

Women's Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization

Lisa Blaydes and Safinaz El Tarouty

To what extent do gender considerations impact voter recruitment strategies in Middle Eastern elections? Based on an examination of voting behavior in Egypt, we find that clientelist voter recruitment tends to empower women economically rather than politically as elections provide an opportunity for disadvantaged women to sell their vote to local vote brokers or offer their vote to a local patron in exchange for a future payoff. In contrast, women who vote for Islamist candidates may be able to increase the influence of their political support by creating common knowledge about the popularity of their candidate and by reducing the effectiveness of government repression.

Most studies of women's political participation in the Middle East focus on the problem of low levels of female representation in government, and more particularly, in elected parliaments. This line of research considers the structural and cultural conditions that make it difficult for women to be nominated as candidates and to win political office as well as the behavior of female parliamentarians once in government.¹ The question of how everyday women respond to the opportunities and incentives presented by parliamentary elections has been largely ignored, however, in favor of studies of the political prospects for female elites. In particular, current studies fail to investigate the extent to which gender considerations impact voter recruitment strategies in competitive parliamentary elections. This article seeks to fill this gap in the current literature by examining the actions and motivations of everyday women as political actors. In particular, we examine women's electoral participation in the 2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt in an effort to understand how women's political participation can lead to certain types of economic and political empowerment.²

The 2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt provide a crucial case for the study of gender and political participation in the Middle East for a variety of reasons. First,

Lisa Blaydes is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Stanford University and an Academy Scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies. She is currently working on a book-length manuscript entitled *Competition without Democracy: Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. Safinaz El Tarouty is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the British University in Egypt and a doctoral candidate at East Anglia University in the School of Political, Social and International Studies. Her current research focuses on Egyptian business elite. The authors are grateful to Mervat Hatem and Jillian Schwedler for their very helpful comments on a draft of this paper.

1. For more details on these issues in Egypt, see Mustapha El Sayyid, "Political Participation in Arab Countries," Paper presented at the Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights - Working Group on Minorities - Ninth Session, May 12-16, 2003, and *Days of Democracy: Egyptian Women and the 1995 Parliamentary Election*, DVD, directed by Ateyat Al-Abnoudy (Seattle, WA: Arab Film Distribution, 1996). For an interesting discussion of the impact of female quotas for parliamentary representation in Morocco, see James N. Sater, "Changing Politics from Below? Women Parliamentarians in Morocco," *Democratization*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2007).

2. By parliamentary elections, we are referring specifically to elections to Egypt's lower chamber of Parliament, the People's Assembly.

these elections were highly competitive and local press reports suggest that female voters may have been pivotal in determining the outcomes of many races. In addition, Islamist candidates associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood fielded candidates for about 30% of available seats and won in more than 60% of these contests. This suggests that the 2005 election was also of particular importance for our understanding of Islamist mobilization tactics as they relate to gender.

Using behavioral evidence, press and academic reports, as well as information from interviews of parliamentary candidates and other political activists, this article argues that voters in Egypt, including female voters, typically fall into one of two categories. The first are individuals who expect to get a direct or indirect material benefit for their vote via local clientelist networks.³ The second are those who are ideologically motivated and turn out to support the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. In both cases, the recruitment strategies of political operatives are highly influenced by gender considerations. For candidates that operate within clientelist networks, the votes of women may be “cheaper” to purchase than the votes of men since the opportunity cost for voting may be lower for women, who tend to be in the formal labor market at lower rates than their male counterparts. For these women, voting becomes a kind of low-level economic activity consistent with arguments put forward by previous scholars who have described how economic opportunism can lead to forms of empowerment for low-income women in Egypt.⁴

For Islamist activists, women also may be targeted voters, though for entirely different reasons. Women have proven to be highly effective political recruiters for Muslim Brotherhood candidates. In addition, high turnout of veiled voters at women's polling stations creates common knowledge about the popularity of Islamist candidates in a particular district, and the presence of female activists cuts down on the likelihood and effectiveness of government repression. The participation of Islamist women in the face of repression and hardship also serves as a powerful and politically motivating symbol for both male and female voters who are inclined toward the Muslim Brotherhood.

After a discussion of the key historical developments related to women's political participation in Egypt, this article will discuss the political context surrounding the

3. Clientelism can be defined as a relationship between parties of unequal status that involves some form of exchange. According to Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson, the introduction of competitive elections gives a client the vote, which can be used to repay his patron for other benefits. See Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson, *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) for more on this point. Susan Stokes focuses on clientelism as a form of electoral mobilization and defines it as the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support. Clientelism differs from what might be called pork-barrel politics, where one or a few districts receive particular benefit, and programmatic redistributive politics, where patronage distribution is offered to a particular class of beneficiaries. See Susan Stokes, “Political Clientelism,” in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, eds., *Handbook of Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for a complete discussion of political clientelism. Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson provide an excellent overview of the issues surrounding patterns of linkage between politicians, parties, and citizens with a discussion of clientelism as it operates in particular country cases. See Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson, eds., *Patrons, Clients, and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

4. Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt. Following that, we examine the issue of non-ideological voting, particularly the politics of gender and patronage and vote buying networks. The next section discusses the ways that women are both mobilized and mobilize in favor of candidates associated with Egypt's largest opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood. We then consider the implications of our findings for the empowerment of women in Egypt, and a final section offers tentative conclusions.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EGYPT

Scholars of the women's movement in Egypt typically write that women began to play a more active political role in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Women were involved in nationalist movements in 1882 and 1919⁵ and began to publish their own magazines and advocacy publications.⁶ In 1923 Huda Sha'arawi organized the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), whose main objective was "to raise the intellectual and moral level of the Egyptian woman so as to enable her to realize her political and social equality with men from the legal as well as from the moral point of view."⁷ Participants in the organization were primarily middle and upper-class women,⁸ and membership was open to women of any religion. The secular orientation of the EFU led Zaynab al-Ghazali to form the Muslim Women's Society in 1936 with a primary focus on welfare work; the Society later expanded its scope to include training of women in the art of preaching and the instruction of other women on religious matters.⁹

The 1940s witnessed significant political activity on the part of Egyptian women; in 1942, the Egyptian Feminist Party was established, and in 1945, the legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kalthoum was elected as the first President of the Musicians' Syndicate.¹⁰ In 1948, Doria Shafiq established an organization called Bint al-Nil which sought "to establish full political equality between men and women and to abolish illiteracy."¹¹ The women of Bint al-Nil stormed Parliament in 1951, demanding female representation. In 1954, Shafiq went on a hunger strike with several other members of the organization to pressure the regime into giving women the right to vote. Shafiq's hunger strike ended when President Muhammad Naguib agreed to take her petition seriously,¹² and in 1956, the new Constitution granted women the right to vote. Feminist political activism was largely confined to the elite classes during this period.

In addition to the right to vote, women were given full political rights as part of the 1956 Constitution. The new Nasserite welfare state offered women an explicit com-

5. Salwa Shaarawi Gomaa, "Political Participation of Egyptian Women," Social Research Center Working Paper (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 1998).

6. Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, 2nd printing (Cairo: American University in Press, 1989).

7. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, p. 29.

8. Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

9. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 67.

10. Mona Zulficar, "The Political Rights of Women in Egypt," Egyptian Center for Women's Rights Working Paper (Cairo: Shalakany Law Office Publication, 2003).

11. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, p. 33.

12. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, p. 33.

mitment to public equality of the sexes.¹³ All Egyptians were to be equal under the law, meaning the guarantee of jobs with the state for degree holders would be irrespective of gender.¹⁴ During these years of “state feminism” many Egyptian women were mobilized, both in terms of their political participation and their economic productivity.¹⁵ Contemporaneously, the regime engaged in ruthless repression of the Muslim Brotherhood following an assassination attempt on President Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser. Nasser launched a series of violent purges; six Muslim Brothers were executed, including Sayyid Qutb, a leader credited with being one of the founding fathers of the modern radical Islamic movement. Thousands more were imprisoned and tortured. The women associated with the Brotherhood operated through organizations like the Muslim Women’s Society to prepare food, clothes, and medicine for jailed members of the Brotherhood.¹⁶ In addition, these women also played an important role as mediators with the Egyptian authorities.¹⁷

The 1970s witnessed a retreat from Nasserist socialist institutions. Sadat implemented a program of open-door economics (*infatih*) that was accompanied by a liberalization of the political sphere, including the introduction of multiple political parties. Mervat Hatem argues that the economic and political liberalization that began in the 1970s and continued into the Mubarak era redefined the relationship between women and the state in Egypt.¹⁸ The social and economic retreat of the state was associated with a declining commitment to women’s public equality. In the face of the state’s diminishing support for the political representation of women, middle class women began to organize themselves into autonomous formal and informal groups, particularly Islamist groups.¹⁹ While the Egyptian state has created secular organizations dedicated to the advancement of women, like the National Council for Women which was established in 2000, grassroots Islamist organizations appear to have the upper hand over their state-sponsored counterparts in the political mobilization of women in Egypt today.

These developments serve as a useful backdrop for the discussion which follows. While the early history of women’s political organization in Egypt largely has been focused on the actions of a small set of elite actors, since the 1950s, opportunities for women’s economic and political participation have increased, though not in a steady or linear fashion. While most of these opportunities came under the auspices of the state in the Nasser era, under President Anwar Sadat and his successor Husni Mubarak participation increasingly came to be associated with growing, autonomous Islamist organizations. Women’s Islamist groups are not a new development, but rather an always present force whose importance has increased in recent years with the retreat of the Egyptian state. The importance of women in organizing and mobilizing other female voters was particularly apparent in the 2005 parliamentary elections. In the section to follow, we

13. Mervat F. Hatem, “Economic and Political Liberalization in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24 (1992).

14. Hatem, “Economic and Political Liberalization in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism.”

15. Sherine Hafez, “The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt,” *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2003), p. 28.

16. Interview by the author with Makarim al-Diry, Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary candidate in Nasr City, May 28, 2007.

17. Interview by the author with Makarim al-Diry, Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary candidate in Nasr City, May 28, 2007.

18. Hatem, “Economic and Political Liberalization in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism.”

19. Hatem, “Economic and Political Liberalization in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism.”

discuss the important political context surrounding the 2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt and then turn our focus to the issue of women's electoral participation.

THE 2005 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The political regime in Egypt is best described as electoral authoritarian; multi-party parliamentary elections were introduced in 1976. Within the context of this autocratic regime, elections for Parliament are highly competitive as thousands of candidates vie for seats in Egypt's lower house, the People's Assembly. Islamist candidates emerged as a powerful political force in the 1984 election, when candidates associated with the Muslim Brotherhood won over 15% of the votes.²⁰ Beginning most conspicuously in the 1990s, official party-list candidates of Egypt's hegemonic party — the National Democratic Party (NDP) — began to also face competition from NDP members who ran as independents.²¹ As a result, it was not atypical for a district race to have a Muslim Brotherhood candidate, an NDP-list candidate, as well as a handful of NDP-independent candidates all competing for a single seat.

The 2005 election season in Egypt has been characterized as a “new departure” within the Egyptian political sphere.²² The parliamentary election results — which brought 88 members of the Muslim Brotherhood to office in a lower house of 444 elected seats — serve as evidence of significant change. Why were these elections so pivotal? The parliamentary elections came in the wake of important formal changes to the Egyptian Constitution, particularly the decision to allow direct, multi-candidate presidential elections as stipulated by the May 2005 amendment to Article 76 of the Egyptian Constitution. In particular, the introduction of the multi-candidate presidential election increased the stakes of performance in parliamentary elections. In addition, increased judicial, media, and NGO supervision of polling stations offered the opposition enhanced opportunities to contest seats. 2005 also represented a high point in the Bush Administration's Middle East democratization initiative, thus increasing US scrutiny of the election. Each of these points is elaborated below.

On February 26, 2005, President Mubarak announced his intention to support an amendment to the Constitution which would allow for the direct election of the President from a multi-candidate field. While the institutional design of the amendment to Article 76 heavily stacked the deck against Egypt's most potentially competitive presidential candidates, it also increased the importance of strong performance in parliamentary and

20. Noha El-Mikawy, *The Building of Consensus in Egypt's Transition Process* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1999).

21. Intraparty competition has emerged within the NDP largely as a function of the failure of the party to effectively institutionalize a set of procedures to choose its candidates or impose discipline on party members. In 2001, the NDP introduced a party primary system to choose candidates but this procedure did not reduce levels of intraparty competition in the 2005 parliamentary election. Before parliamentary elections, party leaders threaten to dismiss party members who run against official party candidates. After each election, however, NDP independents who won seats were allowed to register in the People Assembly as NDP members. For more information on intra-party competition in the NDP, see Lisa Blaydes and Safinaz El Tarouty, “Intraparty Competition and Egypt's National Democratic Party,” *Al Ahram Democracy Review*, April 2008.

22. Yoram Meital, “The Struggle over Political Order in Egypt: The 2005 Elections,” *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Spring 2006).

other lower level elections for groups interested in fielding a presidential candidate at some point in the future. According to the amendment to Article 76, independent presidential hopefuls — such as a candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood — must obtain the endorsement of 250 members from the People's Assembly, the Shura Council, and local councils nationwide. This includes endorsement from a minimum of 65 elected members of the People's Assembly, 25 from the Shura Council, and ten from the local councils in each of at least 14 provinces. The dominance of the National Democratic Party in these representative bodies would effectively give the ruling party the ability to veto any candidate that it views as undesirable. As a result, success in parliamentary elections became increasingly important for opposition groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood, that hoped to field presidential candidates at some point in the future.

The importance of the elections also was enhanced by increased scrutiny both domestically and abroad. Beginning with the 2000 contest, parliamentary elections were to be conducted over several weeks in order to enable Egypt's 8,000 judges to supervise both main and auxiliary polling stations.²³ Despite the government's attempts to use non-judge legal officers as polling station supervisors, the overall influence of judicial supervision has resulted in more free elections in 2000 and 2005.²⁴ In addition, non-governmental organizations engaged in intensive training of election monitors in the run-up to the 2005 election and by all accounts the 2005 elections were the most closely watched and reported on in Egypt's history as a result of judicial, media, and NGO efforts. While regime-perpetrated fraud did take place, this increased scrutiny raised the cost to the regime of engaging in blatant or widespread rigging.

In addition to domestic scrutiny, the international community, and particularly the US, was interested in the conduct of the 2005 elections. Beginning in 2002 and intensifying until 2005, US President George W. Bush and his spokespersons made it increasingly clear that democracy promotion in the Arab world was an important goal of the administration. In his February 2005 State of the Union address, Bush exhorted Egypt, saying that it could “show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.” Both domestic and external interest in and scrutiny of the election made the 2005 contest particularly significant. During the election season, candidates and organizations invested considerable funds and human capital into campaigns across Egypt. In the following sections, we consider how gender considerations impacted the recruitment of voters in this very competitive and closely watched election season.

VOTE BUYING AND GENDER

In her compelling portrayal of informal avenues of economic and political participation in Egypt, Diane Singerman argues that everyday Egyptians, particularly low-income women, engage in a variety of informal activities to make ends meet.²⁵ Women, many of whom may not participate in the formal labor force, create income for themselves in a number of creative ways. For example, female peddlers wait in lines for hours

23. Mona El-Ghobashy, “Egypt’s Paradoxical Elections,” *Middle East Report*, No. 238, 2006.

24. Samer Soliman, *Al-Musharaka al-Siyasiya fil Intikhabat al-Niyabiya [Political Participation in 2005 Parliamentary Elections]* (Cairo: EACPE, 2006).

25. Singerman, *Avenues of Participation*.

at local cooperatives to get access to subsidized food items, which are consumed by their families or resold at the local market for a mark-up.²⁶ Similarly, in her analysis of informal neighborhoods like Bulaq al-Dukrur on the edge of Cairo, Salwa Ismail describes how women also create income for the family by serving as mediators with state utilities and agencies, negotiating better services for the family home.²⁷ These informal economic activities represent an important kind of low-level wealth creation and challenge existing stereotypes of low income, urban women as being the passive poor. In this section, we argue that the selling of one's vote has become another such activity in which lower-income women participate. In the 2005 parliamentary election, vote brokers paid between 20 to 200 LE for a vote depending on the competitiveness of the district.²⁸

Why are women frequently targeted by vote brokers? Women are less likely to participate in the formal labor market, making the opportunity cost of their electoral participation — often a time-consuming process — lower than for male voters who are more likely to be formally employed. Vote brokers certainly do purchase the votes of both male and female voters; it is perceived, however, to be easier to buy women's votes and, as a result, the majority of those bought are women, according to one press report.²⁹ Another reason given is that women are more likely to suffer from extreme poverty and that many of these vote sellers are female heads of households; it is poverty therefore that compels women to sell their votes to the local broker offering the highest price.³⁰ What is the connection between poverty and female-headed households? Recent studies suggest that 13% of households in Egypt are female-headed, in which 81% of the women are widows and 83% have less than a primary education.³¹ In an anthropological study of an Aswan village, the researcher found that widows with underage children generally constituted the poorest inhabitants of the village.³² We have theoretical reasons to believe that there may be a diminishing marginal utility of income; in other words, when a poor person receives some amount of income it means more to her than when a wealthy person receives the same amount of income. Vote buying, therefore, starts at the bottom, not the top, of the income distribution.³³ According to a human rights attorney who trained election monitors for the 2005 parliamentary election, most of those who turn out to vote are extremely poor and the majority of voters are

26. Singerman, *Avenues of Participation*.

27. Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*, p. 114.

28. One Egyptian pound (LE) was worth about \$0.15 at the time of the 2005 election.

29. Hanan Mohamed, "*Fi Bursat Samasarat al-Intikhabat: Sawt al-Mara'a ... al-Tariq ila al-Hasana*" ["In the Electoral Marketplace: The Women's Vote ... the Path to Immunity"], *Al-Ahrar*, November 30, 2005.

30. Mohamed, "*Fi Bursat Samasarat al-Intikhabat: Sawt al-Mara'a ... al-Tariq ila al-Hasana*."

31. Hoda Rashad and Magued Osman, "Age-Discrepant Marriages in Egypt," in Nicholas Hopkins, ed., *The New Arab Family* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001).

32. Kirsten H Bach, "Changing Family and Marriage Patterns in an Aswan Village," Nicholas Hopkins and Reem Saad, eds., *Upper Egypt: Identity and Change* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2004).

33. For a more in-depth discussion of these issues see Susan C. Stokes, "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (2005) and Susan C. Stokes, "Is Vote Buying Undemocratic?" in Frederic C. Schaffer, ed., *Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2007).

poor women.³⁴ Parliamentary candidate and Egyptian political scientist Mona Makram Ebeid concurs and finds that poverty and gender are often closely associated:

Women voters are the lowest of the low. Their living conditions are horrid. These women are the bread earners, most of them are in female-headed families, their husbands are abroad, in prison, or they are divorced. For instance, one of them told me that we look forward to election season for the cash.³⁵

For many low-income women, therefore, voting is less of a political act and more of an informal economic activity. In fact, a series of press reports suggest that vote brokers are exploiting the most vulnerable elements of Egyptian society, particularly illiterate women, female heads of household, widows with young children, and handicapped women.³⁶ For example, dozens of Bedouin women were bussed into Alexandria to vote for the local NDP candidate; when asked who they were voting for, the women said for the crescent and camel (the NDP symbols in that district).³⁷ When asked if they were paid to vote for the NDP, their handler replied for the women, ordering them not to say anything, according to the same press report.³⁸ In the Manial neighborhood of Cairo, it is reported that poor women in the district were paid upwards of 50 LE on the day of the election by tourism magnate Shahinaz al-Naggar, who went on to win the election.³⁹ Older, illiterate women in the Kirdassa district of Giza were offered a monthly income of between 80 and 100 LE in exchange for their votes; party ideology played no role whatsoever in their decision to vote for a particular candidate.⁴⁰ In addition, one article reports that NDP candidates even exploited special-needs women, whose votes were bought and then closely monitored by vote brokers since the handicapped could be accompanied into the polling station.⁴¹ These, and other, reports suggest that vote buying has become a pervasive phenomenon in recent Egyptian parliamentary elections and that underprivileged women are a common target for vote-buying schemes.⁴²

So how does vote buying take place and how do vote buyers ensure that the people they pay vote for the candidate that they have promised? The most obvious case of vote buying — direct exchange of cash for votes on the day of the election — is well document-

34. Telephone interview by the author with Mohammed al-Sawy, Lawyer with the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, January 10, 2007.

35. Interview by the author with Mona Makram Ebeid, parliamentary candidate in Shubra, June 14, 2007.

36. In a letter to the editor of *Al-Masry al-Youm* on November 15, 2005, Mona Makram Ebeid writes that policemen directed women to vote for particular candidates, preventing these women from the free choice of their own candidates. This would suggest that in addition to the purchase of votes, poor women also may be more susceptible to intimidation from state authorities. Women forced to vote may constitute a third class of voters though this group does not appear to be large since this is the only mention of this phenomenon that we can identify.

37. Amira Howeid, "Lessons Learned," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, December, 1-7, 2005.

38. Howeid, "Lessons Learned."

39. Interview by the author with Mamdouh Mekki, Economic Committee of the NDP Policies Secretariat, July 11, 2006.

40. Interview by the author with Kirdassa resident, February 2, 2008.

41. Osama Khaled, "Fadiha ... *Al-Hizb al-Watani Yasthary al-Aswat bil Mukhaddarat*" ["Scandal ... The National Democratic Party Buys Votes with Drugs"], *Sawt al-Umma*, November 14, 2005.

42. Mohamed, "*Fi Bursat Samasarat al-Intikhabat: Sawt al-Mara'a ... al-Tariq ila al-Hasana.*"

ed by Egyptian journalists and human rights organizations. Mechanisms for monitoring vote choice have become more sophisticated over time. In the 1980s, vote buyers used to split a bill in half and promise to give the person the other half of the bill upon completion of voting. In recent years, new insurance mechanisms have been developed to ensure that the vote broker gets a vote for his chosen candidate to materialize. With the advent of the camera phone, voters now capture their voting in a photo to show to the vote buyer upon leaving the polling station. Ali al-Sawy describes what is known as the “revolving ballot” strategy.⁴³ At the beginning of the day a voter leaves the polling station without having voted. This ballot is then filled out by the vote broker and handed to the vote seller. The vote seller submits this ballot in the polling station and returns a blank ballot to the vote broker. The vote seller is paid after coming out of the station with this blank ballot. This process is then repeated throughout the day.⁴⁴ In this way the vote buyer always fills out the ballot without fear that the voter will have a chance to make his own choice.

Parliamentary candidates and their agents use other strategies for recruitment as well. In some neighborhoods, voting cards are issued particularly for illiterate women; the candidate tells the women that *his* name is written on these cards and that they can only vote for him.⁴⁵ Historically, women have used their electoral voices to vote on behalf of candidates from their families, tribes, and communities with the expectation of some indirect material benefit down the line; this type of exchange continues to take place. Researcher Amr al-Choubaki has argued, however, that although candidates for Parliament *used* to focus their efforts on developing these types of longer term social networks, increasingly candidates win seats through direct vote buying.⁴⁶ In fact, a front-page article entitled “Who Pays More..?!” in *Al-Masry Al-Youm* calls vote buying the trend that dominated the 2005 parliamentary elections.⁴⁷ And while it is difficult to know the full extent of vote buying/selling — an act which is technically illegal — both scholarly and journalistic opinion point to the widespread nature of this practice.

ISLAMIST IDEOLOGICAL VOTING AND GENDER

In contrast to the highly targeted strategies of local political brokers who buy the votes of economically underprivileged women, Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood relies on a more programmatic mobilization of voters and the activities of Islamist women play an important role in this effort.⁴⁸ In this section, we discuss the many ways that women are both mobi-

43. Ali al-Sawy, Ali Moussa, and Ajlan Ibrahim, *Kayf Tuzawir al-Intikhabat? [How Elections Are Forged?]* (Cairo, 2005) p. 9.

44. Al-Sawy, Moussa, and Ibrahim, *Kayf Tuzawir al-Intikhabat?*, pp. 9-11.

45. Interview by the author with Makarim al-Diry, May 28, 2007.

46. Amr al-Choubaki, “Legislative Elections in Egypt: Indicators and Consequences,” *Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies*, Issue 46, December 2005.

47. *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, November 16, 2005.

48. The clientelistic benefits that women may enjoy as a result of their association with the Islamist movement are distinct from vote buying in a number of ways. First, there is no direct exchange of cash for support. Second, clientelistic benefits offered to the voter tend to be given before voting (not after) and there is no monitored compliance. For more details on the distinction between Islamist and non-Islamist clientelism see Sara Bin Nefisa and Alaa al-Din Arafat, *Al-Intikhabat wal Zaba’niya al-Siyasiya fi Misr: Tajdid al-Wusata’ wa ‘Audat al-Nakhib [Elections and Political Clientelism in Egypt: Renewal of the Intermediary and the Return of the Voter]* (Cairo: Center for Human Rights Studies, 2005).

lized as voters and as political recruiters to support candidates associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. We also identify the very important symbolic role played by female voters whose participation can serve as an encouraging signal to other Brotherhood supporters.

THE PARALLEL ISLAMIC SECTOR

Carrie Wickham argues that there exists a parallel Islamic sector that operates in contemporary Egypt which includes private mosques, Islamic voluntary associations, and Islamic businesses.⁴⁹ Though not explicitly related to the banned yet politically active Muslim Brotherhood organization, this Islamic sector provides an important basis of support for Islamist political organization. Related to this is the women's mosque movement that emerged in the 1970s, when women started to organize weekly lessons for the reading of religious texts, first in homes and later in mosques.⁵⁰ Inspired by the activism of Zaynab al-Ghazali, Islamic women were mobilized through formal and informal means to create "an Islamic activism" to benefit women "through preaching, education, and philanthropic activities."⁵¹ Female Islamic activists and adherents also have been impacted by increased access to cassette sermons, which have served to increase the space for dialogue on religious issues for women.⁵²

Saba Mahmood argues that the women's mosque movement emerged in response to the perception that religious knowledge had become "marginalized under modern structures of secular governance." Women sought to perfect their spiritual relationship with God by refining their pious selves.⁵³ Sherine Hafez argues that many women develop "an empowerment that evolves out of processes of religious self-discipline by which some Islamic women attain positions of power and influence in society."⁵⁴ While the mosque movement itself is not overtly political, there is an efficacy related to the work of the mosque movement that has a more subtle political importance.⁵⁵

A discussion of Egypt's parallel Islamic sector invites the broader question of how individual piety and participation in the mosque movement translates into political support for Muslim Brotherhood candidates. Azza Karam argues that Islamic discussion groups may be used as political recruitment arenas, depending on the aims of the organizers.⁵⁶ Female participants in these discussion groups often see themselves as "active" in the political process due to their involvement in various religious activities.⁵⁷ As a result, the women associated with the mosque movement are fertile for recruitment by Islamist political organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood and in some cases are highly effective political recruiters for the Brotherhood.

49. Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

50. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

51. Hafez, "The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt," p. 4.

52. Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

53. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

54. Hafez, "The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt," p. 33.

55. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

56. Azza M. Karam, *Women, Islamisms and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in Egypt* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 136.

57. Karam, *Women, Islamisms and the State*, p. 157.

WOMEN AS POLITICAL RECRUITERS

What role do women play in voter recruitment for Muslim Brotherhood political candidates? In a 2005 press interview, Muslim Brotherhood representative Essam al-Erian said that the Brotherhood has an army of 25,000 volunteers who knock on doors urging people to vote for Brotherhood candidates, produce election songs, set up Brotherhood websites, send out mass e-mails, and even solicit feedback regarding why voters did not support Brotherhood candidates.⁵⁸ According to al-Erian, women have become some of the most important political activists within this volunteer network, particularly given their effectiveness as recruiters of other women.⁵⁹

Women enjoy particular advantages when it comes to voter recruitment. For example, women are able to make social calls on the homes of other women.⁶⁰ In both rural and urban areas, women associated with the Brotherhood go from house to house aiding poor women and recruiting voters.⁶¹ Wickham argues that person-to-person outreach using preexisting social ties is particularly effective strategy for mobilization.⁶² In addition, recruitment for the Brotherhood is also aided by the respect felt on the part of the population for the organization due to the social services provided by the Brotherhood and the spirit of generosity which characterizes its members.⁶³ According to Makarim al-Diry, female activists with the Brotherhood use their existing social networks to ask for votes for their candidates, emphasizing the honesty and integrity of the Brotherhood members.⁶⁴ They are able to talk to other women, convincing them of the importance of political participation and the need to support Muslim Brotherhood candidates who will help eliminate corruption in the state.⁶⁵ Female activists operate year round, not just during the election season, and avoid the use of heavy-handed techniques to garner support for Brotherhood candidates; rather they indirectly encourage political participation and support for Brotherhood candidates.⁶⁶ Voter recruitment can take place at clubs, mosques, homes, university campuses, or at professional syndicates.⁶⁷

Press reports mirror these sentiments. One article suggests that female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been very effective at convincing other women to vote

58. Howeidy, "Lessons learned."

59. Interview by the author with Essam al-Erian, Muslim Brotherhood Political Committee, April 29, 2007.

60. This mirrors the findings of researchers who examine the activities of Islamist women in Turkey who, unlike men, "could knock freely on the doors of women they did not know" for purposes of political recruitment. See Jenny White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), p. 199 for more details.

61. Interview by the author with Sharif Waly, Member of Shura Council from Giza, May 24, 2007.

62. Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*.

63. Interview by the author with Makarim al-Diry, May 28, 2007.

64. Interview by the author with Makarim al-Diry, May 28, 2007.

65. Interview by the author with Husayn Ibrahim, Muslim Brotherhood member of People's Assembly, Menia al-Basal, Alexandria, June 12, 2007.

66. Interview by the author with Manal Abu al-Hassan, campaign manager for Makarim al-Diry, June 26, 2007.

67. Interview by the author with Manal Abu al-Hassan, campaign manager for Makarim al-Diry, June 26, 2007.

for the Muslim Brotherhood candidates.⁶⁸ Part of the reason for the effectiveness of these recruiters is reported to be based on the intensive training and direction received by these women. According to one article, well-trained female recruiters take a list of names and make personal visits to local families to encourage turnout and support for Brotherhood candidates.⁶⁹ These reports are consistent with academic accounts which also suggest that female voters supporting the Muslim Brotherhood play a critical — though perhaps less visible — role in the electoral success of the organization.⁷⁰

VIOLENCE, INTIMIDATION, AND FEMALE VOTERS

Recent elections have shown that there is a complicated dynamic between the presence of female voters and government repression at the polling station. Evidence from both interviews with activists and newspaper articles suggests that the presence of women at or near polling stations can help to deter types of election violence. In particular, female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been strategically deployed for this purpose and the Brotherhood's women's division has come to the "rescue" of the group in times of confrontation with the state.⁷¹ Nabil Abdel Fattah has argued that the Muslim Brotherhood has proved adept at countering attempts to intimidate voters, and that the presence of women helps to deter violence.⁷² Press reports also suggest that female Muslim Brotherhood voters are an important presence for resisting thugs and state security services.⁷³ A female voter from Tanta reports that female Muslim Brotherhood supporters used their bodies to surround the male Brotherhood voters who were being taken away by the police.⁷⁴ In addition, these women would scream and shout at the security services, believing that it was their role to engage in direct confrontation with authorities, thus providing cover for male Muslim Brotherhood supporters who may be more likely to be arrested.⁷⁵

Ismail writes about the role of women in dealing with representatives of the Egyptian government, particularly in difficult political situations. She argues that since men will not tolerate abuse from the government, women serve as mediators with the state and its representatives; "womanhood is constructed as an asset and a shield to be deployed in the face of abusive authorities ... The men will not tolerate the abuse."⁷⁶ This "asset"

68. Ashraf Abu al-Rish, al-Husseini Abdel Fatteh, and Hani Abdallah, "*Fi Muwajahat al-Watani wa al-Mu'arada fil Marhala al-Thaniya*" ["NDP-Opposition Confrontation in the Second Stage"], *Ruz al-Youssef*, November 22, 2005.

69. Amira Gad and Hanan al-Gohary, "*Al-Ikhwat ... Silah al-Ikhwani*" ["The Sisters ... Weapon of the Muslim Brothers"], *Al-Destour*, December 7, 2005.

70. Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2005).

71. Omayma Abdel-Latif, "In the Shadow of the Brothers: The Women of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, No. 13, October 2008.

72. Nabil Abdel-Fattah, "How the Brotherhood Won," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, December 29, 2005-January 4, 2006.

73. Gad and al-Gohary, "*Al-Ikhwat ... Silah al-Ikhwani*."

74. Telephone interview by the author with Ragia, Muslim Brotherhood supporter in Tanta, May 30, 2007.

75. Telephone interview by the author with Ragia, Muslim Brotherhood supporter in Tanta, May 30, 2007.

76. Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*, p. 135.

of womanhood is reported also to have been deployed to protect ballot boxes from hired thugs who otherwise would have destroyed the boxes before votes could be counted.⁷⁷

A recent trend, however, has been the increased levels of harassment of women by hired thugs, particularly female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. According to one analyst, Brotherhood members do not want to subject their women to arrests and mistreatment by the police; both the Brotherhood and the state have maintained an implicit agreement to put women outside of the repressive policy of detention and police harassment.⁷⁸ Recent events suggest that this agreement may no longer be in effect.

Violence and intimidation now specifically target women.⁷⁹ The most common way this occurs is through the use of hired female thugs who are known thieves and criminals in the area; these women wait in front of polling stations to confront the female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁸⁰ These female thugs are not policewomen or female members of the security services.⁸¹ Rather they are known as “black-listed” women who are paid to start fights with female supporters of the Brotherhood, thereby obstructing the voting process.⁸²

SYMBOLIC VALUE OF FEMALE VOTERS

We have argued that women serve as effective recruiters for the Muslim Brotherhood and, in some cases, as a deterrent to violence and intimidation. Perhaps the most important role of women in assisting Muslim Brotherhood candidates in Egyptian elections involves the symbolic value of their participation. In particular, the efforts of Islamist women to both rally in support of Brotherhood candidates and to make it to the polling station in support of the Brotherhood are symbolically important in at least two ways. First, women’s participation in marches, rallies, and at the polling station creates common knowledge about the popularity of Brotherhood candidates in a district, encouraging Brotherhood supporters who were previously on the fence about whether or not to turn out that they should vote. Second, the willingness of Islamist women to make personal sacrifices in their efforts to support Brotherhood candidates creates a strong emotional pull for other Brotherhood sympathizers to support the cause. We will discuss each of these mechanisms in turn.

Muslim Brotherhood women have been important participants in rallies in favor of Islamist candidates.⁸³ In Alexandria, for example, female supporters of the Brotherhood were prominent in marches prior to the parliamentary election there. It was reported that women from Cairo traveled to Alexandria to participate in the rallies and Makarim al-Diry — the woman who ran, but lost, in the hotly contested Nasr City

77. Interview by the author with Husayn Ibrahim, June 12, 2007.

78. Abdel-Latif, “In the Shadow of the Brothers: The Women of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.”

79. Bisan Kassab, “*Dubbat Yataharashoun Jinsiya bil Sayadat*” [“Officers Sexually Harass Women”], *Al-Destour*, November 23, 2005.

80. Interview by the author with Hamdy Hassan, Muslim Brotherhood Member of People’s Assembly, Menia al-Basal, Alexandria, June 12, 2007.

81. Gad and al-Gohary, “*Al-Ikhwat ... Silah al-Ikhwat*.”

82. Gad and al-Gohary, “*Al-Ikhwat ... Silah al-Ikhwat*.”

83. Magdi Mehanna, “*Fil Mammou’a*” [“Off Limits”], *Al-Masry al-Youm*, December 4, 2005.

district — was a participant in the rally.⁸⁴ Women were also important organizers of conferences and distributed pamphlets and monitored polling stations.⁸⁵ One Muslim Brotherhood Member of Parliament credits women with attracting voters through publicity activities, like distributing flyers.⁸⁶

In addition, Husayn 'Abd al-Raziq — Secretary General of the Tagammu' Party — says that the large number of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in front of the polling stations aroused the emotions of other voters and gave them the feeling of the power of the Muslim Brotherhood candidates in that district.⁸⁷ In particular, the presence of a large number of veiled women in front of a polling station signals the strength of the Islamist candidate in that area and may encourage others to turn out to vote. This is consistent with the findings of scholars of American politics who have shown that when the probability that an individual's vote will affect the result of an election increases, turnout increases as well.⁸⁸ Egyptian political analyst Amr al-Choubaki has argued that this same type of dynamic also might be relevant in the Egyptian context; he says that Egyptian voters are similarly more likely to go to the polls when they believe that their vote makes a difference.⁸⁹

The effort made by Islamist women to vote is symbolically powerful in other ways as well. Husayn Ibrahim — a Brotherhood candidate from Alexandria — reports that when male thugs came to a polling station and beat one of the female Muslim Brotherhood supporters, this led many others to intervene on behalf of the Brotherhood and aroused feelings of sympathy for the organization.⁹⁰ Saad Eddin Ibrahim also reports that the political support of highly dedicated, almost militant, female Brotherhood supporters was symbolically significant.⁹¹ One of the most widely publicized images from the 2005 parliamentary elections was one of a veiled woman climbing a ladder over a wall to get to a polling station so that she could vote;⁹² this is a powerful image which sends a strong signal, particularly about the intensity of support that exists for the organization and its candidates.

The ability of women to go and vote in the face of political repression and hardship also serves as a powerful motivator for men to engage in political activity. For example, women in Egyptian textile mills have been important agitators in a wave of labor strikes. In one instance, 3,000 female garment workers went on strike, walked over to where their male colleagues were still working, and chanted “Where are the men? Here are

84. Ahmed al-Khatib, “*Masira Nisa'iya Hashida lil Ikhwan bil Iskandria ... wa al-Watani Yarud bi Mu'tamar Jamahiri*” [“Women's Mass March for the Muslim Brothers in Alexandria ... and the NDP Answers in a Public Conference”], *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, November 19, 2005.

85. Gad and al-Gohary, “*Al-Ikhwat ... Silah al-Ikhwan*.”

86. Interview by the author with Husayn Ibrahim, June 12, 2007.

87. Nahed al-Nabarawi, “*Kul al-Turaq Tu'adi ila Fawaz al-Ikhwan*” [“All Roads Lead to the Victory of Ikhwan”], *Al-Ahram*, November 19, 2005.

88. For a summary of these studies see Andre Blais, *To Vote or Not to Vote: The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice Theory* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), p. 58.

89. Gamal Essam El-Din, “The Silent Majority,” *Al-Ahram Weekly*, December 29, 2005-January 4, 2006.

90. Interview by the author with Husayn Ibrahim, June 12, 2007.

91. Personal communication by author with Saad Eddin Ibrahim, sociologist and human rights activists, January 4, 2008.

92. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “*Al-Ikhwat al-Muslamat wa Intikhabat 2005*” [“The Muslim Sisters and the 2005 Election”], *Al-Masry al-Youm*, December 10, 2005.

the women!”⁹³ The men then joined the strike out of shame — if their female counterparts were willing to subject themselves to the oppression of management and the government, the men could not in good conscience leave the women to face this alone, according to one account.⁹⁴ Witnessing the courageous acts of female Brotherhood supporters may similarly encourage higher levels of male participation, particularly given the patriarchal tendencies that exist in Egypt. Why is the participation of Islamist women so emotionally evocative? Laurie Brand writes that the symbolic participation of women in support of democracy in Latin America was important for the transition which many countries underwent; the traditional image of women as sainted mothers and wives made their participation particularly important and symbolically significant.⁹⁵

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

We have argued that voters in Egypt, including female voters, typically fall into one of two categories. The first are individuals who expect to get a direct or indirect material benefit for their vote through local clientelist networks. The second are those who are ideologically motivated and turnout to support the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. To what extent does political participation via these two channels empower Egyptian women?

Our contention is that women who sell their vote to vote brokers enjoy a form of economic empowerment; this argument is consistent with Diane Singerman⁹⁶ and Salwa Ismail,⁹⁷ who both find that everyday women can enjoy forms of empowerment as a result of their wealth-creating economic activities. For Singerman, the tactics used by low-income women to cope with their economic realities represent a form of resistance against both the authoritarian state and the existing economic hierarchy. For Ismail, women serve as mediators who deal with the state in ways that create wealth for their families. Evidence from a variety of sources suggests that female voters are very often poor, and frequently heads of households, who rely on participation in informal economic activity to make ends meet. They may look forward to election season as an opportunity to make a small amount of extra money for their families. What are the normative implications of this type of economic empowerment? Partha Chatterjee argues that while patron-client relations may bring some real benefits to the poor, these relationships are normatively inadequate since they deny the underprivileged effective agency.⁹⁸ Similarly, Susan Stokes finds that vote buying allows politicians to ignore the ideological interests of poor people.⁹⁹ Scott Desposato, on the other hand, raises the possibility that the poor prefer small, targeted rewards today over the discounted value

93. Joel Beinin and Hossam el-Hamalawy, “Egyptian Textile Workers Confront the New Economic Order,” *Middle East Report*, March 25, 2007.

94. Beinin and el-Hamalawy, “Egyptian Textile Workers Confront the New Economic Order.”

95. Laurie Brand, *Women, the State, and Political Liberalization: Middle Eastern and North African Experiences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

96. Singerman, *Avenues of Participation*.

97. Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*.

98. Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

99. Susan C. Stokes, “Is Vote Buying Undemocratic?” in Frederic C. Schaffer, ed., *Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2007).

of programmatic benefits in the future. In other words, Egypt's most underprivileged may prefer the certainty of a cash transfer today over the promise of future patronage benefits from a candidate for whom they have kin, geographic, or even ideological affinity.¹⁰⁰ Given the relative poverty of voters in Egypt, we have argued that practical concerns related to everyday economic survival motivate the actions of many Egyptian women, leading them to relinquish some forms of political agency in favor of targeted cash rewards. This is consistent with Laurie Brand's contention that political activity — of which participation in vote buying schemes would *not* qualify — is a luxury for women in Middle Eastern countries, who often carry a heavy economic burden.¹⁰¹

Women who cast their ballots for candidates from the opposition Muslim Brotherhood, however, often carve out a unique form of *political* empowerment in a society where politics is often viewed as a male domain. Muslim Brotherhood women — generally literate and members of the middle class — are highly effective recruiters of other women,¹⁰² and the symbolic importance of their participation may garner even more support for their candidates. Female voters for Brotherhood candidates are often deployed to deter political violence and are sometimes effective at shielding ballot boxes from tampering. Political participation by female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood is particularly important in an environment of low voter turnout.¹⁰³ Press reports suggest that the women of the Muslim Brotherhood were pivotal in the success of the group, given low levels of overall participation.¹⁰⁴ While there are no definitive estimates of the proportion of women represented in total turnout, local politicians and activists believe that turnout among women is as high as or higher than 50% of total turnout.¹⁰⁵ A case can be made then that the participation and activism of women associated with the Brotherhood may have been pivotal for the group's success in many electoral districts, and that women's political participation on behalf of Islamist candidates provides an important form of political empowerment. The trend in Egypt is not unlike what has been reported in Turkey, where Islamist women were "instrumental in expanding the Welfare Party's voter base."¹⁰⁶

Sherine Hafez argues that Islamist women activists force a reexamination of the issue of empowerment and agency¹⁰⁷ and that those Islamist women have been highly successful at creating alternative forms of personal and political empowerment.¹⁰⁸ These findings are generally consistent with previous work on Islam and female empowerment. Janine Astrid Clark and Jillian Schwedler argue that Islamist parties have witnessed increased levels of women's participation,¹⁰⁹ and Saba Mahmood finds that

100. Scott Desposato, "How Vote Buying Shapes the Legislative Arena," in Shaffer, ed., *Elections for Sale*.

101. Brand, *Women, the State, and Political Liberalization*, p. 259.

102. Interview by the author with Moheb Zaki, Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, May 23, 2007.

103. Turnout for recent Egyptian parliamentary elections has hovered around 25%.

104. Gad and al-Gohary, "*Al-Ikhwat ... Silah al-Ikhwat*."

105. Interview by the author with Husayn Ibrahim, June 12, 2007; editorial by Saad Eddin Ibrahim in *Al-Masry al-Youm*, December 10, 2005.

106. White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, p. 235.

107. Hafez, "The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt," p. 48.

108. Hafez, "The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt," p. 80.

109. Janine Astrid Clark and Jillian Schwedler, "Who Opened the Window? Women's Activism within Islamist Parties," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2003).

piety, through the practice of religious outreach, represents an important form of empowerment for women.¹¹⁰ Omayya Abdellatif and Marina Ottaway also find that the organizational efforts of women play an important role in the outreach success of Islamist movements; however, it is important to point out that our definition of empowerment focuses on personal empowerment rather than the empowerment of women more generally, as it is uncertain if the broader success of Islamist political candidates will result in a net gain for Egyptian women.¹¹¹ According to one researcher, Islamist women's political participation has had a paradoxical effect; on the one hand, it has empowered women, yet at the same time it has reproduced certain types of "patriarchal constraints."¹¹² Abdel-Latif finds that Islamist women — particularly a younger generation representing the wives and daughters of some Brotherhood leaders — are becoming restless with their subordinate status within the Islamist movement and are seeking ways to assert their demands for more formal representation.¹¹³ The longer term impact of Islamist women's participation, therefore, is complicated by the potential divergence of interests between individual women seeking political empowerment and the empowerment of Egyptian women as a social class.

CONCLUSIONS

From an economic perspective, much of women's work in the developing world tends to be overlooked and their political activism ignored. In this article, we attempt to fill part of this void in the academic literature by examining the gender issues surrounding voter recruitment in Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections. We find that clientelistically-based voter recruitment tends to empower women economically rather than politically as elections provide an opportunity for disadvantaged women to auction their voice to the highest bidder. In contrast, women who vote for Islamist candidates may be able to increase the influence of their political support by creating common knowledge about the popularity of their candidate and by reducing the effectiveness of government violence. There is little question that women's roles as visible political actors in Egypt has grown over time, particularly for women that advocate on behalf of the Islamist movement.¹¹⁴ In both cases, female support for Islamist candidates may offer an important "multiplier effect" providing benefits which are not immediately obvious and empowering women politically. Given the lack of previous research on this subject, our efforts are largely exploratory. It is quite clear despite the preliminary nature of our findings, however, that there are a number of significant gender considerations surrounding political participation in Egyptian and, we suspect, other Middle Eastern elections that are worthy of serious investigation.

110. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

111. Omayma Abdellatif and Marina Ottaway, "Women in Islamist Movements: Toward an Islamist Model of Women's Activism," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, No. 2, June 2007.

112. Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) p. 156.

113. Abdel-Latif, "In the Shadow of the Brothers."

114. Abdel-Latif, "In the Shadow of the Brothers."