psychological theories that examined this process.

In relating Theme 1 (respect) to Theme 3 (response to outgroup actions), one could argue that participants' respect for Mubarak as a father and authority figure implied absolving him from any wrongdoing and displacing the re-

sponsibility of civil unrest to foreign forces and disrespectful citizens. For some participants, outgroup blaming further developed into conspiracy thinking. As Zonis and Joseph (1994) put it, conspiracy thinking in the Middle East is very common due to the prevalence of actual conspiracies in the region that were perpetrated by outside powers, such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). However, conspiracy theories are likely to occur when rapid, massive political change disrupt individuals' capacity to understand their new realities (Zonis & Joseph, 1994). The Egyptian revolution marked a rapid and sharp end to a long military rule, which might have enhanced the development of conspiracy theories. One must note, however, that conspiracy thinking also occurs outside the Middle East. For example, conspiracy theories have developed in the Western world around the death of JFK (McCauley & Jacques, 1979), the death of Princess Diana (Douglas & Sutton, 2008), and the 9/11 terrorist attack (Wood & Douglas, 2013).

In an effort to link these three themes, it can be concluded that participants' collectivistic and religious values might have prepared them to respect Mubarak as a father and elderly figure and submit to his authority. This respect of Mubarak might have led participants to develop conspiracy thinking against his enemies to absolve him from any wrongdoing and maintain their submission to his authority figure. In a sense, these themes revealed cultural and religious values that can add cultural depth to our understanding of the concept of authoritarianism.

Finally, participants seemed to have developed a strong emotional bond with Mubarak—perceiving him as a caring father who protected them from potential wars, provided them with security, enhanced their national pride, and maintained the stability of their nation. This positive emotional bond between Mubarak and his supporters does not necessarily mean that they are victims of the Stockholm Syndrome who tried to appease their victimizer. Instead, it may reflect their genuine care and compassion for a father figure and their observance of common cultural values.

Sociopolitical Implications

This study provides some cultural clues about the nature of political participation in Egypt. Rather than seeing many Egyptian citizens who did not support the Egyptian revolution as victims of internalized oppression or victimization, this study provides a cultural perspective on these individuals' political attitudes by acknowledging and highlighting collectivistic values and traditions that influenced them. Notably, these collectivistic values influenced not only Mubarak supporters, but also other Egyptians who did not support Mubarak. For example, the "father figure" role was later acquired by the authoritarian military leaders who ruled the country after they forced Mubarak to resign. More recently, ousted Islamist President Muhammad Morsi was granted the father figure role by many members of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) organization, who also seemed to hold the same collectivistic values (Kadry, 2013). At the end, many Egyptians tended to identify with, and defend a father figure that they respected and revered, but they differed on who this father figure was. However, many members of pro-democracy groups in Egypt were perceived to have abandoned these collectivistic values, and this might have led them to experience serious ideological conflicts with members of the mainstream Egyptian culture, who fiercely observed and defended these values. Specifically, these groups were accused by the mainstream media of advocating Western values and ideals that were deemed irrelevant or contradictory to the cultural experiences of many Egyptian citizens. For example, Abdelhafez (2013) accused these groups of spreading fake slogans about freedom of expression and beliefs that were perceived by many as a threat to maintaining national unity and cohesion. They were also criticized for de-emphasizing the role of religious and cultural values in defining the concept of human rights, especially those related to the relationship between men and women (Fares, 2009). Further, these groups were often criticized for receiving funds from Western countries to defend their interests in the Middle East instead of promoting the

well-being of Egyptian citizens (e.g., Al Saadani, 2014; Mansour, 2013). The present study shed some light on cultural issues that these pro-democracy groups failed to observe and respect while advocating political reforms in Egypt. If they attend to these cultural values and consider them in their advocacy work, these groups may capture the hearts and minds of mainstream Egyptians.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Studies

A major methodological limitation of this study was its small sample size, which was due to the difficulty encountered in recruiting participants. Individuals who declined to participate in the study might have feared being labeled as "felool," which is a derogatory term used by the Egyptian media to describe the remnants of the Mubarak regime. Receiving this label did not only mean social ridicule; it could have also subjected its recipients to legal prosecution at a time when the Egyptian Public Prosecutor was issuing massive arrest warrants against individuals who were suspected to have collaborated with the former regime. Others might have feared that their responses would be misrepresented by the researcher despite given many assurances. On the other hand, it might have been very difficult for participants to fully express themselves without feeling judged or ridiculed given the media hostility and hysteria towards Mubarak and his supporters. Perhaps other, non-obtrusive methods of collecting data, such as the use of Internet blogs and electronic essays could have been used; however, these data sources might not have captured the nuances of experiences that in-depth interviews can reveal. Notably, the study did not intend to provide generalizations about the sympathetic response of Mubarak supporters, but rather to explore some of the reasons for this support in depth. Accordingly, a small sample was sufficient for this purpose.

On the other hand, the small sample prevented exploring other possible influences on support for Mubarak due to participants' backgrounds. For example, it is also possible that this sympathetic response could be explained by factors such as gender, social class, political ideology, and other cultural influences. These and other questions should be explored in future research. For example, follow-up studies with larger samples and using quantitative methods can examine the relationship between collectivistic values and political attitudes. Future research may also aim to answer the following questions: Is there a relationship between filial piety and polarized politics? Do people who have a communal value system adopt certain political ideologies?

Finally, a theoretical limitation of the present study concerns the framework of collectivism that was one of the major assumptions of this study. It is important to note the controversy surrounding the individualism/collectivism dichotomy and the possible limitations of this theoretical perspective. For example, Voronov and Singer (2002) argued that research examining the difference between individualism and collectivism was characterized by insufficient conceptual clarity and a lack of systemic data. They also argued that this dichotomy reflects rigid and stereotypical mental representations of cultures rather than comprehensive views of their complexities. By examining more specific cultural values though, the present study goes beyond this individualism-collectivism dichotomy and is able to provide a more nuanced view of the cultural influences that shape support for Mubarak in Egypt.

Conclusion

This study aimed to provide a deeper cultural understanding of the sympathetic response of Mubarak supporters towards the deposed leader by taking into account certain cultural factors that might have influenced this response. As shown by the thematic analysis of interviews conducted with selected Mubarak supporters, their observance of collectivistic values, such as filial piety and communalism, might have prepared them to respect and revere Mubarak as a parental, authority, and elderly figure. These collectivistic values were also influenced by certain

religious beliefs and unique cultural traditions such as Eshrah. These collectivistic values might have also led participants to develop outgroup blaming and conspiracy thinking. In sum, this study suggests the importance of integrating culturally specific explanations with universal theories in social psychology, such as right-wing authoritarianism and system justification theory.

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