



WORKING PAPER ONLY

NOT FOR QUOTATION OR CITATION

Media, Cultural Consumption and Normative Support for Democracy in Post-Revolutionary Egypt

Mazen Hassan, Department of Political Science, Cairo University

Elisabeth Kendall, Pembroke College, University of Oxford

Stephen Whitefield, Department of Politics and International Relations and Pembroke College, University of Oxford

Abstract

While the comparative literature remains ambivalent on whether cultural consumption is associated with support for democracy, much of the commentary about the Arab Spring, and the Egyptian revolution in particular, points its importance – especially new social media and engagement with literary genres – in generating democratic norms. We test these relationships using data from a survey conducted by the authors in 2012 after the first post-revolution parliamentary elections in Egypt. The research design involves a hard test, in which we estimate the significance of cultural consumption after controlling for a broad range of ‘usual suspects’ affecting democratic attitudes. The results show positive effects for new social media on normative support for democracy but little or no effect for literary genres, a finding which points to the possibility for 2011’s revolutionaries also to be 2013’s supporters of a military coup.

Any snapshot of Tahrir square during the 2011 Egyptian revolution would reveal widespread use of diverse cultural products in association with the protests. These included signs displaying excerpts of anti-regime poems, makeshift stalls selling political books and novels containing anti-regime content, and an extensive use placards with handwritten Twitter hash tags and titles of Facebook pages. It was difficult to overlook the many cultural manifestations of the anti-regime movement(s). Whereas many studies have examined the high level of cultural consumption as a tool of resistance, a mobiliser, or a trigger of revolution (Howard, 2011; Khamis and Vaughn, 2012a; 2012b; Nahed, 2011; Aboubakr, 2013; Abdulla, 2011; Khamis and Vaughn, 2011; Langman, 2005; Della Porta and Mosca, 2005; Langman, 2005; O’Lear, 1999; Wasserman, 2007), the aim of this article is to dig deeper beneath this debate. Instead of examining whether cultural consumption encourages people to take to the streets, we seek to examine – through analysing the results of a mass survey conducted in Egypt in 2012 – how consumption of cultural products affects normative support for the democratic system of government. Our motivation is that, whereas mobilisation can wane over time and revolutions do not necessarily end as initially intended, it is the normative belief in democracy that can provide the foundations for a stable democratic system – even when events take a different direction. It is also a strong determinant of democratic consolidation after the euphoria of the transition moment fades away.

This article’s main research question is thus as follows: is consumption of certain types of media and cultural products, in particular new social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) as well as more literary or artistic forms of expression (poetry, novels, short stories, plays and songs), associated with citizens holding stronger beliefs in democracy? The independent variable thus is cultural consumption which we define as limited to two broad strands. The first intends a person's active engagement with media forms, particularly 'new' social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. The second intends a person's absorption, aurally or visually, of products relating to the written or performed arts, such as poetry, short stories, novels, plays and songs. The dependent variable is democratic support which is the normative support for a political system in which multiple parties compete for power through free elections as the best system of government. While there is much popular commentary that suggests cultural consumption affects democratic attitudes, there is surprisingly little empirical, individual-level evidence to support this. We present a reality check of these assumptions connecting media, cultural consumption and democratic attitudes in the context of the so-called Arab Spring.

From this point, this article will proceed as follows. *First*, the previous literature trying to explain democratic support is reviewed. *Second*, we argue why we think that rates of cultural consumption could play an important role in explaining variations of popular democratic support in the Egyptian case. *Third*, we present the details of the survey that was conducted in Egypt in 2012 followed by the empirical analysis testing the effect of consumption of media and cultural products on popular support for democracy. The final part summarises our conclusions and suggests directions for future research.

I. Literature Review:

Within the literature that tries to explain why people support democracy over other systems of government, three different schools of thought may be identified. The first emphasizes economic factors. Traditionally, this view rests on the mid-twentieth century modernisation school which saw that rising living standards, and the growth of private ownership and of the urban middle classes constituted the main forces which led individuals to support democratic procedures for the resolution of social conflict (Lipset, 1959; Rustow, 1970; Rose, 1992; Rose and Mishler, 1994).

Such a view received renewed attention in the context of transitions in Eastern and Central Europe. Herbert Kitschelt (1992), for example, made a strong case for a connection between market success and mass support for democracy in Eastern and Central Europe. He argues that there exists a pro-market/pro-democracy dimension to public opinion and that the distribution of people along this dimension is determined by absolute levels of economic development in the country (for a similar argument, see Przeworski, 1991).

The second school of thought, on the other hand, stresses the primacy of political rather than economic factors. According to this view, effective political institutions and interest representation are likely to produce positive perceptions of the functioning of democracy among the electorate. The experience of democratic politics thus could itself explain popular levels of support for democracy. The key factors underlying popular support for democracy, according to this view, would be the performance of new political institutions and the ability of electors to be heard via the party and electoral systems (Evans and Whitefield, 1995).

The third view, probably specifically directed towards the Arab World, is a culturalist one. It argues that some elements of Muslim or Arab cultures run counter to the values required for democracy and, instead, contribute to the entrenchment of authoritarian regimes (Kedourie, 1994; Lewis, 1993). Another argument made by the culturalist strand in the literature is that Islam fosters a blind acceptance of authority (Fish, 2002). Yet studies employing different measures or model specifications found no such relationship between Islam and democracy (Elbadawi and Makdisi, 2011; Donna and Russett, 2004; Przeworski et al., 2000; Stepan and Robertson, 2003). One view that is widely missing from the literature thus is one that links democratic support with cultural consumption at the individual level, one that asks whether the type of media and cultural products – and the frequency with which people consume them – can make them either stronger or weaker democrats. This is a gap we seek to fill through the analysis in this paper.

Much of the study of the political implications of cultural consumption has been directed towards examining their effect on political activism rather than normative democratic support. Starting with digital media, some have argued that new digital media have positive and potentially strong effects on political participation and knowledge (Dimitrova et al., 2011; Hendricks and Denton, 2010; Norris, 2001; Papacharissi, 2002; Boulianne, 2009; Mossberger et al., 2008; Gil de Zuniga, Veenstra, Vraga and Shah, 2010). The literature on ‘cyberactivism’ (Howard, 2011) also belongs in this group. Conversely, others have seen media and new digital media as predominantly entertainment-oriented and argued that factors other than technology are more important as determinants of political participation and knowledge (Baumgartner and Morris, 2010; Bimber, 2001; Prior, 2007; Putnam, 2000). Indeed, some previous studies have failed to demonstrate that digital media have any tangible impact on participation (Groshek and Dimitrova, 2011). As for traditional media, there have been arguments that media consumption has a positive effect on political participation (Livingstone and Markham, 2008; Kaufhold, Valenzuela and Gil de Zuniga, 2010) and opposing arguments emphasizing the ‘media malaise’ thesis which sees media consumption as distracting from or ‘dumbing down’ the political agenda (Norris, 2000; Newton, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Previous research also indicates that the effect of media on political participation is not linear across all types of media consumed (Gibson and Ward, 2000; Oates, 2008; Quintelier and Vissers, 2008; Livingstone and Markham, 2008).

In the context of the Arab World, both sides of the argument have been prevalent. On the one hand, there has been an argument for the rising ability of new media to mobilise mass action – and of consequent attempts by incumbent rulers to control it (Eickelman and Anderson, 1999).

The literature on cyberactivism has also been used in connection with the Arab Spring (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011; 2012a; 2012b; El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2014). On the other hand, high rates of internet usage were not found to be associated with significant offline political activism in the UAE (Wiest and Eltantawy, 2012). Similarly, a recent Pew survey did not find that online engagement affected offline participation; rather, both were affected by educational attainment and, for users of social networking sites, online and offline engagement were not considered a separate realm of political activity (Pew, 2013). Regarding the role of literary genres (poetry, short stories, novels, plays) and songs in influencing democratic beliefs or political participation, there is little research that investigates this link empirically.¹

II. Theoretical Overview:

Our main argument is that cultural consumption plays a role in generating popular support for democracy, both from a theoretical perspective and from a specifically Egyptian one. Starting with the theoretical point of view, the argument is that in early times of transition when one's experience of democratic settings is still very limited, political factors would not be expected to play a significant role. These are times in which parliaments have not yet performed their legislative functions, political parties have not yet taken up their representative duties, and elections for some positions are still underway. In addition, these are times when democracy has not yet had sufficient opportunity to deliver economically. Hence, one must be wary of placing too much weight on political and economic predictors. People's political and economic experiences are, however, framed and interpreted by cultural products. Indeed, previous studies have found that cultural products can affect attitudes by setting agendas (Iyengar and McGrady, 2007), providing information (Bartels, 1993), framing (Tversky and Khaneman, 1981; Iyengar and McGrady, 2007), and priming (Krosnick and Kinder, 1990). When it comes to democratic values in particular, cultural products can play positive and different roles. On the one hand, the more interactive types of such products (e.g. new media) can create a marketplace for ideas and a tool for creating an enlightened citizenry (Votmer, 2006) making them one of the most important avenues through which public opinion is shaped (Zelaky et. al., 2006). On the other hand, the more traditional media and literary genres help convey information and symbolic content which "may lead to ... believe or disbelieve, to affirm their support for a state of affairs or to rise up in collective revolt" (Thompson, 1995, 17). According to Miller (2005), when provided with information or symbols, individuals tend to react in accordance with that information and those symbolic forms, which in turn includes certain attitudes and behaviors by individuals alone or en masse. The Egyptian case in particular shows that much of the information and symbols of the traditional cultural products produced in the lead to the 2011 revolution was pro-democratic. Narrowing down our argument to the Egyptian case, cultural products have long been recognised as wielding political influence. Egypt has long sought to endorse its nationalist projects through control of the cultural apparatus, encouraging the production and consumption of works aimed at inspiring obedient model citizens (see Ghanim, 1995; Gonzalez-Quijano, 1998; Kendall, 2006; Winegar, 2009). The political significance of cultural products, especially poetry, is held to be particularly prominent in an Arab(ic) context, where "cultural production shifts in conjunction with political developments" (Salih and Richter-Devroe, 2014) and a long tradition of oral culture with a socio-political role is

¹ In Egypt, two surveys were carried out in the late fifties following Egypt's 1952 revolution to assess the rural population's main source of political information (Harabayashi and el-Khatib, 1958) and preferred topics to read about (al-Mahadi, 1960). However, the sample sizes were small and limited to the Nile Delta.

believed to resonate still (Hitti, 2002, orig. 1937; Jayyusi, 1977; Frangieh, 2000; Musawi, 2006). Moreover, literary activity in Egypt has always tended to peak at times of heightened political tension, owing to its suitability as an activist vehicle able to circumvent censorship in politically sensitive times – from the British Occupation in 1882 to the instatement of Israel in 1948, the Free Officers Revolution in 1952, and the crushing defeat by Israel in 1967 (Allen, 1981; Kendall, 2006).

In the context of Egypt's 2011 revolution, observations point to a similar link between literary activity and political activity. The circumstantial evidence in contemporary Egypt suggests that recent cultural products *have* generated democratic support. Cultural producers began calling for a revolutionary agenda well before the mass protests of 2011. The ambition of cultural producers to effect political change was demonstrated by the formation of the Writers and Artists for Change movement around the time of the rigged 2005 presidential elections. This movement coordinated with human rights organisations and dissident political groups such as Kifaya (Enough) to organise protests and weekly meetings calling for freedom of expression and democracy (Khallaf, 2005). The years directly preceding the 2011 revolution witnessed the production of a range of films, novels and television series that highlighted the ills, injustices and stagnation inherent in Egyptian society. Some novels now bear slogans like 'the novel that predicted the uprising' on their front covers, for example Khalid al-Khamisi's *Taksi* (2007) on the 2011 edition of its English translation and Muḥammad Salmawi's *Ajandat al-Farāsha* (2011). However, the most well-known exposée of the rottenness of Egyptian society is Alaa al-Aswany's bestselling novel *'Imārat Ya 'qūbīān* (The Yacoubian Building, 2002), which was also turned into a blockbuster film (2006) and enjoyed huge reach and popularity. Al-Aswany also published regular articles and a popular newspaper column, ending such output – regardless of whether it spoke about citizens' political grievances or economic pains – with the sentence 'democracy is the solution'. Moreover, the start of major protests coincided with a flurry of cultural activity, as literature and songs were performed, recited, chanted, sung or displayed at sites of protest with the intention of both reflecting the action and stirring it (see Colla, 2011; Mehrez, 2012; Saad, 2012; Yusuf, 2012; El-Hamamsy and Soliman, 2013; Kendall, 2015). As the revolution faltered and protests continued, Egypt witnessed renewed collective action by cultural groups mobilising their artistic credentials to service a political agenda. For example, protest 'festivals' opposing the draft constitution in December 2012 were staged in Tahrir Square by The Egyptian Creativity Front, The Coalition of Revolution Artists, The Coalition for Independent Culture, Writers and Artists for Change, The National Union for Protecting Rights and Freedoms of Thought and Creativity and The Egyptian Actors Syndicate among others.

A great many writers, artists, musicians, critics, scholars and journalists support the view that recent cultural products in Egypt are associated with generating public support for democracy and political participation (as implied by Saad, 2012; Yusuf, 2012; Sanders IV and Visona, 2012; El-Hamamsy and Soliman, 2013; Tripp, 2013). Yet such assumptions have not been tested using data sets to assess the reality and strength of this alleged link, nor the relative influence of different literary genres. This study therefore attempts to investigate the relationship of cultural consumption across a broad range of its forms – social media, traditional media, literary genres – to democratic values in the context of post-revolutionary Egypt. We recognize, of course, that multiple other factors are involved in driving democratic norms as mentioned in the literature review). However, we regard the use of survey data as a valuable means of estimating the impact of cultural consumption because it allows us precisely to control for the impact of alternative or confounding factors. It also provides valuable, individual-level data. If, controlling for other theoretically plausible drivers of democratic norms, therefore, we still find cultural consumption effects, we will be on more solid ground in inferring their importance.

III. The Survey:

The authors designed an extensive questionnaire that was conducted in face-to-face interviews of roughly 35 minutes each with a nationally representative sample of 2,000 individuals drawn from the electorate. The sample was determined subjectively using census data and targeted only those citizens aged 18 or over eligible to vote in the 2011 parliamentary elections. Following pilot studies and extensive back-translation, the authors commissioned an Egyptian survey organisation to conduct the fieldwork in December 2011 and January 2012.

The sampling procedure was a combination of multistage cluster random sampling and systematic random sampling. In the first stage the country was divided into five different regions; a. urban governorates; b. urban-lower Egypt governorates; c. rural-lower Egypt governorates; d. urban-upper Egypt governorates; and e. rural-upper Egypt governorates. The primary sampling unit (PSU) was the family. The sampling units were allocated proportional to the number of units in each of the five regions. This means that the number of PSU in each region was obtained by dividing the number of families in each region by the number of families in the country and then multiplying by the sample size (2,000). In the second stage a governorate was chosen randomly from each region. The chosen governorates were *Cairo* (urban governorates region), *Minya* (upper Egypt; urban and rural) and *Dakhiliyya* (lower Egypt; urban and rural). In the third stage, a sample of cities and villages was chosen randomly from governorates (clusters) of the second stage. In the fourth stage a simple random sample of streets was chosen from the cities and villages in the previous stage. Then a systematic random sample of families living in each street was chosen. In the final stage the target individual in the chosen family was selected randomly. Quotas were set for certain demographic features to match population demographics. Table 1 shows some descriptive statistics of the final sample.

Table 1 here

Our survey operationalised each of the main items of theoretical interest – cultural consumption and democratic norms (as well as numerous controls considered below). Table 2 summarises the relevant survey question measuring each variable along with its operationalisation.

Table 2 here

We first consider citizens' media and cultural consumption, which we consider likely to have an impact on political attitudes. On the main source of information on politics, the results shown in Table 3 indicate that, despite the proliferation of media and news sources, for about three-quarters of Egyptians television remains the main source of news. On the consumption of cultural products, songs, plays and novels came on top with close percentages all over 60% whereas poetry and short stories are consumed least with only about 6% and 14% of respondents respectively (see Figure 1). This low response might indicate that respondents did not recognise some of the popular songs, chants and slogans during the revolution as poetry by the likes of Ahmad Fu'ad Nigm and Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi. Similarly, the high response for novels and plays might indicate that the Arabic terms for these genres were interpreted more broadly, with novels (*riwayat*) understood to include television soap operas, and plays (*masrahiyyat*) to include television dramas.

Table 3 and Figure 1 here

Do consumers of cultural products in Egypt have distinctive common characteristics or opinions that clearly differentiate them from the general public? When it comes to *religious views*, they do not appear to be a distinct group. On five questions that ask about a variety of religious opinions (the identity of Egypt; support for Sharia Law; and acceptance of political leaders with different religions), consumers of such products did not have clearly distinguishable opinions. The one observable difference is that only among poetry consumers

does the acceptance of political leaders with different religions exceed 20% – all other groups fall below the 10% mark. Still, however, accepting political leaders with different religions remains the minority among all groups – as is the case with the full sample (see Figures 2, 3 and 4).

Figures 2, 3, and 4 here

Similarly, when it comes to *voting behaviour*, consumers of cultural products have the same order of electoral preferences as the overall representative sample, with the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) coming top in voting choice, the Salafist Nour Party second and the secular Egyptian bloc third (see Figure 5). However, the percentages differ, showing that the FJP is most popular among consumers of poetry and short stories.

Figure 5 here

Unsurprisingly, it is *demographics* that most clearly distinguish the features of consumers of cultural products. In comparison with the overall population, consumers of cultural products are slightly younger and better educated, with both of these more pronounced among consumers of the more traditional genres of poetry and the short story (see Figures 6 and 7). Finally, some *socio-economic* issues appear to tease out some common features of consumers of traditional literary genres of poetry and short stories. Poetry consumers in particular seem more supportive of a market economy (Figure 8) and also – along with consumers of short stories – more supportive of women's social rights (Figure 9).

Figures 6, 7, 8 and 9 here

Finally, we asked a question on the 'main source' for accessing each of these genres. The results are shown in Figure 10. As expected, television scored the highest for songs, plays and novels (supporting our conclusion above regarding the particularly broad interpretation of the latter two genres) whereas books were the main source for accessing short stories. Poetry was most accessed online and in books. The above results indicate a clear split between cultural products consumed predominantly via television (plays, songs, novels), which enjoy widespread popularity and which we might therefore term 'mass culture', versus those consumed via other media with limited reach (poetry, short stories), which can be considered more traditional literary genres. Naturally, such categorisation is always imperfect and the boundaries remain porous².

Figure 10 here

Moving on from the consumption and its media, we asked two questions on the political significance of consuming these cultural products. On the question of how important any of these products is in shaping one's political views, only just over 23% overall deemed them important (see Figure 11). When this statistic is broken down by cultural product, however, we see that consumers of poetry and short stories, both traditional literary genres, attribute greater political significance to the products they consume (37% and 38% respectively) than do consumers of mass cultural products (see Figure 12).

Figures 11 and 12 here

This initial evidence suggests, therefore, that cultural products generally serve to entertain rather than to convey political or religious messages to the masses (see Figure 13). Yet these need not be mutually exclusive alternatives. It is possible for a cultural product to serve as entertainment (indeed, this is shown to be the primary motivation of consumers) whilst still

² The use of the descriptor 'traditional literary genres' is used here in preference to 'high literature' owing to the latter's elitist connotations. Poetry, both vernacular and classical, was not confined to an elite in Arab history. Both poetry and the short story (which can be likened to the historical *maqama* form or tale) can be considered traditional. For our purposes, novels and plays must be considered products of mass culture here since they were understood by respondents to include television dramas. A useful discussion of the problematics of binary categorisation, particularly in post-colonial Middle Eastern culture, can be found in the introduction to El-Hamamsy and Soliman (2013).

furnishing other by-products of consumption - political, religious, educational - that may not, however, be consciously recognised by consumers. Face-to-face questions regarding influence rely on the respondent's conscious recognition of that process of influence. However, people rarely believe that they are easily influenced or manipulated. Therefore, the fact that Figure 12 shows almost a quarter of Egyptians *consciously* consider cultural products important in shaping their political views seems significant. Moreover, consumers' conscious perception of the political role of traditional literary genres (poetry and short stories) is considerably greater, rising to well over a third. And, crucially for our research question, we need to determine whether forms of cultural consumption and their conscious meanings are associated with democratic norms and behaviours. It is to that question that our analysis now turns.

Figure 13 here

IV. Multivariate Analysis:

We begin by considering the relationship between the various measures of cultural consumption described above and support for democracy. We do so after taking into account the 'usual suspects' in generating democratic support, which are predictors that were found by previous studies to affect popular support for democracy (see literature review). In addition we also control for some demographics such as age, education and living standards. So, our inferential strategy is to see whether, controlling for the 'usual suspects', media effects are still statistically and substantively significant.

In the following analysis, we seek to test whether certain factors related to the media and consumption of cultural products *in addition* play a role in explaining popular support for democracy in post-revolution Egypt. We consider a range of economic, political, religious and media consumption variables. Our dependent variable, therefore, at this stage of the analysis is normative support for democracy, which we distinguish from how democracy is evaluated in practice. To measure the normative element in popular attitudes to democracy, we use the following question in our survey.

Do you think that democracy, in which multiple parties compete for power through free elections, is the best system for governing Egypt?

From this variable we generated three measures capturing the level of democratic support. *Strong Democrat* describes the response 'strongly agree', *Democrat* describes the response 'agree' and *Not Democrat* describes any other response. Overall, the level of democratic support is reasonably high (see Table 4). This should not come as a surprise since the survey was done immediately after the country's first post-revolution democratic election in which Egyptians experienced the right to choose freely from a broad range of parties probably for the first time in their living memory.

Table 4 here

We next consider how well various predictors do in explaining variation across individuals in the strength of each of the three measures of their normative support for democracy. Given the nature of the dependent variables, we utilise ordinal logistic regression, which is suitable for models involving non-ordered response categories. Each model contains the economic, political, religious and cultural predictors and the results are shown in the regression analyses in Table 5. The relevant survey question measuring each predictor along with its operationalisation is included in Table 2. We included predictors that were found significant in affecting the dependent variable in previous tests and pertain to the three main schools of thought of democratic support outlined above. Note, again: the test of the significance of cultural consumption is a tough one, since the models control for the 'usual suspects', including social class, economic position and political activism which we know to be

associated with cultural characteristics of respondents. Thus, finding cultural effects jumping over such a high hurdle might be regarded as strong evidence for their independent impact. The results (see Table 5) show that five predictors were significant in affecting the normative support for democracy. Reliance on Facebook/YouTube/Twitter and news websites as the main source of news on politics had a positive effect while reliance on more traditional media like television, newspapers and radio had no effect. This might reflect a dividing line between traditional and modern ways of consuming political news that is consequential for democratic support. When it comes to cultural products, consumption of novels and short stories was significant with a positive effect (songs also showed a slightly positive effect) while consumption of poetry and plays had no effect.³

Table 5 here

From the perspective of our theoretical expectations, therefore, the case can be made, even in the tough test that we have set up, that consumption of new media – internet news websites – makes a significant positive contribution to support for democracy, even controlling for a broad range of other factors; and that consumption of traditional media has no effect. When it comes to consumption of cultural products, results are mixed. One might tentatively conclude that narrative forms of culture (novels and short stories) have a more positive effect on democratic support than non-narrative forms (poetry and plays), perhaps because prose narrative tends to be intellectually more accessible. However, further research is clearly required. Our survey distinguished between different cultural products only in terms of form/genre, not with regard to content within each genre. Clearly, the nature of the content makes a difference and this could be a refinement in future surveys. However, it is worth noting that the meaning a consumer takes away is not inherent in the content, it is ‘produced’ by the consumer during the act and conditions of performance and/or reception (Derrida, 1978; Foucault, 1980). Ted Swedenburg shows this process in practise in his analysis of the effects of the songs performed in Tahrir Square (Swedenburg, 2012).

Many of our controls also proved to be significant, thereby upholding arguments of the previous literature. This is especially the case pertaining to political factors tracing democratic experience, views on parties and participation rate, as well as support for a market economy. Contrary to previous literature, however, being Muslim increased democratic support. Education had a positive effect whereas age had none. Overall, the explanatory powers of the models are not huge (see Pseudo R2 in Table 5).

V. Concluding Remarks and Directions for Future Research:

We have sought in this paper to impose a hard test on the effects of forms of cultural consumption on support for democracy. Controlling for the ‘usual suspects’ (as outlined above) driving each of these, do we find that cultural consumption has any further effect? And, more specifically to the case of the Egyptian revolution, do new social media and traditional literary genres have positive (or negative) effects?

With regard to media, our results certainly point to the positive importance of new social media and frequently to the no effect importance of traditional mass media – even after many other factors have been taken into account. This may be explained by the relative capacity of the state to control the editing and distribution channels of these respective media. Traditional media, which tend to be paper-based and filtered through editors, were easier for the state to

³ The same negative effect of relying on newspapers to get information on politics was also produced when we ran the same test on another question also measuring democratic support. That time the question read as follows: ‘Please tell me your opinion regarding the following statement: Democracy is a good means of solving social conflicts’.

control than new media, which can be directly author-generated and published instantly. This implies that the theory of cultural ‘fields’ of production (Bourdieu, 1993, 1996), much used in recent analysis of the Egyptian cultural scene (Jacquemond, 2003; Kendall, 2006; Mehrez, 2008; Duboc, 2011), articulates a tension that is not restricted to cultural producers but is reflected also in the opinions of cultural consumers. This might be explained in part by consumers’ predilection for material that confirms their existing opinions. However, it likely also demonstrates that the choice made by cultural producers regarding their field of operation – via the cultural apparatus of the hegemonic state (traditional mass media) or an autonomous independent cultural apparatus (new social media) – has a direct impact on the political attitudes of their consumers. This would explain why we are seeing that new social media generate significant support for democracy, while traditional media are linked to conformity with the status quo.

This distinction between the two types of media could also come down to the fact that new media adds the aspect of interaction, of debate, of the give and take characteristic of a democratic setting. It also enables one to be linked with diverse opinions that shake a belief in the superiority of just one opinion. Traditional media on the other hand, provides only for one-way communication and hence does not in essence make its user acceptance of differences of opinions associated with democratic settings.

With regard to traditional literary genres, our results have shown that traditional literary genres are of some in generating democratic support, whereas some products of mass culture have a positive effect. Hence our results support the widely held assumption that poets and writers played a role – albeit limited – in mobilizing political activity during the 2011 revolution, if not in mobilizing support for democracy *per se*.

Our results however should be considered with two caveats. First, the public consuming literary genres does seem to be tiny. The fact that only 6% of Egyptians recognise poetry as part of their cultural consumption seems particularly surprising, given the unparalleled longevity of this literary form in Arabic, its ability to bend to both prestigious and popular occasions, and its apparent prominence among protestors active in Tahrir Square and other sites during the revolutionary events of 2011. It may be that the overwhelming focus of both researchers and the international media on Tahrir Square as the centre of revolutionary and cultural activities has led to a skewed perception of the popularity of traditional literary genres, particularly poetry, among Egyptians generally. The assumption has perhaps been that the urban intellectuals who were politically and culturally active in Tahrir Square and at other sites of protest where cultural products abounded are broadly representative of Egyptians. With regard to both the popularity of literary genres and their links to support for democracy, this is apparently not the case. Nevertheless, it could be that literary genres *are* of greater political significance than their limited popularity implies. Certainly, they generate increased democratic support among the small minority of Egyptians who consume them. The important question then is: does this minority wield influence and can it impact decision makers? If so, literature might indeed be a catalyst for political change, but without the masses ever having been directly involved. Further analysis of this is clearly required.

Second, although we included a large number of controls and yet several of our independent variables remained statistically significant, the context Egypt is going through rapid and not necessarily linear changes. At such times, such effects could change at high speed. Subsequent research that expands on what is shown here would only put our argument and evidence to further tests at different time points. Future studies could also try to test whether normative democratic support is translated into actual democratic behaviour that could take the shaped of higher levels of participation or whether a gap exists in this regard. If indeed, such a gap exists, it would be worthy of explanation.

References:

- Abdulla, Rasha A. (2011) 'The revolution will be tweeted', *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, 3. Special Report on The Internet, <http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/CairoReview/Pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=89>
- Aboubakr, Randa (2013) 'The role of new media in the Egyptian revolution of 2011', in Walid El-Hamamsy and Mounira Soliman (eds) *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Postcolonial Outlook*, New York: Routledge, 231-45.
- Allen, Roger (Winter 1981) 'Contemporary Egyptian literature', *Middle East Journal* 35(1): 25-39.
- al-Mahadi, A. (1960) *Muyul al-Kibar li-l-Qira'a fi Mintaqa Rifiiyya*, al-Minufiyya: Markaz al-Tarbiya al-Asasiyya fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi.
- Bartels, Larry M. (1993) 'Messages received: the political impact of media exposure', *American Political Science Review*, 87(2), 267-85.
- Baumgartner, J. C. and Morris, J. S. (2010) 'Who wants to be my friend? Obama, youth and social networks in the 2008 campaign', in J. A. Hendricks and R. E. Denton (eds) *Communicator-In-Chief: How Barack Obama used New Media Technology to Win the White House*, Lanham, MD: Lexington, 51-66.
- Bimber, B. (2001) 'Information and political engagement in America: The search for effects of information technology at the individual level', *Political Research Quarterly* 54(1), 53-67.
- Boulianne, S. (2009) 'Does Internet use affect engagement? A meta-analysis of research', *Political Communication*, 26, 193-211.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1996) *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Colla, Elliot (31 June 2011) 'The poetry of revolt', *Jadaliyya*, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/506/the-poetry-of-revolt>
- Della Porta, D. and Mosca, L. (2005) 'Global-net for global movements? A network of networks for a movement of movements', *Journal of Public Policy* 25(1), 165-90.
- Derrida, Jacques (1978, orig. 1967) *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Dimitrova, Daniela V. et al. (2 November 2011) 'The effects of digital media on political knowledge and participation in election campaigns: evidence from panel data', *SAGE publications*.
- Duboc, Marie (2011) 'Egyptian leftist intellectuals' activism from the margins: overcoming the mobilization/demobilization dichotomy', in Joel Beinin and Frederic Vairel (eds) *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 61-79.
- Eickelman, D. F. and Anderson, J. W. (eds) (1999) *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington.
- Foucault, Michel (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Brighton: Harvester.
- El-Hamamsy, Walid and Soliman, Mounira (2013) 'The aesthetics of revolution: popular creativity and the Egyptian spring', in Walid El-Hamamsy and Mounira Soliman (eds) *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Postcolonial Outlook*, New York: Routledge, 246-59.
- El-Nawawy, Mohammed and Khamis, Sahar (2009) *Islam Dot Com: Contemporary Islamic Discourses in Cyberspace*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- El-Nawawy, Mohammed and Khamis, Sahar (2014) 'Blogging against violations of human rights in Egypt: an analysis of five political blogs', *International Journal of Communication*, 8: 962-82.

- Eltantawy, Nahed (2011) 'Social media in the Egyptian revolution: reconsidering resource mobilization theory', *International Journal of Communication* 5, 1207–24.
- Evans, Geoffrey and Whitefield, Stephen (1995) 'The politics and economics of democratic commitment; support for democracy in transition societies', *British Journal of Political Science* 25, 485-514.
- Frangieh, Bassam K. (2000) 'Modern Arabic poetry: vision and reality', in K. Abdel-Malak and W. Hallaq (eds) *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, Leiden: Brill, 222-50.
- Ghanim, Fathi (1995) *Ma'raka bayna al-Dawla wa-l-Muthaqqafin*, Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation.
- Gibson, R. and Ward, S. (2000) 'A proposed methodology for studying the function and effectiveness of party and candidate web sites', *Social Science Computer Review* 18, 301-19.
- Gil de Zuniga, H., Veenstra, A., Vraga, E., and Shah, D. (2010) 'Digital democracy: reimagining pathways to political participation', *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 7(1), 36-51.
- Gonzalez-Quijano, Yves (1998) *Les Gens du Livre: Édition et Champ Intellectuel dans l'Égypte Républicaine*, Paris: CNRS Édition.
- Groshek, J. and Dimitrova, D. V. (2011) 'A cross-section of voter learning, campaign interest and intention to vote in the 2008 American election: did Web 2.0 matter?', *Communication Studies Journal* 9, 355-75.
- Hendricks, J. A. and Denton, R. E. (2010) *Communicator-In-Chief: How Barack Obama used new media technology to win the White House*, Lanham, MD: Lexington.
- Hitti, Philip K. (2002, orig. 1937) *History of the Arabs: From the earliest times to the present*, London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howard, P.N. (2011) *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Iyengar, Shanto, and McGrady, Jennifer A. (2007) *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Jacquemond, Richard (2003) *Entre Scribes et Écrivains*. Paris: Sindbad.
- Jayyusi, Salma Khadra (1977) *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, Leiden: Brill.
- Kaufhold, K., Valenzuela, S., and Gil de Zuniga, H. (2010) 'Citizen journalism and democracy: how user-generated news use relates to political knowledge and participation', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 87, 515-29.
- Kendall, Elisabeth (2006) *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-Garde: Intersection in Egypt*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Kendall, Elisabeth (2015) 'Does literature matter?', in R. Allen and R. Ostle (eds) *Studying Modern Arabic Literature: Mustafa Badawi, Scholar and Critic*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Khallaf, Rania (11-17 August 2005) 'Change, not reform', *al-Ahram Weekly* 755, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/755/cu5.htm>
- Khamis, Sahar and Vaughn, Katherine (Summer 2011) 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian revolution: how civic engagement and citizen journalism tilted the balance', *Arab Media and Society*, 14, <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=769>
- Khamis, Sahar and Vaughn, Katherine (2012a) 'We are all Khaled Said': The potentials and limitations of cyberactivism in triggering public mobilization and promoting political change', *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 4, 145-63.
- Khamis, Sahar and Vaughn, Katherine (2012b) 'Cyberactivism in the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions: potentials, limitations, overlaps and divergences', *Journal of African Media Studies* 5(1), 69-86.

- Kitschelt, Herbert (1992) 'The formation of party systems in east central Europe', *Politics and Society* 20, 7-50.
- Klein, Menachem (2003). 'Egypt's revolutionary publishing culture 1952-62', *Middle Eastern Studies* 39(2), 149-78.
- Krosnick, Jon A., and Kinder, Donald R. (1990) 'Altering the foundations of support for the President through priming', *The American Political Science Review*, 84(2), 497-512.
- Langman, L. (2005) 'From virtual public spheres to global justice: a critical theory of interworked social movements', *Sociological Theory* 23(1), 42-74.
- Fish, M. Steven (2002) 'Islam and authoritarianism', *World Politics*, 55(1), 4-37.
- Stepan, Alfred and Robertson, Graeme (July 2003) 'An "Arab" more than "Muslim" democracy gap', *Journal of Democracy*, 14(3): 30-44.
- Lewis, Bernard (1993) 'Islam and Liberal Democracy', *Atlantic Monthly* 271(2), 89-98.
- Lipset, S. M. (1959) 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Development', *American Political Science Review* 53, 69-105.
- Livingstone, S. and Markham, T. (2008) 'The contribution of media consumption to civic participation', *British Journal of Sociology* 59(2), 351-71.
- Elbadawi, Ibrahim and Makdisi, Samir (2011) *Democracy in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit*, London: Routledge.
- Donno, Daniela and Russett, Bruce (2004) 'Islam, authoritarianism and female empowerment: what are the linkages?', *World Politics*, 56(4), 582-607.
- Mehrez, Samia (2008) *Egypt's Culture Wars: Politics and Practice*, London: Routledge.
- Mehrez, Samia (2012) *Translating Egypt's Revolution: The Language of Tahrir*, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Miller, Katherine (2005) *Communication Theories: Perspectives, Processes, and Contexts*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Newton, K. (1999) 'Mass media effects: mobilization or media malaise?' *British Journal of Political Science* 29(4), 577-99.
- Norris, P. (2000) *A Virtuous Circle*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2001) *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet Worldwide*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Oates, S. (August, 2008) *From Political "Surf" to Political "Turf?": Developing Website Analysis to Better Understand the Internet as a Political Catalyst*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2002) 'The virtual sphere: the internet as a public sphere', *Online Media & Society* 4(1), 9-27.
- Pew Research Centre (April 2013), 'Civic engagement in the digital age' http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media/Files/Reports/2013/PIP_CivicEngagementintheDigitalAge.pdf
- Prior, M. (2007) *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam (1991) *Democracy and the Market*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam et al (2000) *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-being in the World, 1950-1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Qualey, M. Lynx (17 April 2011) 'The era of Arabic poetry is over. Long live Arabic poetry', <http://arablit.wordpress.com/2011/04/17/the-era-of-arabic-poetry-is-over-long-live-arabic-poetry/>.

- Quintelier, E. and Vissers, S. (2008) 'The effect of internet use on political participation: an analysis of survey results for 16-year-olds in Belgium', *Social Science Computer Review* 26, 411-27.
- Rose, Richard (1992) 'Escaping from absolute dissatisfaction: a trial and error model of change in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4, 371-93.
- Rose, Richard and Mishler, William T. E. (1994) 'Mass reaction to regime change in Eastern Europe: polarization or leaders and laggards?' *British Journal of Political Science* 24, 159-82.
- Rustow, Dankwart (1970) 'Transitions to democracy: towards a dynamic model', *Comparative Politics* 2, 337-63.
- Saad, Reem (Feb 2012) 'The Egyptian revolution: a triumph of poetry', *American Ethnologist* 39(1), 63-6.
- Salih, Ruba and Richter-Devroe, Sophie (Spring 2014) 'Cultures of resistance in Palestine and beyond: on the politics of art, aesthetics, and affect', *Arab Studies Journal* XXII(1), 8-27.
- Sanders IV, Lewis and Visona, Mark (2012) 'The soul of Tahrir: poetics of a revolution', in Samia Mehrez (ed.) *Translating Egypt's Revolution: The Language of Tahrir*, Cairo: Cairo University Press.
- Swedenburg, Ted (Winter 2012) 'Egypt's Music of Protest: From Sayyid Darwish to DJ Haha', *Middle East Report* 265, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer265/egypts-music-protest>
- Thompson, John B. (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tripp, Charles (2013) *The Power and the People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman (1981) 'The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice', *Science*, 211(4481), 453-8.
- Kedourie, Elie (1994) *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*. London: Frank Cass.
- Voltmer, Katrin (2006) 'The mass media and the dynamics of political communication in processes of democratization: an introduction', in Katrin Voltmer (ed.) *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies*, New York: Routledge.
- Wasserman, H. (2007) 'Is a new worldwide web possible? an explorative comparison of the use of ICTs by two South African social movements', *African Studies Review* 50(1), 109-31.
- Wiest, Julie B. and Eltantawy, Nahed (2012) 'Social media use among UAE college students one year after the Arab Spring', *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 5(3), 209-26.
- Winegar, Jessica (2009) 'Culture is the solution: the civilizing mission of Egypt's culture palaces', *Review of Middle East Studies*, 43(2), 189-97.
- Yusuf, Sha'ban (2012) 'Al-shi'r wa-thawrat 25 yanayir: taqdim wa-namadhij', *Alif* 32, 312-37.
- Zelaky, E. et al (2006) *Implacable Adversaries: Arab Governments and the Internet*, Cairo: The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information. 26

Table 1: Sample demographics

Region		Gender	
Cairo	20%	Males	50%
Upper Egypt	35.50%	Females	50%
Lower Egypt	44.50%		
Education		Age class	
Illiterate	20%	Less than 25 years	30%
Secondary school level or less	50%	25 - 50 years	40%
University level	25%	More than 50 years	30%
Post-graduate level	5%		
Religion		Marital status	
Christians	15%	Married	60%
Muslims	85%	Non-married	40%

Table 2: Survey questions and operationalisation of predictors

Variable	Relevant survey question	Measurement
I. Dependent variable		
Normative democratic support (dependent variable)	<i>Tell us please, do you think that democracy, in which multiple parties compete for power through free elections, is the best system for governing Egypt?</i>	5-point scale answer (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
II. Independent variables		
Usage of Facebook/YouTube/Twitter; news websites; television, radio; newspapers	<i>Which is the main source you rely on to get information about politics?</i>	Dummies
Consumption of poetry; short stories; novels; plays; and songs.	<i>Do you read/watch/listen to ... ?</i>	Dummies
III. Controls		
a. Political factors		
Democratic experience	<i>How would you evaluate the actual practice of democracy in Egypt since the January 25th revolution?</i>	5-point scale answer (very good to very bad)
View on political parties	<i>Tell me your opinion regarding this statement: 'The main political parties in this country all offer the same sorts of programs'</i>	5-point scale answer (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Political efficacy	<i>Tell me your opinion regarding this statement: 'There is no point in voting because the government can't make any difference'</i>	5-point scale answer (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Political participation		Dummy
b. Economic factors		
Important factors for getting ahead in life (wealth, education, connection)	<i>Tell me how much (wealth, education, connections) are important for getting ahead in life in Egypt?</i>	5-point scale answer (very important to not important at all)
Living standard (household)	<i>Compared with five years ago, has your household's standard of living fallen a great deal, fallen a little, stayed about the same, risen a little, or risen a lot?</i>	5-point scale answer

Living standard (country)	<i>Thinking now of the country as a whole, do you think that compared with five years ago, standards of living have fallen a great deal, fallen a little, stayed about the same, risen a little, or risen a lot?</i>	5-point scale answer
Support for market economy	What do you think about the idea that a market economy, in which the private sector plays the major role in the economy, is the best system for Egypt?	5-point scale answer (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Perception of corruption	How widespread do you think bribe taking and corruption is among public officials (such as police, traffic inspection, local housing officials, etc.) in this country after the January 25 th revolution?	
c. Religion		
Muslim	Can you please tell me your religion?	Dummy
d. Demographics		
Education	What is the highest level of education that you have completed?	7-point scale (illiterate to post-graduate degree)
Age	How old are you?	Continuous

Table 3: Different kinds of media as main source of information on politics

Medium	%
TV	76
Newspapers	9.1
Internet news sites	4.4
Radio	1.8
Facebook, YouTube, Twitter	5.5
Other	2.1
Don't know	0.9
Refused to answer	0.4
N	1,983

Table 4 Levels of democratic support in sample

N= 1,995	Democracy as best system for governing
Strong Democrat	27.2 %
Democrat	40.5 %
Not Democrat	32.3 %

Table 5: Effect of consumption of media and cultural products on normative support of democracy (unstandardized betas)

Pseudo R ²	0.112	0.111	0.111	0.113	0.111	0.111	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.111
Dem. experience	.652***	.655***	.656***	.662***	.661***	.661***	.651***	.666***	.659***	.657***
View on parties	.220***	.214***	.209***	.206***	.207***	.207***	.212***	.196***	.208***	.213***
Pol. efficacy	.024	.026	.029	.026	.031	.024	.023	.010	.016	.029
Pol. participation	.929***	.981***	1.039***	.931***	1.035***	.991***	.998***	1.048***	1.079***	1.046***
Important factor for getting ahead:										
wealth	-.149***	-.158***	-.169***	-.166***	-.168***	-.166***	-.162***	-.167***	-.168***	-.166***
education	.147	.146	.138	.135	.143	.139	.141	.135	.141	.129
connections	-.066	-.066	.062	-.055	-.061	-.061	-.061	-.065	-.068	-.066
Living standards:										
household	-.108*	-.108*	-.103	-.116*	-.109*	-.111*	-.119*	-.099	-.106*	-.109*
country	-.134**	-.133**	-.121*	-.129**	-.130**	-.126**	-.148**	-.104	-.112*	-.129**
Support for market economy	.351***	.347***	.347***	.344***	.340***	.341***	.340***	.330***	.340***	.342***
Perception of corruption	-.002	-.000	-.000	.000	.001	-.000	.001	-.001	-.002	.001
Muslim	.499***	.495***	.499***	.496***	.501***	.509***	.491***	.485***	.514***	.504***
Education	.272***	.281***	.295***	.289***	.289***	.278***	.273***	.293***	.293***	.288***
Age	.001	.001	.001	.001	.000	.001	.001	.002	.003	.001
Weight	.025	.028	.030	.034	.033	.032	.036	.033	.030	.031
Facebook/Twitter/ YouTube	.648***									
Television		-.315								
Newspapers			-.204							
News websites				.826***						
Radio					.493					
Poetry						.331				
Short stories							.337**			
Novels								.225**		
Songs									.208*	
Plays										.067
N	1788	1788	1788	1788	1788	1787	1787	1788	1788	1788

* = p < .10; ** = p < .05; *** = p < .01.

Figure (1): Consumption of cultural products (%)

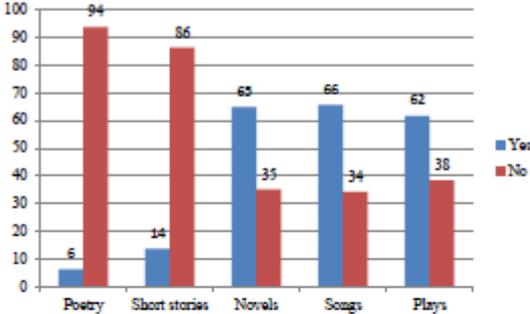


Figure (2) - "Do you see Egypt mainly as what type of country?"
All respondents compared to consumers of different cultural products

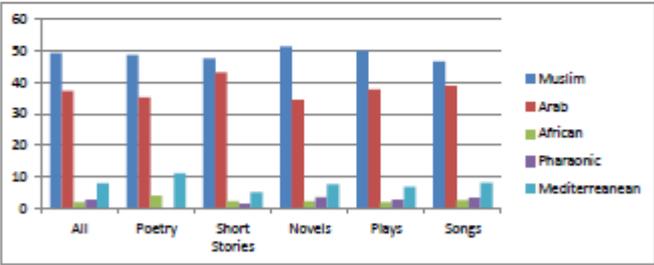


Figure (3) - "Would it be okay with you if the political leaders of our country have a different religion than yours?" All respondents compared to consumers of different cultural products

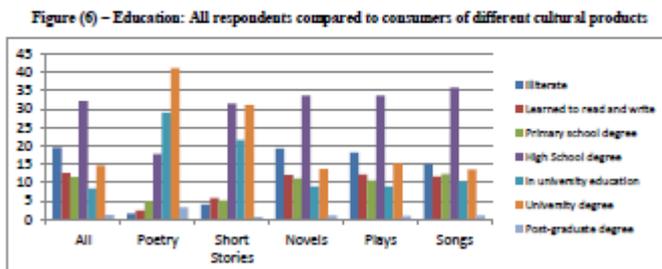
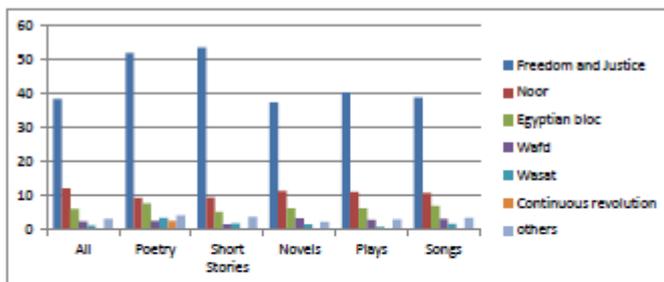
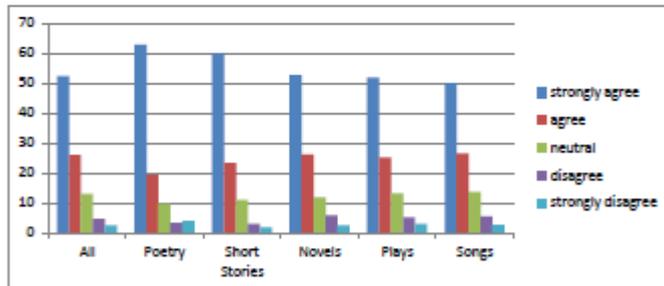
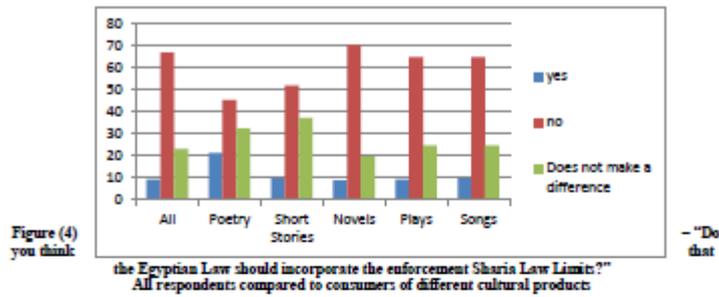


Figure (7) – Age: All respondents: compared to consumers of different cultural products:

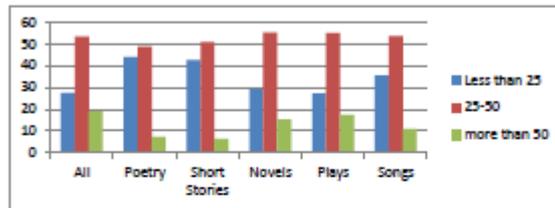


Figure (8) – Support for market economy: All respondents: compared to consumers of different cultural products:

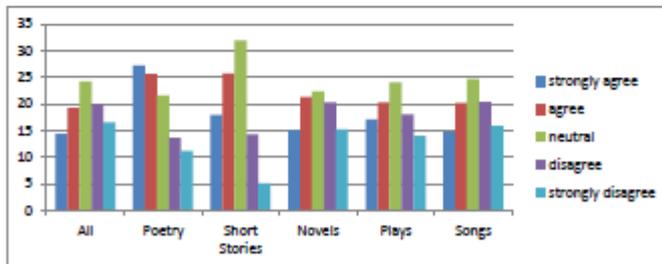


Figure (9) – “How far do you agree that a man’s job is to earn money while a woman’s is to look after the home and family?”
All respondents: compared to consumers of different cultural products:

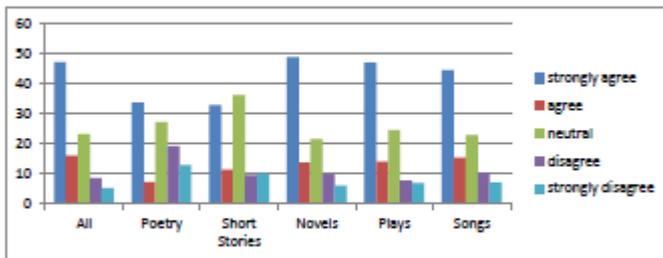


Figure (10): Main source for accessing each of these cultural products (%)

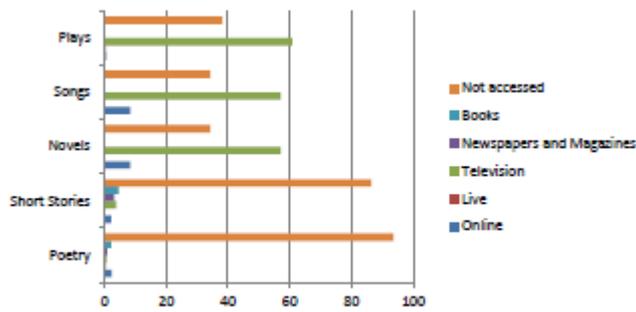


Figure (11): Importance of cultural products in shaping political views (%)

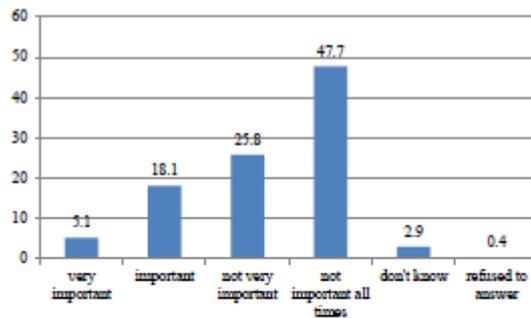


Figure (12): Importance of cultural products in shaping political views depending on which product is consumed (%)

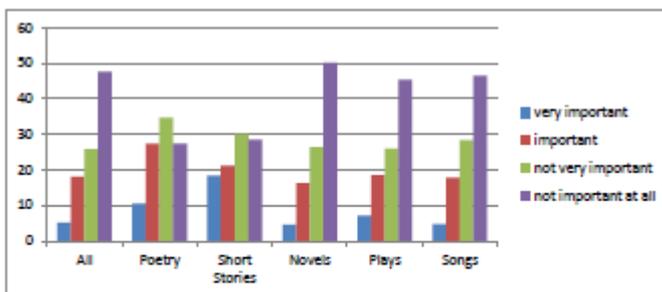


Figure (13): Main Importance of cultural products to respondents (%)

