Learning in social movements: Emotion, identity and Egyptian diaspora becoming 'logically and emotionally invested' in the continuing struggle

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This article explores the implications of learning in social movements on diaspora activists' engagement with struggle. Focussing on emotions within social movement learning and the connection to activists' multiple identities, the paper examines the complex terrain of learning as embodied and rooted in emotionally situated beliefs and values. The theoretical framework that informs this enquiry brings diaspora and identity into conversation with emotions in social movement learning and Boler's 'Pedagogy of discomfort'. Developing these connections contributes a new approach to understanding the emotional dynamics of activism and the implications of learning in this context on social movement participation. Based on qualitative research with diasporic accounts of participating in activism related to the continuing Egyptian revolution, the analysis contributes a deeper understanding of how learning in struggle shapes multiple forms of connectedness and the implications learning in this context can have for activists' engagement with struggle. The findings add to existing knowledge of learning in social movements through a framework where cognition and emotion are 'inextricably linked' (Boler, 1999,

p. xix) and to diaspora studies by highlighting that engagement is underpinned by situated and embodied identities that shape possibilities for learning.

Keywords: *social movement learning, activism, emotion, diaspora, identity*

Introduction

The study of learning in various spaces and forms of resistance (see Hall, & Turay, 2006) has been critical to addressing the acknowledged limited recognition within dominant studies of social movements of how the people within a movement are impacted through their participation (Giugni, 2008; Bosi & Uba, 2009; Van Dyke, & Dixon, 2013). Social movement learning, a field within adult education that garnered increased interest after the mid-1990s (Harley, 2012), established that spaces and practices of resistance involve valuable knowledge creation and development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Eyerman, & Jamison, 1991; Welton, 1993; Holford, 1995; Foley, 1999; Hall, & Turay, 2006). While events such as the 'Arab Spring' in 2011 garnered significant global attention and have been analysed as national expressions of revolution, significant gaps remain in understanding the range of actors who participated in and how they were impacted by the movements.

The aim of this paper is to further conceptualise activism in the contemporary global political context and build on the current understanding of learning in social movements. It does this by exploring a specific case of social movement learning—diaspora activism in the continuing Egyptian revolution—and examining the implications of learning in a social movement through theoretical intersections of emotion, identity and social movement learning. The empirical data contributes an original perspective on the Egyptian revolution and the contribution of UK-based Egyptians to the broader political struggle in Egypt. The paper contributes a theoretical framework for understanding the implications of participating in social movements in a global context by drawing deeper connections between diaspora and the emotional dynamics of learning in social movements. This framework is followed by the methodology and a brief overview of the Egyptian case is then

outlined before the qualitative data is presented with specific reference to activists' words and reflections. It concludes with a brief discussion and recommendations for further study.

Diaspora: transnational connections and action

Global politics has been transformed by globalisation and its concomitant relationship to increased human migration and emerging transnational networks (Lyons, & Mandaville, 2012). Within this global context, diaspora and migrant populations have been established as agents of change economically, culturally and politically both in their 'home' and 'host' lands. Indeed, diasporic communities are shaped by people's multiple identities, experiences and connections that vary significantly for different people and groups (Kaldor-Robinson, 2002; Sökefeld, 2006; Cohen, 2009). Reading diaspora experiences and connections in political terms rather than economically or ancestrally establishes 'the formation of diaspora as an issue of social mobilization' (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 126) and brings them into the global polity as transnational political actors (Adamson, 2005). This is essential to understanding social movements within an increasingly globalised context and, importantly, to recognise the diversity of actors who mobilise in struggles for social change.

Studies of transnational activism and diaspora politics have established national identity as a significant factor that prompts and sustains movement participation (see Anderson, 2006; Adamson, 2005; Sökefeld, 2006; Lyons, & Mandaville, 2010), whilst also revealing that subgroup identities such as religion, class or race reflect a person's various identities (Klandermans, 2014) and that they have different strengths (Huddy, 2001). Although the last two decades have seen a shift away from a homogenising theorisation of identity as 'shared perception of belonging to a specific social group' (Pries, 2013, p. 22), Benedict Anderson's (2006) conceptualisation of nationalism through a collective national identity —the 'imagined community'—remains pertinent because of the ways in which national identity is 'imagined as real' (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 266) by activists. Despite people having many other identities that inform the shape and scope of their activism, diaspora participation in the politics of the homeland is related to the 'deep-rooted' connection (Sheffer, 2003, p. 245) to the notion of national identity precisely because it is located in relation to the idea

of a specific nation. To illustrate, when a British–Egyptian mobilises in support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt rather than elsewhere, they act through the sense of connection to both superordinate (national) and subgroup (Muslim Brotherhood) identities, highlighting that these are, as Klandermans (2014, p. 14) argues, 'far from mutually exclusive'. Although notions of connection can explain why diaspora mobilise, the next section explores how theories of emotions within social movements can deepen our understanding of how diaspora identities might impact activists' learning and engagement.

Emotions and learning in social movements

Theories of learning in social movements, popular education, community and social action have established that, through their participation, activists learn movement strategies (see King and Cornwall, 2005; Nyamu-Musembi, 2005; Wang, & Soule, 2012) and, by engaging with ideas of the world, develop critical consciousness necessary for personal and societal transformation (Freire 1970; Finger 1989; Welton 1993; Foley 1999). However, humans have emotional connections to values and beliefs (Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2012) so the meanings that they create through movement participation are not fixed. Vygotsky's (1978) theorisation of concept formation established meaning is created through experience and social relations, including through communication with a more knowledgeable other, and can change. It is important to recognise, therefore, that activists' beliefs and values will continue to develop through the social interactions associated with movement participation.

Melucci (1995, p. 45) argues 'there is no cognition without feeling' reminding us that, because knowledge is shaped by discourse and context (Foucault, 1980), notions of truth are contested and cannot be separated from how we feel about particular ideas. To understand activism in the contemporary moment where the notions of fact and truth are being contested, it is necessary to continue challenging the historical depiction of 'division between "truth" and reason on the one side, and "subjective bias" and emotion on the other' (Boler, 1999, p. xii). Given social movements are spaces where ideas are lived, created, challenged and resisted, there is an imperative to examine the 'deep mind' of the social movement (Melucci, 1985, p.793) and its emotional dynamics.

Depending on a scholar's disciplinary home, the understanding of emotion varies considerably: emotions can be depicted as physiological characteristics that reflect an inherent response to stimulus or as evidence of cognitive processing that connects stimulus to response and conclusion (Dirkx, 2008). With a more complex reading, a social-constructivist framing views emotion as 'embodied and situated' and, while also experienced physiologically, 'shaped by our beliefs and perceptions' (Boler, 1999, p.xix). Emotions, from this socially oriented perspective, are critical dimensions of how we feel about ourselves and our relationships with others and the wider world. This perspective is critical to analyses of social movements because it enables an interrogation of movement participation that engages with activism as a lived and embodied experience to consider how emotion shapes activists' ideas and practices.

Despite being difficult to define (Boler, 1999), emotions have been recognised by adult educators and social movement scholars as pertinent to understanding the shape and dynamic of activism. Feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, passion and joy underpin activists' motivation and why participation is sustained (see Jasper, 1998; Goodwin, Jasper & Poletta, 2000, 2007; Eyerman, 2007; Ollis, 2008; Castells, 2012), but can also be used tactically. For example, activists in the Egyptian revolution targeted people to support the protests by disseminating information online 'which made them angry' (Aouragh, & Alexander, 2011, p. 1348). The conscious use of knowledge to elicit an emotional response establishes 'moral shocks' (Jasper, 1998, p. 16) as a dynamic of learning in struggle that reinforces the indivisibility of cognition and emotion. Analysing social movements through a 'false dichotomy' (Hercus, 1999, p. 44) of cognition as rational and emotion as irrational depicts activists as 'calculating automatons not passionate human beings' (Goodwin, & Jasper, 2006, p. 616). By way of challenge, social-constructivist perspectives open up analyses of learning in social movements to explorations of the interactions between activists and the relationships that are formed within a movement, an approach that raises the importance of how our identities and emotions shape behaviours and relationships, the focus of the following section.

Identity, emotion and learning in social movements

The previous section established that emotions and feelings of

belonging stimulate, motivate and shape movement participation. It is also evident that activists' behaviours are informed by feeling rules that can determine how emotions should or should not be expressed in a given situation (Hochschild, 1979, cited in Moon, 2005; Kovan, & Dirkx, 2003), suggesting our identities might impact possibilities for learning with others in collective contexts. In addition, migration and globalisation necessitate deeper understanding of how activists' ideas are shaped, but this requires engaging with the complexity of their lived experience and the emotional dynamics of learning in struggle that are rooted in notions of multiple identities. The pedagogical nature of social connection and collective identity need to be interrogated within the context of migration and transnational activism, particularly to understand how the sense of self that resides in diasporic activist's conscious and unconscious (Kovan, & Dirkx, 2003) might shape learning. This requires specific engagement with diaspora experiences of struggle to consider the opportunities for or barriers to learning with others and the implications for future activism.

Similar to collective identities within social movements, and despite comprising people with multiple identities, diaspora are established through feelings of connection and sustained through senses of belonging and community (Kaldor-Robinson, 2002; Sökefeld, 2006; Cohen, 2009), all notions that suggest sameness. However, superordinate identities, including dominant groupings such as nationhood, and subgroup identities such as ethnic background are rooted in ideas of difference (Sorenson, 1996). In other words, where we have feelings of belonging there is an implied aspect of our identity that we share with some and not others, a reality that places notions of belonging alongside difference and contestation. There is an imperative to deepen understandings of learning within contexts where people's multiple identities are shaped by feelings of challenge or contestation, particularly in the current global context of rising populisms and social tensions. To reimagine challenge and contestation as productive rather than prohibitive requires interrogating the connection to emotion and identity to understand how social movements might involve learning through a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (Boler, 1999).

Boler (1999, p. 196) challenges the suggestion that some emotions are 'good' or 'bad' as she argues a 'pedagogy of discomfort' requires us to acknowledge 'our beliefs and strong feelings' to 'evaluate how

the actions that follow … might affect others'. Becoming conscious of how historically and culturally situated identities that are present in all our perspectives (Boler, 1999) determine our actions can be challenging, particularly as the strong emotions associated with some perspectives can constrain openness to critical thinking or questioning about previously held beliefs (Underhill, 2019), or close-down scope for learning (Walker, & Palacios, 2016). Establishing difference and belonging as intersecting emotions within diasporic identity raises questions about the possibilities for creating learning relationships where activists might learn through feelings of belonging and connection and the notion of difference. Here, the indivisibility of 'feeling and intellect' (Boler, 1999, p. 109) are evident, and the pedagogy of discomfort reframes learning through questioning, risk-taking and 'openness and non-attachment' (Walker, & Palacios, 2016, p. 177). Discomfort becomes a critical dimension of learning in struggle which is necessary to 'uncover and question the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines and unconscious complicity with hegemony' (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012, p. 44).

Emotion concerns experiential and embodied dimensions of activism and follows the temporal distinction between affect as long-term and emotion in the immediate (Jasper, 1998; Boler, 1999). Activists' accounts of feelings during struggle presents new possibilities for exploring the dynamics of becoming critically conscious where feelings are expressed and named within an articulation of the embodied activist experience. This process of naming reclaims the experiential within analyses of collective action, activism and social movements by prioritising the activist and their different experiences, knowledges, identities, values and emotions. Within the framework developed here, emotion and identity intersect to offer a more complex understanding of learning in social movements in a globalised world. The following section provides an overview of the methodology and an introduction to the case study.

Methodology

This paper draws on doctoral research into learning and unlearning among UK-based Egyptian diaspora activists associated with the Egyptian Revolution (Underhill, 2017) and offers a rare account of their contribution to Egypt's struggle. The definitional boundaries

between activism, social movements and social action have been drawn to include those who may regard themselves as participating in social action (Foley, 1999; Ollis, 2011) rather than belonging to a social movement. It therefore follows Bayat's (2002) definition of activism by stressing the specific contrast to passivity and without implying membership of a specific organised group. It also recognises the lack of a single established definition of social movement (Crossley, 2002) and that, as the contemporary context opens up new spaces and practices of social action (see Byrd, 2005; Castells, 2012), an expansive conception of social movements is necessary to allow for, and respond to, the innovation and creativity with which people seek to create social change.

The paper presents rare empirical evidence of diaspora mobilisation in the UK and Egypt during the revolution in 2011 and in the four years that followed, which I refer to as the continuing struggle. The terms '18 days' and 25 January revolution denote the initial revolutionary moment in 2011, while the 'continuing struggle' refers to the period since. Extended interviews with 28 activists (either dual nationality or Egyptians living in the UK) were conducted in the UK and further informal interviews at demonstrations. I also draw on partially participant observations (Bryman, 2012) at protests and elections during 2014 and 2015 and in online spaces such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Participants were identified through snowballing and chain-sampling (see Atkinson, & Flint, 2001) and were evenly spread in terms of gender and age. More interviews were conducted with activists who identified as secular/leftist and anti-coup because they were the two groups participating in social and political action related to Egypt during the research period, though two in-depth semi-structured interviews with Sisi supporters and lengthy discussions with many more outside the Egyptian embassy during the presidential elections in May 2014 provided valuable insights into the nationalist position. Observing activists' engagement during 2014 enabled a specific focus on the connection between learning in social movements and its implications. The qualitative data was analysed thematically across 45 nodes with superordinate, parallel and subordinate relationships.

Throughout the paper, I refer to activists, struggle and revolution acknowledging the contention associated with these terms but preferring to use the words that reflect the participants themselves. In the interest of safety in a period where political opponents are routinely targeted,

all participant names have been anonymised and identifying features removed. As outlined above, I draw on Adamson (2005), Kaldor-Robinson (2002), Sökefeld (2006) and Lyons and Mandaville (2010) to emphasise diaspora as an expression of political consciousness rooted in a sense of transnational belonging rather than generalising to all with an ancestral connection to Egypt (for a discussion, see Underhill, 2016). As such, the accounts do not represent all Egyptians or diaspora and cannot be generalised to the wider population. Before considering the activists' reflections, I provide a brief (and, I acknowledge, simplified) overview of the Egyptian struggle to contextualise issues and terms raised in the remainder of the paper.

The Egyptian revolution and continuing struggle

Since the end of British colonial rule in 1952, Egyptian social and political life has been dominated by military leaders from the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and discourses that emphasise nationalism and security alongside the dangers of terrorism and 'foreigners' (see Achcar, 2016; Marfleet, 2016). Building on the foundation of workers, pro-democracy and human rights movements, discontent with the status quo intensified following the release of photos of the body of Khaled Said who had been brutally beaten by police in 2010 (Ghonim, 2012). Following the uprisings in Tunisia that toppled Ben Ali, 18 days of demonstrations began on 25 January 2011. Across Egypt and the world but centring on the mass sit-in in Tahrir Square, Cairo, protests forced Mubarak's resignation after 30 years as ruler.

Although global interest in Egypt's struggle waned after Mubarak's downfall, activists continued to demonstrate and organise sit-ins calling for democratic elections in the months that followed, often resulting in extreme violence perpetrated by the state. Elections in June 2012 saw Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohammed Morsi, narrowly defeat SCAF leader, Ahmed Shafiq. Dissatisfied with Morsi's Presidency, widespread protests between 30 June and 4 July saw Morsi detained by the army after refusing to resign triggered the bloodiest incident in the Egyptian struggle: the Rab'a massacre in August 2013 of over 1000 Morsi supporters. Headed by Morsi's own appointment as defence minister, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the wave of protests was responded to by widespread arrests followed by mass trials, executions and accounts of torture against both Morsi supporters and secular and human rights activists.

Following Rab'a, and in the continuing struggle, Egyptians were starkly divided between three core positions: first, anti-coup / pro-Morsi / Islamists; second, nationalists / pro-Sisi; finally, revolutionary / secular / pro-democracy / leftists. This triangular contest (Marfleet, 2016) saw nationalists arguing against Islamists by making associations to terrorism and invoking Egypt's colonial memory to portray the secular left as peddling foreign influence. Amid the 'cult of Sisi' (el-Nawawy, & Elmasry, 2016), nationalist arguments for 'stability and security' secured President el-Sisi's formal election into office in May 2014 and enabled a brand of authoritarianism particularly dangerous for political opponents, journalists, NGOs and activists (see Dunne, & Hamzawy, 2019). It is in this context that many activists have reinterpreted their understandings of democracy and continue to navigate perceptions of how they might contribute to Egypt's struggle, even from abroad (Underhill, 2016).

Social movement learning as connectedness: emotion and identity

The examination of social movement learning outlined in this paper was initially inspired by Nour (revolutionary), a British-Egyptian activist who remarked that his experiences made him more 'logically and emotionally invested' in future action. Having spoken about a tense generational divide in his family and the difficulties of navigating their confused rational and emotional arguments, Nour revealed logic and emotion to be inseparable to learning in struggle and suggested the intersection strengthened his beliefs and determination to continue participating. To draw on the entwined nature of logic and emotion within social movement learning, and recognising that diaspora activism often takes place at distance from the 'homeland', this section examines how movement participation creates feelings of connectedness and begins to consider the implications for activists' developing perspectives and practices. This is then developed further in the following section through an exploration of embodied activism.

Participating in protest generates 'oppositional consciousness, solidarity and collective identity' (Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke, & Andersen, 2009, p.878). Attending protests with prominent human rights activists and developing a friendship group was foundational to Sana's continued learning and the development of a revolutionary perspective. She reflected that learning with a group of more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978) helped her to think critically and theorise her

participation (Foley, 1999), gaining knowledge that deepened her revolutionary praxis and commitment to the relationships she had developed with those in the movement: 'We're not just people who are connected in the same ideas but also comrades fighting in the same field, like you. There is a personal connection that they are like you and this connection is what keeps us strong' (Sana, revolutionary). Emotional connections within social movements and spaces of resistance are an important dimension of solidarity (Featherstone, 2008) that, Sana suggests, can make activists feel more resilient. Feeling that someone is 'like you', to use Sana's words, strengthens the trust and belief in the knowledge that is created with that person and subsequently trust and belief in the actions that derives from that knowledge. Sana was clear that her participation was sustained because the values and beliefs were co-created with others in a shared process of learning rooted in emotional connection and deepening social bonds.

The Egyptian diaspora in the UK is disparate (Karmi, 1997) and many activists reported that, prior to the revolution, they did not know or socialise with other Egyptians in the UK. For many, the struggle triggered and sustained activists' connection to Egypt's 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006), revealing bonds and a sense of self that are rooted in multiple, intersecting identities of belonging. For example, Mona revealed different identities (national, diaspora, Muslim, anti-coup) were part of a process of learning about herself and becoming more committed to taking action:

> *I learnt so much about myself in this time. Especially during the Rab'a time … We were watching what was going on and there were few of us of my generation who Egypt had never been home, never lived there, but they have a connection and a tie to Egypt. We came together—as Muslims living as a minority in the West we know what it means to fight for rights … we have to do something. To feel part of it. (Mona)*

As with Mona, Omar's (anti-coup) commitment to sustaining resistance against Egypt's military state and gaining justice for those killed in the Rab'a massacre derived from the emotional tie ('personal attachment') to Egypt as a nation state and from feeling part of a group that shares his values. He shows that rationality and logic cannot be devoid of emotion because we have 'emotional investments' that are rooted in histories

(Boler, 1999, p. 198) and empowering social relationships based on the belief that we are contributing something useful (Gamson, 1992; Van Dyke, & Dixon, 2013):

> *[I continue] out of my appreciation of the work of the MB [Muslim Brotherhood] from the beginning of the 20th Century. People say it's about legitimacy but ... it's about their struggle ... about personal attachment ... I would get calls from people in Egypt during the coup who would say 'please continue' and 'you don't know how much it helps us knowing you're with us'. (Omar)*

Activism involves shared experiences that form collective identities (see Poletta, & Jasper, 2001) and learning about the self (Kovan, & Dirx, 2003), and can lead to learning about how we relate to others. For example, Youssef (anti-coup) learned 'how to have a healthy conversation' with people who held similar and different ideas about politics, democracy and the Egyptian struggle. Similarly, Zakaria (revolutionary) commented that the most important issue for the continuing struggle was 'how we learn about each other'. However, because friendships based on collective understandings reinforce and support these identities (Van Dyke, & Dixon, 2013), examining how activists learn to navigate relationships must include a reflection on relationships beyond shared collective identity to consider how strength of feeling towards a particular idea or identification can render learning in struggle challenging. To do this, we must engage with social movements as spaces where feelings of solidarity, connection and empowerment can be interrogated alongside notions of conflict, contestation and challenge to consider learning within and beyond the social movement as a process of struggle in itself. Engaging with the embodied nature of diaspora activism as a dimension of learning in struggle that has implications for activists' continued participation is one element of this analysis, to which the next section turns.

Embodied learning in struggle

This section highlights the embodied and performative nature of learning in social movements and the significance of place for diaspora activists to develop and enact a sense of connection to struggle. Activists' accounts confirm that Tahrir Square, the focal point of the Egyptian revolution, 'was not all fun and festivity ... emotional reactions were

accompanied by cognitive processes' where people were politicised through interactions and experiences of 'serious politics' and 'intense emotions' (della Porta, 2014, p. 57). The accounts of activism during the 18 days and continuing struggle support Ollis' (2008, p. 323) position that learning in struggle involves 'intelligence, the physical body as well as emotions'. Activists gained new knowledge and skills, drew on emotions for motivation and inspiration and, as this section details, experienced embodied processes of learning.

The diaspora activists used historical and cultural symbols such as places and spaces that elicit emotions (Brown, & Pickerill, 2009) in performative displays of belonging to a particular side of the Egyptian struggle and as embodied practices within the UK and Egypt. For example, revolutionary and anti-coup activists displayed defiance by protesting outside the Egyptian embassy in London despite the dangers of being photographed or videoed by staff inside to show resistance and 'no more ... sitting on the fence' (Sami, anti-coup), while nationalists occupied the same space (particularly during presidential elections) in performative displays of national solidarity.

Diaspora activists like Ayesha (revolutionary) who travelled to Egypt to participate in demonstrations and sit-ins throughout 2011 and 2012 reflected that physically being present in Egypt was critical for self-learning and was instrumental in strengthening her Egyptian identity:

> *There is no theoretical, intellectual knowledge without tasting ... you really have to be embedded in life at the existential level so that you are part of the world ... The revolution was a way of tasting all of these things from 25 January up to this day ... You have to do something moral, of course, but also something material. By going there, I transferred my body there in sight of danger. I did not give the gift. I got the gift by feeling like for the first time I belonged to Egypt in a way I have not felt before. (Ayesha)*

The physicality of 'performativity and embodiment of protest' in a specific place (Brown, & Pickerill, 2009, p. 28)—what Ayesha referred to as 'tasting' and 'material' —is an embodied process of learning that entwines fear and anger with feelings of belonging and commitment. Similarly, Ashraf (nationalist) reflected on his involvement in organising fundraising events in the UK to the support doctors in Egypt in the aftermath of the 18 days, commenting that he 'reconnected with Egypt in

a more [sic] stronger way'. A deep sense of belonging was also evident in Mohammed's (anti-coup) account of how embodied learning stimulated determination within the pro-Muslim Brotherhood movement:

> *Now you see kids, children, young girls, they are not afraid of the bullets. They are not afraid of grabbing. They are not afraid of torture in the police station. Every day they go to the streets and demonstrate, and they know at the end of the day maybe she or he or all of you will after [sic] be arrested, be tortured, be killed. Right? And they still go. 13 months now and they still insist. Forget their freedom. Why? Because they tasted the taste of freedom. The international community has to understand this. The Egyptian people have changed. The Libyan people have changed. They are not coming back to the situation which we were under the umbrella of the dictatorial regimes anymore. I think the majority, not all of the people, I'm talking about the majority of people when they taste freedom, you don't want to let that go away. (Mohammed)*

The recurring notion of 'tasting freedom' from activists within the revolutionary and anti-coup movements demonstrate how embodied learning in struggle draws on and recreates feelings of hope and the 'idea of agency' (Ayesha, revolutionary) that can persist even when activists are 'not sure if [they] are going to be successful' (Faoud, revolutionary). The activists who 'learned not to give up because there is every reason to give up' (Salma, revolutionary) also showed that strength of emotion associated with embodied practices draws on moral shocks (Jasper, 1998) that challenges previously held truths through emotional processes of sense-making. To illustrate, Farida (anti-coup) explained that 'Mohammed Mahmoud was the main [learning moment]. The dead people. The police just dragging the dead bodies to the rubbish. For me to see the police and army treat civilians [that way] was a shock'. When feelings of shock, anger and fear subside, the emotions associated with witnessing violence deepened a sense commitment to the struggle (Underhill, 2016) because they 'help us define our goals and motivate action toward them' (Jasper, 1998, p. 421).

Justifications for continued participation cannot be explained as rational choices; hope and agency are embodied within knowledge that is generated through experience, as one activist I spoke to at a

demonstration in London remarked: 'we've done it once, we can do it again'. Similarly, Faoud (revolutionary) argued that 'everybody fully realises that [the army] is the problem now. But it takes quite a while to understand that. It wasn't something that was very obvious in the beginning of the revolution'. When reflecting on shifting understandings, revolutionary activists in particular, demonstrate the emotional character of witnessing and gaining knowledge that have an enduring impact:

> *We know where to put the pressure, we know what the red lines are ... You know, you just know. Before it was like fog but now you know what is going on and you can work on that. It will take way longer, obviously revolution doesn't take a day, it will take way longer but now you just know and you are a lot more aware. (Ali, revolutionary)*

Although street-level activism and protests in the UK related to Egypt diminished as el-Sisi tightened his grip on power, participation in the struggle, whether in the UK or Egypt, enabled rich and powerful embodied learning that deepened activists' sense of self and materialised in commitment to 'keeping the issue alive' (Rana, anti-coup) and 'to resist[ing] injustice' (Ayesha, revolutionary). A sense of optimism is key to sustaining movement participation (Van Dyke, & Dixon, 2013) and emerges in the intersections of logic and emotion that generate ideas of what might be possible. However, diaspora activists engaged in Egypt's struggle, acknowledged that they 'need to learn to be a lot more patient' (Salma, anti-coup), recognising that learning in social movements can be emotionally and intellectually challenging. In conversation with a prominent revolutionary activist in Cairo in March 2015, he admitted that 'we have to search for the conversations and thoughts, but I don't know how to.' The final section of this analysis explores the provocative space of uncertainty within social movement learning to illustrate the necessity of a 'pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999) that can expose the limitations and implications of emotionally laden identities that constrain new imaginations.

Discomfort and the implications of learning in struggle

Moving beyond gaining skills and knowledge to application and mastery involves a 'predicament' where a person needs 'to develop the means to

overcome its condition' (De Smet, 2015, p. 51). Conceptualising learning as a predicament and a continuous process of development that occurs through tension, struggle and feeling uncomfortable (Bateson, 1994; Hobson, & Welbourne, 1998) recognises that although emotions associated with movement participation are not always positive, when read within a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999), they can be productive. Questioning assumptions and the values we have learned over time involves openness and risk taking (Boler, 1999) but, as this case shows, cannot be taken for granted as a feature of social movement learning.

As established earlier in this paper, people have emotional investments in particular beliefs and values that are rooted in histories. To build on this, this section establishes that identification with an idea or group is tied to a sense of emotional commitment to the idea or group, which can be problematic. Boler (1999, p. 195) argues that we need to recognise that our identities are present in our perspectives when we witness something and that because 'we all see things differently … how we see or choose not to see has ethical implications and may even cause others to suffer'. Because activists in Egypt's struggle identified with one of three central narratives, revolutionary, anti-coup or nationalist, the case provides a useful example of how emotion and identity manifest in constraints to learning (Underhill, 2019) and the subsequent necessity of Boler's (1999, p. 179) recognition that 'any rigid belief is potentially "miseducative"'. For instance, when activists acknowledged checking another person's allegiance before engaging in conversation or only engaging in discussions with someone who held a different position for fun (Underhill, 2019) they revealed how emotionally and historically rooted identities can strengthen assumptions about the other and subsequently prevent listening and limiting possibilities for learning.

In a further illustration of how beliefs entwined with history impact the possibilities for learning, one nationalist, a Sisi supporter, revealed that his continued support for the military was based on his belief that 'all the third world countries need a dictator' because they did not and would not be able to understand what democracy really meant (Underhill, 2016). For nationalists with similar views, the risk of self-reflection as outlined by Boler (1999) would be to focus inwardly and fail to interrogate the wider context in which their ideas and assumptions are created and reinforced. Instead, a pedagogy of discomfort would ask activists to consider how their perspectives have been shaped by

their experiences, identities and emotions, recognising 'how their ways of seeing have been shaped specifically by the dominant culture of the historical moment' (Boler, 1999, p. 179), potentially opening up questions of power and their relationship to hegemony.

Although activists have experienced some extreme highs, for example with the 18 days being described as 'utopian' (Amira, revolutionary), and a belief from many that 'the younger generation has the imagination now to make the change we need but in a long time, not now' (Zakaria, revolutionary) and are committed to future action, learning in social movements does not ensure participation will be sustained. One revolutionary activist was critical of the movement's lack of strategy for beyond the 18 days and the inability of other revolutionary activists to cooperate, remarking that 'if anything, they are competing' (Dina). This activist left the revolutionary movements to become involved in community action and went on to vote for el-Sisi in the 2014 election, arguing she needed to be 'pragmatic' about how to create change. Similarly, political decisions taken during elections caused Amira, an active member of the revolutionary socialists for many years, to withdraw from the party and from formal political processes. Amira admitted distance from organised action was key to her 'trying to make sense of what happened', revealing the possibilities of a conscious pedagogy of discomfort.

The intersections of emotion, identity and learning in the context of the Egyptian struggle has implications for activists' sense of connection to subordinate identities associated with a collective group or social movement. This shift in connection can also impact how activists feel towards national identity. To illustrate, some anti-coup activists revealed how the reactions from other Egyptians towards the Rab'a massacre ('they wanted Rab'a'. Salma, anti-coup) challenged their relationship with Egypt: 'I feel less connected to Egypt which is not what I intended ... I feel it's the people and the people have let me down and that's left me feeling less connected and let down.' (Omar, anti-coup)

Omar's disconnection reveals his belief in an imagination of Egypt that had been created from a distance over many years of holidays to visit family. Having emotionally invested his identity to Egypt's imagined community (Anderson, 2006) over the years and again through his participation in the anti-coup movement, it was challenging for Omar

to accept that the new realities might require him to reconsider other 'truths' about Egypt that he had established over many years. To engage with this state of discomfort pedagogically, Omar would need to question where his beliefs about Egypt had come from and how his position in relation to those beliefs might impact others. The shift from feeling let down to regaining a sense of agency would require exploring complex ideas and developing political imaginations (Beaumont, 2010) that are, when we have multiple, situated and embodied identities, pedagogically challenging.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to examine how diaspora activists' emotions and identities shape learning in and engagement with struggle. It builds on existing knowledge of learning in social movements to explore the relationship between activists' identities and emotions to consider the implications on engagement with the struggle. The integration of identity within the theoretical framing and analysis contributes a new approach to understanding learning in social movements and the implications for activists that is increasingly relevant to the contemporary global context of increased globalisation and transnational activism. By exposing the pedagogical dynamics of emotion and identity within diaspora activists' learning, the paper reiterates the 'inextricabl[e] link' between cognition and emotion (Boler, 1999, p. xix) to argue that the emotional dynamic within our multiple identities not only shape what and how we learn but also its possibilities.

Drawing on diaspora activists' reflections on participating in the Egyptian revolution and continuing struggle, the paper establishes that experiences of learning in struggle involves emotional connections to ideas and knowledge, and that engaging in processes of learning that can strengthen or challenge these understandings. Commitment to a position —and to subsequent action related to that position—draws on our identities and is strengthened through collective experiences that develop relationships of shared learning. Although learning in struggle is made possible through 'intimate and emotional connections' between activists (Featherstone, 2008, p. 38), it is important to recognise that the strength of emotion can constrain opportunities to experience the discomforting pedagogy necessary to challenge hegemonic ideas and values. Greater understanding is needed of how activists experience

and learn through Boler's (1999) 'pedagogy of discomfort' and the possibilities of an activist pedagogy that centres on the lived experience as a process of learning that is underpinned by feelings of connection and belonging to ideas, collectivity and understandings of the self. Without fully engaging with emotional experiences of movement participation and the possibilities for creating new and different knowledge, the picture of activist engagement is incomplete.

An embodied reading of social movement learning offers language to explore how and why activism intensifies or diminishes, and why the shape and strength of activism changes. In the Egyptian case, for example, a more intentional account of emotion recognises feelings of hope can spur commitment and determination, but also acknowledges the emotional weight of struggling in authoritarian contexts. While many of the activists in this study referred specifically to the need for patience and to reimagine the revolution as an intergenerational struggle that requires '20–30 years' (Amira), it cannot be assumed that all who participated will have continued to struggle with the intensity and that there are other, negative emotions such as despondency and disillusionment that are part of the activist experience.

More broadly, this paper contributes evidence of the significance of deepening the connections between diaspora and emotion in theories of learning in social movements. As Clover (2012, p. 90), argues, 'it is emotive and affective learning, and not simply the cognitive, that can best challenge today's technically rationalised industrial culture'. Emotive accounts of learning from those who draw on multiple identities as they engage in struggle, therefore, are critical for conceptualising alternatives to a purely rational existence, for reimagining the lived experience and 'revisioning ourselves' (Boler, 1999, p. 200) as empowered transnational agents within a continued process of change.

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