LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM IN LEBANON’S WOMEN’S MOVEMENT: BETWEEN *FITNA*, *FAWDA*, AND FEMINISM

By

SANDY S. EL HAGE

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Thesis Proposal Form

Name of Student: Sandy El Hage  I.D. #: 200904301
Program / Department: International Affairs
On (dd/mm/yy): 25/07/12 has presented a Thesis proposal entitled:

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in the presence of the Committee Members and Thesis Advisor:

Advisor: Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss
(Name and Signature)

Committee Member: Dr. Marwan Rowayheb
(Name and Signature)

Committee Member: Dr. Dima Dabbous-Sensenig
(Name and Signature)

Comments / Remarks / Conditions to Proposal Approval:
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Date: June 3, 2013
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(Dean, School of Arts and Sciences)

cc: Department Chair
School Dean
Student
Thesis Advisor
Thesis Defense Result Form

Name of Student: Sandy El Hage  
I.D.: 200904301
Program / Department: International Affairs
Date of thesis defense: 28 February 2013
Thesis title: Transnational Activism in Lebanon’s Women’s Movement: Between Fitna, Fawda, and Feminism

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☐ Thesis is not approved. Grade NP is recorded

Committee Members:
Advisor:
Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiiss  
(Name and Signature)

Committee Member:
Dr. Naiwan Rowayeh  
(Name and Signature)

Committee Member:
Dr. Divine Dasthaus  
(Name and Signature)

Advisor’s report on completion of corrections (if any):

Changes Approved by Thesis Advisor: Dr. Skulte-Ouaiiss  
Signature:

Date: June 3, 2013  
Acknowledged by: 
(Dean, School of Arts and Sciences)

cc: Registrar, Dean, Chair, Thesis Advisor, Student
Thesis Approval Form

Student Name: __Sandy El Hage__________________ I.D. #: __200904301______

Thesis Title: __“Transnational Activism in Lebanon’s Women’s Movement: Between Fitna, Fawda, and Feminism”__________________________

Program / Department: __International Affairs______________________________

School: __Arts and Sciences______________________________

Approved by:

Thesis Advisor: __Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiiss, PhD__________________________

Committee Member: __Dr. Marwan Roushdi__________________________

Committee Member: __Dr. Dina Dackles__________________________

Date: __29 May 2013__________________________
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Transnational Activism in Lebanon’s Women’s Movement: Between *Fitna, Fawda*, and Feminism

Sandy S. El Hage

Abstract

This thesis investigates transnational campaigns from the international and state level to consider the existence of transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement. Lebanon’s women’s movement serves as an example to analyze the effects of transnationalism on national campaigns for policy change, in the Lebanese case, reformed personal status laws and citizenship rights. The study follows the literature on Lebanon’s women’s movement to extend an analysis of systemic effects on the structure of women’s organizing with emphasis on international partnerships in state-centered contention during the country’s post-war development. Pressure for greater recognition and observance of women’s human rights has risen as a pertinent feature of civil society as Lebanon has become further enmeshed in international partnerships and U.N. agencies. As a result, the structure of the women’s movement has transformed from a loose network of women’s advocacy groups to a centralized, top-down movement. The focus of this case study investigates the spur of a bottom-up, grassroots feminist movement as a response to top-down contention and cooptation of women’s organizing by a UN-Lebanon alliance through the UNFPA and National Commission for Lebanese Women. With focus on grassroots organizing and diffusion of feminist discourse, the case study of *Nasawiya* provides a contrast between transnational activism in women’s organizing across ideology and structure. Still, Lebanon’s women’s movements reveals old truths of the country’s sectarian political system: women’s organizing continues to suffer at the hands of patriarchal politics. Nonetheless, the emergence of a grassroots, feminist polity suggests that, as the “mainstream” women’s movement has become less fragmented and institutionalized, the “alternative” feminist movement has also increased in activism and visibility, thus implying a new schism in Lebanon’s women’s movement.

*Keywords:* Women’s Movement, Transnational Activism, Transnational Feminism, Grassroots Organizing, Feminist International Relations Theory
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CHAPTER ONE

A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON
SOCIOPOLITICAL GRIEVANCES IN LEBANON

1.1 – Situating the Thesis

“I have a feeling that our time has come. We, the people on the margins. The angry, disenfranchised people who pay too much for bread and fuel and rent and water and parking. We, the kids who grew up in the 80s. We, who are unamused by boring media and mindless entertainment. We, who’ve been struggling for years trying to create small, important projects that go nowhere and achieve nothing. Civil marriage. Women’s rights. Green spaces. Anti-corruption. Renewable energy. Equal pay. Migrant rights. Bicycle lanes. Refugee rights. Public schools. Public universities. Social security. Protect our beaches. Protect our workers. Protect our Internet. Protect love. Save our animals. Save our forests. Save our heritage. End torture. End the civil war. Build a public transportation system that works already!

How much longer are we supposed to fight – alone and secluded – for what is right? How much longer do we bang our heads against a Parliament that doesn’t give a damn? Over 300 laws they have in their drawers and they waste their time – time that we pay for with our sweat and hard work – to quarrel over issues that don’t even concern us. Better yet, they create issues and convince us that they are protecting us from each other. Who protects us from the daily struggle it takes to live in this country that millions of us have abandoned because it gets [sic] more and more unbearable every day. I have a feeling that thousands of you agree that enough is enough. And what’s different this time is that I have a feeling thousands of you want to do something about it. What better thing to do than take back Parliament?”

—Nadine Moawad

Nadine Moawad’s blog post from April 4, 2012 has reverberated throughout Lebanon’s active blogosphere from social media outlets, Twitter, Facebook, and not to mention at her own blog, www.nadinemoawad.com. Titled, “I have a feeling our time has come,” Moawad’s tone at first reads as an almost too quixotic declaration. However, after an exhilarating first read, a second study reveals that Moawad, a widely revered activist in Lebanon’s feminist collective, Nasawiya, suggests a clearly articulated dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Further, and more suggestive are the grievances delineated in Moawad’s statement and a call to “Take back Parliament.” Moawad’s activism to challenge complacency and instigate a social movement is at the core of Lebanon’s feminist
collective, Nasawiya. Since 2010, feminist in Lebanon have been organizing towards a larger social movement among Lebanon’s grassroots community. The structure, rhetoric, and campaigns within this very social movement are characterized as grounded in a feminist framework and “alternative” in their approaches to existing women’s organizations in Lebanon.

An influx of NGOs and transnational networks for women’s organizing and the use of social media during the preparation phase of protests have contributed to the changed structure in Lebanon’s women’s movement. However, a great aspect of the movement’s emerging character can also be attributed to the intervening variables of internationalism and the purview of globalization on Lebanon’s political and economic opportunities for increasing women’s rights.

An analysis of the women’s movement in Lebanon provides an insightful overview of the transnational diffusion of liberal feminist values through generations and across cultural boundaries. This paper asserts that, due to the sectarian political structure in Lebanon, the women’s movement has been historically fragmented (Bray-Collins 2003; Weber 2003; Khattab 2010). However, this study is a departure from the existing literature on Lebanon’s women’s movement in that it situates the women’s movement from the domestic sphere to the international arena. Amongst the abundance of literature, Harb (2010) lightly considers transnational activism through transnational advocacy networks in Lebanon’s women’s movement. However, the mention of transnational advocacy networks is depicted in broad strokes, where such networks are described to “play an important role in reducing repression in various countries by supplying information, socializing agents in a world culture, and using economic pressure.”

1 Harb, 2010, p. 18
This study focuses on the transnational structures wherein underlie the mechanisms of women’s organizing. Upon investigation in the linking process of Lebanon’s women’s movement, or according to Sidney Tarrow (2005), “how local activists cognitively connect to global symbols,” activism is notably transnational in its political opportunity structure and grievances. Linkage occurs through various process instigated by activists seeking to side-step national contention, or namely in Lebanon this process emerges as a result of an unresponsive government and languished national policies for women’s rights. This process, as Tarrow identifies, is the initial domestic process within a transnational social movement. In Lebanon’s women’s movement, linkage, or the linking process, to a transnational force serves as the identifying marker of transnational activism. Leading to the characterization of feminist activism as the linking process, the paper constructs a two-fold analysis of the women’s movement to broadly consider the structural effects on agency. First it seeks to examine the systemic variables that cultivate structural inconsistencies in the women’s movement in Lebanon. From this analysis, a discourse of international-nation-state contentious politics will emerge to consider the pervasive effects of neoliberalism on institutionalizing the women’s movement. A second analysis will characterize the existence of transnational activism as a product of diffused liberal feminist values that have allowed efflorescence of transnational feminist activism. The implications of international contentious politics and transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement will further elucidate on the magnitude international politics, and particularly U.N. policies clash with feminist values in Lebanon. The discrepancy between U.N. campaigns for women’s rights and the aspirations of

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2 Tarrow, 2005, p. 60
3 Tarrow, 2005, p. 60
feminist activism for women’s rights organizing in Lebanon’s domestic politics make up the fabric of transnational contention in Lebanon’s emerging feminist movement.

In addressing the juncture of international contentious politics and domestically rooted transnational activism, I focus primarily on the displacement of policy oversight for women’s human rights from the state to United Nations agencies. These efforts highlight attempts to institute Western-style liberties for women.

This thesis attempts to identify transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement with a study of Nasawiya, a Feminist Collective of activists in Lebanon. A progeny from social movement theory, transnational activism discerns the character of activism in Lebanon’s contemporary women’s movement as a projection of international contentious politics for women’s rights. Upon further investigation, this study identifies a correlation between state-centered politics, the ineffectual inclusive political opportunity structure in Lebanon, the implications of supranational relations with Lebanon’s civil society, and the emergence of a progressive social movement for a feminist, secular polity.

However, in its infancy, Lebanon’s Feminist Collective Nasawiya faces obstacles to mobilizing for political awareness beyond social media forums and protest spheres. In its campaign for women’s rights in Lebanon, the Feminist Collective faces opposition from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is the representative body for fifty-seven member states, including Lebanon, at the United Nations Population Fund, “the leader in reproductive health and population and development”. Aside from its alternative discourse for a feminist polity, activists in Nasawiya express disdain against the state of Lebanon. Activists express a struggle against patriarchy and an expressed desire to gain recognition as a legitimate representative body in the women’s movement.
A concluding analysis will delineate the existing constraints of Lebanon’s sectarian political structure on transnational feminist activism. The case of patriarchal representatives on behalf of Lebanese in the UNFPA and Lebanon’s parliament, that which aims to structure its human rights policies in accordance to U.N. criteria, serves as the primary intersection of contention between national and international discourse for policies on women’s issues. From here, the crux of state contention has emerged from refusal to ratify U.N. policies (under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW) for women’s rights, where certain articles have been deemed as defiant to prevailing political, cultural, and religious norms. In response to contention between the OIC and the UNFPA, the Lebanese state has been complacent towards the former organization.

The implicit argument addressed in this thesis argues, as long as patriarchal features of the Lebanese sectarian system are not addressed, the issue of gendered politics among elite decision-makers will persist at the national and international level, even when there are transnational grassroots pressures seeking to reform the system.

1.2 – The Topic of the Present Women’s Movement in Lebanon

On the cusp of Lebanon’s last parliamentary elections in 2009, Al Jazeera English aired a news segment on the dismal participation of women in Lebanese politics. In his newscast, Todd Baer posed the overwrought and contrived stereotype that “Lebanon is widely regarded as one of the most open societies for women in the Arab world”. However, Baer admits what activists of Lebanon’s women’s movement have been challenging, that, “What you see on the street does not transcend into the political arena.”
In 2009 “of the more than five-hundred candidates running for a seat here in the Lebanese parliament, only twelve of them [were] women and judging from previous election results, it [was] unexpected that even half of them will make it.” A post mortem of the 2009 parliamentary elections indeed reflects a reality of inequality in decision-making. Results were staggering low, with only four women elected from a bracket of 128 to be Members of Lebanon’s 2009-2013 parliament.

Baer’s report further provided two opposing interpretations for women’s lack of political involvement. Paul Salem, head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Beirut, says it is easy to understand why women do not transcend these political boundaries, because “maybe…the lifestyle of the Lebanese, you know, they would prefer to have a good time, have a good job, drive a nice car rather than get engaged in politics.”

Bahia Hariri, a veteran politician, posed perhaps a more cerebral deduction that “among the reasons for the low numbers of women in politics…is that the Lebanese political system is mainly controlled by prominent families where men are expected to lead.”

From Hariri’s assertions, this thesis is concerned with assessing the mechanisms of Lebanon’s women’s movement for overcoming a lack of responsiveness from the confessional, male-dominated government. In 2012, it is apparent the women’s movement has incurred setbacks, despite Lebanon having reinstated a stable political structure in accordance to the 2008 Doha Agreement.

Though my framework is largely concerned with theories of social movements and the emergence of new features in Lebanon’s feminist activism and women’s movement, the social grievances among activists are direct products of a stagnant, patriarchal decision-making system. Particularly, feminist activists are trying to afford

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5 Baer, 2009
their own means to erect a gender-sensitive, egalitarian, inclusive political culture for a genuinely democratic republic in Lebanon.

Budding scholars and academics alike have extensively discussed the status of women in Lebanon. Prime research conducted from between post-Ta’ef Accord and pre-2006 War between Hezbollah and Israel highlights nation-state contention in the women’s movement and the patriarchal Lebanese state. Accordingly, involvement of women in decision-making and political leadership positions has continued to remain at distressingly low numbers throughout Lebanon’s development stage post-1990.

For women and politics the world has stood still since as far back as 1953, when suffrage was extended to female Lebanese citizens; to date, only seventeen women have served in parliament. Personal status laws continue to be gendered and “relegated to the authority of patriarchal religious courts and institutions…Thus, the freedom Lebanese women enjoy is selective.”6 A ‘Western’ feminist scholar wrote the aforementioned statement in a thesis on the gendered politics of elite decision-makers in Lebanon. Nine years later, Bray-Collins’s statement still evokes a wretched truth about women’s rights in Lebanon, especially towards gender rights or the acknowledgement of gender mainstreaming.

In its development stage post-1975-1990 Civil War, and post-2006 July War between Hezbollah and Israel, Lebanon has endured an everlasting, turbulent political climate. Existing political parties, “especially after the civil war from 1975 to 1990…compete to preserve narrow sectarian interests, not those of a unified Lebanon.”7 The political system is thus not only a stalwart patriarchal one, but rigid at that, with primary concerns that revolve around party politics.

6 Bray-Collins, 2003, p. 2
Today, and as the 2013 parliamentary elections inch closer, feminist activists and the women’s movement are enacting strides towards achieving greater women’s rights, or political parity at the least. Since the 2010 submission of a draft law by KAFA Enough Violence and Exploitation (KAFA) to protect women from family violence, grassroots movements have taken the streets in numerous protests to pressure an unresponsive government for acknowledgment that the personal is indeed political.

Of the first of many large protests, on January 14, 2012, a fledgling women’s movement marched through the maze of Beirut’s most politically active neighborhood to pressure the Lebanese government to consider a draft law written by lawmakers and activists of the women’s movement. In this assembly of protestors, a collective force moved in synergy to demonstrate against sexual violence in Lebanon, birth country to most of the protestors present, and chiefly a country insufficiently governed by a malnourished judiciary that is unable to allocate rights cultivated in most democratic systems.8

From the Interior Ministry to the doorstep of Lebanon’s Parliament, the march was principally characterized by a movement of non-state actors against the backdrop of state contention. Nonetheless, the march itself was symbolic of the growing support for Lebanon’s women’s movement throughout the wider sphere of civil society.

The foundation for Lebanon’s women’s rights movement is the result of dynamic turmoil of structural factors against a heightened wave of grassroots

campaigns and transnational activism. The country’s unheeding cultural patriarchy, a resultant political segregation from sectarianism, and a fractured economy unsupported by laws that protect women in the workplace contribute to the complex environment through which women’s movement in Lebanon has had to maneuver. Most important, these factors have also contributed to the unification of grievances of gender inequality and oppression on women.

This single demonstration generated up to a thousand protestors from across the Lebanese regions, and would maintain as, thus far, Lebanon’s largest demonstration for women’s rights of 2012.\(^9\) The guise of this protest presented a demand to reconcile the gap between archaic, hallow, and mostly nonexistent laws towards family violence, marital rape, and sexual harassment in the workplace—offenses that heed direct gender discriminations towards women. Over the course of five months, and since the January 14\(^{th}\) protest, the women’s movement in Lebanon has also sought to elucidate on the overhanging social issues at large, the indirect gender discriminations that have resulted in gendered leadership and patriarchal political representation.\(^{10}\)

Unlike recent social movements across the Middle East and North Africa, namely in Egypt, supporters of women’s rights rightfully came out that Saturday with confidence that, although Lebanon’s unstable social environment has been prone to disparaging equal rights of demographics aligned with contentious political or social affiliations, their freedom of speech was protected under an authorized permit to

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\(^9\) Under the conduct of up to 30 NGOs, Lebanon’s activists and women’s movement has staged and partaken in six protests since January 13, 2012 to pressure (personal observation from January 13, 2012 to May 12, 2012).

occupy streets in the Sanayeh district of Beirut, though under strict parameters.\textsuperscript{11} That day women and men demonstrated without any political party affiliations. Rather, a community of non-governmental organizations served as a mobilizing structure. The rhetoric of freedom of speech, however, stood as an elusive right. Though constitutional rights account for the freedom to assemble in Lebanon, recent history of protests across the Middle East and North Africa region has been a prism of reality to remind protestors that violation against personal freedoms is always a possible outcome.

The urgency expelled by activists from the widespread protest on January 14\textsuperscript{th} permeated onto the agenda of decision-makers in parliament. Since its consideration, however, the draft law has been revised with severe distortions by erasing its gender undertone. Originally in 2010, KAFA, a prominent NGO human rights organization, submitted the draft proposal under the heading of “Protecting Women from Family Violence.” As of 2012, the impending bill has been renamed to “Protecting the Entire Family” whilst a vital clause that extends protection against marital rape continues to be scrutinized in the parliamentary debate chamber.\textsuperscript{12}

Head of the subcommittee, Members of parliament, and Tripoli MP Samir Jisr clarified that the bill will not achieve legislation until it follows a framework “in line with the Constitution, Lebanese Law and international agreements, especially the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.”\textsuperscript{13}

The process through 2010 and on in creating a gender-based law for women’s rights has proven to Lebanon’s women’s movement that, not only is the decision-

\textsuperscript{11} According to a UNDP report, Lebanon grants the freedom of assembly under Article 13 of its constitution, however within “the limits of law” (“Internal Governance for Governance in Lebanon,” 2004).
\textsuperscript{13} Gatten, 2012a
making body in Lebanon patriarchal, the nuance relationship between women’s rights and human rights is nonexistent in political rhetoric and Lebanon’s political discourse. Therefore, superseding and excluding gendered politics from discourse altogether.

This study will build upon existing literature of social movement theory, feminist critique, and civil society and democratization in Lebanon to consider the implication of transnational feminist activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement. However, this thesis will diverge from past arguments that have eloquently presented critiques of civil society and stagnant democratization in Lebanon’s women’s movement to, rather, consider Lebanon’s affluent civil society as a variable to opening the current political opportunity structure that which transnational feminist activists are mobilizing through.

Thus, the overarching thesis question of this study beckons consideration of systemic effects that have widely shaped the structure of Lebanon’s women’s movement.

1.3 – Outline of the Thesis

To explain factors affecting the contemporary character of Lebanon’s women’s movement, Chapter Two will introduce the theoretical framework of transnational activism as a phenomenon that occurs in Lebanon from top-down and bottom-up initiatives in the women’s movement. Chapter Three will introduce literature on transnational feminist activism as a manifestation to counter systemic patriarchal decision-making. In Chapter Four, the study will delve into the opportunity structures that have enabled transnational activism to transform the way women’s organizations from civic society began to organize in a unilateral manner
within a statist alignment with the national women’s organization, National Commission for Lebanese Women. The pitfalls to transnationalism are described as two-fold. On one side there is the reigning political system, behind the cooptation of the women’s movement, and is described as patriarchal in structure and political values. This political character is survived by the dominance of men within the governing system, and has egregiously disregarded women’s organizations and campaigns for reformed personal status laws. The overwhelming representation of men has further led to a bulwark of patrilineal policies. And in a symbiotic manner, these factors continue to breed state level contention between women’s rights campaigns and the Lebanese state.

The other side of contentious politics in Lebanon’s women’s movement is an intrinsic problem of how women’s organizations and activists organize to pressure the Lebanese state. While there are instances where women’s organizations have participated in intersectional campaigns, groups have failed to mobilize a unified women’s movement. Instead, the movement has been fragmented and weakened by long, stagnant periods of no reform following costly campaigns and disagreement between women’s organization leaders on how to best achieve movement goals. Yet, regardless of which side of the argument is presented, the conclusion will revert back to a known truth: Lebanon’s women’s movement continues to be coopted by ruling elites.

Khattab (2010) provides this assertion in an analysis of long-standing women’s organizations, wherein Khattab’s thesis argues that polarization in Lebanon’s women’s movement is a prominent feature, and at this rate a “counter-hegemonic society” has not materialized to challenge the prevailing political order.¹⁴

¹⁴ Khattab, 2010
Chapter Five will follow with a detailed account of grassroots transnational activism from below. This chapter will focus solely on the emergence of Nasawiya as a transnational feminist social movement. The study of Nasawiya will posit an example of a grassroots movement attempting to build a “counter-hegemonic movement,” and thus debunk Khattab’s assertion that Lebanon’s women’s movement is solely a product of a complacent civil society. While the subject of this thesis is largely an exploratory study of feminist social movement organizing in Lebanon, there is a larger implication to bringing the state back into analysis vis-à-vis social movement contention.

Where Chapter One introduced grievances expressed in Lebanon’s women’s movement, the proceeding chapter expands upon the methodological approach used to address qualitative variables that govern the behavior of a feminist movement in Lebanon’s women’s movement. The case of study of Lebanon’s women’s movement will satisfy a dual component to answering the thesis and its subsequent question.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 – Introduction

The general purpose of the thesis is to describe the character, nature, and pervasive phenomenon of transnational activism. Lebanon’s women’s movement is a case study from which to draw informed assertions of the existence of transnational activism in Lebanon.

The subsequent sections will outline the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. A great emphasis is placed on the significance of the role of the participant-observer as part of a holistic approach in the tradition of feminist scholarship. An aspiration of this study is to integrate a feminist ideology into International Relations and Social Movement scholarship.

2.2 – Configuring a Methodology

This study is an endeavor to provide a modest contribution for reading discursive arguments on civil society actors and activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement. It will fundamentally serve as a critique that extends far from a personal exercise in situating academic scholarship, and aims to employ a new perspective from which to observe activism on a transnational plane in Lebanon’s women’s movement.

From a personal level, as a student and researcher, my immediate academic environment in Lebanon has provided an incentive for me to study feminist discourse. For one, when class discussions were dominated by the monotony of liberal and
realist theories of International Relations, it was the least mentioned theory in IR that found my interest.

In an assigned reading in a seminar on IR Theories, titled, *You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements Between Feminists and IR Theorists*, Tickner (1997) eloquently dissected the instances where International Relations Theory has failed to incorporate Feminist Theory’s “critical voices.”

Although class time was not allotted to discussing ‘The Feminist Approach’ in IR in that first semester of my graduate studies, I found inspiration to take on the topic at my own admission.

An innate interest in Feminist International Relations Theory and its simultaneous absence from class discussions drew me closer to understanding “these continuing silences…that most women are homeless as far as the canons of IR knowledge are concerned.”

I began to veer towards interdisciplinary approaches versus the rigidity of a parsimonious one. Part of the advantage to studying International Relations in the 21st century is the privilege to borrow from groundbreaking alternative frameworks at the edge of ‘mainstream’ social science.

Since the 1980s, feminist scholars have continually fought the disbelief of others and the pedantic discrediting of Feminist Theory in methodology to reinstate an aptitude for studying IR that beckons:

“In contrast to these key mainstream works of the decade, [Cynthia] Enloe asked us everywhere to give up thinking that international relations consisted of peopleless states, abstract societies, static ordering principles, or even theories about them, and begin looking for the many people, places, and activities of everyday international politics. Locate those who make the world go round, she said, and cite them.”

Most striking of Feminist International Relations Theory is its overlooked approach as an interdisciplinary study, despite its grounding in rich, diverse

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15 Tickner, 1997, p. 619
16 Tickner, 1997, p. 612; Sylvester, 1994a, p. 316
17 Sylvester, 2004, p. 3
literature.\textsuperscript{18} Certainly, Feminist International Relations Theory is centered on deconstructing a very specific facet in political science: the exclusion or diminishment of women via patriarchal politics. However, its perennial feature that “feminists assert that the universalism they defend is defined by identifying the experience of a special group, (elite men), as paradigmatic of human beings as a whole” divulges a cross-cultural difference and allows for study of a “symbolic system that shapes many aspects of [any] culture.”\textsuperscript{19}

While feminism has not gained esteem through a succession of waves in the ‘East’ or developing world, in contrast to ‘Western’ societies where feminism has evolved from suffrage to the most contemporary third-wave movement, it would be a tragic orientalist notion to assume feminist notions do not exist in Lebanon. In the same vein, rejecting feminism as a Western import would be rejecting feminism’s long-standing history in Lebanon. However, as this thesis will detail in Chapter 5, section 2, feminism has been recognized as existent in Lebanon through individual accomplishments of mostly elite women. Whereas, the foundation of this study argues an emerging social movement of feminist activism is invested in organizing for collective rights of women in Lebanon.

In the midst of graduate studies, I stumbled upon, quite literally, a few feminist activists at the Lebanese American University, Byblos campus. That Saturday morning in 2011, I became acquainted with members of \textit{Nasawiya}, a Feminist Collective uniquely based in Beirut, Lebanon. At LAU, Nasawiya members were invited to discuss their grassroots initiative to discuss women’s issues with high school and undergraduate students part of LAU’s Model U.N. program. Since then, \textit{Nasawiya} has been the focal point of this study’s application of feminist discourse in

\textsuperscript{18} Tickner, 1997
\textsuperscript{19} Tickner, 1997, pp. 614 & 617
nation-state contentious politics. Over the course of a year, I held a position of observer-participant at meetings and protests to adhere to a methodology that would attempt an exercise in empiricist epistemology found in the feminist theoretical approach.

It is this study’s intent to understand how transnational campaigns ‘empower’ women residing in differing temporalities, where Lebanon stands as a case study of the existence of post-colonial feminist organizing. Thus, this study aspires to speak up with its ‘critical voice’ and illuminate on a greater phenomena boiling in Lebanon’s women’s movement, where a proactive movement is cultivating a potentially radical, revolutionary feminist polity.

2.3 – Theoretical Approach and Underpinnings

In revisiting the study of Lebanon’s women’s movement in light of a robust feminist movement for new political activism, an interdisciplinary framework is employed that includes the use of grounded theories alongside a critical feminist research approach. The participant-observer approach and interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks provide a symbiotic relationship to inform how this study is a deduction of Feminist International Relations Theory and transnational activism from the social science fields of transnational feminism, social movements and contentious politics.

Theory and methodology can offer credible scientific study, however, in social scientific inquiry the product of reasoning a social phenomenon is largely reflexive of the researcher’s presence.\textsuperscript{20} Whereas in feminist scholarship, explanatory theories and structure of methodology are as much concerned with shaping validity of a study as they are, too, concerned with practicing ethical methods cognizant of feminist

\textsuperscript{20} Stacey, 1988
values towards the treatment of the researched individual or group. Therefore, taking account of the researcher’s effects, and particularly in ethnographic research, it is imperative to understand the means for acquiring data for the ensuing project.

Where theory fails to explain feminist phenomena, fieldwork methodology may elucidate on the implicit dynamism between research variables in this case study. However, this is not met without challenges of its own. Feminist scholars continue to grapple with a prototype of a feminist research methodology that honors the meticulous marriage of feminism and social science methodology. Certainly, feminist research is an aspect of social science study. However, where generally accepted social science methodology, and particularly in International Relations, has overlooked gender-conscious methodologies, feminist scholars and feminism has provided the lacuna for alternative framework.

While I base my research methodology on a participant-observer approach, there is a keen dichotomy between being a participant and an observer in feminist research. Specifically, the dichotomy lies in the researcher’s obligation to uphold an ethical tradition as both, and separately, as a feminist and a researcher. A role of participant-observer provided the most suitable approach since I had already become acquainted with the grassroots actions of Nasawiya before submitting my thesis proposal. To some lesser degree, my involvement as a participant-observer had to exceed more than just as an observer of this esoteric social movement, and particularly at a time when the feminist polity was just emerging in Lebanon. Although, admittedly, I am in defense of a feministic analysis, revealing political and social feminist aspirations in feminist research is akin to seeking validation and merit of a critical scholarship.
Hereto, this study will refer to data compiled by Lara Khattab (2010) and Elinor Bray-Collins (2003) with commentary and analysis of historical context supported by Charlotte Weber (2003) on civil society in Lebanon’s women’s movement. In this comparative study, I will contribute original qualitative observations compiled on *Nasawiya*, Lebanon’s Feminist Collective. My aim is to provide a comparative analysis of differing movements within Lebanon’s women’s movement by providing another facet of a feminist polity not yet explored. The implication being that the “Muted Voices” of the past have emerged with a renewed momentum of agency and the critical feminist voices in Lebanon’s women’s movement are no longer silenced. Bray-Collins and Khattab provide a relevant basis of study that explicates the relationship proposed by Suad Joseph’s (1993) triangulation of contentious politics and Lebanon’s civil society.

This study is critical of the existing body of literature on Lebanon’s women’s movement. Whereas scholarship has painted Lebanon’s women’s movement as complacent, this study rejects this notion and argues for a renewed perspective that considers international, systemic effects as conducive to breeding a radical women’s movement in Lebanon in lieu of the existent reactionary civil society. Though my observations are original, my deductions are entirely supported by grounded theories of social movements (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Tarrow, 2005; Von Bülow, 2010) and Feminist International Relations Theory. The coupling of interdisciplinary theories has inevitably bred analyses that further required the addition of post-colonial theory to contextualize the socio-political climate of Lebanon’s feminist polity in relation to globalization and internationalism. In particular, post-colonialism provides a

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21 This is a direct reference to Bray Collins’s 2003 thesis titled “Muted voices: Women’s rights, NGOs, and the gendered politics of the elite in post-war Lebanon”.
framework for addressing notions in U.S.-Lebanon political relations for development.

The chapter of this study titled *An Emancipatory Movement: Organizing* *Nasawiya* is devoted solely to analyzing the mechanisms behind sustaining a Feminist Collective in a politically, socially, and economically marginalized environment. Social movement theories are coupled with a social psychological framework of analysis. To understand *Nasawiya* as a social movement, rather than a formal organization with associational ties, it is pertinent to discuss the movement as one that supports campaigns and initiatives for individual rights, although it is a movement sustained by collective, collaborative efforts.

The preceding case study of *Nasawiya*, a feminist polity and “alternative” social movement in Lebanon’s women’s movement, is a deductive example of transnational activism for women’s rights amidst international campaigns, such as the U.N. Convention for the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Specifically, the rise of a feminist polity in Lebanon is examined as an example of the rise of contentious politics across boundaries. Borrowing from McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly (2001), contentious politics is defined as “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.”

This vantage point of analysis aims to characterize activism in the women’s movement in Lebanon as an existential process of contentious politics. This assumption becomes particularly relevant to understand the existence of globalized

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22 “Alternative” is utilized as a categorical term to distinguish between activists of the feminist movement, *Nasawiya* who outwardly reject any affiliation to reigning political parties in Lebanon and work outside of the statist framework with assistance from transnational women’s networks.

23 McAdam et al., 2001, p. 4
contentious politics, that which extend beyond the nation-state. Thus, if contentious politics exist beyond nation-state boundaries, in the same vein activism will reactively exist as an oppositional force with reach beyond national boundaries. Scholars of social movements have proposed that to identify the character of activism is to identify the political process of nation-states. Sidney Tarrow (2005) posits social movement theory and the concept of political process to assert the significance of a social movement in relation to domestic politics.

This thesis will follow Tarrow’s framework to address the character of transnational activism in the women’s movement. Particularly, the usage of Tarrow’s framework will provide an analysis of transnational activism as a reactionary political process to globalized contentious nation-state politics in Lebanon. Within this framework, Tarrow proposes a correlation referred to as “a dense triangular structure of relations between states, non-state actors, and international institutions, and the opportunities which this produces for actors to engage in collective action at different levels of this system.” For Tarrow, the approach of International Relations Theory wherein explicates the relevance of this dynamic relationship coined as internationalism, which “operates as a political opportunity structure at the international level” and globalization spurs “a source of interest, ideology, and grievances” to fuel the causal relationship in contentious politics.

Whereas Tarrow provides a grand theory to identify the relevance of internationalism, Feminist Theory will replace International Relations Theory in this paper to address contentious nation-state politics that spur Lebanon’s women’s movement. In replace of modern IR theory, Feminist Theory serves as a spectrum to address contentious politics beyond gender-insensitive issues and ultimately to

\[ 24 \] Tarrow, 2005, p. 25
\[ 25 \] Tarrow, 2005, pp. 16-19
understand an alignment of feminist values in the country’s historically fragmented women’s movement. In addition, Suad Joseph (1993) proposes a triangular relationship in contentious politics with cultural sensitivity to Lebanon’s case. Whereas triangulation of state, civil society, and kinship, or private domain, fosters “people’s commitments [to remain] grounded in kin and community, and they carry these commitments with them, whether in the civil or state spheres.”

Globalization serves as a variable that continues to foster state-centered contention spearheaded by neoliberalism and patriarchy, and transnational activism will address the need for policies that foster politically and economically progressive societies and representative parliamentary political structures. The argument will seek to understand the role women’s movements will play in shaping political structures through, as Tarrow defines, a political opportunity structure that cultivates transnational activism.

Relationships between the state and NGOs, civil society actors, or activists of a social movement continue to be a pertinent factor to determine the success of a social movement’s campaign. However, the landscape of contentious politics is expanding across borders and regions to facilitate a new transnational activism. The eminent scholar of social movements, Sidney Tarrow (2005) posits that transnational activism is an organic extension of international nation-state contention propagated by globalization and internationalism. Whereas, internationalism has given way for collective activism built with a transcendent structure beyond the reach of national borders and consisting of activists, interests, resources, and opportunities. In part, the internationalist structure has been sustained by global proliferation of NGOs and transnational networks. In the academic study of social movements, scholars have

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26 Jospeh & Stork, 1993, p. 25
begun to conceptualize the emergence of transnational activism as a formative product of globalization and access to global information. Nonetheless, in the twenty-first century there appears to be distinctive tools employed by transnational activism that encourages such a reach beyond national boundaries, but yet effective only to the extent to garner transnational leverage for an impact on domestic economic, social, and political issues.

As scholars of social movements have begun to identify a new character in civil society as transnational, literature on the women’s movement has concomitantly begun to witness a reflection in feminist discourse. At a 2005 roundtable discussion at UCLA on transnational feminism, V. Spike Peterson noted that scholarship is deviating from assertions for “identity attribution of who [feminists] are” to exploring the nature of transnational activism in the women’s movement, particularly in issues of “Third World” countries, women’s agency, and the applicability of Feminist Theory to emergence of the women’s movements.

In identifying patterns of transnational feminist praxis, it is equally imperative to discuss theory, and particularly feminist theory in relation to feminist social movements within the sphere of transnational activism and international relations. In literature of the women’s movement, however, the term transnational feminism seems to suffice as a concept that explains both the diffusion of feminist ideology and activism within the women’s movement. The inherent value that transnational feminism is activism stems from the notion of refuting “the overarching way of understanding globalization as a masculinist recuperation of Marxism and poststructuralism.” The male dominant view of transnationalism has provided admission for feminist scholars to develop theories to fill the lacuna “male transnational thinking leaves out,” wherein “the gendered and patriarchal nature of the
moribund nation state and nationalist politics and the reliance on the exploitation of Third World female labor of the global economy” is addressed along the margins of masculine ‘globalizationist’ thinkers.\textsuperscript{27}

Therefore, in exploring transnational activism in the women’s movement, it is imperative to provide the binary distinction between theories and feminist theories, just as in transnationalism and feminist transnationalism. Perhaps what this study may inadvertently prove is that, although feminist movements are part of the larger discourse of women’s movements, a women’s movement does not necessarily equate to being a feminist movement. Scholars remark this disconnectedness amongst women’s advocacy movements as a fault line between praxis and theory.

Koretweg and Ray (1999), though offering only a hint of transnational activism, conceptualized women’s movements in “Third World”\textsuperscript{28} countries as concerned with democratization, anticolonial and nationalist struggles, religious and fundamentalist movements, and socialism. Thus, political discourses in women’s movements of these regions are largely derivative of grievances caused by the ruling political structures. In transnational activism, the source of contention is farther removed is centered between international and state contention. In Lebanon’s women’s movement, transnational activism is identified by the tools activist are afforded by the Internet, globalization, and an influx funding for women’s rights campaigns from social movement organizations (SMOs), intergovernmental organizations, such as the U.N., and even through foreign policy interests.

\textsuperscript{27} Mendoza, 2002, p. 300
\textsuperscript{28} When the term “Third World” is utilized in this thesis to describe a developing region or nation-state, quotation marks signify it as a borrowed term from international relations, development studies and political economy of world systems (Desai & Naples, 2002, p. 5). Therefore, this thesis does not adhere to the usage of “Third World,” but is applied accordingly to its use by respective cited scholars. “Postcolonial” will be used in this thesis alongside “Third World” when discussing Postcolonial Theory. Ostensibly, both terms are interchangeable, however stem from different academic disciplines.
This thesis will attempt to address this shift in feminist discourse on the women’s movement with particular attention to the mechanism of transnational activism in the women’s movement. Wherein organizing in *Nasawiya* serves as an exemplary representative of grievances and mechanisms feminist activists struggle towards bottom-up grassroots political reform.

### 2.4 – Challenges and Reflections

Feminist scholars have posited a series of contradictions that may exist in a participant-observer approach. An observer-participant role inherently carries an undertone for conflict of interests. Whereas the participant facet poses an empathetic engagement as an “authentic, related person,” the intersection of the joint role of observer is markedly one as being an “exploiting researcher.” From her experience as a feminist researcher and ethnographer, Stacey (1988) expresses extreme concern for the adverse effects of ethnography. Stacey (1988), Duelli Klein (1983), Mres (1983), and Stanely & Wise (1983) have encountered an implication underlying studies employing ethnography that this methodology succumbs to “elements of inequality, exploitation, and even betrayal” between the researcher and studied individuals. This concern is especially contradictory to feminist scholars who take on research projects for women, on the topic of women, and yet must avoid further objectifying women in research case studies.²⁹ Therefore, a great challenge lies in the researcher’s praxis to balance along a tightrope that leads to consistency in the marriage of feminist research and social scientific inquiry. Thus, a challenge in this study has been to reconcile this very relationship that has opened a window for me to peer inside the sphere of

²⁹ Stacey, 1988
Lebanon’s feminist polity, whilst maintaining detached as not to undermine the delicate validity hereto.

The thesis now turns to a literature review of relevant scholarship on transnational activism and transnational feminism to explicate the context from which this study is derived. An interdisciplinary approach between the study of social movements and contentious politics, Women’s Studies, and International Relation are merged to understand the complexity of a feminist movement in Lebanon.
CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUALIZING TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM IN THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT

3.1 – Introduction

Literature on feminism in the Middle East and North Africa region has been predominantly preoccupied with defining ‘feminism’ as an identity. In doing so, scholarship has concomitantly focused on individual achievements of feminists in the region. The following sections provide a departure from polemic debates concerning feminism as an identity, and rejects notions of whether feminism is a ‘Western’ ideology, whether Islam and feminism are incompatible, and lastly whether feminism is inaccessible to societies in developing countries. Rather, this study is grounded in the rise of scholarship on transnational feminism to posit that agency within a transnational feminist social movement continues to be relevant to explain manifestations of systemic patriarchy.

3.2 – The New Transnational Activism of the Twenty-first Century

In a 2005 publication, Tarrow’s assertions of transnational activism seemed to propose a progressive outlook on activism—an approach to resuscitate the study of activists as non-institutional, non-state actors with potential to influence the juncture of international-domestic politics. Indeed, Tarrow’s theory of new transnational activism includes the study of institutional actors, such as NGOs. But the single most pertinent assertion to Tarrow’s theory is a reproach to parsimonious scholarly works concerned with strictly non-governmental, institutional organization in contentious politics. At a time when the influx of NGOs and their transnational networks surfaced
in developed and developing countries alike, scholars began to tailor social movement theory for the twenty-first century. The dominating approaches either include “equivalents at the international level for the stable opportunity structures that had been identified in domestic politics, [while] others refashioned their theoretical approaches to a more dynamic mechanism-and-process-based approach.”

The dominant approaches are either consumed with a ‘global’ approach to studying social movements or the latter, divergent approach on comparisons between social movements. Though Tarrow admittedly is a scholar of the latter approach, his latest theory on transnational activism seeks to supplant the former dominant approach for a renewed interest on domestic activism as a result of international relations.

“The equation between globalization and contention that we find in much of the literature on ‘global social movements’ says both too much and too little: it says too little because it leaves out the intervening processes that lead people to engage in contentious politics; it says too much because a great deal of the transnational activism we find in the world today cannot be traced to globalization. The international structure of power is indeed changing in important ways that affect contentious politics but not in ways that reduce to the simple equation “globalization leads to resistance.”

Theories of transnational activism emerged in response to the lacuna in scholarship to explicate the role of non-institutional entities in domestic social movements spurred by international contentious politics. Such literature on transnationalism, social movements, and non-state actors has accumulated in theories of a “contemporary NGO worldview.” Here, scholars have attempted to explain the emergence of a global social movement based on the “bloom” of secular, international NGOs with shared values that exist at the international level and are disseminated

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30 Tarrow, 2005, p. 24
31 See McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly (2001) Dynamics of Contention
32 Tarrow, 2005, p. 5
through transnational networks. However, in deducing a structural theory of NGOs, scholars came to the conclusion that “the most significant impact of NGOs is indirect, influencing the social and material structure of the international system, which in turn shapes much more powerful actors.”

This assertion conjures up many interpretations in light of the influx of NGOs in Lebanon. Are the powerful actors non-institutional entities and autonomous activists? In the context of the women’s movement in Lebanon this question beckons a reinterpretation at time when women continue to partake in protests and reorganize local women’s movements in lieu of institutionalized, political representation. Thus, Tarrow’s new transnational activism ruminates on the significance of activism in contentious politics, and reinstates the relevance of activism—that which has been overshadowed in social movement literature by the influx of nongovernmental organizations and institutional entities.

A priori assumption then of social movements in the twenty-first century is their inevitable international character. However, Tarrow (2005) argues that transnational movements have been an unfaltering, enduring feature of social movement history, and with recognizable “familiar” processes. Europe was a hub for transnational movements from the Reformation period to the spread of nationalism through colonialism, print, and railroad throughout the 19th century. Transnational movements have even sailed across continents such as the anti-slavery movements throughout Europe and into American society. These few examples elucidate the deftness transnational mobilization has for transforming social issues into political causes.

33 DeMars, 2005
34 DeMars, 2005, p. 40
Thus, transnational movements are not a new phenomenon. But literature suggests that new features in transnational mobilization have emerged, causing scholars to reexamine the depth of transnational activism in transnational movements. To perceive the significance of contemporary social movements is to understand the potential they have of becoming transnational in character. That is not to say social movements will become *global social movements*, but rather a social movement can sustain the ability to transfer influence beyond a local fixture. Therefore, contemporary social movements beckon examination on two levels: “the equation of globalization and contention,” or the survey of contextual social and political developments that have given rise to transnational activism, and resultant change in the structure of international politics.\(^5\)

Contemporary transnational social movements continue to follow “familiar” processes—mobilize up to supranational reach, potential to be diffused across borders and become internationally mobilized, or to follow a modularity of protests. These persistent processes are now met with *globalization*, which has operated as an enabler to intensify the frequency and magnitude of transnational activism in social movements. Tarrow provides a compelling argument for the relevance of globalization on transnational activism:

> “But what is most striking about the new transnational activism is both its connection to the current wave of globalization and its relation to the changing structure of international politics. The former, I argue, provides incentives and causes of resistance for many (although not all) transnational activists; but the latter offers activists focal points for collective action, provides them with expanded resources and opportunities, and brings them together in transnational coalitions and campaigns.”\(^6\)

\(^5\) Tarrow, 2005, p. 5  
\(^6\) Tarrow, 2005, p. 5
Tarrow’s attention to the changing structure of international politics explicitly refers to the degree non-state actors play in contentious politics. Observations on the effects of *globalization* on social movements have accordingly introduced a purview of research that has placed contentious politics on the international level. In accordance, various conceptualizations of non-state actors have been introduced as units of analysis. As Tarrow succinctly explains:

“Over the past decade scholars of social movements have expanded their interest from local and national to international forms of contention (della Porta, Kriesi, and Rucht 1999; Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald 2000; della Porta and Tarrow 2005). They also broadened their interest from social movements...And while some authors sought to find equivalents at the international level for the stable opportunity structures that had been identified in domestic politics, others refashioned their theoretical approaches to a more dynamic mechanism-and-process-based approach.”

There are various labels given to these actors involved in the push and pull of contentious politics, dependent on their affiliation vis-à-vis the state or international community. Literature refers to non-state actors of social movements using terms that indicate a conglomerate of individuals grouped together. Collective action (Tilly 1978) civic society, civil society (Amenta & Young 1999; Tarrow 2005) civil society organizations (CSOs) (Von Bülow 2010), network society (Castells 1996), activists, society activists, institutional or non-institutional actors (Tarrow 2005), NGOs, international organizations (Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco 1997; DeMars 2004), activist networks (Keck & Sikkink 1998), issue networks (Lind, 2005), civic participation (Sheridan-Rabideau, 2008, 161), nonprofits (Martin, 2 November 2011) are prominent markers used in analyzing groups of actors in contentious politics.

However, activist persists as the most distinct concept scholars utilize to distinguish which actors of social movements push for a revolutionary, or radical agenda. Discourse on activism expounds that such actors of social movements will,
and above all other categories of non-state actors, seize the “factors that give rise to social movements,” or as Doug McAdams (1982) defined as “expanding opportunities” in political structures. This detail is pertinent for differentiating the unit of analysis when discussing transnational activism. Although the delineated concepts are used interchangeably in colloquial terms, the nuances of action-output among non-state actors are greatly constrained by associations and group affiliations.

3.3 – Transnational Feminist Organizing

If transnational activism can transmit a reach beyond state borders and is formed as a product of shared contentious politics between one state and another, or between a multitude of states, then out of such activism there can emerge a collective social movement with its own supposed revolutionary agenda. Though the women’s movement is a robust social movement, and certainly not a new phenomenon, its reach has implicated movements from other regions and nations in attempts to form an international, collective social movement for a revolutionary agenda.

However, despite its long-standing existence, and since its inception, the women’s movement has faced internal differences of identity attribution that has sustained its fragmentation and kept feminist and activists alike from consolidating into a transnational movement.

Before addressing transnational activism in the women’s movement as an emerging character of 21st century contentious politics, it is pertinent to discuss the historical attempts for a globalized women’s movement. These methods have taken place under concepts of international feminism, global sisterhood, global feminism, and most contemporarily, transnational feminism. Just as the theoretical conception of

38 Meyer, 1999, p. 184
feminism and Feminist Theory has undergone transformative waves, the women’s movement accordingly has to. Thus, there exists a comprehensive body of literature that explains the evolution of the women’s movement from the standpoint of attribution identity, which ends with contemporary scholarship on transnational feminism. In light of feminist scholarship, and as Peterson noted in 2005, scholars have neglected the study of collective activism from the approach of social movement theory. This point will be revisited in the next section to examine transnational activism in transnational feminism and the women’s movement.

In the meantime, feminist scholars have markedly observed attempts at unifying women’s movements across the world through initiatives by first-wave feminist organizations, like Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the International Alliance of Women, and the Young Christian Association. These organizational structures propagated the earliest known theoretical framework for an international women’s movement. This framework, conceptualized as international feminism, sought to reconcile First World and Third World women’s movement with “a belief in the universal applicability of Western standards of progress.” Historian Charlotte E. Weber attributes first-wave feminism’s failure to breach ties with international women’s movements due to the overt imperialist nature from the Western feminists’ attitudes.

Transnational feminism differs from international feminism, which has existed since the inception of first wave feminism and the beginning of the women’s movement. Whereas, according to scholar of Women’s Studies, Nayereh Tohidi argues that transnational feminism “is more recent and is more directly connected to

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39 Nayereh Tohidi, among other feminist scholars, cited these organizations as spearheading international feminism as “organizational manifestations of first wave feminism and its [the women’s movement] regional or international expansion during the early 20th century” while at a UCLA sponsored roundtable titled Transnational Feminism: A Range of Disciplinary perspectives (2005, May 18).

40 Weber, 2003, ii
the processes of globalization” unlike international feminism which garnered regional and international expansion in the early 20th century.

“Implicated in the novel notion of transnational feminism is the desirability and possibility of a political solidarity of feminists across the globe that transcends class, race, sexuality and national boundaries.”

Previously, a great deal of feminist scholarship addressed the emergence of transnational feminism in the women’s movement in other regions, neglecting the Middle East North African region until the U.S. invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan brought forth an imperative focus. Though the theory of transnational activism is attributed to the school of social movement theory, feminist scholar Nadje Sadig Al-Ali enumerates the effects of hegemonic foreign policies on women’s living conditions, with particular attention to the Iraqi women living with effects of the U.S.-led Iraq Wars—the Gulf War and the War on Terrorism. Al-Ali implicitly utilizes a transnational causality to explain the effects of international contentious politics on the domestic living conditions of women and the long-standing Iraqi women’s movement.

Scholars such as Nadje Sadig Al-Ali, Suad Joseph, and Valentine Moghadam provide an extensive contribution to the topic of the women’s movement, feminism, and politics of the women’s movements throughout the MENA region. Their theoretical frameworks enlighten Feminist Theory and International Relations on a scale of issues between the relationship of women and the state. As globalization and internationalism have taken a widespread affect, Al-Ali, Joseph, and Moghadam continue to provide relevant frameworks to assess the informal and formal ways women have in the past organized in ‘Arab’ society.

41 Mendoza, 2002, p. 296
The most enduring assertion from Al-Ali, Joseph, and Moghadam is the existence of patriarchal states across the MENA region and the abasement and constraints perpetuated by the state against women. In Lebanon, the women’s movement has largely been divided on the basis of two factors: nation-state contention from a reluctance to legislate liberal personal status laws equally among women across religious sects; and the cooptation by sectarian cartels of draft laws for women’s rights.

However, this study is not intended to provide a didactic argument in regards to feminist identities in Lebanon. Nor does it purport that a single feminist identity pervades the women’s movement. As a case study alone, the demographic of activists in Lebanon’s grassroots movement, Nasawiya’s existence can attest to the plurality of feminist and political ideologies.

Nor is this study concerned with elucidating a thesis on the international women’s movement. Feminist scholars and historians have written extensively on the formation, emergence, and failure of the first international women’s movement and its heyday “In 1853, when the international women’s movement was most active.”\(^{43}\) However, this period is notable for its attempts to connect women throughout the world through the dissemination of literature on feminism and annual conventions. Though purely a vestige of the first international women’s movement, a pamphlet titled On the Necessity of Extending a Decent Welcome to Foreign Women proposed the formation of a feminist civil society with headquarters in major cities “where women could safely congregate.”\(^{44}\) This sentiment expressed on behalf of French feminist Flora Tristan has become a universally shared aspiration among women’s movements. The international women’s movement did not progress beyond the first-

\(^{43}\) Anderson, 2000, p. 194
\(^{44}\) Anderson, 2000, p. 141
wave feminist movement. However, in replace, a civil society within the contemporary women’s movement transpired, and continues to persist in the form of women’s NGOs and transnational networks.

An ancillary effect on Western feminists after a thwarted attempt at the first international women’s movement realized a “nationally oriented” approach with “[activists] far more cautious than their predecessors” in the movement’s late 1860s revision. A recount of the first failed international women’s movement postulates two points that continue to resonate in the twenty-first century: nationalism is a perennial feature of the women’s movement and contemporary women’s movement activism, and organization must be refined to reroute women’s movements around this factor, rather than exclude it, in order to accommodate a sustainable international women’s movement.

While the latter seems light years ahead, women organizing and protesting in Lebanon for reformed personal status laws, and particularly against gender-based violence, subsequently provides insight into the purview of transnational activism. The landscape of activism and protests are remnants of transnational influence and for leverage in ways that are enabling activists in profound social movements for progressive polities.

A literature review of transnational activism and feminist scholarship on women’s movements will provide the bulk of the preliminary analysis. The historically fragmented women’s movement in Lebanon will be a focus, or testing ground for conceptualizing transnational activism. The most effective contribution this thesis can do is attempt to forecast a slight outcome that considers the new

45 Anderson, 2000, p. 205
landscape of activism emerging from the existent civil society of NGOs and transnational networks.

As ousted, even persecuted authoritarians have been procured to relinquish governance by vigorous campaigns for “democracy from below,” a looming question beckons whether women, who have been prominent figures in mobilizing MENA protests, will be direct beneficiaries of the new political structures implemented in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco, and potentially other impending nation-states.46 If their outcomes are revolutionary, “the creation of new arenas more open to the control of public opinion” will be instituted with an ethos towards “a new conception of democracy wherein citizens influence decision makers as more than electors.”47

The case of Lebanon highlights this potential, yet inevitable shift of feminist activists into political actors.48 The unanswerable, yet impending question is not ‘what if’, but when the will women’s movements in MENA countries produce respective political parties to directly address social and cultural factors hindering equity amongst men and women.

The mechanism of an emerging feminist political party in Lebanon seems too transparent – women are involved in spheres of politics except in decision-making position, from where women have been largely excluded by the politics of a boys club.49 However, Lebanese women are aware of their next step to permeate a patriarchal state: through collective action for a feminist political party. The political and social culture of protest seems to be the definitive process to steers democratic

46 della Porta, 1999, p. 66; Roth 1994; see also Dalton 1994
47 della Porta, 1999, p. 66; Willems, Wolf, and Eckert, 1993; Offe, 1985; Kitschelt, 1993
49 In response to a growing movement for a feminist political party, Interior Minister Marwan Charbel responded with: “Let us see whether [Lebanese] women would succeed more than [Lebanese] men, particularly as we have experienced men in this field [politics].”
participation. At the least, social movements matter for a “movements’ production of meaning.”

Among Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and UAE, opinion polls have shown that the procession of protests since 2010 have carried a distinct political discourse for “expanding employment”—a concern that has been cultivating since 2001. In conjunction, a second tier of social issues has entered the political landscape in 2011. Opinion poll respondents from Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and UAE have pronounced concerns on social issues such as political reform, advancing democracy, and protecting personal and civil rights. Tunisia and UAE interestingly were the only nations to express a “prominent concern” for women’s rights. The disconnect in Lebanon’s respondents’ concern between ‘protecting personal and civil rights’ and women’s rights is a notable feature in Lebanon’s political rights for citizens. Namely, the confusion persists between human rights and women’s rights—that is, gender issues are largely alienated from political discourse.

The preceding points on transnational activism, however, reflect an impending emergence of a new feature of Lebanon’s women’s movement. Particularly due to the emergence of an inclusive, feminist based movement, Nasawiya. As seen in the shift of academic feminist discourse, perhaps the time of identity attribution has culminated into a period where women’s movements will seek solidarity with a greater emphasis on agency. Most poignantly, perhaps the diffusion of feminist liberal values will breed a uniquely feminist liberal movement in Lebanon. Regardless,

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50 della Porta, 1999, p. 67

titical%20Discourse%20By%20James%20Zogby.htm

52 Zogby, 2011
activists are recognizing the nuance relationship between human rights and women’s rights, and the social constructs embedded in nation-state contention in the country’s contemporary women’s movement.

3.4 – Globalization, Internationalism and Transnational Feminist Activism

Although states remain as the fundamental framework of contention, while grievances continue to resonate across state borders and unify organizations under an umbrella of a social movement. The framework for transnational contention arises in effect. In Egypt, the documented gender-based violence against women generated a new level of grievances. Women were not only a part of the uprisings against Egypt’s political system, but an offshoot of the larger social movement has emerged to address sexual violence and patriarchal values latent in Egypt’s politically transitioning environment. As broadcasted footage of military aggression against peaceful protesters surfaced on the Internet, a rhetorical and social link amongst activists for women’s rights from Egypt to Lebanon formed in the rhetoric and symbols used in December 2011 and January 2012 demonstrations.

The instrument of mass media communication is instrumental in providing linkages between social movements across societies. Namely, as the heightened response of protestors for women’s rights in Egypt were broadcasted on any media outlet in existence, activists in Lebanon resonated their campaigns against sexual violence to create a solidarity movement. Through this, a social meme of utilizing ‘the

blue bra’ has emerged to signify female empowerment.⁵⁴ On the streets of Sanayeh district, ‘the blue bra’ emerged once again, however this time in the context of intentionally expressing transnational solidarity for female empowerment through protest.

A clear movement for women’s rights has sprung in the midst of uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa in response to state contention. It is imperative to recognize the structural forces that have debilitated women from social mobility in the past, and namely from entering the political sphere. Discourse of feminism and critiques of the neoliberal economic structures argue that economic reform coupled with patriarchal political structures have been a formidable threat against women developing countries.

Though the diffusion and efflorescence of the women’s movement in Lebanon has been the product of local actors, civil society has been effectively mobilized with foreign assistance and international organizations. Thus, the dynamic relationship between local and international actors is worth considering in how transnational activism has created a momentum conducive to instigating policy change.

Before addressing the status of the women’s movement in context to the rabid mobilization across Lebanon’s women’s movement, it is pertinent to consider the history of the movement’s largely fragmented past. This overview provides a synthesis of literature on the political opportunity structure of women’s rights in nation-states. This approach will attempt to illuminate on the evolution of the women’s movement first by defining “the preconditions of mobilization, [which is enacted upon by] women’s abilities to form collective identities [and] articulate their

⁵⁴ Footage of ‘The Girl in the Blue Bra’ surfaced onto YouTube to reveal evidence of systematic violence against men and women during a December 17 protest in Tahrir Square, Cairo (Amaria, 2011).
interests [that] are shaped by political, local, and historically contingent processes. This analysis will ultimately coincide with Tarrow’s assumption that states remain as key players in contentious politics in transnational activism.

3.5 – Conclusion

While academics of social movements have been largely concerned with the study of campaigns for political Islam in the Middle East, campaigns for women’s rights movements are growing robust in this region, and can afford to supply academics of social movement with a criteria worthy of observation. Whereas, the study of women’s movements has provided inferences to economic and political reform in Middle East countries, in the wake of uprisings and transitional political systems, the mobilization of women’s movements will provide an insight to the functionality of new state structures implemented after decades of authoritarianism. An especially interesting observation for scholars of social movements will be a comparison of emergent policies for women’s rights from before to after regime change, along with the prevalence of women voted into legislative office. These factors will provide scholars of women’s movements the implication of political opportunity on women’s rights during political transitions.

This paper attempts to identify transnational activism as the contemporary landscape in Lebanon’s women’s movements as an example of the effects of ratifying U.N. transnational policies for women’s rights. In Lebanon, transnational activism in the women’s movement has given rise to a feminist social movement. In particular, this movement is challenging the existing structure of Lebanon’s civil society

55 Korteweg & Ray, 1999, p. 53
pertaining to women’s advocacy campaigns that which continue to be coopted by Lebanon’s patriarchal political system.

Through identifying transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement, this study characterizes the aspects of Lebanon’s patriarchal system that stem from internationalism and globalization. International partnerships, the influx of NGOs and transnational networks, and foreign aid have contributed to opening up an otherwise closed political system in Lebanon. However, these partnerships have mostly carried a bias for the interest of donors. U.S.-Lebanese relations under the guise of human rights policies have done more for sustaining status quo reactionary politics than addressing Lebanon’s burgeoning feminist polity and its push for progressive women’s rights. In doing so, U.S. foreign policy is only instrumental in exacerbating Lebanon’s patriarchal political system and inadvertently hindering social, economical, and political development in Lebanon.

In the face of setbacks, Lebanon’s feminist polity, however, has muddled through domestic and systemic forces. Since Bray-Collin’s 2003 observation of Lebanese feminists existing “despite their small numbers,” the community certainly has not disintegrated nor become fragmented, but rather is faring with increasing membership and inclusive campaign initiatives.56 Lebanon’s feminist social movement provides a case study of transnational activists, affected by transnational grievances, yet organizing towards a purely domestic cause.

Before policy makers can address an international women’s movement as a solution to alleviate global patriarchy, scholars of social movements, and particularly of transnational feminism, must address the means in which citizenry are more focused on combating domestic issues with local campaigns.

56 Bray-Collins, 2003, p. 128
CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM IN LEBANON’S WOMEN’S MOVEMENT

4.1 – Introduction

This chapter will address the roots of transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement, highlighting its existence as a recent phenomenon among the country’s women’s movement. In this contemporary wave of activism, the women’s movement aims to repurpose its campaigns towards grassroots methods for political reform and away from a community of domestic and international elitist organizations headed under corporatist and sectarian structures. In doing so, Lebanon’s women’s advocacy groups base their frame of reference for financial support and political leverage on international agencies to support their campaigns on women’s human rights, a feature of post-war development. However, in a recent phenomenon, a minority of transnational feminist activists of Lebanon’s women’s movement is already spearheading the next wave of new transnational activism.

As discussed in Chapter Three, transnational activism is a social movement dynamic that emerges from an international political opportunity structure in the domestic sphere, yet is prompted by systemic, international effects. This chapter will investigate the forms of transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement and attempt to demonstrate the emergence of a feminist polity as a result of transnational impacts.

The beginning sections of this chapter will explain the dynamic model of internalizing and externalizing contention for women’s human rights in Lebanon’s women’s movement (Tarrow, 2005). This process will be argued as the mechanism
that has fostered the momentum of transnationalism and the popularity of “market structures” or “hierarchical governance structures” in women’s advocacy groups and NGOs. The latter section will consider the emergence of horizontal organizing spurred by the diffusion of feminist liberal discourse into Lebanon’s contemporary grassroots women’s movement and supported by the rise of a transnational feminism and network society.

The process of internalizing contention is cited as the introduction of internationalist discourse into Lebanon’s women’s movement. Internalized contention is a concept borrowed from social movement theory (Tarrow, 2005) to describe the advent phase of a top-down approach in a transnational movement. The section in this

57 Von Bülow, 2010, p. 29
58 In chapters 4-6 of this study, a implicit distinction will be emerge between Lebanon’s espoused “liberal” political system versus the emergence of a reactive movement to promulgate an ideology of liberal feminism and a pro-secular agenda in a grassroots campaign. The notion of an existent liberal political system in Lebanon is supported by Lebanon’s amended 1990 constitution and U.N. state reports. Specifically, U.N. oversight of transnational policy implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in Lebanon describes, “The system is liberal, based on respect of freedoms, including freedom to form political parties, freedom of speech, and freedom of belief. The election system in Lebanon does not adopt proportional representation; it is a denominational system which distributes representation among the denominations and sects in the various regions.” Wherein, Lebanon’s liberal political system recognizes women’s rights as human rights, thus policies for women’s rights “are not open to interpretation or division. Accordingly, women’s rights should be viewed in accordance with the laws, conventions, and constitutions related to human rights…this legislation [of CEDAW] must eliminate sexual discrimination and the injustice visited upon women in order to equally safeguard women’s rights as well as human rights” (CEDAW, 2004 September 2). I argue that Lebanon is not a liberal state and thus does not sustain an infrastructure to promulgate human rights, let alone women’s rights. This study implicitly argues the caveat of “Women’s Rights is Human Rights” stems from a largely colonial interest. This is in contrast to the transnational feminist movement of liberal feminism in Lebanon that calls for gender-related decrees that will address gender-based violence as an offense that take place not only during wartime, but also in the private sector. In this chapter, the study will follow the impact of this triangular relationship between the women’s movement demands for liberal feminist policies, the Lebanese patriarchal state that which functions under neoliberalism, and U.N. agencies that which ultimately perpetuate the interests of elite decision makers and states. According to Human Rights Watch, “Reform in Lebanon stagnated in 2011, in part because Lebanon proved mostly immune to the Arab Spring and its widespread popular calls for change. The stagnation was also caused by internal divisions, which prevented progress on draft laws to stop torture, improve the treatment of migrant domestic workers, and protect women from domestic violence. Women face discrimination under personal status laws, and vulnerable groups are reportedly mistreated or tortured in detention. Lebanese authorities and humanitarian organizations have provided material assistance to the influx of Syrians fleeing their country’s fighting, but needs are increasing. An estimated 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in appalling social and economic conditions” (Human Rights in Lebanon, Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/middle-east-africa/lebanon).
chapter titled *Internalizing Contention for Growth of Women’s Advocacy NGOs* will explore the gradual development of women’s advocacy groups from national to transnational organizations.

Top-down internalized contention from a supranational, neoliberal institution is the most explicit variable of international political contention and initiation for diffusion of neoliberal political discourse into Lebanon’s social movements. To put it boldly, the model of internalizing contention is characteristic of a top-down global approach where existing interests from an international agency or international community are presented as a frame to support and sustain domestic development. However, as transnational relations deepen, systemic effects may become apparent, as non-state actors are unable to supersede the state. The political interests of an international body are best left for an analysis apart from this study, and require an entire discussion in itself. For the purpose of this study, international interests are understood in general terms, as a sphere of influence and an impetus for expanding neoliberalism and potential security interests. These interests are inherently patriarchal and hindering for women empowerment and gender equality (can you cite some other scholars who say this?).

In Lebanon, the growth of civil society groups has largely resulted from supranational interests to build a robust civil society. For Lebanon’s women’s movement, this approach has taken form by instituting pressure groups and lobbyists for state accountability to legislate women’s rights within the framework of universal women’s rights as human rights.

This approach has facilitated participation and inclusion of Lebanon and its women’s advocacy groups in transnational conferences and campaigns within this
new international political opportunity structure.\textsuperscript{59} This type of inclusion has become characteristic of Lebanese behavior in the post-civil war era. In return, women’s advocacy groups and non-governmental organizations have begun to adopt transnational activist approaches in externalizing contention to seek assistance beyond the state. In this vein, the focus of the argument is to extend an analysis beyond state effects to demonstrate the significance of international support that has created an international political opportunity structure for civil society to participate in activism towards political and social issues concerning women. Although the grievances for a lack of state accountability and need of recognition for women’s rights is a longstanding fixture of the women’s movement, the emergent neoliberal organizational structure underpinning the character of Lebanon’s contemporary women’s movement has become the latest source of fragmentation within the movement.

The proceeding section on \textit{Transnational Impacts on Lebanon’s Women’s Movement} discusses the transition from internalizing to externalizing contention on behalf of movement organizers and partnerships. Within this process of transnational contention, women’s advocacy groups are described to have formed partnerships with international and transnational agencies under a consolidated national institution. In externalizing contention, women’s advocacy groups align their causes and campaigns with international funders and their agendas. The dynamic relationship that ensues between international and domestic civil society attempts to supersede state contention. In the context of Lebanon’s civil society, however, patriarchal elites and decision-makers ultimately co-opt prospective leverage between Lebanon’s national

\textsuperscript{59} Development assistance from the U.N. has been ongoing since post 1975-1990 war. However, the July 2006 War between Israel and Hezbollah initiated funding for the new program area “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” as what began under SCR 1325 and in partnership between UNFPA and NCLW for 2006-2010.
women’s institution and the international sphere, thus reasserting sovereignty of the state. It is imperative to note that within this process of externalizing contention, transnational activism exists but is largely ineffectual.

The processes of internalizing and externalizing contention for a transnational women’s movement from a top-down approach has not improved the dismal progress in implementing legislation of women’s rights. Rather, transnational, professional networks in Lebanon’s civil society continue to multiply without coherent results. In response, a sequence of proactive grassroots movements has emerged as a result of the international political contention between the state and Lebanon’s women’s institution.

The latter half of this chapter will continue to analyze the evolving structure of the women’s movement in Lebanon to discuss the spur of a transnational feminist movement. In Against Hegemonic Interests: The Call to Reaffirm Grassroots Campaigns, a discussion of transnational features will reveal an emergence of a grassroots feminist collective with transnational grievances bred by international political contention and alienation by the state and Lebanon’s women’s institutions. This section will provide a preliminary assessment of a new transnational grassroots movement. In what initially began as a top-down global movement, transnationalism in Lebanon’s women’s movement seems to have buttressed the emergence of a grassroots transnational feminist movement.

4.2 – Internalizing Contention for Growth of Women’s Advocacy

**NGOs**

Activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement has become more transnational despite stagnant political, social, and economical constraints against women. Yet, and
despite these roadblocks, Lebanon’s women’s movement has become a transnational fixture in international campaigns. An emergence of its transnational facet began developing with participation of women at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. From this opening, women’s advocacy groups have grown in numbers as a result of a transnational agenda to pressure state implementation of transnational policies that secure domestic women’s rights as human rights.60

It is indisputable that Lebanon’s women’s movement has languished at the hands of an unresponsive government. In the eyes of elite decision makers, however, the women’s movement has generated significant milestones. In a public broadcast, former parliamentarian, Nayla Mouawad inadvertently depicted an interesting significance of women’s involvement in transnational conferences in the nineties of post-war Lebanon:

Interviewer: In the eighteen years that you were a member of parliament from 1991 to 2009 things must have evolved for women.
Mouawad: Of course.
I: Can you think of one specific change that happened while you were there?
M: In 1992, there was the first [Earth] Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Of course, [the heading of the conference] was Keeping the Environment, but one of the main titles [concerned the topic] without women you cannot do anything, nor can we have sustainable projects—economic, environmental or anything else. Then, there were other world summits. There was the Copenhagen summit and the Beijing summit that were especially for women.
I: And Lebanon was involved in those.
M: Very much so—and women of Lebanon.61

When asked of specific accomplishments for women during her reign as Member of Parliament and Minister of Social Affairs,62 Mouawad noticeably could

60 According to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Annex I, article 14 states they are “convinced” the framework for women’s rights must be perceived as human rights. The Beijing Declaration can be accessed from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf
62 Between 1991-2009, Nayla Mouawad was the second Lebanese woman to serve as a Member of Parliament, along with a Ministerial position of Social Affairs. Myrna Bustany holds the honor of first woman to be elected into Parliament during 1964-1965. In that time, between 1965-1991, women held
not provide a single example of legislation for women’s rights, although she is “proud” of the ones she did amend. Instead, Mouawad’s energetic response alluded to the greater permeation of internationalism into Lebanon’s political and social affairs as the sole advancement for women. The advances women were given, if anything, were miniscule and noticeable on a transnational level, where Lebanon’s women’s admission into the Fourth World Conference on Women allowed then for a “migration of international pressures and conflicts into domestic politics…where a strong supranational authority [provided] a visible target for local citizens.” The visible target being the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, wherein the overall campaign for “women’s rights are human rights” began.

Before analyzing the internalized/externalized process of contention that led to transnational activism in Lebanon’s contemporary women’s movement, it is imperative to recall the recent history of transnationalism in Lebanon’s women’s movement. From this reflection, an understanding of the current political opportunity structure will provide an explanation of the basis of transnational activism as an attempt for a proactive women’s movement.

The distinguishing feature between the recent past and the contemporary temporality of the women’s movement lies in the structure of organizing and mobilizing members of women’s advocacy groups. In Lebanon, inherent

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the position of first lady while women’s groups focused their causes on relief work for the duration of the 1975-1990 war in Lebanon (Khattab, 2010).

63 Tarrow, 2005, p. 79

64 This conviction has led the women’s movement to fragment over the application of women’s rights are humans rights versus women’s human rights. Human rights are statist laws meant to protect citizens from the state, whereas women’s human rights are social laws that recognize gendered violence against women. However, this argument is not the focal point of this study and requires empirical tests, where “A true test of human rights strategies requires a detailed empirical study that situates the language of human rights in its social and historical context, assesses the impact of human rights instruments, and analyzes the influence of both on social movement activism” (Clément, 2008). Rather, in identifying the character of transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement, an emphasis is placed on this adopted conviction that women’s rights are human rights as exemplary of global framing Lebanon’s women’s movement in alignment with U.N. conventions in transnational campaigns. In this chapter, I will argue the pitfalls of reframing women’s rights are human rights as to leverage patriarchal elites to distort draft laws on gender-based violence to meet the requirement of universal human rights laws.
characteristics of structure, relations between other groups and organizations, power dynamics with ruling elite, and funding are enduring determinants of an advocacy group or organization’s operability as an impetus for social change.\textsuperscript{65} An additional feature, typical of a contemporary advocacy group of transnational activism, is its usage of social media. The more contemporary and transnational it is in scope, the more essential social media becomes as a means for sustaining organization and mobilization. However, before the women’s movement incorporated means such as social media, public access and grassroots organization for social change, scholars note Lebanon’s women’s movement widely consisted of professional women’s organizations that “do not fit the…developmental paradigm [and] rather [sic] are corporatist and elitist structures that fail to address and meet ordinary women’s needs”.\textsuperscript{66}

For Beijing and beyond, the Lebanese state appointed a group of women to the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), an “official,” national organization.\textsuperscript{67} Since 1995, the committee, or as the NCLW refers to itself as a “machinery,” has been primarily responsible for overseeing drafts of national strategies for achieving women’s advancement and gender equality under the conventions of transnational policies, and particularly in accordance to CEDAW. In parallel, the NCLW distributes assignment to women’s NGOs in civil society to bring social and political awareness to internalized contentions. Through a trickle-down policy of top-down funding and agenda setting, the NCLW is simultaneously...
responsible for allotting U.N. funding and for institutionalizing partnerships between civil society groups and transnational agencies.

The harm in allocating the vast majority of transnational leverage to the NCLW reflects in its bias to support women’s groups that will similarly adopt the same characteristics, mechanisms, and processes. Since its official establishment in 1998, the NCLW has been in charge of campaigns for women’s rights, however its formal structure does not grant decision-making power, and thus functions alongside the sectarian, patriarchal state. The NCLW’s role has granted women opportunities to participate in transnational partnerships to build an institution for women. However, without the formal allocation of decision-making power, the NCLW is an idle organization that has led the women’s movement to stagnate while “corporatist, elitist and sectarian-based structures permeate and dominate the women’s associational landscape.”

Further, and most evocative of a patriarchal system, the NCLW has been largely a dumping ground for qualified, educated women who can rival their male counterparts yet are denied the opportunities to do so. Implicit in the organizational structure of the NCLW is an overwhelming segregation of women from entering actual realms of leadership and political decision-making, relegating them instead to working in the sphere of civil society.

As for its bias for working cooperatively with the patriarchal system, the NCLW shares this mechanism with its domestic partners in internalizing U.N. contention, by forming cooperative, complacent, and almost conformist attitudes to the hierarchal market structure of neoliberalism and globalization that ultimately

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68 The NCLW is a transplant of the National Committee for the Follow up of Women’s Issues (NCFUWI). The NCFUWI consisted of men and women whom prepared for the Fourth World Conference in 1995. Subsequent to the creation of the NCLW, NCFUWI became a women’s advocacy NGO under the acronym of CFUWI. The NCLW overtook administrative and organizational duties in 1998 under law 720, which “entrusts missions” of consultation, liaison and coordination, and execution concerning Lebanese women’s affairs. (Who is NCLW? Retrieved from http://www.nclw.org.lb/Faq)

69 Khattab, 2010, p. 91
prioritizes funding and partnerships with prestigious affiliations over grassroots organizing. In return, the funders as “international aid agencies strengthen [the] corporatist rather than grassroots associations, contribute to marginalize women’s interests and needs and impede comprehensive reforms.”

The privilege to enter the international sphere as a representative body for Lebanese women at international and regional conferences and workshops was largely benefitting an esoteric group of women in Lebanon, and would only increase inclusivity of other women’s groups and NGOs in a matter of fifteen years. By 2011, the inclusivity of NGOs was nationally appointed to activism on women’s rights by the original women’s movement from Beijing. As the movement containing the earlier generation of “feminist” from Beijing took on a market, hierarchal structure, a trickle-down of this structure has ultimately permeated through the organizational structure of any women’s advocacy group that which aligns with the state-controlled, statist-centric alignment of the NCLW.

The complacency upheld among activists in hierarchal, market structure organizations is staggering and equally ineffective for mobilizing reformist agendas. In a hierarchal market structure, neoliberal practices are not questioned, but rather, adopted. For the women’s movement, this is hypocritical on behalf of the NCLW that boasts support for feminist ideals. Rather, the NCLW is a product of segregated political participation between men and women, and its implicit cooperation with the state only enables the patriarchal character of decision makers. The segregation of women from decision-making positions is noticed in the gendered structure of the NCLW, where its position in politics is largely to displace international pressure on women’s rights from the hands of the elite. In this unfortunate dynamic, the NCLW

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70 Khattab, 2010, p. 91
and its community of women’s advocacy groups inevitably become the scapegoat for the state’s lack of responsiveness, while the cycle of fragmentation between women’s advocacy groups continues.

The women’s movement in Lebanon has existed for as long as Lebanon’s women have been the sites of contention for male domination. Thus, the enduring feature of Lebanon’s women’s movement is the women who continually protest for demands that are inherent for their inherent individual and collective wellbeing. Insofar, I have argued the emergence of transnationality in Lebanon’s women’s movement and its existence as an enduring feature of civic society in the twenty-first century. In this landscape for activism, women continue to be the vehicle for force, the perennial impetus for social change. However, the transnationality of the political sphere has complicated the system in hierarchal and bureaucratic ways, and has maintained its patriarchal undertone, but yet there is seemingly an expansion of opportunity structures that are ready to support activists and women’s advocacy groups in their continual fight. In Lebanon, the dominant corporatist elitist structures have proven to buttress the very system that offends women’s rights. These structures discussed thus will offer advancement to the women’s movement as long as they are keen to mobilize through it and internalize the contention this system has neatly packaged for consumption. Sociologist William Gamson (1992) argues that collective action is structured by “ideological packages.” The ideology behind this very movement, however, is imported from a supranational system that ultimately benefits the most developed nation-states with strong, democratic institutions. Therefore, its ideology is not yet fit for Lebanon’s consumption.\footnote{In response to pressure to pass legislation in Lebanon under the comprehensive framework of the U.N. convention, CEDAW, “Lebanon’s highest Sunni Muslim authority, Grand Mufti Sheikh Mohammad Qabbani, rejected a proposed law to protect women from domestic violence as a Western}
In this section, the overlying argument introduced the concept of transnationalism, and proposed its inception in Lebanon’s women’s movement as a means of supranational influence on the post-war, developing climate. Although since Beijing an international political opportunity structure has enabled the growth of women’s advocacy NGOs, this growth is but a number that presents an exponential admittance of activists into civil society. A lack of output on behalf of legislating women’s rights policies continues to be a source of contention. Today the NCLW’s role has been mainly supportive, and simultaneously restrictive, as the umbrella organization for mobilizing associational organizations in Lebanon’s women’s movement to transnationalist heights, as noticed in the joint UNFPA and NCLW campaign to institutionalize women’s rights and formulate the *National Strategy for Women in Lebanon 2011-2021*.

The state contention that ensues will follow with a process of externalizing contention. In the following section, externalized contention will be discussed as a means that has solidified a structure of reliance between Lebanon’s women’s movement and internationalist support. In this process, the section will explain the dynamics of Lebanon’s women’s movement, followed by a thesis on the new divisive force between the women’s movement and the spur of a transnational feminist movement.

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72 Austria, Denmark, Netherlands, and Sweden have condemned Lebanon for incompatible and inadmissible claims against CEDAW. A detailed transcript of objections to Lebanon’s reservations can be accessed from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm#N36
4.3 – Externalizing Contention for Transnational Impacts on Lebanon’s Women’s Movement

The long standing impasse between patriarchal elites and women’s advocacy groups has proven that, regardless of the structural and transnational associational ties between international support and domestic civil society, the national political climate continues to be impassable for legislating women’s rights. The section argues that the women’s movement has not gained esteem in the advent of transnationalism in Lebanon. Visibility of the women’s movement’s expansion into transnational realms includes women’s advocacy groups, civil society organizations and NGOs with partnerships between the international and supranational agencies. However, the benefits that civil society generates from such cooperative, transnational associational ties should not be sought as a reflection of the overall status of women’s rights.

Regardless of the stagnation, transnationalism has taken a stronghold within the women’s movement. That is, Lebanon’s women’s movement has found a grounding of support from supranational bodies and agencies to mobilize campaigns for women’s rights. But, along this path to transnationality, the women’s movement has become further mainstreamed and enmeshed in a “dynamic process of figuration and reconfiguration of interactions” from a structure of grassroots organizing to corporatist, associational cooperative ties with state-aligned women’s organization.

The broad configuration of the women’s movement, albeit, has not changed. For one, the state maintains its status as the ultimate offender of women’s rights. In return,

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73 Von Bülow, 2010, p. 5
74 Pre-existing literature on Lebanon’s women’s movement provides documentation on the organizational structures of women’s advocacy groups up until 2010. The National Lebanese Council of Women, one of the long-standing advocacy groups, “emerged as a corporatist umbrella structure sponsored by the state which limited women’s rights agenda to one enabling women to participate in the social and economic spheres and increase their political participation” (Khattab, 2010, p. 8; Pratt, 2006, p. 82).
assimilating to the hierarchal integration with the state, the women’s movement has only exacerbated Lebanese patriarchal chauvinism.

Scholars have depicted the dim future of Lebanon’s women’s movement as a pyramid built by features of the top-down, statist centric approach. Wherein, the appeal of legitimacy from state and international bodies, along with the carrot and stick of funding and acceptance into a mainstream civil society, has been proven too seductive to ignore. Internalized contention and its supposed remedy by U.N. agencies have swayed activists towards assimilation rather than enhancing prospects of a true grassroots movement that addresses the fundamental social issues in Lebanon. For a country governed by deep-seated patriarchal norms and inherent political contention, the implications are grave when civil society assimilates to the structures of statist-centered, hegemonic institutions.

This section argues that the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) under Security Council Resolution 1325\(^7\) has provided the “ideological package” for women’s advocacy groups to organize in a transnational scope. The mechanism of internalized contention has brought forth the transnational feature in Lebanon’s women’s movement. Where this structure of organization is largely built around CEDAW’s transnationality, the convention’s connectedness to supranational influence, and its domestic appeal for women’s liberation from discriminatory offenses simultaneously instigated an opportunity structure for contentious politics between women’s aspirations for women’s rights and the patriarchal system’s lack of consensus. The latter feature of political discrimination has driven Lebanon’s women’s movement to employ the mechanism

\(^7\) Lebanon signed the U.N. Convention in 2000, with reservations against article 9 (2) and articles 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) and (g) (Division for the Advancement of Women. (2009). Declarations, reservations, and objections to CEDAW (UN Publications). New York: United Nations. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm#N36).
of externalized contention to seek resourceful venues beyond the state under claims of a repressive system.

In this section, externalizing contention is described as a mechanism for women’s advocacy groups to widen the international political opportunity structure for Lebanon’s women’s movement. I argue, however, this mechanism of externalizing contention further implicates the status quo relationship between Lebanon’s civil society, NCLW, the U.N. and even as distant as Lebanon-U.S. relations on “women’s rights are human rights” polices.

In Lebanon, externalized contention is directed at both contentions with the state’s reservations on articles 9 and 16, and its total refusal to ratify legislations, and towards the committee of CEDAW. Contention against the latter body largely regards the committee’s lackluster efforts to provide a framework of CEDAW exemplary and applicable for Lebanon’s culture, society, and political system. This contention has come forth as an admission from objections and condemnation of Western countries against Lebanon’s “incompatible and inadmissible” claims for CEDAW.

To deconstruct externalized contention as a social movement mechanism, it is imperative to discuss the concept of frame bridging and frame transformation, sequences that drive “social movements [to] align their claims with relevant social publics.”

U.N. institutionalization of CEDAW is symbolic of the internalized contention that has given rise to campaigns for women’s rights in Lebanon. Its discourse represents the framing of liberation as the “universal bill of rights for women” and is further “constructed by movement organizers to attract supporters, signal their intentions, and gain media attention” as the righteous framework that

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76 Tarrow, 2005, pp. 61-62

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will emancipate Lebanese women from state induced oppression.

Women’s rights activist, Lina Abou Habib, founder of a woman’s advocacy group in Lebanon, the Collective for Research & Training on Development—Action (CRDT-A), and advising partner to Women’s Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, & Peace (WLP), depicts the profoundness of CEDAW’s framing within Lebanon’s women’s movement:

“The Campaign's starting point and main asset is the ratification of the Convention by Arab States. This provided a powerful and legitimate tool to hold Arab states responsible for making women rights and gender equality a reality….As an international Women Learning Partnership, we celebrated last year the 30th anniversary of CEDAW and organized public events at the CSW 54th meeting in New York. Our intent was to demonstrate the extent to which CEDAW had given us drive, power, ammunition and international legitimacy to advocate for rights and equality. Our struggle is to make CEDAW a reality for all women in the region and to make this convention a binding one….CEDAW remains the only Convention that focuses on women's rights. It still by far surpasses the provisions of other Conventions and has been instrumental for women's movements the world over in advocating for rights and recognition.”

CEDAW is a U.N. drafted convention that has stood for the women’s movement as both a tool for framing grievances and for framing transformation of Lebanon’s future for women’s rights. However, the technique of translating framing from bridging support for women’s rights and employing the assistance received in response (externalized contention) followed by transformation is precisely where Lebanon’s women’s movement has broken down in the face of state hegemony.

Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford (1986) coined the symbiotic mechanism of frame bridging and frame transformation as the features in a social movement that provide “the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” and “frame transformation which involves the planting and nurturing of new values, jettisoning

78 Tarrow, 2005, p. 61; Snow et al., 1986; Snow and Benford, 1988, 1992
The mechanism of frame bridging brought forth a grassroots movement in support of CEDAW by Lebanon’s women’s advocacy groups. In building the women’s movement in Lebanon around a civil society of women’s advocacy groups, campaigns to remove reservations from CEDAW rallied activists, scholars, and organizations around its specific issues. Grassroots campaigns and protests focused on KAFA’s draft law, The Law to Protect Women from Violence to eliminate gender-based violence and protect women, CRTD-A’s campaign for Nationality laws, LLWR’s variation on CRTD-A’s campaign with an additional emphasis on article 9 of CEDAW, and the UNDP-CFUWI coalition, with additional support from LWDG, LWC, LCRVAW.81

From the perspective of state-level analysis, Khattab (2010) attributes the fragmentation seen in grassroots organizing as a failure to launch a Gramscian ‘war of position’ against the sectarian regime. However, from the perspective of internationalism, the disunity of grassroots organizing has failed to produce campaigns that engaged the target public through campaigns with Gramscian ‘common sense’. According to Tarrow (2005), for a transnational campaign to successfully translate global framing into local framing, movement organizers must be both consumers of resources and producers of new ones relevant to the target demographic:

“Proposing frames that are new and challenging but still resonate with existing cultural understandings is a delicate balancing act, especially since society’s ‘common sense’ buttresses the position of elites and defends inherited inequalities. It is particularly problematic where activists attempt to import symbols and forms of action from abroad.”82

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80 Tarrow, 2005, p. 61; Snow et al., 1986, p. 467
81 Khattab, 2010, pp. 140-143
82 Tarrow, 2005, p. 61
Organizations and associational leaders of women’s advocacy groups were not inherently hostile with each other, but the difficulty of unpacking an imported framework such as CEDAW into a mostly traditional and patriarchal society was a daunting task that required cooperation among individuals and groups in the women’s movement.

Yet, consensus amongst women’s advocacy groups is but one facet to the success of translating the global frame of CEDAW for women’s human rights into a local frame. Aside from consensus amongst the minority that is the women’s movement, for CEDAW and to gain a national social movement in favor of women’s rights, movement organizers and activists would have to promote common sense framing to the wider society of Lebanese. This task is further exacerbated by the opinion of ruling elites, who attest to an infringement of CEDAW’s ‘Western’ dimensions, and demand reservations on articles 9, 16, and 29 (which dictate nationality, women and family, and authorization to supranational arbitration on state party disagreements over CEDAW interpretation).

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83 Reservation on article 9 include (2): States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

84 Reservations on article 16 include: (1) States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: (c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution; (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount; (f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount; (g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

85 Reservation of paragraph 2 in reference to paragraph 1 of article 29: (1) Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court. (2) Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of the present Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound to paragraph I of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by that paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation.

86 At Beijing, Randa Berri, wife of long standing Speaker of Lebanon’s Parliament and sectarian warlord, Nabih Berri, “went as far as to deny that domestic violence existed in Lebanon, and that it was...
Khattab further cites “the weakening of state institutions” as the driving force that lead grassroots women’s organizations KAFA and CRTD-A to rely on “the sectarian leaders’ consent to their proposed laws.”

When funding towards various campaigns led to a polarized community within the women’s movement, it seemed institutionalizing the movement under the NCLW and dispersing funding solely through this organization presented an alternative approach.

However, before this consolidation took place for the drafting of a ten-year strategy for women’s “affairs” in Lebanon, the transnational movement was fragmented with rivalry between groups and for externalized support. Khattab (2010) details the polarization that previously existed amongst women’s advocacy groups for the women’s movement, where:

“…grassroots organizations whether professional or voluntary-based have tried to create avenues to assess, reach out and address the basic needs of underserved women. Despite these praiseworthy efforts, they have failed to come together and act as a counter-hegemonic force against the sectarian status quo. Hence, single-issue based associations with a limited constituency and number of supporters cannot lead the change alone.”

While Khattab’s observations date back only two years, the women’s movement has since attempted to resolve any contention in organizing amongst women’s advocacy groups. The cited schism at the time between the women’s advocacy groups and NGOs, KAFA, CRTD-A, LLWR, and LWG was duly noted as a product of “competition over funding” as each advocacy group specialized on a narrow issue for women’s rights.

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87 Khattab, 2010, p. 145
88 Khattab, 2010, p.125
89 Khattab, 2010, p.143
The departure of this study from that of Khattab’s analysis\(^{90}\) asserts, rather, the evil effect on the impetus of a social movement can be disorganization amongst the various women’s groups within the women’s movement as a whole. The climate of activism during the formidable years of transnationalism in Lebanon’s women’s movement was largely fragmented over disorganization and heated with rivalry between associational leaders who believed in grassroots organizing as a protest for secularism and elite women with corporatist alliance with sectarian members of parliament. Disorganization preceded rivalry as each women’s advocacy group specialized in campaigning towards a narrow interest, rather than to consolidate constituents, grassroots mobilization, and funding towards a comprehensive social movement. In return, the ruling cartels and sectarian decision-makers were able to exploit the bounty of efforts by women’s rights activists and civil society actors with claimants of promoting “politicized issues” and submitting “incomplete” draft laws that need “to be reformulated more precisely so that it does not contradict with other effective laws.”\(^{91}\)

Thus Lebanon’s women’s movement, though transnational in scope, can be more likened to a “Lebanese oddity” of transnational activism.\(^{92}\) Its aberration is arguably consequential of employing externalized contention on two levels, not harmoniously, but rather in varied, disorganized, and seemingly competitive sequences. The implication of this breakdown raises doubts of the unity in Lebanon’s women’s movement.\(^{93}\) This stark disunity, however, is not a recent occurrence. Rather, transnationalism of women’s advocacy groups and internalization of civil

\(^{90}\) For a detailed account of Lebanon’s women’s movement from a state-level analysis see Lara Khattab (2010) “Civil society in a sectarian context: The women’s movement post-war Lebanon.”

\(^{91}\) Khattab, 2010, p. 155 & p. 171

\(^{92}\) My sincerest regards are to my thesis advisor, mentor, and sometimes counselor, Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, for coining the phrase, “Lebanese oddity,” and when I could not articulate the intensity of my ideas into a coherent sentence during those last minutes before the hour of deadline.

\(^{93}\) Khattab (2010) and Bray-Collins (2003) attest to the polarization in Lebanon’s women’s movement.
society as a whole have perpetuated a long-standing polarization in the face of competitive funding. It is noticeable this breakdown within the women’s movement intensified whenever a different associational leader of a women’s advocacy group proposed a new campaign. The ironic rivalry that ensued in externalizing contention between the grassroots groups, CRTD-A, KAFA, LLWR, and LWG occurred in the midst of institution building between the UNFPA and NCLW.

The NCLW, though arguably a national organization, risks becoming just a committee of displaced (and weak) oversight and accountability for transnational policies on women’s rights. Rather than allocating responsibility to the state, where the centralized power of decision-making rests, the U.N. has only expanded its boundary of institutionalization through the NCLW. In this form of organization, any contention regarding women’s issues between the state and the U.N. is displaced to the NCLW and its community of women’s advocacy NGOs. In return, the decision-makers continue to benefit from the unchallenged “salience of state apparatuses” of sectarianism and patriarchy.94

When women’s groups could not form a consensus for movement organization over at least the nationality law, allegiance to the state and power of party politics did inevitably overshadow their campaigns. However, and most notably, movement organizers received a dismal reaction to grassroots mobilization even in public demonstrations. Indeed, associational leaders of women’s advocacy groups colluded with parliamentarian members’ over public support. It is pertinent to briefly describe the allegiance of citizenry to the sectarian, confessional system. Lebanese are majorly divided between political movements headed by long-time patriarchal warlords. The overwhelming majority of political participation is either for the March

94 Evans, Skocpol, Rueschmeyer, 1993, p. 193
8 or March 14 bloc. Thus, even grassroots mobilization for sectarian causes and national interests overshadow support for the women’s movement, which largely consists of secular grassroots organizations.\textsuperscript{95}

In their failure to reconcile for solidarity and mobilize a formidable grassroots movement, the women’s movement became further entrenched in fitna and fawda, or civil strife and chaos.

Further, when the grassroots movements failed to achieve the overt goals of amended laws, the women’s movement externalized contention away from grassroots campaigns and towards supranational support for institution building within the framework of sectarianism. The configurations of the NCLW, its associational women’s advocacy groups and the culmination of the \textit{National Strategy for Women, 2011-2021} is part of a larger attempt to build an institution for women’s rights and human rights. Wherein, what seemed to be the last standing disillusioned grassroots organizations in Lebanon, KAFA, CRTD-A, LLWR, and LWG,\textsuperscript{96} are now recognized as stakeholders within the NCLW as “The stakeholders that have participated to the validation meeting of the National Ten-Year Strategy for women’s Affairs in Lebanon.”\textsuperscript{97}

In 2012, many of the women’s advocacy groups that were once regarded as marginalized by the NCLW and LCW, national committees that consists of “elitist women [who] played an influential role in pushing ahead safe agendas, silencing grassroots women’s organizations and dividing the women’s movement” are

\textsuperscript{95} Triggered by the February 14, 2005 assassination of politician Rafiq Hariri, the largest and most successful social movements in Lebanon have been under the 2005 protests \textit{Intifadat Al Istiqlal}, or commonly refereed to as the Independence Uprising Beirut Spring, to demand the release of Syrian hegemony. The protests that ensued would create the anti-Syrian March 8 bloc and pro-Syrian March 14 bloc. I stress these protests were successful according to Tarrow’s process of externalizing contention: demonstrators ultimately achieved their overt goals.

\textsuperscript{96} Khattab, 2010, succinctly categorized these women’s advocacy groups/NGOs as grassroots with pragmatic to critical relationships with elites.

\textsuperscript{97} NCLW, \textit{National Strategy for Women in Lebanon 2011-2021}, p. 6
seemingly integrated into a newly manicured, consolidated institution under the succinct heading of “National Commission for Lebanese Women in cooperation with United Nations Fund for Development.”\(^{98}\)

Tarrow (2005) and Keck & Sikkink (1998) may explain this process of consolidating organizational partnerships under the heading of a single institution as:

“[An] alternative to the two-level game that we called ‘the boomerang effect,’ where non state actors, faced with repression and blockage at home, seek out state and non state allies in the international arena, and in some cases are able to bring pressure to bear from above on their government to carry out domestic political change.”\(^{99}\)

The international contention for women’s rights in Lebanon is largely within the benign structure of the NCLW, where it serves as a national representative of women in Lebanon and an executive body of women’s advocacy NGOs that are recognized as part of civil society. Thus, the women’s movement in Lebanon has extended so far as “collective action framing” will mobilize activists of civil society within this umbrella organization.\(^{100}\) That is to say, the transnationality of Lebanon’s women’s movement can spur other collective movements of action, transnational activism, and reactive grassroots movement, however, the site of contention between the international and domestic will always return to collision at this juncture.

As it will be argued in the latter half of this chapter, transnationality has also provided opportunities for externalized contention to build horizontal, transnational coalitions between grassroots organizations in Lebanon’s women’s movement with Women’s Learning Partnership (WLP), Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR), and the Coalition for Sexual Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) in junction with Resurj, along with grassroots funding from Women’s Fund (WF) and

\(^{98}\) Khattab, 2010, p. 107  
\(^{99}\) Tarrow, 2005, p.145  
\(^{100}\) Tarrow, 2005, p. 61
Association for Women in Development (AWID). Johnson & McCarthy (2003) offer a theoretical assertion of causation between transnationality and national grassroots movement, wherein the expanding international opportunity structures can be conducive for enabling a momentum of national movements:

“A clear theoretical specification of appropriate mechanisms by which the founding of transnational populations might spur the founding of national ones and visa-versa is embedded in conceptions of the appropriate boundaries of wider institutional fields and communities.”101

This study points to an existing causation between transnational building of an umbrella institution in Lebanon for women and the spur of a transnational feminist movement by a community of grassroots activists who are largely alienated by the NCLW and UNFPA.

Since Beijing, Lebanon’s women’s movement has attempted to follow a path of transnationality, but has failed to sustain itself as a truly grassroots movement. Rather, along this path to transnationality, this chapter argues that the women’s movement became fragmented due to inherent features of rivalry for funding between women’s groups, differing allegiances to secular or sectarian ideologies, the confessional, sectarian state of Lebanon, which include: patriarchal stalemate, male chauvinism, and a society of Lebanese who only mobilize in mass numbers to sheepishly support political parties within the two dictating blocs, March 8 or March 14.

Until now, the desired outcome for externalizing contention has been met exclusively for the NCLW. Throughout its partnership with UNFPA, the NCLW has established grounding as the sole “machinery” driving the women’s movement.102

101 Johnson & McCarthy, 2003, p. 6
102 According to the consultancy terms of reference on the action plan for gender enhancement and mainstreaming, “The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) is the main national women
The achievements that belie women’s empowerment and advancement in Lebanon up through 2012 are largely under the heading of transnational partnerships with UNFPA. Through UNFPA, selective groups, institutions, and NGOs, including KAFA and most notably the NCLW have been receiving funding and assistance on projects in the following program areas: reproductive health and rights, population and development, humanitarian response, and gender equality and women’s empowerment. While most projects last between one or two years, UNFPA appropriated the most effort to implementing projects to buildup the NCLW’s capacity as the organizing body of the “mainstream” women’s movement. The touted structure of the women’s movement has gone from a combination of various women’s advocacy groups to a formidable, state-centric, institution. Institutional organization and state approved mechanisms of the women’s movement for campaigns that address “gender equality, equity and women empowerment” may prove to only be shallow attempts at “enhancing the institutional capacities of NCLW” rather than to challenge the fabric of institutional sexism, patriarchy, and gender inequality.

In discussing the structure of the contemporary women’s movement in Lebanon, as it stands before the 2013 national elections and before a potential 2015
Fifth World Conference in Qatar, the sequence of framing its ideological basis and reconfiguring its structure of mobilization is best analyzed alongside the rhetoric of the *National Strategy for Women in Lebanon, 2011-2021*. Since Beijing, and throughout Lebanon’s history as a participant in international forums, the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon has served as an official framework for a national and local agenda to implement transnational policies on women’s rights. However, when analyzing the agenda in the context of Lebanon’s political climate and patriarchal, sectarian structure, the National Strategy reads more as empty rhetoric than an applicable framework.

Regardless, the transnational force behind CEDAW has initiated a revival of Lebanon’s women’s movement with vertical, supranational support between the NCLW and its civil society affiliates with “partnerships” “stakeholders” and “gender focal points” with various, respective bodies of power (partnerships consisting of UNFPA, ILO, UNODC, OHCHR, FAO, ESCWA, UNESCO, European Union, Italian Embassy and “gender focal points in the following ministries, public administrations and councils: ministry of Tourism, ministry of Defense, ministry of Finance, ministry of Energy and Water, ministry of Higher Education, ministry of

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106 According to the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), “On March 8, 2012 the President of the United Nations General Assembly H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser and the Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon jointly proposed convening a Fifth World Conference on Women (5th WCW) in Qatar in 2015. The proposal has to go before the 193-member General Assembly (GA) for final approval, and its proponents hope that this will be advanced during the 66th session of the GA.” (AWID, About the fifth World Conference on Women, Retrieved from http://awid.org/News-Analysis/Fifth-World-Conference-on-Women-in-2015).

107 The National Strategy for Women in Lebanon 2011-2021, responsible for overseeing social awareness of CEDAW, refers to civil society actors as stakeholders: “The stakeholders that have participated to the validation meeting of the National Ten-Year Strategy for women’s Affairs in Lebanon are the following: Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering, Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Woman (Lecorvaw), National meeting for the elimination of discrimination against women, kafa (enough) violence and exploitation, Azm and Saade Association, National committee for the follow up on women’s issues, Lebanese council of women, Safadi Foundation, YWCA Young women Christian Association, League of Working women in Lebanon, League for Lebanese women’s rights, Lebanon family planning association for development and family empowerment (LFPRAE), Caritas, CRTDA, Saint-Joseph University, Women Committee in Beirut Bar Association, Chamber of trade, industry and agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (NCLW, *National Strategy for Women in Lebanon 2011-2021*, p. 6)”
Although the mainstream women’s movement did initially follow a transnational path to becoming a society of civil organizations and NGOs, the “Lebanese oddity” of unique cultural, social, and political features steered the character of the women’s movement towards institution building, and perhaps with the intent for structuring a democratic institution. The prevailing institutional feature has supplanted mainstream women’s advocacy groups from civil society into a political society. The looming question behind this transference beckons whether this will become the new model of women’s participation in Lebanon’s political sphere. Is the façade of neoliberalism as an institutional structure equated with development and democracy? Will the structure of the NCLW continue to entice women to join its ranks?

Noted grassroots organizations that were once marginalized have seemed to now align with the state and U.N. partnerships. This next section describes a vacuum in the grassroots social movement community, where a pocket of opportunity has risen to mobilize activists who are redefining the transnational structure of Lebanon’s mainstream women’s movement.


An argument of Lebanon’s flawed approach to building a democratic institution of women’s organizing will be detailed in Chapter Five when discussion of a feminist grassroots collective reveals the exclusivity of the NCLW-UNFPA partnership.
4.4 – Against Hegemonic Interests: The Call to Reaffirm Grassroots Organizing

*Shou ya3ni banat akhir zaman?*
You probably have heard this phrase before—maybe someone has referred to you as one of ‘banat akhir zaman’, and it wasn’t exactly meant as a compliment. Banat akhir zaman, or “the girls of the last times,” are supposedly so different from the generations of women before us, so much more unruly and rebellious, or so we are told. The fact is, if your elders don’t understand your way of life and don’t like the way you dress, your attitude, the way you think and the way you behave, they will probably call you a bint akhir zaman.

So, we’ve decided that since we’re not ashamed of who we are and what we believe in, we are going to reclaim that label and turn it into an empowering name for all of us who are working, in whatever way we can, towards the personal liberation of women and the end of all discrimination against them, and therefore towards the general betterment of society. Banat Akhir Zaman are all you girls and women who feel different, who defy the traditional mindsets and ways of behaving that society has assigned you, and who are working, or who want to work, towards making a positive change in the world.

In 2008, an inkling of change began to show within the blogosphere of a feminist grassroots movement. *Banat Akhir Zaman* was the first attempt at a grassroots campaign for women’s bodily rights. A group of independent, feminist activists noticed a gap in action for women’s bodily and sexual rights within the mainstream women’s movements in Lebanon. According to a Beirut-based, Lebanese activist, *Banat Akhir Zamaan* began as a loosely networked movement for “an organization of the entire Arab world, not only in Lebanon. [It] Organizes between five and six thousand girls.”

Almost two decades on its “pathways of transnationality,” a new structure of organizing activists has emerged to challenge the long-standing, prototypical character of women’s advocacy groups. The apparent shift in organization has taken place from a “market structure or hierarchically based governance structure,” to

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11 Von Bülow, 2010, p. 25
a method of horizontal organization for a network society of transnational collective action.\textsuperscript{112}

Further, in the twenty-first century, the usage of social media outlets has become imperative for a collective social movement to establish itself. Eminent documentarian and social activist George Stoney succinctly suggests, “Social change comes with the use of social media and getting people… involved”.\textsuperscript{113} This aspect of social media connectedness is a mainstay feature of social movements, and especially transnational in scope.

The collective of feminist activists in Lebanon’s Banat Akhir Zaman sought to reinstate a grassroots movement at a time when leftist, secular, and grassroots organizations were muddled in the fragmented structure of the mainstream women’s movement. At the time Banat Akhir Zaman emerged in the blogosphere, women’s advocacy NGO KAFA began “campaigning for change [away violence against women] at both the parliamentary and social levels.” However, campaigning at the social level would not be executed until “Once the draft law is finalized [then] KAFA intends to begin a grassroots campaign.”\textsuperscript{114}

As a direct critique to its campaign implementation, a grassroots activist questioned in a blog: “At the end, KAFA seems to be doing a great job, but I do wonder why they’re separating their grassroots campaign from their work with the legislators? Wouldn’t it be more effective if they worked on both levels simultaneously?”\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} Von Bülow, 2010, p. 29-30
\textsuperscript{114} Clark, S. (2008, June 8). Lebanese women still vulnerable to violence
This statement reveals an implicit schism within the organization of the women’s movement. As mentioned before, a great aspect to the fragmentation was an inability to organize a mass grassroots movement around the campaign of women’s rights. Instead, mainstream women’s advocacy groups organized grassroots movement in relation to their own respective campaigns. The pitfall of this frame bridging hinders collective identity from diffusing throughout the movement, and is instead maintained with communities closest to the movement organizers. At the onset, at least for KAFA, funding was critical to support their partnership with legislators. This placed greater emphasis to work with national institutions first, rather than with activists.

Nonetheless, these perceived failures on behalf of feminist activists led to realignment to grassroots activism. In effect, the transnational feature of a subculture (or perhaps a counterculture) within the women’s movement transformed from transnational in structure to transnational in ideology and collective identity.

Chapter Five will present a case study of grassroots, transnational feminist organizing in Lebanon’s women’s movement. The overlying argument will describe the spur of a national movement for transnational feminist activism as a reproach to the institutional consolidation of women’s advocacy groups without furthering women’s rights.

4.5 – Conclusion

In summary, the chapter provided an overview and analysis of Lebanon’s women’s movement from national to transnational since the post-1975-1990 period began. The prevailing argument asserts that even transnational woman’s advocacy groups, as products of a top-down global approach, are not conducive to challenging
the patriarchal political system, whether at a state or international level. However, from this stagnancy, and by the diffusion of transnational feminism from a revival of bottom-up grassroots movement, an emerging transnational feminist collective has been (re)born, albeit on the fringe of Lebanon’s mainstream women’s movement.
CHAPTER FIVE

DIFFUSION OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST TIES: ORGANIZING NASAWIYA

5.1 – Introduction

In a study of Lebanon’s women’s advocacy groups, Bray-Collins (2003) investigated the structure of the women’s movement at a time when discourse of women’s rights was just emerging in civil society. The details of these observations discern a temporality when transnational activism and feminism, too, were largely absent from organizing. Post-2006 War and at the height of transnational intervention for human rights, Khattab (2010) provided timely observations of the effects of transnational funding for Lebanon’s women’s movement. By 2010, feminists in Lebanon had begun to organize independently and alongside prominent women’s advocacy groups KAFA and CRTD-A on campaigns against gender-based violence and nationality laws. In these two case studies, when feminist discourse was present in grassroots movement, campaigns for personal status and citizenship laws were brought to the forefront to organize campaigns for women’s rights.

The most evocative discernments between Bray-Collins and Khattab’s studies that drive the proceeding arguments in this chapter rest upon two facts: Feminist activists continue to be on the fringe of Lebanon’s mainstream women’s movement; while, discourse on the plight of sectarianism against women’s rights continues to be simultaneously absent from the mainstream women’s movement. This is the opening through which Nasawiya emerged.
5.2 – *Nasawiya: A New Faction in Lebanon’s Women’s Movement*

As discussed in Chapter Four, women’s advocacy groups of the mainstream women’s movement have been consolidated under state institutions. However, the transformation is largely a cosmetic substitution to its previous form of fragmentation. Although structural features have been adjusted to accommodate new transnational partnerships with the UNFPA, the mainstream women’s movement seemingly still resonates with a notion of being “an aging movement, that has not been able to increase its constituency, nor update its discourse.”[116] The languished women’s movement and lack of strides towards civil laws to protect women’s rights are particular failures on behalf of an unresponsive state. My analysis attempts to emphasize the state as the greatest offender to the women’s movement. I cannot, however, discredit mainstream women’s advocacy groups with broad strokes of skepticism. It is undeniably, and at least a partial failure on behalf of women’s advocacy organizations when their efforts and campaigns have not produced enough mobilization and organization amongst themselves to pressure their political representatives to a noticeable degree.

This chapter will orient the feminist collective *Nasawiya* within Lebanon’s women’s movement as a grassroots, bottom-up social movement. Due to its structure as a loose network of activists, *Nasawiya* is highlighted as a social movement, and not similar in its organizational structure to existing women’s advocacy groups within Lebanon’s purportedly mainstream women’s movement.

Between *Nasawiya* and other women’s advocacy groups in the women’s movement, the largest difference lies in the campaign approaches and discourse surrounding “initiatives,” or grassroots projects enacted by an individual or group of

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activists from the collective. In this chapter I will delineate the various initiatives and campaigns instigated by *Nasawiya* activists thus far. Before discussing this portion in detail I will further explain pitfalls on behalf of woman’s advocacy groups to mobilize activists. In accordance, I will address pitfalls in organizing *Nasawiya*.

The case of the top-down, mainstream women’s movement headed by the NCLW-UNFPA partnership does provide an interesting example of rhetoric changes as an attempt to align women’s advocacy groups under a single campaign agenda. Actors of the mainstream women’s movement and authors of the *National Strategy for Women in Lebanon, 2011-2021*, updated the national rhetoric for women’s rights campaigns to include thematic references of women and gender. This is a direct adoption of a systematic overhaul for “political correctness” on behalf of the U.N. and since the adoption of SCR 1325.117 By upholding the assumption that international campaigns affect domestic political opportunity structures, a critical approach is used to consider policy aspirations under Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 in Lebanon.118 A meta-analysis based on a quantitative study from Black (2009) quantifies the mention of SCR 1325 in resolution references in Lebanon, wherein Lebanon has adopted six resolutions in references of SCR 1325 between 2000 and 2009. Black’s analysis concludes that U.N. policies have changed policy rhetoric from depicting women as victims to including gender mainstreamed language for women as active agents in peace building, governance, peace negotiations, and post-conflict peace building. Although U.N. rhetoric is adopting gender mainstreaming, Black’s data posits that ultimately gender themes in country-specific resolutions

117 Black, 2009, p. 20
118 United Nations Security Council adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace, & Security on October 31, 2000 to call for inclusive resolutions for women to be active participants in post-conflict environments. Although the resolution attempts to reorient the image of women from victims of war to agents of peace, international campaigns fail to delineate the importance of overcoming cultural constructs of gender.
continue to fluctuate – an indication that gender mainstreaming is often diluted in the process of state legislation.

Black (2009) denotes this overhaul has led to a dramatic increase of U.N. resolutions in reference to women as active agents of peace building. According to Black:

“The generally high percentage of recent resolutions containing some SCR 1325 references is an encouraging sign and suggests that gender mainstreaming is becoming more normalized within the daily routines of the Security Council.”

The assumption of rhetorical political correctness is not a direct indication of transformed cultural and social values towards women. In the context of Lebanon, national rhetoric for gender focal points, including gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming was used in the prior 1997 National Strategy. Yet, and since, political participation and women’s rights have not been reflective of the rhetorical correctness. Partly, efforts to transform cultural stereotypes of women as victims to leaders in peace building and nation-state development require an ideological challenge against traditional gender stereotypes, requiring national legislation to support women in such roles.

Under its institutional framework, the NCLW and women’s advocacy society agree to structurally prevent future causes of fragmentation in the movement with solutions of joint effort, partnership, and equal dissemination of reports and results amongst partnered groups. Yet, its revamped organizational structure does little to challenge the power dynamics favorable to an imperious political structure of sectarianism and patriarchy. In fact, the National Strategy accepts the notion of fragmentation as solely a product of disorganization amongst women’s groups, and that “Such partnership [between the NCLW, public administrations and institutions,
and civil society] also would bring added bargaining power and influence during the negotiation process with the concerned authorities.”\(^{(121)}\) Rather, the institutionalization of women’s advocacy groups under the governmental institution NCLW only reduces civil society to a cog in the political machine of \textit{business as usual}, while the mainstream women’s movement stands to support the yoke of male authority.

The example of the NCLW-UNFPA partnership, nonetheless, is a national attempt to create an inclusive system of women’s participation in politics. This top-down reform has in some ways advanced the agenda of a few existing women’s organization. Namely, from the civic sector, KAFA has benefitted from this strengthening of the NCLW. KAFA’s service as a lobbying body is the primary link between \textit{Nasawiya}, grassroots organizing and top-down reform. However, along this spectrum, a noticeable breakdown occurs at exactly the point when activism among civil society becomes enmeshed with activism alongside political parties, as KAFA has done.

Most recently, on January 29, 2013, KAFA headed its annual campaign for sixteen days of activism with a coalition of activists under the heading, “The Protection of Women is more important than your seats.”\(^{(122)}\) This latest campaign is meant to shame Members of Parliament and House Speaker, Nabih Berri for overlooking KAFA’s draft law and the women’s movement’s dire call for a non-confessional law to protect women against gender-based violence. This recent campaign culminated with a street protest on February 24, 2013. From Sanayeh Garden to Ain El-Tineh, Berri’s residential neighborhood, a march consisting of the National Coalition for Legalizing the Protection of Women from Family Violence. The make-up of this coalition is not outwardly described, however activists who

\(^{121}\) NCLW, \textit{National Security Strategy 2011-2021}, p. 29
\(^{122}\) http://www.nasawiya.org/web/2013/02/
identify themselves as part of Nasawiya were present.\textsuperscript{123} Among the crowd were also political party representatives for the Free Patriotic Movement and the Al-Kata’eb Al Lubnanniyya, or the Lebanese Phalanges Party.\textsuperscript{124}

The 2013 protest for the Violence Against Women law was organized by KAFA. Its attempt was to be inclusive of all civil society actors. However, there was a noted backlash. In contrast to the 2012 protest organized by Nasawiya, the turn out was visibly smaller. Also visible was the disdain some protestors took to march alongside political party representatives. In a post mortem recap, an activist present at the 2013 protest poignantly wrote:

“To me and several other participants at the march, the presence of representatives from political parties, just added insult to injury. These parties, who don’t exactly have a track record of supporting the legislation [The Law to Protect Women from Family Violence], turned the march into a platform for their usual hypocritical speeches, in a desperate bid to win some votes ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections.”\textsuperscript{125}

Despite a women’s advocacy group’s independent status as non-confessional, when conjoined to work on a women’s rights campaign with elite, sectarian decision-makers, or inclusive of political parties a backlash ensues against the women’s movement. Secondly, centralized power will ultimately remain in the hands of the upper echelon of government, while political parties and their sectarian strife, or \textit{fitna} will inevitably eclipse non-confessional women’s advocacy groups and their campaigns. A nod to political parties was felt as injurious to some activists who are trying to challenge the very system that promotes patriarchy and sectarian cooptation of the women’s movement.

Consolidation of the mainstream women’s movement and its alignment with

\textsuperscript{123} This note is from personal observation and attendance of the protest.
\textsuperscript{124} Representatives of some political parties were noticeable at this protest by their emblemized banners that read “Now, not tomorrow, is the time to create a civil law to protect women from family violence.”
\textsuperscript{125} Hatem, J. (26, February 2013). Marching for domestic violence legislation. This quote was retrieved from http://racing-thoughts.com/2013/02/26/marching-for-domestic-violence-legislation/
the state has solidified a new layer of state political contention amongst secular feminists of the women’s movement. The attempt at institution building of the mainstream women’s movement has inevitably marginalized secularist non-state actors who have been active in the women’s movement and civil society since up to 2007. The significance being that, yet again, the state has cracked a new schism between the mainstream women’s movement and the alternative women’s movement. This schism has buttressed the spur of a counter movement, I argue, as a transnational feminist in scope and organization. Since 2009, the collective of feminist activists at Nasawiya have been organizing campaigns, demonstrations, and protests on the streets in Lebanon for an alternative means to mobilize constituents for women’s rights. This movement comes at time when Lebanon’s known grassroots women’s advocacy groups have been coopted to join government-mandated institutions.

5.3 – Sowing Social Manifestations for Feminist Discourse

Nasawiya’s founding principles aim to sever what is described as the oppressive nature of NGOs and transnational networks that staggers against the giants of Lebanon’s unchanging elitist decision-making body. In its formative stage, Nasawiya has erected a feminist, women’s advocacy group that experiments with various means to organize for an alternative civil society. This alternative is sustained through three approaches unseen in Lebanon’s existing civil society: entrepreneurial feminism, feminist collectivity, and online feminism for feminist webspace. The most prominent facet to organizing activism within Nasawiya relies on its inherently grassroots structure where:

“At Nasawiya, we do not have a traditional NGO structure of boards, staff, and volunteers. We are a member-driven collective where everyone is equal
and in support of each other’s activism. We believe that we are stronger together.”

Among other characteristics, the collective approach is one that sets Nasawiya apart from the prevailing “personalistic style” organizing around a single leader in prominent women’s advocacy groups. Further, this chapter argues, the collective approach assists in sustaining Nasawiya’s genuinely grassroots, bottom-up movement.

The following sections investigate the transnational features of Nasawiya. The basic assumptions of the chapter posit Nasawiya as an alternative feminist social movement within Lebanon’s women’s movement for gender justice and equality. Thus, the study implies the transnational, top-down approach facilitated by the UNFPA-NCLW partnership has inadvertently fragmentized women’s organizing between an institutional movement and a grassroots movement. However, due to the transnational influences on Lebanon’s women’s movement, the countermovement will inevitably be a force of tranationalism, too. From this counter movement, a new transnational activism emerges for a new social and political movement towards women’s rights. Further, this chapter edifies the transnationality of Nasawiya as a movement within two spheres: a domestic coalition of feminist activists; and a social movement with transnational, regional and international networks. Altogether, Nasawiya poses a case study of new transnational activism in Lebanon’s women’s movement. Before deconstructing Nasawiya as a transnational feminist and a national social movement in Lebanon, the following sections will briefly introduce Nasawiya as a collective based on the movement’s origin, objective, structure of organizing, and the current campaign initiatives enacted by independent activists of Nasawiya.


127 Bray-Collins, 2003, p. 76
Nasawiya has evolved into a feminist movement for the reclamation of public spaces for feminist sensitization in a cultural setting overrun by male chauvinism. Since the movement’s origin, activism has focused on consciousness raising campaigns on feminism and workshops for transformative change at the most grassroots, community level. Founding feminist activists of Nasawiya originally began organizing for bodily rights and sexuality awareness with LGBTQI non-profit groups *Meem* and *Helem* and in association with transnational networks in the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR). Since 2004, the transnational organization *Helem*\(^\text{128}\) has been prominently working to “[lead] a peaceful struggle for the liberation [and awareness] of non-conforming sexuality and gender identity in Lebanon.” Helem’s main activism is to revoke penal code 534, which upholds “unnatural sexual intercourse” as punishable by law. Helem’s organization was a breakthrough for grassroots activism by proving means to refute the weapon of social interpretations and state legislation that target non-conforming social behavior. Incepted in 2007, Meem has promoted “empowerment through self-organizing” for the LBTQI community in Lebanon.\(^\text{129}\)

As a side note, Meem was spurred by a movement of activists who wanted to create a space for sexually non-conforming women to organize, while Helem proceeded to popularly become a transnational movement for sexually non-conforming men. In retrospect, Meem’s offshoot from Helem within the LBTQI community was a sign of fragmentation between differing perspectives on gender relations among activists themselves. In the midst of writing this chapter, former

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members of Helem published blog posts in the form of testimonies. In a recent blog post from Nfarsharte, a former member of Helem wrote:

“I’d like to speak about my experience as a woman inside this organization and my relationship with its members and leaders. A strange feeling crept up on me as I got to know many members better, when I discovered that the way they greet women is not through a handshake, but through grabbing her breasts…This idea in particular, that women’s bodies are public and revolve around men’s sexuality and desire, forms the basis of the patriarchal system that discriminates against me as a woman and makes me pay very dearly for my non-normative personal choices…Among the other things that reproduce patriarchal structures among many members of Helem is the image they have of femininity, the same image in the mainstream social imagination: superficial, gossipy, catty, enemies with other women and obsessed with the world of fashion and beauty with the goal of attracting men. I have always fought against this in my personal life, and I’ve always had my own standards of beauty and my own non-normative version of femininity. Women who fall outside social norms of beauty and femininity are considered by the men of Helem to be “abnormal”, “angry lesbians”, “ugly”, “dirty” and “smelly”. …This general anti-woman atmosphere created the perfect breeding environment for sexual harassment.

All of this verbal and physical harassment has bothered me and many other women in Helem. There was never any genuine attempt to solve the problem, and so many women ended up leaving the organization completely. The lack of serious engagement was always tied to a patriarchal structure within the organization that absolves those who discriminate and harass. This structure becomes clear in the reactions that inevitably follow any complaint: blaming the victim, relegating the problem to a just a few bad apples, and mocking the women, among other oppressive strategies designed to silence anyone who dares to speak out. I think today is finally the time for these violations against women’s bodies to stop. I am speaking out now so that this doesn’t happen again to other women in the future.”

From these narratives, a former member of Helem set out to prove the seed of gender-based violence in Lebanon exists among varying demographics, and is even perpetuated between factions who identify themselves as subjects of discrimination.

The pervasiveness of gender based violence and sexual harassment is attributed to “outside factors” that have shaped the “mechanism” of Helem’s organizational structure. Three components of social behavior are described to have caused a schism over gender-based violence between men and women in the LGBTQI community: character assassination, shaming and silencing, and reluctance of

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accountability:

“As with all previous instances of organization-splitting arguments, the immediate reaction by most of those involved was to sweep it all under a carpet and pretend it never happened. This was done, first of all, by framing it as a ‘personal argument’ that, apparently, does not reflect negatively on the politics of the organization as a whole. Secondly, there was shameless pride from some of the members and key people in the organization and community in having ‘defeated’ the ‘evil terrorists’ by shaming them into leaving. Thirdly, after this event and during Helem’s general assembly, the same members who participated in sexist slander suddenly started speaking about ‘women’s rights’ and about how making a ‘safe space for women should become a priority for Helem. Those same people refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing or apologize for their hurtful and misogynist remarks and actions, and continued to slander women who spoke up not just in Lebanon, but regionally. While they might think that saying tokenistic phrases about women’s rights may shield them from criticism, it is their actual actions that count and that show otherwise.”

The case of Helem can be seen as a “microcosm of gender-based violence” in Lebanon. Former members who have come forth with testimonies have emphasized that the objective to their narratives is not to slander the organization as a whole, but rather to contextualize the extent of patriarchal organizing, misogyny, the inherent ‘male-privilege’ in institutions, and the pitfalls of NGO tactics in Lebanon’s civil society. For this study, the relevance of these incidents provides further details of the impetuous for grassroots activists in Lebanon to build a feminist movement.

The “outside factors” affecting social movement organizing are referent to social norms in Lebanon that which enable sexual harassment and gender-based violence to occur in the first place. While there is reportedly “an undeniable trend of gender based discrimination that has thus far gone unaddressed” within the grassroots community, a recent campaign to address sexual harassment has emerged within the feminist community to employ transformative justice and build a culture of accountability. While nobody is immune to social conformity, as long as there are members within the community (whether they have been offended or were affected

by sexual harassment) who refuse to speak up and be part of the change, a schism in social movement organizing around the issue of women’s rights will persist and eventually deaden the grassroots community’s efforts for a women’s movement.

When looking at activism through Helem and Meem from a distance, and unknowing of the fragmentation between the LGBTQI community, the movements are notable for bringing forth discursive interpretations of human rights in Lebanon. From this earlier established grassroots community, a confluence of activists would come together to found a transnational feminist movement to not only campaign for women’s rights, but also within a critical context of sectarianism, patriarchy, and globalization.

However, there are inveterate structures of grassroots organizing in Lebanon that I argue have led a grassroots community from one of loosely connected networks into culmination of a social and political movement under Nasawiya. The LGBTQI movement initiated non-conformist campaigns for additional action plans to challenge, on the broadest level, Lebanon’s constitutional interpretation and enforcement of universal human rights by the ruling elite, religious clerics, and pervasive social and cultural taboos. Further, their organizational structures for inclusivity, grassroots self-organizing, and horizontal, transnational activism would become fixtures in the emergent feminist movement. Particularly, founding activists of the grassroots feminist movement would continue to contest the prevailing power structures of the state and consequently further international contention.

Although the grassroots community of activists had been organizing for years before, the origins of Nasawiya date to 2007. To commemorate International Women’s Day, on March 10 activists hosted an event that would be “The first of its kind in being organized by young women and also being able to bring together
different women figures and groups together [in Lebanon].”

The intent to organize for International Women’s Day 2007 was described as follows:

“[We] Invite you to attend, participate and celebrate with us in an event sparking a new initiative within the cultural and social realm of Beirut: “Women’s Day”. An initiative that aims to bring women and women friendly people together so that they may jointly think and explore tools of work having a direct impact in women's lives. Our aim is to celebrate with all of you who have worked, struggled, fought, felt mistreated and marginalized to come together for a second round, with an uprising generation of young women and men determined to bring equality within their present.”

“This event will be a scheme where culture and social initiative will be to create and thus building a concrete network working on women and tackling women issues from a different perspective. This space will be mixed between employee women, journalists, politicians, and artists. We will be together to share their experiences and to fix a program to continue their demands on the political, economical [sic], and personal level.”

“The occasion marks the beginning of a long-term collaborative endeavor that aims to create a network of active organizations and individuals determined to realize gender equality in a collective present.”

These promotional descriptions of IWD 2007 in Lebanon describe a grievance among young activists for a renewed women’s movement. Simultaneously, the means to organize coincided with the juncture of international interest to fund human rights campaigns in the region. But most interesting, the effort to organize was on behalf of activists in Lebanon who recognized a disjuncture between the state of the women’s movement in principle and praxis.

In 2008, along with the momentum of KAFA’s campaign against gender-based violence, Banat Akhir Zaman simultaneously emerged with aspirations to become a proactive grassroots feminist campaign for bodily rights. Over the previous

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133 S. A. G., personal communication, August 29, 2012
135 This description was taken from the event’s promotional poster, Retrieved from http://urshalim.blogspot.com/2007/03/international-womens-day-lebanon.html
year, feminist activists began reclaiming web spaces online to *nashr*, or publish feminist critiques of the state of women in Lebanon. From a blog post by campaign members in Banat Akhir Zaman, the feminist campaign was fueled by the social construction that women in Lebanon are as liberated as their bodies are portrayed through media:

“When one attempts at discussing the status of women in Lebanon these days and comparing it with that of women in the Arab world, challengers ignorantly bring about the stereotypes of the women at the forefront of Lebanese media as examples to back their invalid arguments…outsiders believe that the typical seemingly liberated bodies that are circulated around all the music channels actually do represent the whole of the situation of Lebanese women. Wrong.”

In this blog post, a feminist activist of Banat Akhir Zaman made an implicit contrast between the media’s broadcasted image of women and the reality of formless, nonexistent personal status laws for women’s liberties. This contrast is even more evocative in the context of the region’s sweeping reforms in personal status laws within other MENA nations. Yet, with only hollow victories for women’s rights, women in Lebanon are unjustly mistaken as “liberated bodies”. The outspoken blog post is an earlier example of feminist discourse becoming relevant as social cleavages begin to reveal grievances from globalization, internationalization, and patriarchy in the public, private and, I argue, the international spheres.

Following the momentum of the mainstream women’s movement, and particularly in KAFA’s campaigns, the ‘alternative’, feminist women’s movement gained traction as a grassroots effort. In January 2009, campaign members of Banat Akhir Zaman banded with independent activists for a Feminist Collective to create a

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“platform to allow different feminists to work on different groups in one office.”

By International Women’s Day on March 8, 2009, the campaign for Banat Akhir Zaman coalesced into a formative collective of activists among Lebanon’s feminists for a social movement and “the first group of its kind in Lebanon.” Known as Beirut’s Feminist Collective, the movement organized its first demonstration to commemorate the universal day to protest the status of women in Lebanon.

International Women’s Day 2009 occurred in the midst of contention for electoral reform and just before national elections. By this year, CRTD-A had already launched the campaign “My nationality, my right for me any family,” KAFA had initiated a campaign on violence against women (VAW), and yet, the grassroots movement had still been unable to perforate the bulwark of politics-as-usual and prove women’s issues deserve more than scant attention.

IWD 2009 would be the beginning of an annual tradition for feminist activists from Nasawiya to take the streets and engage people of Lebanon in grassroots activism. Dubbed as Hello Women in 2012, the campaign for International Women’s Day follows very basic structures of organizing seen throughout women’s movements across the world. Along with an evening protest to “Take Back the Night” and “reclaim the streets from harassment women face,” every year, the feminist activists disperse in groups throughout Lebanon to gather societal perspectives from women on

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138 Before Feminist Collective emerged as a comprehensive social and political movement, members of the collective originated as independent activists from Beirut-based IndyACT, (Saade, R., Camperspeak: sectarianism can be a challenge to info-activism, Retrieved from http://infoactivismcamp.tacticaltech.org/node/55).


1) challenges they face as women and 2) what changes would they like to see made in Lebanon in regards to the social and political status of women. According to members of the collective, the objective of this demonstration is:

1. For us, as feminists, to listen, grow and learn from what women have to say.
2. To let the women we meet express themselves, think about the questions, voice their opinions, concerns, and stories.
3. To let women know that our collective is out there and is supporting them and that they are welcome to join us and work with us.141

Implicit in their objectives, IWD is an opportunity for the collective to generate nashrah, or produce and publish independent reports on women’s opinions of their status as citizens in Lebanon. Usage of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and web spaces supply the means then to broadcast their data on social perspectives on women’s status in Lebanon. Nashrah is then an extension of nashaat, or activism, to generate alternative responses of women’s social attitudes. The content produced in this approach is an attempted rebuttal to the widespread portrayal of Lebanese women in mainstream media (MSM) as ‘liberated bodies’.

International Women’s Day in Lebanon has become a popular occasion amongst women’s advocacy groups. Although IWD is not a formal or mandated national day in Lebanon, commemoration among women’s advocacy groups has become informally institutionalized at university campuses, through the NCLW and in civil society, and across media outlets. Yet, the means and presentation of IWD celebrations in Lebanon are varied across the women’s movement, and more broadly across the community of women’s advocacy groups. From a distance, the attention IWD has received in Lebanon since 1998 shows that women seem to be celebrated and met with sincere acclamation each year. However, there is a clear discrepancy

between how IWD is commemorated between women’s advocacy groups. For Nasawiya, IWD serves as an opportunity to protest grievances and demand urgency from decision makers to recognize the plight of women in Lebanon. This is in stark contrast to how other women’s organizations or advocacy groups have utilized IWD as a day to promote superficial or hollow advancements for women in Lebanon.

The overt distinction between the ways IWD is commemorated in Lebanon is either an opportunity to protest for change, as seen by Nasawiya’s movement, or a day of celebrating achievements made by women in Lebanon. While both reasons to commemorate IWD are respectively controversial, they are also representative of two prevailing differences in the women’s movement as a whole: 1) discourse and 2) organizational structure. For example, at IWD in 2009, two contrasting commemorations took place in Beirut: one organized by IWSAW and the other by a group of feminist activists who referred to themselves as the Feminist Collective (and before officiating their movement under the name Nasawiya). From a comparative perspective of the means and presentation of IWD celebrations between a women’s advocacy group and a grassroots feminists collective, a feminist activist’s perspective will ultimately provide a reflection between these divergent discourses in Lebanon’s contemporary women’s movement:

“IWSAW [celebrated] women’s day by paying tribute to the women soldiers in the Lebanese Army. On the one hand, I understand that the army is sometimes the only ‘respectable’ place for many working class young people, mainly from rural areas, to turn to, but at the same time, why must we honor an institution that is built on machismo and violence—that is a basic facet of the nationalistic patriarchal world we live in. While I always respect individual women who are getting themselves into male-dominated spaces, I think, as far as women’s rights groups go at least, we could focus our efforts more on creating a world free from militarism instead, even if people call us crazy and utopian now; I think it’ll be worth it on the long run.”

The Institute of Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) has been

commemorating IWD in Lebanon since 1998. Since its inception in 1973, IWSAW has been notable for publishing research on women’s studies and for being an influential resource for women’s advocacy groups in the region, and especially for its feminist journal *al-Raida*. Although the Institute is prohibited\(^{143}\) from directly participating in demonstrations, protests, or campaigns, its description by a member of the Feminist Collective holds a specific truth about women’s organizing. From the perception of a feminist activist, IWSAW is ostensibly a neutral beacon in the women’s movement in that it publishes a feminist journal yet supports women’s collusion with ‘patriarchal’ institutions. Regardless of these subjective views, this protest against supporting ‘machismo’ and nationalistic patriarchy is a further indication of a new feminist radical discourse among activists. Ultimately the differing celebrations of IWD provide examples of divided discourse for women’s rights through the prism of a women’s movement and a feminist movement.

Secondly, taken from the perspective of the feminist movement, women in Lebanon have not succeeded collectively. Lebanese women have undoubtedly succeeded and contributed to society, however in individual endeavors. For example, in activism, the late Laure Moghaizel is upheld as a renowned figure of Lebanon’s women’s movement. Moghaizel’s contributions include the creation of the Democratic Party of Lebanon, the Lebanese Association for Human Rights, and Bahithat, an institute for Lebanese women researchers. Moghaizel’s activism along with her husband is cited as instrumental in bringing the Lebanese state to sign and ratify UN convention CEDAW.\(^{144}\) In civil society, and as argued by Bray-Collins (2003) and Khattab (2010), associational leaders of women’s advocacy groups have been recognized at the forefront of the women’s movement. At the institutional and

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\(^{143}\) From an interview with former director of IWSAW, Dr. Mona Khalaf, Bray-Collins (2003) clarifies that according to LAU protocol, the Institute is a source for research and not demonstrations.

\(^{144}\) Stephen, 2010
academic level, the Institute of Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at Lebanese American University, my own stomping grounds, even maintains a database of “prominent contemporary” Lebanese women. This online database is meant to reflect “As representative as possible of Lebanese women’s achievements...At the same time, the list will be duly selective to reflect a high level of achievement by every woman included, depending on her field.” The critique is not against institutions and individual achievements, but rather against the complacency within these institutions and communities that either commemorate women’s individual achievements, or women’s collusion with ‘male-dominated spheres’. Often, individual achievements are mistaken as indication of women’s overall, collective progress in Lebanon. Thus, when feminist activists voluntarily protest for social and political change on IWD, their collective point is to further produce an alternative discourse for a collective movement for achievements for women in Lebanon.

Tarrow (2005) would argue, because of its international appeal, IWD serves as a “global frame” and incentive for women’s advocacy groups to organize campaigns through means of externalizing contention:

Global framing describes only the domestic diffusion of a message in global terms and ignores the contacts and conflicts between its receivers and their opponents. But even in the absence of such contacts, imported symbols can make a difference to both elite and popular response.

Funding is often appropriated to women’s advocacy groups just for the occasion of International Women’s Day. For a women’s advocacy group, a commemoration framed around the themes of IWD can be used to externalize a claim for funding or to garner transnational support. In 2012, the NCLW, which boasts membership of politicians’ wives, celebrated UNIFIL women peacekeepers and their

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145 Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World [IWSAW], Who is she in Lebanon?, Retrieved from http://whoisshe.lau.edu.lb/content/about-who-she-lebanon
146 Tarrow, 2005, p. 64
role in “the National Campaign to Support Women in Decision-Making and Peace-Building Positions.” Thus, the context of International Women’s Day is in itself a global frame, and as Tarrow states, the contacts and conflicts that emerge as a result of importing its symbol is contingent upon domestic factors. A feminist activist from Nasawiya describes the juncture between feminism and IWD, where:

“Feminism however, in its ideal practices, seeks not to impose frames or values, but to keep alternative, empowering and contesting norms in circulation. A good example would be International Women’s Day (IWD), which, while centered around women and advocating for a global day of action, is still flexible enough to contain the particularities of any woman’s struggle.”

The emphasis being that International Women’s Day has seen participation of the grassroots movement multiply. Yet, for its ‘flexibility,’ IWD will remain as a day of protest for the women’s movement, and will continue to reflect varied strategies for furthering women’s movements in Lebanon. For grassroots women’s organizations such as the Feminist Collective, IWD is markedly a day that can promote visibility for its cause.

As of 2012, Beirut’s Feminist Collective became known as Nasawiya (feminism). Since its inception in 2010, Nasawiya has grown in membership and in the number of campaign it engages in. The feminist collective consists of 270 independent activists, and though it began with one campaign for gender-awareness training in 2010, members now work across ten various initiatives produced in or around Nasawiya. The collective, however, did not emerge without tribulations. Moawad describes the movement to have begun with Banat Akhir Zaman as “a first attempt at young feminist organizing. [However,] it did not follow through and died out, then became The Feminist Collective and then that became Nasawiya, the final

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functioning version.”

Although its origin in Beirut remains a perennial feature, some campaigns in Nasawiya stride across the MENA region and in solidarity with other Arab feminist movements for gender justice and equality. Further, Nasawiya serves as a headquarters for expansive global networks in campaigns such as the Coalition for Sexual Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR). Along with its expansion of membership, the collective has taken on the role as an umbrella of support for any feminist campaign in Lebanon. Thus, members of Nasawiya provide ancillary grassroots activism for both international campaigns and national campaigns for the women’s movement. The collective’s work is not tethered to any single partnerships, institution, or organization, but rather serves as an alternative hub for churning social and political issues into opportunities for organizing grassroots activities and services. As a transnational movement from below, Nasawiya activists work horizontally to organize grassroots campaigns, demonstrations, and protests with national civil society institutions, namely KAFA and CRTD-A.

In presenting the case study of Nasawiya, this chapter challenges the purported arguments of feminism as an imported ideology or production of the ‘West’. While feminist activism has existed throughout Lebanon’s history, its ideological paradigm has been tethered to the works of individual elites, whether independent or as associational leaders of women’s advocacy groups. Nasawiya’s organizing structure is unprecedented in that it seeks to conjoin existing groups with individual activists to mobilize for social change. This is in contrast to institutional organizing of civil society, as in the case of the UNFPA-NCLW partnership in Lebanon. Without a grassroots social movement in Lebanon, women’s legal status

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Moawad, N., personal communication, September 03, 2012.
will only progress either through individual accomplishments in increments over time or in alignment with the ruling cartel. The individual approach to social change has proven to fragment the women’s movement, just as a vertical alignment with the state has allowed elite decision-makers to distort and co-opt women’s rights campaigns for the benefit of sustaining a status quo political system.

Further, the scope of feminism as an underlying framework for campaign initiatives in not a foreign ideology to women and activists in Lebanon. Through the diffusion of transnational feminist organizing, however, feminism in Lebanon has gained esteem since the reemergence of the women’s movement post-1975-1990 war. The trickle of organized initiatives from the international community has enabled internationalization of women’s rights to permeate the women’s movement in Lebanon through institution building and in building a bottom-up social movement. The top-down approach has taken a significant stronghold over the women’s movement, however the bottom-up, grassroots approach is beginning to take on a prominent role.

5.4 – Patriarchal Politics and Power Dynamics: The Political is Personal

Part of what makes Nasawiya as a unique collective of activists among Lebanon’s women’s advocacy groups is the movement’s outspoken framing of resistance against hegemony of the state and international order. As delineated in Chapter Four, this thesis argues that the reordering of the women’s advocacy community under a mandated UNFPA-NCLW partnership has only served as a cosmetic improvement of the women’s movement fragmented structure, despite the multi-year and million-dollar UNFPA sponsorship. The NCLW’s inherent alignment
with the state, with the first ladies of the sectarian government, (wives of the
president, prime minister, and speaker of the house) as associational leaders, clearly
depicts the limitations of the mainstream women’s movement. Strategies of
“patriarchal bargain,” “ethnic bargain” and “liberal bargain,” within the mainstream
women’s movement risks committing offense towards a “triple marginalization”
against women in Lebanon along ethno-national, class-based, and gendered lines.\textsuperscript{150}

According to Kandiyoti (1988), Cockburn (2004), and Sa’ar (2005)
respectively, such ‘bargains’ illustrate the limitations of women’s agency in power
structures. Within the civic space of women’s organizing, the case of Lebanon’s
women’s movement is fragmentized between a mainstream movement and a feminist
movement, where the former movement marginalizes the latter on the basis of
foregoing a unified movement in the face of such bargains.

While the women’s movement altogether advances goals for women’s
liberation from gendered violence, women’s empowerment, and inclusion in political
participation, the UNFPA-NCLW partnership can be seen as a quintessential liberal
bargain that marginalizes any women’s organizing that refuses to adopt the ethnic and
patriarchal structural status quo. Thus, seeking a liberal bargain, or the acceptance of
“whiteness” and “maleness” by internalizing and externalizing contention through the
UNFPA, the women’s movement directly serves as an incubator of international and
state contention vis-à-vis the feminist movement. In the vein of ‘going native’ to
assimilate to indigenous culture, “going white” is an argument amongst postcolonial
feminist theory to explain how “members of disempowered backgrounds have
adopted its [the liberal model] modes of thinking and knowing…[and], through access
to right cultural capital, are in position to share the liberal dividend,” and whiteness

\textsuperscript{149} Kandiyoti, 1988; Cockburn, 2004; Sa’ar, 2005
\textsuperscript{150} Sa’ar, 2005
and maleness “assume a formidable and unchanging character because they are anchored in robust regimes of power.” At the cost of a unified and women’s movement, the liberal bargain between the NCLW-UNFPA on one hand serves the privilege of women involved. Simultaneously, the liberal bargain is a kowtow to the sectarian and patriarchal system in Lebanon. As Sa’ar describes, the liberal bargain in Third World countries “reduces the power of these identity components to shape a critical consciousness.” For women who kowtow to the liberal bargain through their reinforcement of a top-down movement and the adoption of UN rhetoric for ‘political correctness’ in the National Strategy platform, their admissions as leaders of the women’s movement poses a bleak future for women’s rights.

This following section will describe the goals of Nasawiya’s feminist movement to elaborate on activists’ efforts to raise consciousness among women and refute such strategies adopted by the mainstream women’s movement.

The collective’s objectives are intimately intertwined within the declaration of their qiyamouna, or value system, wherein:

- Sexism, which is a devastating result of the feudal/patriarchal culture that we live in, is a major social problem that we should work to eradicate, especially since it is deeply related to other social problems, such as classism, heterosexism, capitalism, racism, sectarianism, etc. Therefore, we must fight all forms of violence, discrimination, and exploitation that are based on gender, sexuality, able-bodied, ethnicity, race, religion, class, etc.
- As women, we have the right to a positive self-image and an emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy life.
- As women, we have the right to our bodies and our sexualities. In other words, women should be free to express their sexuality, free to make a choice about engaging or not engaging in sexual acts and/or relationships, free to choose whether they want to marry or not, whether they want to undergo an abortion or not. Women must also have easier access to helpful and non-judgmental sexual health services, as well as sexual education.
- We must work to eliminate all forms of harassment, and all forms of gender-based violence, verbal, physical, and sexual, wherever they happen.
- All women should have equal rights of employment, and equal treatment and pay in the workplace.

Sa’ar, 2005, p. 688
Sa’ar, 2005, p.689
• Women should be encouraged to enter the fields of study and work that are currently dominated by men, such as sciences, sports, etc.
• Domestic migrant workers are employees and should have all the rights of employment, starting with respect and equality.
• We have a responsibility to be smart consumers since what we buy and where we buy from are political as well as personal choices that affect us all.
• We should encourage women to start women-friendly, workers-friendly and environmentally friendly small businesses. Women must play an active role in the political process, and lead the way in political reform.
• Women must have all their citizenship rights.
• Women must assume more leadership roles, in the private and public spheres, to reflect their central role in their communities.
• We have to promote feminist art, women-friendly media, and women’s studies courses and institutes.
• We should respect our natural environment, as exploitation of nature is parallel to the exploitation of women.
• We should support other feminists in the Arab world, the global south, and the rest of the world, who are working towards a similar vision of a better world.\textsuperscript{153}

The value system of Nasawiya presents the core of all campaign initiatives, and the changes activists wish to realize and diffuse throughout the cultural practice of human and women’s rights in Lebanon. At the objective level, the collective implicitly differentiates itself from its fellow women’s advocacy groups. Its emphasis on ‘We’ as the vehicle for social change is the founding principle for transformative gender justice and equality. This approach is rooted in social education for awareness of social and political norms in Lebanon. In promoting awareness, Nasawiya’s campaigns also call for community accountability in lieu of legal frameworks for government accountability, and currently in cases such as sexual harassment. In a general sense, community accountability requires the commitment of activists and community members to realize their shared grievances, with a priority for:

“This change in ourselves and in our communities is first and foremost one of healing, of openly talking about the multiple sources of our pain—our personal and collective histories, in non-judgmental, women-friendly environments, and then working together to eliminate these problems.”

In promoting a culture of community accountability, Nasawiya’s objective is to expose the nuances in Lebanon’s social and political culture that which enable oppression against all women and men. The value system of feminism thus serves as a foundation for a critical framework in activism. In the context of Lebanon, this movement begins at the most rudimentary level of social oppression to address pervasive cultural taboos, or topics considered shameful or aïeb. In an interview with a national newspaper, Nadine Moawad explains how a feminist movement could elicit women to challenge various social taboos surrounding the issue of women’s lack of ‘empowerment’:

“In addition to the political sphere, society is also a front in the struggle for gender justice in Lebanon…Lebanese women are inundated with expectations of the female body that adhere to certain beauty norms: blonde, straight hair; small, neat noses; large lips and flat stomachs. Under the weight of tremendous social pressure to conform to gender stereotypes, women suffer huge damage to their self-esteem. This is exacerbated…by the complete lack of discussion around these issues…[To re-engage debates on women’s issues in Lebanon] this can be achieved…by spreading awareness and promoting debate about sexual health, sexual education in schools and sexual harassment. Through opening up a dialogue around these focal issues [Nasawiya] hopes to encourage women to be more aware of the various forces at play in determining gender norms and expectations. In turn…such a dialogue will enable women to explore different ways in which they can reassert their agency in order to bring about positive change in their lives…On the other hand…the problem of political disempowerment among women in Lebanon [continues. Yet] along with the empowerment of women in politics per se, the mainstreaming of core feminist values such as equality, solidarity and critical engagement with multi-faceted mechanisms of oppression is the key to breaking away from the endless cycles of sectarian squabbling that continue to mire Lebanese society.”¹⁵⁴

Along with civil society groups, KAFA, Helem, and Himaya, Nasawiya provides a support helpline on behalf of Salwa, a campaign against sexual harassment. An activist from the collective emphasized a discrepancy between campaigning for rights as a civil society actor and Nasawiya’s objective to uphold feminism as an alternative discourse for implementing women’s rights in Lebanon:

¹⁵⁴ Goodman, 2009
“[‘Women’s rights’] are more of a checklist, like participation in politics, work, education, etcetera. When you get those rights you check it off and think, ‘finished,’ … [Nasawiya’s objectives are] much deeper than getting the law right, [but rather] thinking about how to make society actually adapt and accept [women’s rights].”

Most interesting, Nasawiya’s objectives do not categorically align with any single or specific kind of feminism. Rather, the movement aims to redefine the women’s movement from a “docile” one in terms of organizational structure and towards one for a collective consciousness to challenge pervasive social and cultural norms of violence against women.

Per its organizational structure, anyone is welcomed to join Nasawiya as long as they are self-identified feminist activists and uphold the collective’s qiyamouna, or value system. The structure of collectivity does not rest upon a formal organizational approach, but is driven by a loose, network-like structure. Castells (2000) proposed for a new sociological conception of a network society, an evolved form of social organizing, wherein:

“A social structure made up of networks is an interactive system, constantly on the move. Social actors constituted as networks add and subtract components, which bring them into the acting network new values and interests defined in terms of their matrix in changing social structure. Structure makes practices, and practices enact and change structures following the same networking logic and dealing in similar terms with the programming and reprogramming of networks’ goals, by setting up these goals on the basis of cultural codes.”

This theory of the network society theorizes mobilization of resources for a transnational movement. Most important, it provides an argument against reductionist claims of social structures to exist within confines of “the mechanical view” of

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156 “By activists, we mean individuals actively involved in gender justice work. Some Nasawiyas work full-time in women’s rights; others volunteer a few hours a month. Some are students and some are professionals in different fields. All of us are activists in different capacities, whether by leading our own feminist projects or by discussing gender with our friends and communities. In our jobs, classes, homes, and daily lives, we advocate for equality and social change” (Who are Nasawiyas? Retrieved from http://www.nasawiya.org/web/about-us/who-are-the-nasawiyas/).

157 Castells, 2000, p. 697
institutions and organizations. In the network society, deepened interactions among society will bare a process of evolvement and generate “agencies of social change.” Castell argues that the network society is more likely to initiate social change from attempts at trial and error of applying theory to practice.

Nasawiya’s network-like structure is a purposeful step in the collective’s evolution from being a group of individual activists to realizing a social movement. To maintain a network-like structure is simultaneously an outward rejection of the rigidity in institutions and organizations that have dominated the scene of Lebanon’s women’s movement, and particularly of the inherent character of hegemonic ordering between organizers and associational leaders. In response to ongoing contention, and as the movement grows, attracts more activist members, and expands themes of initiatives to include multi-causes, the praxis of feminism becomes more distinct and the collective becomes more movement-like. In becoming agents of social change within the movement, the process of evolvement for activist presents its own set of contention most noticeably at attempts to reconcile between individualistic models of activism versus a collective approach. Yet, the collective maintains its cohesive movement through volunteerism and self-initiated campaigns or ‘initiatives’. As one member describes the collective, “There is no hierarchy. We have one coordinator for every initiative. Everyone has the right to start up a new initiative, as long as it has a strong feminist perspective and corresponds to our core values.”

Members often contribute activism towards more than one social issue. Abandoning any formal structural organizing is an exercise to sustaining a communal movement based on inclusivity and will. Where, “At Nasawiya, we do not have a

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158 Castells, 2000, p. 697
159 Castells, 2000, p. 697
traditional NGO structure of boards, staff, and volunteers. We are a member-driven collective where everyone is equal and in support of each other’s activism. We believe that we are stronger together.” It is not atypical to find activists in Nasawiya who were once part of formal non-governmental organizations and women’s advocacy groups. As argued in Chapter Four, the inception of a feminist collective emerged as a response to the failure of formal organizing to mobilize constituents in the women’s movement. Rather, the collective was born out of an opportunity structure for a grassroots movement that would counter the highly politicized, cutthroat, competitive sphere of civil society, and rather provide for specifically mobilizing young feminist activists.

An activist of Nasawiya, and a previous member of a well-known formal women’s advocacy group describes the contrast between activism and NGO work in women’s advocacy groups:

"My own observations as an activist and a former NGO worker made me reach the conclusion that informal organizations, that are less professionalized, are more flexible and can adapt more easily. Networks and collectives also leave the door open for creative, dynamic initiatives that will be sustained by the commitment of the activists rather than by grants. Nasawiya is a loose organization within the women’s movement that had made the conscious choice to avoid ‘NGOization’ and professionalization in order to allow the maximum of independence to its members within their initiative, thus enabling a wider independence for the organization as a whole. Talking with other Lebanese activists, it has become very clear that many of them working in more professionalized structures struggle with the issue of resources: they loathe the competition donor funding creates between organizations (who they would tend to see as natural partners in ideology but who become rivals when it comes to access to resources), they have issues with the agenda-bending that donor trends entail, often estimate the system of donor funding unsustainable and almost all of them draw a line to what kind of funding they’re ready to accept."

Nasawiya reemerged from an unsuccessful campaign for bodily rights and sexuality

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awareness to eventually flourish into a burgeoning feminist movement distinctly when the women’s movement needed a renewed impetus for change. Initially, the collective’s expansion came with an influx of young activists seeking to join a movement with a consistent outward focus on progressive change. The collective structure of Nasawiya seems to appeal to young activists who have experience in working under the restrictions of organized, professionalized, and institutionalized work in Lebanon’s women’s advocacy groups. Part of this impression is directly related to the friction and rigidity between donors’ agendas and pressure on grantee partners to meet expected criteria for campaign and activities. The appeal of flexibility, creativity, and dynamism in a social movement is theoretically a conducive setting for a feminist collective of activists that seek to challenge the very organizational structures that have done little to mobilize an effective constituency for women’s rights in Lebanon.

Activists of Nasawiya are typically between 18-30 years of age and consist of women and men of various demographics from throughout Lebanon. The specificity in this age range depicts the majority of people in the collective. However, as a social movement, Nasawiya often collaborates in protests, campaigns, conferences and demonstrations with various groups and organizations that aim to further causes through a feminist perspective, too. The notable attraction between Nasawiya and young feminist activists in Lebanon is an indication for the need of positions that support the emergence of young leaders. Khattab (2010) characterizes the women’s movement as previously being an inopportune environment for fresh activism, where even leftist woman’s advocacy groups were not particularly interested in mobilizing young people in Lebanon:

“Despite the fact that these associations advanced reformist agendas and challenged
the sectarian status quo, their institutional makeup failed to attract young leaders in the post-war period. In particular, they were increasingly controlled by a group of women who were involved in every aspect of the associational work but refused to delegate power to the newer generation."163

In comparison to the institutional makeup of other women’s advocacy groups, the collective organizational structure relies on support and leadership by every member to sustain its flexible, creative, and dynamic movement. Most important, Nasawiya is conducive for mobilizing activists on new ideas in campaigns and initiatives by young people in Lebanon as a result of receiving funds and grants from women’s transnational organizations that which support to establish local feminist movements. Commonly referred to by scholars of social movement theory and organizational theory as social movement organizations (SMOs), these transnational organizations provide seed grants to diffuse a template of activism.164 Before Nasawiya, in 2008 18.6% of reported organizations in the region worked with young women on women’s rights work. Those organizations that reported a target group of young women under thirty-years of age were most cognizant of the need to integrate young women’s rights work into their context. Yet, of the surveyed organizations, only 49%, less than half admitted to having young women in managerial roles.165

To build upon its twenty-one feminist causes and initiate such a challenge to the status quo, Nasawiya members engage in women’s issues across the following initiatives: Ghayreh 3adtik: Feminist Tools for Change, Sawt Al Niswa, Adventures of Salwa, Take Back the Tech, coalitions with KAFA (to protest for the legislation of The Law to Protect Women from Family Violence) and Zolah (to promote an Arab network of young feminist activists in the MENA region), The Gender Databank,

163 Khattab, 2010, p. 105
164 Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005
165 These statistics were generated by a study produced by the Young Feminist Activism Program with AWID in 2008. Titled, “Funding the future of women’s rights: Where is the money for the new generation of women’s rights initiatives?” the results were taken from an online global survey of 1032 global organizations.
International Women’s Day, Labor Day, Anti-Racism Movement, Delete Article 522 campaign, and most recently the Nasawiya Café, an entrepreneurial feminist venture to provide a sustainable income for campaigns while reclaiming a space in Beirut for feminist activists to congregate in. In my view, each initiative varies in transnational ties, but ultimately contributes to diffusing transnational feminism.

5.5 – The Pitfalls of Externalization: The International is Personal

Nasawiya is not exceptional in that the collective requires external funding, as do other women’s advocacy groups in Lebanon. Simultaneously, as mainstream women’s advocacy groups have been affected by transnational politics and institutional structures, transnational processes have affected Nasawiya as a movement. However, the difference between Nasawiya and Lebanon’s civic society of women’s advocacy groups lies in their relation towards the state as either “elites” or “challengers”, while the former relishes its privileged access, such as funding and donor-partnership with the UNFPA, the latter must make do with limited access to political change.¹⁶⁶ This difference is key to understanding what has come to be described as the mainstream women’s movement and the alternative women’s movement. Although both movements are arguably a product of the same internalized contention—international pressure to institute women’s human rights and to raise a culture for gender justice and equality—the alternative women’s movement headed by Nasawiya exercises a grassroots approach to externalizing contention at organizations with particular interest in mobilizing transnational feminist movements. Wherein an unresponsive government refuses to allocate resources to the feminist movement, Nasawiya has relied on transnational SMOs to assist in mobilizing

¹⁶⁶ Davis, Mayer, McAdam, Richard & Zald, 2005
resources. Thus, the influx of young activists into leadership positions at Nasawiya is reflective of a larger, transnational trend to supporting young people in “young women’s rights work”.

The phenomenon of transnational activism in Nasawiya emerged with the influx of external interest to fund young women’s rights movement. The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), MamaCash, and the Global Women’s Fund (GWF) are prominent supporters for multi-year initiatives. Multi-year financial support through transnational feminist SMOs have allowed for transnational diffusion of resources, whether of funding or mobilization structures, for young feminist movements in developing countries. In Lebanon, the LBQT community became the source of feminist diffusion amongst young activists. LBQT support group Meem brought forth a renewed movement for queer and feminist discourse amongst young people and initiated conscious raising campaigns for awareness of women’s rights in Lebanon, their lack of rights, and the imposed traditional, often patriarchal ideals that often dilute women with false notions of liberties, such as the means to drive, wear expressive clothing, and attend public spaces along with male counterparts. Much of these awareness campaigns have been made possible through funding support from external organizations for feminist movement building and with utility of Internet for organizing and dissemination of information on movement activities that are occurring on the ground. Nasawiya’s transnational structure is heavily maintained and connected through the means of electronic communication via Internet social media sites. Therefore, the Internet provides a means for diffusing, transmitting, and disseminating information and for recruiting national to transnational interest towards Nasawiya’s cause.

167 The Young Feminist Activism Program with the Association for Women in Development (AWID) use this concept to describe the future of women’s rights from the perspective of campaigns undertaken by young people and a “new generation of women’s rights initiatives”.
5.6 – *Nasawiya: A Model for Transnational Feminism*

The phenomenon of Nasawiya is indicative of various factors affecting social movement organizing in Lebanon. A notably young generation of fervent activists is protesting to become part of national discourse to affect an approach of Transformative Justice towards gender based violence and sexual harassment. The model of transformative justice is “a means of addressing the way that power and privilege, abuse and our own histories of trauma play out in our relationships, organizations, activism, and movement-building.”

This model, originally formulated by Generation FIVE, a California-based grassroots movement against sexual abuse, stands at the core of activism in Nasawiya. The diffusion of the normative value of Transformative Justice is the result of transnational activism among feminist movements. Most recently, Nasawiya activists were joined by regional MENA coalitions in Amman, Jordan for training to enact grassroots campaigns for Transformative Justice in country-specific communities. This opportunity came at a time when Lebanon’s mainstream women’s movement has not gained traction in legislation. The relevance being that the top-down approach in the women’s movement has waned, leaving feminist activists to look for bottom-up approaches that allow ‘full potential’ of a community to engage in campaign work without the collusion or leverage of a patriarchal state.

Factors such as the combination of existing grievances in Lebanon’s women’s movement and the ripe opportunity structure provided by Generation FIVE to mobilize a transnational campaign that seeks to work outside of state systems is the basis of Nasawiya’s transnationalism. For activists in Nasawiya’s alternative

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women’s movement, it is imperative to work without the Lebanese patriarchal state and its affiliates, specifically the NCLW-UNFPA machinery. Transformative Justice serves as the framework for activists to engage with communities on social issues without distress of the state’s cooptation, as seen with the state’s intrusion on Lebanon’s mainstream women’s movement in campaigns for personal status laws and women’s rights.

This chapter argues that the emergence of a feminist, alternative women’s movement further exemplifies that women’s status in Lebanon are still sites of national contention. However, one of the single grievances, an unresponsive government, has led the Nasawiya movement to seek assistance from transnational feminist organizations. Yet, these western social movement organizations (SMOs) do not have leverage to directly affect transnational policy making, but are rather in the business of transnational activism to fund women’s work at a grassroots scale. That is to say even alternative feminist SMOs have proven as effectual insofar to assist individual activists in social projects. The onus to mobilize grassroots movements continues to rest upon the shoulders of social movement organizers.

To refute a cultural relativist perspective, women in Lebanon are neither in better social form than their counterparts in the MENA region, nor can their status be compared to the liberties esteemed by developed nation-states. Women in Lebanon are simply shorthanded by a patriarchal state, and, as this study has argued, there is a multitude of detrimental effects hindering women’s organizing in Lebanon’s women’s movement that directly stem from the patriarchal, sectarian state.

A black or white depiction of women’s status, between liberated and oppressed, is a reductionist perspective of the situation in Lebanon. While it does not depict the character of women’s movements and organizing in Lebanon, transnational
support—be it from the U.N. or alternative means—inevitably risks perpetuating this black and white idea that women are collectively one or the either.

If Nasawiya has proven itself as a social movement, the feminist collective has proven to be one of a resistance movement against the patriarchal, sectarian political system in Lebanon. Its transnational features are broad, varied, and carry the weight to become a model across the MENA region’s women’s movements. As a Lebanese feminist activists and coordinator of Nasawiya explains:

“We understand the fact that many problems are Lebanon-specific, but many problems are common to the region. We, as Arab women, face challenges that have the same root, and this is why, early this year, many of our members in their individual capacity were part of the launching of the Young Arab Feminist Network in Cairo. We don’t like how the situation for women in Lebanon is always compared to that of women in Saudi Arabia, supposedly saying that women here are much better off when they are not even aware of what is happening. So yes, we focus on Lebanon, but at the same time, women in other countries are inspired by our work and have contacted us. There is a mutual inspiration between women here and those in the rest of the region.”

However, even before Nasawiya may prove as a sustainable model for a feminist social movement, activists carry a great challenge to overcome the curse of becoming just another fragmented movement in Lebanon. Years after its inception, Nasawiya continues to be a grouping of activists who have pronounced experience in activism, yet face the challenge of mobilizing and organizing a movement as pronounced as their rhetoric. Perhaps the feminist movement can risk dissolution by joining, in adjunct with other social movements in Lebanon with grievances as a result of the sectarian system.

Surely, activists of Nasawiya have experienced personal backlashes in organizing within other communities who do not uphold feminist values as a social framework (such as the very public sexual harassment offenses within the LGBTQI community). However, there is a great consequence to cultivating an impenetrable

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community within a feminist bubble. Feminism, just as the women’s movement as whole, has not generated any historical or sweeping achievements in Lebanon. Further, the framework of feminism carries negative connotations for being a ‘Western’ production, irrelevant or inapplicable, and even a radical paradigm for human rights to conservative or traditional societies. In Lebanon, the feminist movement needs to outwardly address the bulwarks in society and family life outside of the realm of the Internet and largely on the ground in order to create a lasting movement for waves of success.

5.7 – Conclusion

Nasawiya is not outwardly a typical movement of transnational forces. The grievances underlying the feminist movement in Lebanon are products of long-standing contention between the state and women. Yet, the transnational effects through greater funding and transnational partnerships with regional and international feminist movements have provided Nasawiya as a movement with more support than the mainstream women’s movement has allotted it. Nonetheless, as this chapter set out to demonstrate, transnational feminism exists within the grassroots community of activists. Whether this impetus will garner policy reform is beyond the scope of this study. What appears true, however, is that the changing landscape of activism can eventually effect change. Yet, as it stands, the implications of transnationalism in the women’s movement has served to benefit the NCLW-UNFPA partnership as a residual structure of the dominant patriarchal systems between Lebanon’s confessional system and the U.N.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 – Summary

The women’s movement has been at the forefront of civil advocacy since before Lebanon’s history as a nation-state. As Weber (2003) and Thompson (2000) recollect, women in Lebanon have been an integral faction to initiating social and political change since the nation sought sovereignty from the French Mandate. Throughout its colonization up until the present period of the “Arab Spring,” women have been adopting newer skills over time to organizing campaigns in Lebanon. This thesis proposes, however, a new and still emerging women’s movement in Lebanon – one that has divorced itself from the nationalistic—or, more aptly, the mainstream—women’s movement. From activism by this faction of feminists, grassroots campaigns have shown insight into the pervasive transnational structure of activism for policy reform on women’s status, and, secondly, the aspirations to expand policy rapport for women’s human rights.

Yet, Lebanon’s women’s movements are not necessarily fragmented along the lines of national versus transnational social organizing. Women in Lebanon ultimately want the same ends for policy reform against gender-based violence and women’s personal status codes. The means to mobilizing support, however, are the fundamental differences between the mainstream women’s movement and the alternative, feminist movement. Thus, the women’s movement is not fragmented as a whole, but rather bifurcated into two separate movements with similar objectives and vastly differing means. Whereas the mainstream movement of civil actors organizes in line with the

170 Weber, 2003; Thompson, 2000
political system, the alternative feminist movement decries the sectarian system as the sole offender to women’s welfare in Lebanon, and human rights as a whole.

For the feminist women’s movement to begin to attain its goals, activists would need to neutralize their liberal and anti-sectarian rhetoric to garner more support among the lay citizens. But this attempt at reducing anti-sectarian rhetoric has proven to (further) subdue and mute women in Lebanon. Although this cycle of complacency has historically built the women’s movement in numbers, the meager effects from its complacent rhetoric has been met with growing tension and grievances for a stronger, more radical women’s movement. Further, to recall the fragmented structure within the mainstream women’s movement, its complacency has directly alienated and marginalized a generation of women’s rights activists who rebuke the organization of a women’s movement along national lines. Yet, when male, elite policymakers convince the Lebanese public that women are not educated enough to participate in political decision making, they are overlooking the main idea and undermining the progress women have made for themselves at the hands of a withholding political system. These assertions, whether implicit or overtly stated, are detrimental to perpetuating a patriarchal society in Lebanon.

This thesis argues that the women’s movement is a continual force for influencing change on policies towards human rights and women’s rights. But while this study does not aim to quantify changes in policy, the analysis of the case of Nasawiya sets to prove that a new generation of activism has emerged in Lebanon’s grassroots community that may well be more effective in pushing for women’s rights in the country. Of Nasawiya, I argue, this generation of activism is appropriately identified by the nomenclature of a transnational feminist movement.
6.2 – Answering the Thesis Question

Tarrow (2005) describes that the new character of activism will be concerned with borderless campaigns as a product of transnationalism, the latest phenomenon to affect relationships among states and civic society. According to Tarrow and other social movement and social movement organization theorists, the significance of the new transnational activism is its potential as the new political landscape of activism. Transnational activism is concerned with changing pervasive social and political issues that manifest as a result of modern-day conditions. This kind of activism is spatially oriented in the transnational sphere as an inevitable result of globalization and internationalism. Just as these forces have caused modern-day social issues, activists have also utilized means of globalization and internationalism to transform their adversities into opportunities within a movement organizational structure. Yet, the focus is not entirely on organizational structures within social movements, nor is the focus solely on activists, but the context of the transnational brings the state back into the purview of contention.

Ultimately, this study aimed to challenge the grounded theory of Tarrow’s transnational activism. The example of Lebanon’s women’s movement posed a complex yet fruitful example of the ever-changing process of organizing in a state affected by transnational forces. If transnationalism exists within Lebanon, then this study has proven thus by divulging its effects on the identities of feminist activists, the emergence of a new political arena, and the fusing of domestic and international politics, especially in the shift of the mainstream women’s movement to international heights through the NCLA-UNFPA partnership. Further, the case of Nasawiya has inadvertently shown that marginalized groups can profit more from a transnational movement than refusing to seek assistance from larger, umbrella social movement
organizations. Activists of Nasawiya have outright proven their ability to utilize transnational resources for the benefit of mobilizing a strictly national movement. Feminists of Nasawiya have broken the stereotype, that of muted feminists, to deafen the ears of their antagonists. Whereas, just under ten years ago, Bray-Collins (2003) assumed the worst of the women’s movement in Lebanon and reasserted notions that “a stronger feminist consciousness” was nowhere in sight to resurrect Lebanon’s women’s movement from the deathly grip of elite male policymakers, today, Lebanon’s feminist movement is active and diverse due to its transnational support from grassroots SMOs and the means of Internet-wide support from Diasporas and activists alike. A conscious raising feminist movement is undeniably at force in Lebanon and coming in clearer than before.

However, the implication of challenging the status quo varies ultimately on the level of mobility and organization between social factions. The other side of the undeniable truth is that women’s issues continue to be second-rate concerns to the mainstream public. The very mainstream public further continues to support the confessional and clientalistic political system that breeds the patriarchy that stifles women’s organizing. In the face of an upcoming electoral year, Lebanon’s confessional political system does not show any sign of implosion, and despite increase in grievances amongst factions for a secular and democratic system, only carrots of reforms are on the menu. Yet, on the cusp of 2013, when geopolitical turmoil has heeded more attention than national politics, electoral reforms seem distant, far-fetched and unattainable at this time. A longstanding debate to enact an electoral quota for women in Parliament at this point seems imaginary. In the meantime, the mainstream women’s movement will continue to function under the NCLW-UNFPA partnership. At best, the NCLW-UNFPA commission is an artifice to
sustain women’s support of the sectarian system. At worst the NCLW-UNFPA stifles the women’s movement by design.

6.3 – Lessons and Avenues for Future Research

The study of transnational activism relies on intrinsic and extrinsic factors of a social movement phenomenon. While the feminist movement becomes more visible, the study has proven that social movement theories continue to be relevant, especially the marriage of social movement and organization theory. These theories were applied to investigate the intrinsic factors of Lebanon’s women’s movement, and particularly the spur of a feminist movement. The framework of this study follows American contemporary social movement theorist (Tarrow, Tilly, McAdam, Doug, Skocpol) to identify the central conflicts within the women’s movement that are 1) unique to the “Lebanese oddity” in movement organization and 2) and external contention that is extrinsic to sustaining the transnational political structure and definitive of the “new era” in social movement study.\(^\text{171}\)

Where I believe an opening for research has emerged through this study is from my observations of the Nasawiya movement in reclaiming public spaces for a “counterpublic sphere”. From the Nasawiya Café to virtual feminist web spaces, activism in Lebanon’s feminist movement concerns activities beyond demonstrations, community-wide events, and international conferences or meetings. The concept of the “counterpublic sphere” is most relevant to describing the transnational activism in Nasawiya, wherein private and public spaces are reinvented for the primary objective to disseminate counter-discourses against the prevailing structures of Lebanon’s civic society and its inherent attachment to the sectarian political system. McLaughlin

\(^{171}\) Crossley, 2002
(2004) describes these members as “subordinated social groups” who “within the context of a counterculture…are able to offer interpretations of their identities, needs, and interests in opposition to a comprehensive public sphere imbued with dominant interests and ideologies.”

Wherein the Beijing Conference of 1995 set a precedent for women’s organizing and a momentum towards transnational movement, the transnational feminist movement has taken example of the importance in utilizing communication across national borders. In the case of Nasawiya, the transnational feminist movement has taken an initiative to adopt political-economic practices into its counterculture space. An inclusion of women and men, regardless of religious denominations, nationalities, and persuasions utilize the Nasawiya Café as a movement-sustainable project. Surely this space can provide an appealing narrative, but its function as a paradigm for non-profit, feminist entrepreneurialism elicits interest of further study. Can this paradigm serve as a new formula for a feminist political economy in Lebanon?

172 McLaughlin, 2004, p. 160; Fraser, 1997, p. 81; Felski, 1989
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