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RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN CYBERSPACE:

IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP

AMONG EUROPEAN MUSLIMS AND EGYPTIAN COPTS

A Thesis Submitted by

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DEDICATION

To those who died while they chanted “Bread, Freedom and Social Justice,”
to the martyrs of the Egyptian Revolution who dreamed of a new social contract
superseding injustices of the regimes and stupidities of the polarizations
Finally, I finished my master's thesis; it is a long journey that I’m happy to make it. This thesis is a step on my road of seeking and sharing knowledge. Passion gave me the energy to continue my work on this thesis and to condense scattered thoughts and experiences. I'm thankful for many people who allowed me to pursue my true passion and finish my thesis.

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III
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All thanks are due to Allah in the beginning and in the end
The study explores how religious minorities can utilize the Internet in handling their hybrid identities and how the different online platforms can reveal the diverse perceptions within the same minority group. The case study qualitative method was adopted. European Muslims and Coptic Christian Egyptians were tackled as major models for analyses. The study brought different historical and conceptual backgrounds to the discussion and tackled the case of the European Muslims by utilizing the researcher’s observations gleaned from her previous experience as an editor of IslamOnline’s European Muslims page, and by conducting descriptive and thematic analyses of selected websites of different European Muslim entities. The study tackled the case of the Egyptian Coptic Christians through conducting both in-depth interviews and thematic analysis of selected websites and Facebook pages. The study showed how both the European Muslims and the Egyptian Coptic Christians encountered the question regarding the circles of affiliation and how they reacted differently to this question while they were managing their online platforms. Despite the disparity among the online platforms studied regarding the levels of vision and content, the study showed how most of these minorities’ online platforms need to develop their discourses and tools in order to address the offline diverse stances. They also need to play a more prominent role in framing issues of citizenship and integration.
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I. Introduction

There have been debates whether it was necessary to advise veiled women to take off the hijab in order to maintain their safety [after 9/11], but I insisted that I was not willing to take the risk. I refused to change the way I practice my religion, or to allow fear to stop me from observing my beliefs. If I did this, I would be failing in my duty as a citizen.

— Shelina Janmohamed, *Love in Headscarf: the perfect gift*¹, 2010

“Watch out! Do not go; do not wear a Cross; wear a scarf on your head when you go out; do not pass by the demonstrations; and do not write something on Facebook.” All of these things are manifestations of fear and attempt to control others’ actions by claiming to be concern about them. Have you thought before about depending on God and being fully submitted to him and living strong and being active in your society?!

— Evronia Azer, Evronia’s World web log, 2012²

It is strange that we Copts see the similarity between our isolation within the Muslim society due to the lack of understanding and the isolation of Muslims in the [Western] World for the same reason.

— Shamei Assad, *Christian’s Alley*, 2010³

¹A translation from the Arabic edition of the book based on the author’s blog, translated by the researcher,
²A translation from the Arabic section of Evronia’s World web log, translated by the researcher,
³A translation from the Arabic edition of the book based on the author’s blog, translated by the researcher,
The above quotations involve the voices of two different social groups sharing the position of a “religious minority.” Despite all the complexities and differences, a common tone could be found among these quotations, with regards to questioning and confronting discrimination while maintaining an active position based on citizenship, and based on spotting the peculiarities and challenges. The influences of majority - minority categorization can be found, on both micro- individual and macro- community levels, but they should be viewed within their different social, political and historical contexts. Such a categorization does not operate in an isolated vacuum and its impact should not be perceived as a static and inevitable one. In fact, dramatic changes, within the larger context, can take place due to the possible interaction of diverse voices, actors and power relations.

A simplified view, not devoid of truth, tends to suggest that representing people becomes the role of the media after this has been relatively perceived as being the role of literature. But with the emergence of the digital media, some scholars explain how more space has been created for voicing different individual and institutional attitudes. Dan Gillmor (2004) believes that the new grassroots (digital) media present “the most democratic form of journalism” by being the voice of the voiceless (p.29).

Terry Flew (2009) used the argument of Albert Hirschman’s Exit, Voice and Loyalty to shed more light on the institutional differences between the “centralized mainstream media” and “citizen journalism.” According to Hirschman, voice is defined as “any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or various collective types of actions or protests” (quoted in Terry, 2009, p.4).
This study aims to explore how religious minorities can utilize the Internet in addressing their concerns and handling their hybrid identities and also how the different online expressions can reveal the diverse perceptions, among the same social and religious group, of these complex contexts and interactions. The study uses qualitative methods in analyzing the content of selected digital platforms that represent certain trends of fellow citizens with different religious backgrounds.

The study focuses on both European and British Muslims and Christian Coptic Egyptians as major models of analysis. Historical and theoretical propositions are recalled and reconsidered throughout the analysis. Primary and secondary sources are used in studying the positions and experiences of British Muslims and Copts in both offline/online contexts. An in-depth analysis is dedicated to study the case of Coptic Christians through primary fresh sources including in-depth interviews and critical analysis of web content. Certain points of time are also considered while looking into deconstructing, or emphasizing and originating different discourses and narrations. An instance of this relation is the beginning of the millennium when the dramatic incidents of 9/11 took place and brought to the forefront the question of the relationship between Islam, Muslims and the West. At the heart of such a debate were necessarily the Muslim minorities in the West.

Only a decade later, the Arab revolutions or the “Arab Spring” were the key incident that caused, among many other crucial issues, the position of non-Muslim minorities to resurface, especially that of the largest community, the Christian citizens. Both the fragmentation of the political scene and at a certain point of time the political rise of Islamists influenced such a discussion. Currently, the focus on “religious” minorities is closely linked to those two major incidents with their significant influences on both local and global levels.
These key incidents have been further intertwined with the information revolution and communication technologies. Relevantly, and according to Mandaville, (2001) media technologies permit us to “reproduce and sustain forms of different identities across great distances.” Mandaville tackles the influences of media technologies through the analysis of translocality where information and opinions flow between and across diverse spaces (quoted in Bunt, 2009, p.17). The use of the Internet and new social media, by diverse groups in several contexts, has become an interesting field of vivid studies characterized by interdisciplinary and multi-perspective analyses. Despite the great differences between the two religious minorities/social groups subject to study, each of whom has their own historical and cultural peculiarities, a more profound insight could help in conducting an adequate analysis that would in turn enhance our understanding of identity and citizenship with their overlapping definitions and models. Choosing the Internet as the environment for the analysis facilitates the discussion and re-addresses relevant concepts of marginality, self-image, representation, networking and integration.

**Insider/outsider Binary**

In studying the cases of both European Muslims and Copts, the researcher has to swap positions between her religious and national identities. Being a Muslim Egyptian, the researcher attempts to make use of her partial familiarity with each social group or minority to conduct a realistic comparative analysis. Despite the relative familiarity with these social groups, biases and deficiencies can be found because of cultural differences, sensitivities and ignorance of different details that might problematize the assumptions, etc. Curiosity, academic guidelines, and past journalistic experiences helped, to some extent, provide the researcher with techniques to address biases and deficiencies. Observations, consultation, and
exposure to different textual and actual experiences were additionally used to limit any possible shortcomings.

The researcher experienced different situations where conceptual frameworks and editorial decisions were required during her work as the managing editor of the islamOnline’s European Muslims page (from 2006-2010). In 2005, the researcher proposed to launch a new section where a larger space can be made for in-depth and specialized coverage of European Muslims. The purpose of launching such a page was to reveal how Muslims living in Europe are in a unique position to address Muslim transnational issues and challenges as they are at the coalface of different debates. The researcher scanned different European Muslim websites and discovered how a lot had to be done in representing the European Muslims dynamic issues in Cyberspace.

At that time, most of these websites were for organizations and were not regularly updated nor make full use of the Internet characteristics. Considering the above mentioned details, the European Muslims page aimed to

Examine the different hypotheses about the Muslims ‘capability of integration and to oppose the ghetto tendency

- Become an authentic source, for both Muslim and non-Muslim users, for information, analysis and interactive forums.
- Help European Muslim communities to build their coalitions and networks, in their countries, as active citizens.
- Introduce the different initiatives for understanding and dealing with the cultural sensitivities.
Advance the different attempts among Muslim scholars trying to arrive at intellectual and judicial frames of reference which are clearer and better adapted to Muslims in European contexts.

These missions were tackled through diverse sections as follows: Fiqh & Islamic Thought, Family, Community & Civil Society, Politics & Citizenship, Art & Culture and Education. The quality of the outputs was determined by various factors including the availability of qualified reporters, facing the challenges of linguistic barriers and the structural challenges (e.g. deadlines, financial and logistic requirements…etc). Additionally, interactive sections (including live dialogues, discussion forums, directory databases and polls) were developed to guarantee more multi-perspective views and overcome the challenges of covering the issues of the European Muslims communities with their topical, geographical and generational diversity. Monthly and annual plans were outlined to specify the goals and the page’s work was reviewed through goals achievements reports on weekly, monthly and annual bases. One of the major problems the page had faced was the occasional imbalance in representing the diverse European Muslim communities with their various ethnical, ideological and organizational backgrounds.
The above mentioned editorial experience helped the researcher in identifying the study sample and the methods for analyzing this sample. Additionally, and based on the same experience, the researcher noticed the importance of considering the different institutional and financial structures and their impact on the production of the studied websites' content.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Historical and Conceptual Backgrounds

Defining “minority” is an increasingly difficult challenge. The concept involves different demographic, socio-economic, political, national and international complexities that contribute to its ambiguity. Saba Mahmood (2012) discusses how it is difficult to decide whether “minority” is “an objective designation” or a “subjective psychological process.” A more objective definition should refer to ethnic, cultural or linguistic traits distinguishing a group (minority) from the larger circle (the majority), while others underline how only a subjective understanding (by a certain group) of their distinguishing traits could define their status as a minority (p.427). Even the statistical facts about a minority and their numeral proportion compared to the majority could embed connotations of caution and reservation.

Elizabeth Iskander (2012) touches upon this problem as “the government estimates that Copts make up around 6 per cent of the population, whereas some Church sources claim the proportion is between 15 and 20 per cent” (p.23). On the other hand, Professor Yasir Suleiman (2009) described how “largely because of post-war migration, the British Muslim community has grown from some twenty thousand in 1950 to around 2 million at present, or about 3% of the population” (p.9). Similar to the Copts in Egypt, the Muslims are the largest religious minority in Britain (Suleiman 2009); but Britain is more diverse than Egypt ethnically and theologically. Iskander (2012) considers the dispute over the accurate figure of the Copts as an indicator of the management of Muslim–Christian relations in Egypt and also of the role that religious identity plays in national politics (p.24). For British Muslims, and as they have a young age profile, the increasing growth of British Muslims numbers might be introduced, by some media outlets and right wing supporters, and especially at time of crises,
as a threat and a “demographic bomb.” Therefore, the demographic controversies might lead to the marginalization of the minority fueled by a possible dominance of the majority and/or the fear of the mushrooming of the minority.

Dealing with the possible negativities of being a “minority,” each minority uses different techniques and tools based on its history of emergence and developing positions. Usually, the European Muslims face the question of belonging and loyalty in a bipolar sense. For instance, and in British Muslims context, there is a recurring question “Which are you primarily: Muslim or British?” Using such a challenging question, some British Muslim researchers distinguish between the different levels of identity. Dilwar Hussain (2004) differentiates between the religious philosophical characteristics associated with the level of Muslim identity and the national or territorial characteristics of British identity. Hussain, among others, explained how the Muslims are not an exception in this sense; “just as one could be Christian and British, or Humanist and British, so one can be Muslim and British, without the need for contradiction, tension or comparison between the two” (p. 103).

Although there is a historical relationship between Islam, Muslims and Britain, the community of British Muslims has been formed and has boomed after different waves of post-Second World War immigration. This historical fact influences the argument of British Muslims in settling and adjusting their position. Hussain (2004) uses the diversity within Britain to stabilize the position of Muslims as British citizens. He shows the importance of realizing how Britishness is not a monolithic or homogenous identity and how traveling through the British Isles could manifest the amazing “range of different regional customs and habits, norms and subcultures and dialectual variations” (Hussain, 2004, p. 104). While the European and British Muslims are facing the question of either/or, the Copts address the
question of identity in different ways. Lise Paulsen Galal (2012) discussed how Christians re-build their counter narration to emphasize the sameness and the differences versus the national Muslim majority not only to show their peculiarity, but also to offer themselves “a way out of their marginal position as a minority.” Galal (2012) noted that “by allowing the narratives of sameness and difference to converge, the Copts reject the dichotomy of being either/or” (p. 56).

The Coptic history and culture in Egypt allow the Coptic Christians to reject the “minority” status through the narration of “firstness.” According to Galal (2012) Copts reject an ontological given “otherness” (driven from their perception of the “dhimmi status” that they were assigned during the Muslim caliphates). On the other hand, “Copts claim what one might term ontological ‘Firstness’ by referring to their presence in Egypt since the year 42 and to their participation in the national independence movement at the beginning of the twentieth century” (p.48).

Although Copts do not show the paradox between the geographical and the philosophical components of their identity as in the case of British Muslims, Galal (2012) explores a different kind of dilemma the Copts might encounter as

Coptic identity in Egypt today takes shape through interaction with the hegemonic narrative of national unity and sameness. On the one hand, as the power of definition at the national level is in the hands of the Muslim majority, by supporting the sameness narrative too blindly, the Copts risk losing their Christian identity. On the other hand,

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Historically, Christians living under Islamic rule were usually treated as “protected [dhimmi] peoples”; the practical implications of dhimmi status fluctuated from time to time and from place to place (Kimball, n.d.)
by isolating the specifically Coptic narrative within the Church context, the community risks withdrawing from the wider interpretation of Egyptianness (p. 48)

One of the major entities qualified to deal with the paradox of sameness and difference was the Coptic Church. Rather than adopting the spiritual / political dichotomy in analyzing the roles of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Galal (2012) introduced the Church as a counter public space where the “marginalized groups are able to express oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs...[And] where they can discuss and practise their interests without the intervention of the majority” (p.52). Through her work, Galal (2012) explained how the Church does not suspend the narration of sameness between the Copts and the Muslim majority, but it intertwines this narration with “morally appropriate narrative of the Church .Thus, the Church is constituted as a socio-political and moral locality” (p.48). Accordingly, the Christian identity, promoted by the Church, counters any sense of inferiority or marginality based on historical and ethnographic characteristics; on the contrary, it integrates Egyptianness into the primary identity of Christianity.

Unlike Egyptian Copts, British Muslims do not have a central hierarchical representative body that could constitute a counter public sphere as the Orthodox Egyptian Church does. Subsequently, British Muslims tend to adopt a blend of primary and sub-identities. Hussain (2004) pointed out that “recent research among Muslim youth shows that many young people are blending the local identities of their environment and friends and the culture of their parents to come up with new, hyphenated identities such as British- Pakistani-Muslim” (p. 68). The European Muslims are exploring innovative legal and intellectual frameworks to adjust their position and handle their visibility and unique social code in their larger European societies. These innovative frameworks are not only dealing with the
European and British majorities, but also with “the Muslim community, who are not convinced of the need for integration” (Hussain, 2004, p. 107). Different challenges are introduced in this context including the conflict of loyalties.” Hussain (2004) re-emphasized how Muslims are not an exception in this regard as loyalty is “multi-faceted and operates at different levels. Each one of us regularly balances loyalties to ourselves, our families, our work commitments and careers, our friends, the community, the nation, etc. Often these loyalties can clash, but this is not a case just for Muslims…” (p.104).

The European and the British Muslims face a double challenge as both their national affiliations as well as their belonging to the authentic “Islamic” traditions are one question. Engaging with this controversy, Hussain builds up his argument by advancing a series of basic questions. “What does it mean to be Bangladeshi or Egyptian?” “What makes these nations Islamic?” “Is it then just a matter of presence or numbers, i.e. that Muslims in these countries are in a majority?” “Well, how about Indian Muslims or in Malaysia, where the population is about 50% Muslim?” It seems that the issue really is an emotional one (p.101). These logical questions are significant, but Hussain (2004) could not ignore other factors as he brings more complexities to the discussion by addressing the historical animosity and modern tensions between Muslim countries and Western countries that make it more difficult for people to expect the activation of Western Muslim identities.

The historical and the modern tensions between the Muslim World and the West might not only contribute to form the Muslim World perceptions of the Muslim minorities’ status in the West, but also, and to a certain extent, they might influence the Muslim majorities’ perceptions of their non-Muslim fellow citizens’ status, especially in Arab
Muslim countries. In light of this assumption, Saba Mahmood (2012) tended to refute ahistorical methods in approaching the question of minority in the Middle East.

Relevantly, Mahmood decided to explore neglected historical dimensions in discussing the “religious sectarianism in the modern period” by considering national and international regulations and constraints rather than introducing the concept of “religious freedom” as universally valid. Through her work, Mahmood highlights how religious liberty was far from being “a stable signifier and meant different things to different actors.” These differences were often shaped by various legal, historical and “inter- and intra-state dynamics” (2012, p.423). In this context, and according to Mahmood, one historical key incident like the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 could be narrated and perceived in two different ways. On the one hand, for the Europeans, it could be seen as

A foundational moment in the emergence of the twin concepts of religious liberty and state sovereignty that not only brought an end to almost a hundred years of religious warfare among Christians but also paved the way for the eventual creation of a political order in which religious tolerance became an integral part of modern governance and state-craft (p. 420)

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5 The Westphalia area of north-western Germany gave its name to the treaty that ended the Thirty Years War, one of the most destructive conflicts in the history of Europe. The war or series of connected wars began in 1618, when the Austrian Habsburgs tried to impose Roman Catholicism on their Protestant subjects in Bohemia. It pitted Protestant against Catholic, the Holy Roman Empire against France, the German princes and princelings against the emperor and each other, and France against the Habsburgs of Spain. The Swedes, the Danes, the Poles, the Russians, the Dutch and the Swiss were all dragged in or dived in. Commercial interests and rivalries played a part, as did religion and power politics (Cavendish, n.d.)
On the other hand, and specifically in the Muslim World, the very same historical transformation is considered to be “the repeated attempts by Christian European rulers to assert their right to protect Christian minorities within the Ottoman Empire throughout the sixteenth century” (Mahmood, 2012, p. 421). Historically these attempts extended to the nineteenth century and the discourse on religious liberty in the Muslim Arab World was linked to the questions of sovereignty. The Western allegations of protecting the religious minorities had not been perceived similarly by all the non-Muslim minorities in the Muslim World. Significantly, and historically, “Coptic Christians proudly distinguish themselves from other Christian communities of the Middle East for repeatedly resisting European offers for protection, and for fully participating in the anti-colonial movement that overthrew British rule.” (Mahmood, 2012, p.430)

After the emergence of the post-colonial Arab nation-state, and especially during the last three decades, different overlapping phenomena have taken place including sectarian violence and the increasing manifestations of religiosity and the so-called “confessionalization of Egyptian civic-public life.” These developments returned the old dilemma of the “minority” status to the forefront of the scene and forced the Coptic Christians in Egypt to engage with it. For some thinkers and activists, Copts should meet the requirements and the adoption of the international language of “minority rights” in order to counter any kind of discrimination and marginality. For others, it’s still the model of “national unity” experienced in 1919 that could guarantee the national harmony and equality. The tension between these two perspectives, among different other Coptic perspectives, might color the arguments of both religious liberties and citizenship in the Egyptian scene. In this context, the stance and the role of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church seem central. Different analyses attribute the increasing role of the Coptic Church to both the internal
dynamic within the Church as well as to the model of the Egyptian soft state allowing the emergence of so-called confessional public space.

The origins of the internal factors of the Coptic Church revival can be traced back to the reforming “Sunday School Movement” in the nineteenth century. Rachel M. Scott (2010) traced the causes and phases of this reforming process. She discussed whether this reform was a result of countering the Protestant missionaries and critiques of the Orthodox clerical hierarchy.

The Sunday School Movement, founded in 1898, had a slow but sure impact as it accelerated during the 1940s and the 1950s in Egypt when it was largely led by “educated laymen drawn from new urban upper-class university graduates … among them Nazīr Gayyid, who became the steward of the Sunday School Movement and went on to become Pope Shenouda III in 1971” (Scott, 2010, p.67).

The Sunday School Movement has cultural peculiarities among which are the traditions of glorifying “legendary local figures.” The revival and the re-constructing of Coptic identity was not only about the legendary figures, but there was also, and according to Galal, the re-imagining of the space as “… nodal points of Egyptian Christian topography: structural signs, such as buildings and tombs, and natural signs, such as trees, rocks, caves and mountains which are not only physical but also have been ascribed sacred meaning…” (Galal, 2012, p.54).

Randall P. Henderson (2011) added to the characteristics of the Sunday School Movement in “The Egyptian Coptic Christians: the Conflict between Identity and Equality”
where she described the traits of the movement as “apostolic, monastic and marked by martyrdom and persecution” (p.155). But these cultural manifestations of the “Sunday School Movement” have not operated in vacuum. Rather, they are influenced by political powers and the appearance of certain milestone historic changes. Subsequently, one can imagine the complex web of relations between the Church, the State and the other social and political national powers.

Various analysts highlighted how the political process in Egypt became “more religious” and how it marginalized the Copts. While many assumptions linked between this scene and the increasing “Islamization” of the political public sphere, more in-depth analyses include more sophisticated historical, cultural and institutional factors. Generally, the confessional tenet of the public scene in Egypt is attributed to the late-ex-President Anwar El-Sadat, but others put it differently and linked the phenomenon to the president of the post-colonial republic, Gamal Abdel Nasser, as he put the control of the Coptic laymen’s Communal Council (Majlis al-Milli) in the hand of the Pope and as the religious endowments were shifted to the Church. Mahmood (2012) described these shifts as “a shot across the bow at the secular Coptic elite who had fought to develop a critical political voice against not only clerical excesses but also Muslim-dominated national discourse” (p.434). Mahmood interpreted these procedures that might seem inconsistent with Nasser’s well-known tendencies to modernization and nationalization by assuring that “this was not because Nasser was religiously biased against the Copts but was the result of a series of complex socio-economic policies and developments that transformed post-colonial Egyptian identity and by extension the public and political life of the Coptic community.”
Eventually, and according to Mariz Tadros (2009), these procedures and policies led to a long-term consequence of enshrining the Church as the sole representative of Copts in Egypt and “religious affiliation became the Copts’ main marker, not their citizenship” (cited in Mahmood, 2012, p.436). Moreover, the psychological impact of the 1967 defeat also had its influences on fostering the religious sentiments and visibility for Muslim and Christian Egyptians; “a boom in the construction of Churches followed, and many new benevolent funds were created, some with money from Coptic emigrants abroad. There was also a surge in the number of Copts who became monks” (Scott, 2010, p.68).

Ex-President Anwar El-Sadat had a blunt clash with Pope Shenouda III. Sadat’s regime (1970–1981) is regarded as “having opened the door for the polarization of Muslim identity along confessional lines” (Mahmood, 2012, p.436) For the escalation of the rate and the visibility of the sectarian tensions. The organizational developments and changes of the Coptic Church under Pope Shenouda III proceeded during former President Mubarak’s era and were, occasionally, perceived as a threat to the government (Henderson, 2011). On the other hand, and with the increasing withdrawal of the state from carrying out its social and civic commitments, there was unannounced but significant agreement between the State and the Church that has “to further consolidate its [the Church’s] control over the social and civic life of Copts, while pledging obsequious allegiance to the president and his corrupt National Democratic Party” (Mahmood, 2012, p.438). But more deeply, the actual relationship between the State and the Church was far from being static linear one.

In “The ‘mediation’ of Muslim–Christian relations in Egypt: the strategies and discourses of the official Egyptian press during Mubarak’s presidency,” Elizabeth Iskander (2012) discussed how “under Mubarak, the Patriarch’s status as the Copts’ political
representative remained relatively stable. However, this did not prevent the use of proxies to convey each party’s position or to contest the power relations between them.” (p.42).

Although sectarianism appears to be a multi-dimensional sophisticated problematic cause, in most cases, the Egyptian regimes tended to engage with its security angle. Iskandar (2012) described how even the discourse of “national unity” in countering tensions was reduced to be “a parroting of slogans, regardless of realities on the ground” (p.36). In spite of the different contexts and peculiarities, both the Copts and British Muslims suffered the negativities of the securitization of their positions and issues.

For the Copts, the sectarian conflict which escalated since the 1970’s, was a legitimate cause for the regime to maintain its repressive stance. For the European and British Muslims, and as Tariq Modood(2006) explained, the upsurge of international terrorist incidents (including 9/11, Madrid bombings (2004) and 7/7 London bombings) have led to questioning the claims of the accommodation of a Muslim minority (p.52).

The failure of the security model adopted by the Egyptian regime announced the tragic al-Qiddissin Church bombings that took place on the New Year’s Eve in 2011. Many observers pointed to how al Qiddisin Church bombings marked a new phase in the relations between the Church and the Coptic youth. The Coptic youth were too angry to be appeased by the usual attitudes of the Church and the State in dealing with these kinds of attacks. Al Qidissin Church bombings were followed less than a month later by the January 25 Egyptian revolution and the overthrow of Mubarak on February 11, 2011. The model of

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6Twenty-three people died as a result of al-Qiddisin Church bombings, which occurred as Christian worshippers were leaving a New Year Eve service. Some 97 more were injured. The attack was the deadliest act of violence against Egypt’s Christian minority in a decade. The target of the bombing was al-Qiddisin, the Saints Church, a Coptic Church located in SidiBechr district of the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria (BBC, 2001)
ElTahrir Square during the early days of the revolution (described later as an idealistic Utopia) was an inspiring model overcoming different polarizations and divides among the Egyptians including the Muslim-Christian one. The manifestations and the symbols of national unity, including the cross and crescent visual symbol “encapsulating the ‘same but different’ concept” for Egyptians, were restored (Iskandar, 2012).

The Egyptian Revolution had impressed the whole world and many expectations rapidly followed. British columnist Yasmine AliBahi-Brown was among those who adopted this optimistic view immediately after the Revolution. She used the models of Arab youth revolutionaries to address the status of some European Muslim younger generations and to confront their pessimism, depression, and radical tendencies. In an opinion piece published in The Independent on Monday 28 February 2011, she wrote

In recent years small numbers of British Muslims have gone to Chechnya, Afghanistan, Somalia and elsewhere to fight or blow themselves up either for legitimate causes or as warriors of Islamicism…This time [Arab revolutions] is optimism that draws them. The martyrs they see in Libya and Egypt are sacrificing themselves for a better real world… (The Independent, 2011)

With the political traps of the transitional phase following the outset of the Arab revolutions, most of these optimistic views did not last long. The concerns and the uncertainties overshadow the stances of different groups including the non-Muslim Arab and Egyptian citizens towards the Arab revolutions. After the Maspero massacre\(^7\) in October 2011, in

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\(^7\)Maspero demonstrations were staged in October 2011 by a group dominated by Egyptian Copts in reaction to the demolition of a Church in Upper Egypt claimed to be built without an appropriate license. The peaceful protesters who intended to stage a sit-in in front of the Maspero television building were attacked by security forces and the army, resulting in 28 deaths, mostly among the Coptic protestors, and 212 injuries (Wikipedia, n.d).
which Copts were run over by army vehicles under SCAF\textsuperscript{8}, and with the political rising of the Islamists, the concerns and suspicions escalated and some observers, e.g. Samuel Tadros, were encouraged to adopt a polarized pessimistic view of the revolution by describing it as a “Coptic Winter” (2011). On the other side, in his thesis “Seizing the Moment of Opportunity? Emerging Movements of Coptic Activists in Egypt,” Christiansen (2013) focused on what he described as “secular turn” defined as “the conditions that led activist to front a separation between Church and State” (p.10). He noticed how after the revolution, and especially in 2012-2013, the demonstrations organized by the Coptic activists “were not oriented at confessional goals, such as discrimination and Church attacks, but fronted demands for a secular and democratic Egypt” (p.11).

With the unsettled political scene and the Egyptian strife towards a vivid model of citizenship, it is quite expected that the Copts would attempt to increase the media utilization, among other tools and techniques, to express both their concerns and their opportunities.

In most cases, the above mentioned historical and structural complexities and the diverse voices within the Egyptian Coptic communities are not addressed thoroughly, whether in the mainstream media (especially the state –owned media) and/or in the private media which are influenced by a more polarized Muslim/Christian, Religious / Civil oversimplified arguments and where the Muslim-Christian relations are tackled only in the contexts of crises, sectarian tensions or in a folkloric occasional way.

\textsuperscript{8}The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) is the governing body of 21 senior officers in the Egyptian military. The council is held only in case of war or great insurgencies. As a consequence of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, SCAF took the power to govern Egypt from its departing President Hosni Mubarak on 11 February 2011, and relinquished power on 30 June 2012 upon the start of Mohamed Morsi’s term as President (Wikipedia, n.d).
Thus, the following part of the literature review discusses whether the Internet and the new social media share certain characteristics which can accommodate the representations of religious minorities and to overcome the structural problems of the mainstream traditional media.

B. Minorities Issues between the Mainstream Media and the Internet

This part examines the differences between traditional media and the new media in dealing with the issues of minorities through exploring how some researchers and intellectuals tackle the questions of social media networks, public space and connectedness and if the new media could lead to political mobilization or any kind of social change.

The criticism of the discourses and structures of the mainstream media (whether the state owned or the private models) paved the way for the flourishing of the “alternative” media to re-interpret scenes and incidents from different perspectives. According to the American Linguist and Philosopher Noam Chomsky, alternative media is not simply different from mainstream media in presenting another worldview but it is institutionally distinguishing; working in a different way.

According to some observers, there was a kind of exchangeable relationship between the mainstream media and alternative Muslim press, in the British case that has taken different forms “as writers from the Muslim press were invited to write in the mainstream Press. Although events in the US [after 9/11] were the stimulus and main focus of the media, they also provided an opportunity to consider other matters of significance to Britain’s
Muslims” (Ahmed, 2005, p.118). And in this context, the Internet stands to be a source of alternatives to mainstream opinions.

In “iMuslims and Cyber-Islamic Environments,” Gary Bunt (2009) provided us with details on how the Muslim individuals and groups utilized the web at a time of crisis and how this has enlarged the circle of the audiences of the Muslim responses. After the 7/7 London bombings, and according to Bunt, different British Muslim organizations had quick reactions and issued statements condemning the attack on their websites. Bunt described these immediate responses as an effective and significant way to diffuse audiences and reach both Muslims and non-Muslims as “other media players, such as the mainstream newspapers and broadcasters, placed hyperlinks to them in their reportage” (p. 9).

Utilizing the characteristics of the web helps European Muslims adopt a more interactive attitude towards their societies. However, this would not be achieved by imposing specific solutions or directing European Muslims along a certain path without considering the different contexts. The problematic relationship between cultural, ethnic and religious identities should be considered in debating the position of Islam in Europe. Also other factors should be considered including Muslims’ administrative status in Europe that varies from one country to another, the relation between the state and the religion in the European countries, and the differences between Muslim generations, as the younger generations may face distinct situations.

For the European Muslims, building up networks is not only about emphasizing their religious and cultural affiliations as Muslims, but it is also about practicing their citizenship and their belonging to different local and national European circles. Historically, the media
have come at the end of the European Muslims’ help list of priorities to accommodate themselves in their European societies after strenuous efforts to find worshipping places, *Halal* foods, schools, employment …etc. The weak engagement between Muslims and the media allowed the environment that breeds misunderstanding of Islam and Muslims to flourish. To be media-friendly requires conditions that will help in breaking the cycle of difficulties in changing the stereotypes about Muslims.

On different occasions Muslims, complain that because Western journalists know so little about Islam, they sometimes quote ill-informed people or people misusing the religion. Dilwar Hussain (2004) acknowledged the large influence of the media and pointed to the dominant power of the media in the context of searching for meanings and identities.

It may not be an exaggeration to say that no such force existed in the past in visual, electronic, audio and print format; constantly on, constantly interacting with us. Ranging from a reflection of what happens in society to allowing us to escape from what happens in society, the media constantly nudges and challenges us (p. 89).

Despite all the deep differences between the European Muslim experiences, and the above-mentioned narrations of “firstness,” sameness and differences of the Christian Egyptian Copts, a common ground could be seen in the incapability of the mainstream media to address the problems of the two communities and reveal the complexities of their positions. Elizabeth Iskander (2012) discussed the dominant central discourses adopted by the “official media” (especially during Mubarak presidency) in countering sectarian tensions. Iskander explained how the Egyptian state manipulated and handled the concept of “national unity” in dealing with the “sectarian tension.” Covering the sectarian tension by the State
media and before the booming of the private media and digital one framed the issue as an outside conspiracy. Consequently, the purpose of the coverage was damage limitation, defending Egypt and national unity against a ‘foreign campaign’. Iskander (2012) focused on the coverage of the Egyptian leading state-owned newspaper Al-Ahram by selecting a sample of how it covered the issue at different points of times. She highlighted how the coverage was based on displacement of blame and undermining the narratives of media sources not controlled by the Egyptian state and using selective historical narrations to frame the Muslim-Christian relationship as capable of overcoming any actual problems. “In this way, national unity discourse is defended, not only by attributing blame for the cause of conflict to outside forces, but also by undermining the authenticity of ‘outsiders’ by questioning their understanding” (Iskander, 2012, p.38).

Mohammad Siddique Seddon (2004) stated that living in any society involves a constant negotiation of our different values and ideas, allegiances and loyalties. Many researchers stressed the negotiable and dynamic nature of the concept of “identity,” a nature that could be expressed and interacted with through cyberspace. Allucquere Rosanne Stone (1991) defined cyberspace as “incontrovertibly social spaces in which people still meet face-to-face, but under new definitions of both ‘meet’ and ‘face’” (p.83).

In cyberspace, one can represent oneself in different ways by highlighting certain aspects of one’s experiences and hiding others under what has been coined as “selective self disclosure.” Subsequently, cyberspace gives users the opportunity to construct and deconstruct their identities. On the other hand, and with the recognition of the “heightened sense of the individual and self-identity” within the Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), cyberspace also provides collective communities a similar opportunity.
Jan Fernback (1997), in “The Individual within the Collective: Virtual Ideology and the Realization of Collective Principles”, connected between our physical and virtual existence and indicated that our analogue existence in cyberspace is partially characterized by the tensions that emerge between the individual and the collective in the post-industrial society (Jones, ed., 1997, p.48).

Understanding the complications of the virtual individual and collective representations in cyberspace can help a lot in studying minorities and different religious existences online. Generally speaking, the Internet seems to be the “voice of the voiceless.” According to Gary Bunt (2000), “minority opposition may believe that cyberspace is an environment in which religious, cultural and sectarian differences can be articulated with great safety.” (p.33)

Considering the conflict of ignorance and history of misunderstandings between the East & the West, Sociologist of Culture and Communication Armando Salvatore envisioned the sophisticated relations between the Muslim world, the West and the Media. Salvatore (2011) put the question of the media and its impact in the context of Orientalism:

Not by chance the immediate follow-up to Edward Said’s Orientalism was a book he dedicated to Covering Islam[Said 1978; Said 1981]. In this work, Said indicted Western media’s distorted coverage of the Islamic world, usually depicted as a heap of deficits and lacks of conditions for producing modern societies and polities (p.3)

Starting a debatable discussion, Salvatore (2011) linked two key turning points (also related to this study) and how they are perceived through the Orientalist lenses.
While the wave of obsession with Islam in connection with terrorism that precede 9/11 had not surprisingly bolstered the bluntest orientalist visions (as witnessed by the success of the book *What Went Wrong?* by Bernard Lewis, one of the masters of Twentieth century’s orientalist narratives), it is more astonishing that the events of 2009-2011, instead of contributing to sharply reverse this narrative, as it should have been expected, have created a new fertile terrain for sociological orientalisms. (p.3)

Salvatore (2011) refuted the theories indicating that the Internet and its more interactive version embodied in the Social Networking Sites (SNS) could lead to political and social changes. Salvatore (and other researchers) tackled the Arab revolutions and the role of the SNS in the context of such refutation. He questioned the ability of the Web 2.0 to resist “orientalist stereotypes.” Moreover, he warned against the possible role of Web 2.0 to deepen these stereotypes. He critically demonstrated how the West introduced the bloggers in the Arab world as “mostly young, educated, secular, middle class, Western-looking and ultimately ‘liberal’.”

According to him, this perspective reinforces Western biases that the agents of radical changes in the Middle East are acting in a Western like-minded “closed societies” within the Middle East (Salvatore, 2011). Aided by the sociological and intellectual literatures in criticizing Orientalism and Western Culture hegemony, Salvatore (2011) re-addressed the impact of Facebook and Twitter on the socio-political changes in the Middle East.

This development is reflected in the idea itself of a ‘Facebook Revolution’ that has been coined and propagated to define the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, as much as the
Iranian protests of 2009 were celebrated as a ‘Twitter Revolution.’ According to Greg Burris, this type of interpretation has configured as what he acidly dubbed the new coming of ‘Lawrence of E-rabia’ (p.2).

The critique by Salvatore seems inspiring on both conceptual and methodological levels, but it should not be magnified to the extent that would obscure viewing the impact of the new social media (investigated by different researchers and scholars) and its role as a catalyst for change and not a sole producer of change. Self-verification, social categorization, representation, and networking are among the vital operations that interact and form architecture of different electronic communities.

Creating a homogenous unified body to represent social groups (including religious minorities) does not sound possible in the context of sophisticated multi-stratified societies. The concept of "network" could introduce a creative pattern in this respect. Instead of the rigid classical organizations, the "networks," whether online or offline, might give space for more hyphenated affiliations and hybrid identities to interact in more flexible and dynamic ways. Again, the Internet seems to embody this idea perfectly as one can define the Internet as a complex of networks.

Manuel Castells (1998) describes the “networks” as a set of interconnected nodes where the relations configured by the speed of operating information technologies which determine the density, exclusions and inclusions of the networks. Different prominent scholars attempted to look deeply and reconsider the definition of “networking.” They noted the notion of networking is part of a larger picture: “more important than just the idea of network are the styles and modes of communication that facilitate the formation of new and
overlapping forms of community, trust, and association” (Eickelman & Anderson, eds., 2003, p.1).

After the start of the Arab revolutions, Manuel Castells answered a question about the power of network. He clarified how “the key issue in facilitating the turning of mere connectedness into mobilization might be the density and speed of the latter, which allows the network actors using social media to resist repressive measures and strike back” (cited in Salvatore, 2011, p.7). In reaction to Castells’ answer, Salvatore warned against ignoring a deep look into “the milieus that have the potential to generate this density and speed as something more than a merely technically winning situation” (Salvatore, 2011).

Considering Salvatore’s warning and without ignoring the impact of the social media, Augusto Valeriani (2011) examined the nature of the connectedness caused by the social media and asserted that social media have had exactly the merit of facilitating and amplifying highly mobile patterns of connectedness. The most important part of this connectedness, according to Valeriani, is its idle sides (the opportunity for entertainment and chatting) as these sides “have proved to be, within contingent situations saturated with legitimate rage, a more powerful potential for mobilization than the traditional means of organized political groups and parties” (Salvatore, 2011, p.7).

At the dawn of the millennium, the phenomenon of blogging has evolved on both national and global levels. Blogging re-emphasize the role of the individual voices and could take the form of a platform of citizen journalism and/or personal views and insights. Just like other different communities, religious minorities used blogging and creative writing tools to articulate the intra group challenges as well as their complicated relations with their larger
societies. In this regard, both the British Muslim female Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and Christian Egyptian male Copt Shamei Assad have had significant blogging experiences. Janmohamed is the author of *Love in a Headscarf* and blogs at [www.spirit21.co.uk](http://www.spirit21.co.uk) where, basically, she shared with the reader her journey to find her spouse, and during this journey the reader learns a lot about the challenges of engaging with one’s larger society, while one could have different social codes and a desire to observe one’s religious obligations. According to Janmohamed, she wanted “enjoy life and find love.” Although Janmohamed’s work could be categorized as personal writing, it sheds light upon different complicated details of living as a younger female British (or European) Muslim. Moreover, her work touched upon the challenges that faced Muslims in Europe after 9/11 with the activation of islamophobia and the seasonal rising of the radical rightwing groups.

Shamei Assad is the author of *Christian’s Alley* book based on his writings at [www.kasakiswarak.blogspot.com](http://www.kasakiswarak.blogspot.com). In *Christian’s Alley*, Assad directs his book to the Egyptian Muslim majority. Assad aims to re-attract the attention of the Muslims to see how Coptic Christians are increasingly suffering in what he described as an “unfriendly environment.” He shares snapshots from Copts daily lives and different forms of visible and subtle discrimination. Different unique creative writings tackling the Christian - Muslim relations in Egypt appeared ahead of the Egyptian Revolution and attempted to underline the fact that something needed to be done to deal with these tensions that surfaced and resurfaced in a chaotic manner. The book of *Astigmatism of the Brain* by Mina Shenouda and Mustafa El Sayyad (2011) can be seen as one of these attempts. Shenouda & El Sayyad are Christian and Muslim friends who decided to write a book warning against the polarized monolithic vision in perceiving the “other” referring to the fellow citizens with different religious identities: Muslims vs. Christians. They use the metaphor of astigmatism, a disease that
causes visual distortion as it forces the patient to see either the longitude or latitude. Shenouda and El Sayyad warned against a kind of mental astigmatism and how this disease can affect the insight just as it affects the sight by preventing people from seeing multidimensional realities. Similarly, Assiut Citystan (2010), a novel by physician and novelist Michel Prince, artistically pictured the realm of Coptic youth in urban areas in Upper Egypt. One of the focal points of the novel was showing the discrimination against Copts, especially at the level of University appointments.
II. THEORATICL FRAMEWORK

This thesis draws on the social identity theory and its integrated sub-theories and arguments. According to Henri Tajfel, who plays a central role in shaping the theory, it “seeks to explain modes of self classification, cleavage to one’s group (whether minority or majority) and feelings of inferiority or superiority with in-group membership compared to out-groups” (cited in German, 2004, p.32). Basically, social identity theory tends to explore the psychological consequences of a perceived membership of a certain group, but the theory has developed to reveal how this certain group would react to the challenges imposed on the group (Turner, 1999, p.7).

German brings the personal background of Henri Tajfel to reveal Tajfel’s motivation to shape the social identity theory. Being a World War II Jewish refugee, Tajfel tended to depend on categorization as a way to understand the self and the society. Adopting this perspective, Tajfel explained how viewing the outsiders (the out-group) Jewish minority by the Aryan German majority sparked a catastrophe such as the Holocaust (German, 2004, p.34).

Interpersonal-Intergroup Continuums

“Tajfel suggested that social behavior varied along a continuum from interpersonal [reflecting the personal relations and characteristics] to intergroup [reflecting a collective behavior determined by memberships of social groups].”(Turner, 1999, p.8). The interpersonal-intergroup continuum was used by Tajfel to describe the interactive processes that could form certain positions between the two extremes. When a certain social group tends to go closer to the intergroup extreme, its members tend to see the out-group members in a more homogenous and uniform way (Turner, 1999, p.11).
Subsequently, many theorists tend to introduce “Social identity” as a set of different theories (or processes) that are essential in understanding collective behavior, real-life intergroup relations and the complexities in stratified societies (Turner, 1999, p.8). One of the interrelated processes to social identity theories is “categorization.” According to Hogg (2001), categorization as a cognitive function enables individuals to perceive the world as structured and predictable. Categorization is one of the most basic and essential of all cognitive processes that helps one focus on contextually relevant and meaningful aspects of the world (Cited in Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p.95).

Despite its cognitive functions, categorization might be the process from which reductionist stereotyping can erupt. But the developments of the “social identity” theories faced the tendency to reduce the theory into one-dimensional linear process that involved certain psychological input and caused a psychological outcome. The emergence of “self-categorization” can be seen in light of an attempt to elaborate and contextualize the psychological component of the relevant theories. “Acknowledging the causal role of social and psychological content is a way of facing the specific political, historical and ideological facts of society and moving to the interactionist social psychology which Tajfel advocated so powerfully”(Turner, 1999, p.9).

Categorization revolves around the idea of transforming the relations among people into similarities and differences or more precisely into perceived similarities and differences. The theoretical developments, including self-categorization, suggested that people do not categorize themselves and others in a fixed absolute given way and that different contexts and stimuli should be considered in processing the categorization. Generally, people have
different social identities which take their places in a particular order that could be changed for various internal and external interactions. In identity theory and social identity theory, Stets & Burke (2000), introduced the sister theories of “identity and social identity. In social identity, the main difference lies in the fact that self-classification is based on the membership of a group or category, while in Identity theory, it is based on the roles that one occupies.

Stets & Burke (2000) drew on the classical classification of social integration into “organic and mechanical forms” developed by one of the founding fathers of sociology, Emile Durkheim. The organic relations refer to the affiliations to social groups, while the mechanic relations refer to the roles occupied within these social groups. These differentiations and the multiple social identities bring the question of how those identities work and stimulate. Engaging with such a question, Oakes developed the concept of “Salience.” According to Oakes (1987), a salient identity can be defined as “one which is functioning psychologically to increase the influence of one's membership in that group on perception and behavior” (quoted in Stets & Burke, 2000, p.230).

Considering the term “salience,” Stets & Burke (2000) continued with their comparative approach between social identity and identity theories, while the first indicates how a salient identity is an activated one in certain situations; the other indicates the probability that an identity will be activated in another situation. “Salience is not only a cognitive perceptual process but also a social process in which people may compete or ‘negotiate’ over category salience” (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p.19). Oakes (1987) developed two related notions to the social identity salience: accessibility and fit (Hogg & Reid, 2006). People tend to draw on the social identities that turn to be more accessible for organic chronic reasons or through
accumulated experiences and situations. According to many theorists (for instance, Mackie, Hamilton, Susskind, & Rosselli, 1996), “gender and race are social categorizations that are often both chronically and situationally accessible” (cited in Hogg & Reid, p.12)

People examine if certain categories apply to their own perception of similarities and differences through a series of gradual, logical and comparative processes. This examination is called “fit”. If the examination failed to obtain an optimal level of fit, people resort to other accessible social categories. In the course of these processes, people prefer to favor the intergroup characteristics (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Both depersonalization and self-verification are central cognitive processes in social identity theories. Depersonalization reflected the concept of self-viewing of the individual as an embodiment of the in-group traits and associated norms. On the other hand, self-verification appears as a similar process but functions through perceiving a role within the group. Ironically, and although the social identity theories focus mainly on the activation of a collective or a group identity, the individual seems to be responsible for activating the related social identity or categorization. Moreover, the activation is determined by one’s position in a certain social structure. But as it is emphasized above, the process of activation does not work in the vacuum. Acknowledging the importance of the individual skills and purposes does not stop the researchers from considering the concept of “fit” of a stimulated identity in certain situations in the social identity theory, as well as the concept of structural commitment as it is emphasized in the identity theory (Stets & Burke, 2000).
Prototype & Representation: Studying Minorities

The recognition of certain affiliations is related to “perceiving” such an affiliation. The other and self-perception of a certain identity is essential in activating social categorization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Cognitively, individuals represent the social categories through prototypes. Prototypes are “fuzzy sets, not checklists, of attributes (e.g., attitudes and behaviors) that define one group and distinguish it from other groups” (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p.10). The group prototype has a practical critical implication which is “representation.” Representations stand for a series of comparisons within and between groups. These comparisons are context-dependent and they could vary according to the degree of familiarity, accessibility of the comparing groups as well as the goals of the comparison.

The depersonalization embedded in the social categorization process influences our perception of the categorized groups. People tend to view social groups through the lens of relevant prototypes, and thus simplify many social, emotional and structural complications that could determine the behaviors of a certain social group. Moreover, and through the prototype perspective, the unique individuals could be turned into embodiments of collective attributes and fed the cycle of stereotyping (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Obviously, social categorization of out-groups involves a group prototype as well. Hogg (1993) suggested that “a group prototype involves the salient characteristics that define a typical member of that group. As a prototype is shared amongst group members, it also identifies group norms and stereotypes” (quoted in Code, J., & Zaparyniuk, N., 2009, p.95).

The influence of the depersonalization on the collective level received criticism from different researchers as it presented the individual members of a certain group as one-
dimensional people. Despite the criticisms of the group prototypes, researchers tend to believe that social collective identities are more powerful than the individual identities (Code, J., & Zaparyniuk, N., 2009, p.95). Social Identity theory deals with the in-group / out-group categorization, in addition to the intergroup relations. The consequences of these comparisons and processes could help in studying many social phenomena interrelated with the minority-majority interactions including ethnocentrism (Stets & Burke, 2000, p.226), prejudice and discrimination among others. For instance, Myna German (2004) invoked the social identity theory to “explain extreme minorities’ media behavior, which could differ from that of the majority groups” (German, 2004, p.22).

As mentioned above, prototype is important for self-perception and social categorization especially if the in-group is so central in reflecting who we are and how we are different compared to the out-group (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p.11). The more the members of a certain group adhere to the prototypical model, the more they become central members within their group. And therefore, the marginal group members are those who do not fully adhere to the group prototypical model. Moreover, according to Marques (etal, 2006), “in high-salience groups, low-prototypical in-group members are marginalized and evaluatively downgraded—they are often treated more negatively (as ‘‘black sheep’’) than out-group members holding a similar position” (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p.21). Leaders utilize the position of the marginal members to emphasize the in-group traits and peculiarities and to make the group’s normative structure more durable (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p.45).

But one can posit that the polarization of marginal vs. central (and/or) leader members within a group is problematized in role-based identities. Different relations and perspectives can be involved and negotiated within an in-group. The role-based identities
expressed a kind of interconnected uniqueness as “the emphasis is not on the similarity with others in the same role, but on the individuality and interrelatedness with others in counterroles in the group or interaction context” (Stets and Burke, 2000, p.226).

Overcoming the simplification does not stop by revealing the complex relations and roles within a group, but it reaches the core of defining the concept of identity itself. Researchers discussed how both the collective and the public identity of certain religious, national, or ethnic group would “evolve in the face of considerations both internal and external” (Richardson, 2010, p.15). Identities are not introduced as solid static concepts; they could change due to overlapping complex processes. Richardson demonstrated how a number of researchers have studied identity change associated with social movements. Identities can be amplified, reduced, extended, consolidated, fragmented, retracted and transformed in different contexts and for various reasons. A special focus is given to minority groups as the potential of being exposed to a greater external pressure is higher (Richardson, 2010, p.15). One of the ways to look into the processes of identity categorization and negotiations could be done through virtual communities in cyberspace. Social identity theories and perspectives continue to be meaningful to study presenting and constructing personal and collective identities in digital environments.

**Online Attachment: Social Categorization & Interpersonal Bonds**

Similar to the actual communities, it is essential to have a sense of community in order to create an attachment to a certain e-community. As with Tajfel’s intergroup – interpersonal continuum, there are two ways of creating attachment: the first is achieved when people perceive similarities between themselves and the traits and purposes of a group, and the second is achieved by developing interpersonal bonds and relations among the members.
(Ren et al., 2012, p. 845). Similarities between ourselves and a certain (on/offline) group create initial attraction and could enable individuals to realize their differences as well. According to Jenkins (2000), “this comparative process is identified in social identity theory as ‘internal and external moments of dialectic identification’” (quoted in Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p. 95).

Basically, we are combinations of different social identities and roles. Electronic communities provide us with an extension of our social roles and contexts and therefore they could help us develop our social identification (Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p. 92). But the social identification is not a simple one-dimension process; it is interrelated with the internal-external dialectical. Jenkins (2004) linked the dialectic processes to the distinction between the nominal (the label identity) and the virtual identity (the experience of the nominal identity). Cyberspace represents an adequate environment where there are various opportunities for “identity experimentation” (Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p. 93).

Despite the similar processes of social categorization and identification between the offline/online environments, some researchers look into the unique traits and characteristics that create profound differences between the two environments. For instance, Bargh & McKenna (2004), McKenna, Green, & Gleason (2002), and Walther (2007) discussed how “relative anonymity, selective self-disclosure, physical appearance, and the ease in finding ‘familiar others’ through search, embedded traits, and predefined groups” represent the major differences between face-to-face and online communication (cited in Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p. 95).
Some of the major characteristics of digital environments are embodied in the social network sites and how they facilitate and strengthen community building through different tools, including customization of profiles and posting pictures, videos and messages (Keller, 2011). Moreover, researchers tend to resemble the process of “depersonalization” in social identity theory to the sense of anonymity on the Internet as both of them encourage the affiliation to a collective group. The tendency to group differentiation and recycling stereotypes are also observed in digital communication environments. However, most researchers concluded that digital communication might foster these differentiations and gaps, but they do not create them (Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p.95).

With the emergence of Web2.0 and the over-changing technologies of User Generated Content (UGC) and User Created Content (UCC), some researchers believed that social identity theory could provide us only with one perspective in defining our current in-flux identities (Keller, 2011). Facing the overdeveloping social and culture phenomena especially within the electronic communities, one can also examine the extensions of the social identity perspectives motivated by internal dynamics and including “elements of self-consistency, self-regulation (Burke 1991; Burke and Stets 1999; Stets 1997), self-verification theory (Swann 1983), and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1989)” (cited in Stets & Burke, 2000, p.232). The key concept that could be found through all these theoretical extensions is how people counteract any kind of disturbance that might cause inconsistency between their perceptions of themselves and their identity standards (Stets & Burke, 2000, p.234).
II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This study examines the experiences and interactions among religious minorities in different online/offline (con) texts. To strengthen the reliability of a study, and according to Johannessen, Tufte & Chrosterffsen (2010), the researcher should introduce a thorough description of the context in order to “provide the reader with the same presumptions before being exposed to the analysis”. “An open and transparent description of the method one used throughout the process” should also be highlighted (cited in HidalgoTenorio, 2011 p.24). This section demonstrates the methods and the presumptions of the study, and a more detailed description of the major sections of the study is also provided.

Basically, the study benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. The study tackles various historical and conceptual complexities of religious minorities’ positions through both the literature review chapter and the theoretical framework one. Exploring the previous theoretical work has helped in determining the Research Questions.

Research Questions

The study aims to conduct a qualitative analysis of how religious minorities utilize the Internet to re-address their hybrid identities through the Research Questions as follows

RQ 1: How do both Coptic Christians and the European (British) Muslims utilize the Internet to manage their hybrid identities? What kind of online discourses and tools do they use to highlight their understanding of citizenship and religious affiliations?
RQ 2: How does the Internet reveal the Coptic Christian diverse voices, actors and the motivations of identity salience?

Tackling the question of “how,” the study adopts an explanatory approach, brings to light the different contexts of the phenomenon, and provides descriptive and analytical information by using a qualitative methodology to show how religious minorities utilize the Internet to re-address their hybrid identities.

Method
The study adopts the case study qualitative method to deal with the Coptic Christian Egyptians and European Muslims two communities with their different historical and conceptual backgrounds. A case study allows taking advantage of multiple sources of information and triangulation that could strengthen the accurate findings of explanatory research questions. George and Bennett (2005) attributed the explanatory qualifications of the case study to its capability to deal with “operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence.” They also regard the definition of the case study method “to include the comparative case method as well” (cited in Christiansen, L. 2013, p. 31). According to R.Yin (2009), a case study is “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.18).

The case study has different methodological qualifications to justify using it in this study including how it is more concerned with hypothesis generation than hypothesis-testing. Moreover, according to Gerring(2007), a case study “gives insight into causal mechanisms (a pathway from X to Y) rather than measures the causal effects of this mechanism” (cited in Haakenstad .M, 2013, p. 16).
The case study method appears more adequate to avoid any “conceptual stretching.” According to George and Bennett (2005), “conceptual stretching refers to the application of concepts in contexts where they do not belong.” A culture-sensitive approach can be borrowed from “political sciences” as Sartori (1970) warned against the “uncritical travelling” of the Western political vocabulary that could empty the concepts of meaning. Allowing a more comprehensive analysis, the case study could help in studying how dynamics and tools can work in different contexts. The interactions and the contradictions among the different virtual individual and collective representations of religious minorities make cyberspace too chaotic for a researcher to study. However, according to Ryen (2002) and Yen (2009), this chaotic nature could be reduced by the context –sensitive approach of a case study which increases the ability to achieve internal validity through showing causal mechanisms in detail and by excluding alternative paths (cited in Christiansen, L. 2013, p. 32).

**Research Structure**

The status of the European Muslims is tackled by drawing on primary and secondary sources. The researcher uses previous theoretical and conceptual literature, existing research findings, outputs of the researcher’s previous work as an editor of IslamOnline’s European Muslims section (2006-2010), features of community-based debates and initiatives, combined with updated descriptive and analytical remarks on some of the related European Muslims’ online communities and representations.

Special focus is given to the status of British Muslims for the reasons as following:
• The English language factor that facilitates the analysis of the British Muslim Online communities as opposed to European Muslim communities.

• The demographic features of British Muslims as being one of the largest and most diverse Muslim communities in Western Europe.

• The larger relative personal experience of the researcher with this community through visiting various British Muslim organizations and interviewing some of their representatives.

One of the characteristics of the case study qualitative method “is that the unit under special focus is not considered a perfect representation of the population” and hence we cannot generalize the findings; instead we can “transfer the knowledge to other cases considered to be similar” (Hidalgo Tenorio, 2011 p.16). Considering the peculiarities of each case, some of the European Muslim thematic issues are cautiously used in advancing questions related to the Egyptian Coptic Christians and collecting new qualitative information to study their status.

The internal validity of a case study, according to Ryen (2002), is strengthened by the researcher’s immersion into the context of the case and a deeper understanding of the field (cited in Christiansen, L. 2013, p.47). Accordingly, the researcher tended to participate in various relevant discussions and conferences, and was exposed to Coptic Christian web pages, blogs, and different media outlets in order to expand her knowledge of the topic. Primary sources are used to study the offline/online interactions of the Egyptian Coptic Christian communities by conducting in-depth interviews. These interviews investigated the visions of the diverse intellectuals, activists and (web) journalists reflecting their various
(sometimes contradictory) stances on managing and negotiating national, social, religious, and political identities.

**In-Depth Interviews**

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted from February 15 – April 22, 2013. The interviews had some pre-planned questions based on the theoretical literature and frames including social categorization, managing sameness and difference between the majority and the minority, the role of the different actors including the Church and the State, the differences within the Coptic communities and the intragroup mechanisms and, the impact and the structure of the mainstream media versus the Internet and the new social media. Other questions were generated during the interviews and allowed the emergence of more dialectical interactions and new perspectives.

**Descriptive and Thematic Analyses**

In this study, engaging with the offline contexts (through the interviews) is combined by exploring online representations of the Copts and by using descriptive and thematic analyses methods. The critical analysis of the different online sites was conducted in March-April 2013. Individual, collective and institutional (professional) levels of Coptic Online expressions were tackled through analyzing online representations. In the context of such analysis, a selected number of websites as well as Facebook pages were chosen as follows:

- Basically, the researcher typed in the words 'Coptic' and 'Egyptian Christian' using Google search engine. After browsing and scanning different findings, a prioritized shorter list was produced. The researcher used Alexa.com to rank results of the short list (Alexa.com
is a website traffic-ranking service that provides the ranking of any site based on the total number of visits over a three-month period).

- The websites and Facebook pages suggested by the in-depth interviews respondents were taken into consideration in producing the shorter list of the selected online platforms.

The discussion of the thematic and critical analyses is followed by the conclusion where the researcher revisited the research questions and the previous theoretical and descriptive work. Limitations and the recommendations are also highlighted at the end of the study.
IV. EUROPEAN MUSLIMS IN CYBERSPACE

This chapter aims to investigate the status of the European and/or British Muslims within their larger societies by tackling the major conceptual and organizational challenges facing these communities. The chapter mainly uses thematic analysis as well as the researcher’s observation of different online platforms to arrive at an understanding of how European Muslims utilize the Internet to manage their hybrid identities. In this context, this chapter analyzes how different conceptual and operational definitions of identities are presented through European Muslim websites. Both the macro and micro perspectives in tackling the issues of citizenship and integration can be traced through different European Muslim online expressions. Moreover, the organizational and personal levels of online representations are discussed. The output of this chapter sets a list of minorities-majorities related themes, actors and categorizations to be discussed and re-examined in the context of exploring the status of the Coptic Christians.

Background Information

Currently, Western Europe is home to more than 15 million Muslims; most of them are youth (Europ-Islam.info). The level of religiosity of European Muslims increased since the 1990s making Muslims more visible. The young European Muslims have identity questions. Demographically, the number of Muslims on the continent has tripled in the last 30 years. This might make some European governments and official bodies worried about the future of the continent and its identity.

The socio economic state should also be addressed. Unlike Muslims in the United States, who belong largely to the middle class, most European Muslims are economically
disadvantaged, poorly integrated, and tend to cluster in closed communities. They are predominantly post-World War II immigrants who arrived as manual workers from different ethnic backgrounds. The underachievement of European Muslims is caused by different barriers including language, faith, culture, identity, tradition, economic standing, education, employment, and prejudice.

Despite all these challenges and beyond the specifications of the European context, European Muslims, on both theoretical and actual levels, may work as a catalyst to re-evaluate important issues and concepts within the European societies as well as the Muslim world. Muslims living in Europe are in a unique position to address complex interactions including different models and requirements of integrations, definitions and spaces of religiosity and secularism, attitudes towards people of other faiths, political participation, and engagement in civil society.

The position of the European Muslim communities was among the changes in the public consciousness tackled by Jürgen Habermas (2008) in his lecture titled “Notes on a post secular society” where he discussed how the “public consciousness in Europe can be described in terms of a 'post-secular society' to the extent that at present it still has to ‘adjust itself to the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment’.” Habermas attributed the change in consciousness primarily to three phenomena among which are “the visibility and vibrancy of foreign religious communities also spur the attention to the familiar Churches and congregations.” Habermas focused on the impact of the Muslim minorities in Europe by addressing how “the Muslims next door force the Christian citizens to face up to the practice of a rival faith. And they also give the secular citizens a keener consciousness of the phenomenon of the public presence of religion.”
The Controversy of European Islam

Responding to the challenges of adjusting their positions, European Muslims are dealing with the controversy of producing the so-called “European Islam” introduced by German Political Scientist Bassam Tibi in the early 1990sand which caused different reactions. Some intellectuals (most of them Muslims) see that there are not many “Islams” but there are many expressions of Muslim lifestyles. According to their views, Islam encapsulates values and ideas and could be manifested in different cultural expressions depending on certain actual contexts. Other observers believe that the concept has more credibility since “European Islam” for them is not a mere product of Western liberals, but an accommodation of Islam with European social and cultural patterns and reconciling Islamic thought with religious and political pluralism.

Despite all these vivid debates and the possible role of European Muslims as a catalyst in the intellectual and structural senses, these aspirations and ideas do not work in a vacuum. On the contrary, the performance of European Muslims is determined by different historical and current complications. During the last decade, and especially after 9/11, different crises of understanding (e.g. French Ban of Hijab, Danish Cartoons ridiculing Prophet Mohammed, the Dutch politician Wilders' Movie attacking Qur'an …) brought back to the surface the debatable interactions between Islam, Muslims and Europe. European Muslim communities form a key factor in these sensitive situations.

As European Muslims continue to redefine themselves in their communities, discussing choices and decisions in adequate platforms seem of enormous importance. The Media are a major actor allowing these platforms to moderate and publicize these discussions. Online
expressions are varying in addressing the issues of European Muslims from two different perspectives: First, the theoretical (macro) one, discussing how European Muslims can arrive at intellectual and judicial frames of reference, which are clearer and better adapted to Muslims in the European context; and second, the practical (micro) perspective considering the different experiences and views on a daily life basis.

A number of European and British websites were chosen based on previous literature reviews, and according to different techniques including

- Putting “European Muslims,” “British Muslims” in Google search engine
- Filtering the results and producing a shorter list

Throughout the analyses of the selected websites, the researcher focused on the related concepts and arguments of integration, loyalty, and social networking. Moreover, the researcher examined the issue of representing European Muslims through looking into the websites of key organizations. The researcher analyzed the websites based on conceptual and thematic levels, and she looked into the content, design, composition, services and interactivity.

One of the biggest and most diverse British Muslims websites, in terms of the content, is www.sala@m.co.uk. It does not affiliate itself to a certain group or organization. The design is a simple classical one. The right bar has many advertising banners of community initiatives, publications and products. Interactive tools and services are utilized effectively on www.sala@m.co.uk. Showing the added values of www.sala@m.co.uk, in “Islam@Britain.net,” Bunt (1999) pointed to the archives of the website and its significance in studying the
developments of the British Muslim communities, as well as the diverse contents and networks demonstrated through the website.

[It] incorporates extensive archives from the Federation of Student Islamic Societies' magazine *The Muslim*, dating from the 1960s. This in itself is an interesting 'snapshot' of changing attitudes towards Muslim practice in Britain, and contains articles which are difficult to obtain within other formats. Sala@m.co.uk contains a broad range of links, including pages on Sufism, and a portal into the Islamic Foundation's website. (p.355)

Index, Sala@m.co.uk, December 2013

In the previous part, www.sala@m.co.uk represented a good example for a general website preserving the memory of the British Muslims and the history of developing their community. The following section will take a step deeper by discussing two models of websites representing different levels of affiliations among the European Muslims.
Identities Salience: Between the Circle & the Network

Some of the websites under study are representing the different models and the focal points of Integration and Citizenship. For instance the European Muslims Network EMN www.EuropeanMuslim.net revealed how the founders and the contributors to the network perceived themselves as part of Europe. This perception has been emphasized even through the design of the homepage with the colors and stars of the European Union flag. Currently, the website lacks any sign of interactivity and is totally out of date (the last updated item was in March 2008). The EMN moved to Facebook, in 2010 where it is defined as a “think tank that gathers European Muslim intellectuals and activists throughout Europe” and their aim is to foster “communication, views and expert analysis on the key issues related to the Muslim presence in Europe.” (EMN, 2013) EMN echoed the intellectual project of European Muslim thinker Tariq Ramadan http://www.tariqramadan.com/?lang=en described by Salvatore (2011) as “the leading speaker for ‘European Islam’,” and who is promoting “the civic engagement and participatory politics of Muslim actors” (p.5).

Based on a different concept, the City Circle www.thecitycircle.com has emerged. City Circle is a British website seeking "the development of a distinct British Muslim identity.”(City Circle, 2013) City Circle is found to work more as community- organization and this target has its impact on the way the website is designed and functions. The design of the home page does not overemphasize the affiliation to Europe. Aiming to indicate the intercultural relations and the common public space between British Muslims and their fellow citizens, the design tends to be modern and simple. Focusing more on grass roots initiatives, the weekly events section has a main space on the home page where these are announced and updated weekly.
The difference between the two approaches of European Muslim Network and City Circle was crystallized in an in-depth interview the researcher conducted in 2007 with the native British Muslim researcher and activist Yahia Birt, a key founder of City Circle. In this interview, Birt clarified why he disagreed with Tariq Ramadan. Birt criticized Ramadan for rushing to bypass different obstacles to reach the European level of identity. Birt believed that the national identity is still very strong and tended to establish the definition of Europe as an entity that united different nation states collaborating on the level of the free market. Birt highlighted how Ramadan sided with a more abstract philosophical perception of the European identity that tends to be very French.

The views of both Ramadan and Birt are reflected in the structuring and the developing of their websites: Ramadan by being involved in enhancing European Muslim discourses and networks, and Birt by developing City Circle, which he described as a catalyst organization focusing on the British-ness of the Muslim community in the UK. These two websites (or experiences) illustrate two different levels of integrating and empowering European and British Muslims. Additionally, Ramadan has not perceived the issue only on the European level; he stretched the concept of “European Muslims” to cover the idea of enhancing the Islamic juristic innovative thinking (ijtihad).

Aspirations & Traps of Innovative Frameworks

In “Tariq Ramadan: The Muslim Martin Luther?” Paul Donnelly (2002) interviewed Ramadan who optimistically talked about his desired prospects of his intellectual contributions
In the near future, Muslims in the West are going to help Muslims in the Islamic world. Because we [European Muslims] are facing challenges and we can do things that are forbidden in the so-called Islamic countries. We need to think about think tanks, platforms, councils that would share views and opinions that could be critical toward Islamic authorities. (Salon, 2002)

However, reality was more challenging and difficult than Ramadan’s perception. For instance, in 2005, Ramadan issued an international call for a moratorium on corporal punishment, stoning and the death penalty. Ramadan justified his call by highlighting how these penalties are applied only on the poor and on women who are doubly oppressed. Ramadan’s call received a lot of criticism from some Muslim scholars based in the West and in the Muslim World.

In the introduction of his book “Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation,” Ramadan could not hide his disappointment at these reactions and the “lack of calm critical debate” which he described as “one of the evils undermining contemporary Islamic thought” (Ramadan, 2009, p. 4). Most probably through the concept of “Radical Reform,” Ramadan (2009) decided to move from a heated debate over the moratorium to a calmer and more comprehensive approach where he emphasized that both text scholars and context scholars should equally tackle the center of gravity of Islamic knowledge.

The previous section focused on the concepts of integration and innovative thinking and their impacts in developing online platforms and arguments. The following section will focus on how different European Muslim organization manage and enhance their presence in
offline and online environments. The emergence and the development of the different European Muslim organizations are related to the issue of representing European Muslims.

**Organizations and the Question of Representation**

Moving from the conceptual level to the organizational one, we can see how different organizations use the Internet as a platform to publicize their views and promote their agendas on both the European and British levels.

The Federation of Islamic Organization in Europe – FIOE is an umbrella organization on the European level. According to the basic information on FIOE’s website [www.fioe.org](http://www.fioe.org), it is defined as a cultural organization, with hundreds of member organizations spread across 28 European States. FIOE frames its vision and mission through the concept of moderation, balance and tolerance of Islam. FIOE was found in 1989, which is a relative earlier point of time in the context of organizing European Muslims efforts. According to the [www.fioe.org](http://www.fioe.org), the organization is defined itself as a key contributor in establishing and encouraging the transformation of the Muslims from “mere powerless migrants into positively contributing citizens: enjoying the same rights, and shouldering the same responsibilities as the native population.” (FIOE, n. d.)

FIOE’s website is a bilingual one published both in Arabic and English languages. Obviously, there is no difference between the Arabic and the English versions in terms of the structure, design, categorization or content. The FIOE highlights its European affiliation, but it also overemphasizes its Islamic affiliation on both the visual and the content levels.
FIOE’s website is not updated on a regular base, but generally the announcements and the stances of FIOE are framed in quasi-official tone and addressed the officials, the heads and the representatives of governments. In this context, President’s Message section is dedicated to publishing letters from the President of the FIOE Chakib Benmakhlouf to European presidents, ministers and officials. However, President’s Message section is not updated, the recent letter was on April 2012. It was sent to former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy criticizing the positions and statements expressed by state, political bodies and some media channels of coming close to “casting French Muslims, their prominent organisations, and mosque imams unjustly in the zone of suspicion.” (Benmakhlouf, 2012)

*European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations -FEMYSO*

Another category of the Muslim European organizations can be presented through the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations -FEMYSO. Visually, [www.femyso.org](http://www.femyso.org) design looks modern and colorful. The history of emergence and development of FEMYSO is told through its website starting with the first meeting between Muslim youth organization across Europe in Sweden, 1995. After consultation, FEMYSO was registered as an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Brussels, at the heart of Europe.

On the level of representational status, FEMSYO’s basic information on the website indicated that the organization has become “the de facto voice of Muslim Youth in Europe and is regularly consulted on issues pertaining to Muslim Youth” (FEMSYO.n.d.). The members celebrate the recognition of their efforts on both European and international levels and through the “useful links with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the
Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations …” (FEMSYO, n.d.)

FEMSYO describes its work through framing the unique position of the younger generation of European Muslims. This unique position is defined by not finding the combining of the Muslim identity and the European one as a strange thing. FEMSYO introduces its mission of networking young Muslims all over Europe in an emotional and spiritual way as they “must be in touch, know each other to feel the real Islamic brotherhood”. At the same time, FEMYSO highlights its obligation to support young Muslims “to be a responsible and constructive member of the European society.” (FEMSYO, n.d.)

One of the missions of FEMYSO is to facilitate the networking and the cooperation between European Muslim youth and student organisations. It is for this reason that FEMYSO has set up a wide series of training programs in different fields including Fundraising in the EU, How to run a Campaign, Social Media for NGOs, Making IT work for you, How European Institutions work …etc (FEMSYO, n.d.). In terms of civic engagement, and in combating Islamophobia, FEMYSO adopts human rights approach and attempts to train different Muslim youth organizations to tackle the issue in a creative way.

FEMYSO promotes citizenship through campaigning and training on the institutional level. At the time of writing, FEMYSO announced the launching the campaign of “Green up my Local Community!” from Mon, 01/04/2013 - Tue, 31/12/2013 in coordination with MADE in Europe organization. The campaign aims to bring young Muslims from 10
European countries to work for securing pledges from 20 mosques to become environment friendly by December 2013. (FEMYSO, 2012)

In terms of utilizing the internet tools, FEMYSO regularly uses the website to publish about the coming events, and then document them in audio and video format. One of the interesting ways to utilize the internet was publishing the winning photos in the Photos against Racism competition. To highlight the 2013 International Day for "Elimination of Racial Discrimination," on March 21, FEMYSO publishes the winners of the 2012 European wide competition and campaign titled 2012 Photos against Racism. (FEMYSO, 2013)

*Muslim Council of Britain - MCB*

One of the most significant bodies, on the British level, is the Muslim Council of Britain- MCB. The MCB has a functional updated website [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk). The Muslim Council of Britain is an umbrella body with over 300 affiliated national, regional and local organizations, mosques, charities and schools. According to Gary Bunt (1999) “the Muslim Council of Britain does represent one of the 'broader' platforms, and presents through its web site a quasi-official status… the MCB's desire for a representative role for Muslims in Britain is also reflected in its official statements …” (p.355).

MCB’s slogan is “working for the Common Good”. The slogan goes in line with one of the major missions of MCB which is to work for the common good of society as a whole; encouraging individual Muslims and Muslim organisations to play a full and participatory role in public life. (MCB, n.d.)
The structure of the MCB’s website reflects the actual organizational work especially in the committees and affiliations sections. The home page highlights the news, events and press releases of MCB and its different committees. There are also highlights of the community news and events. At the time of writing, the committee news announced the LAUNCHPAD series of workshops to facilitate entrepreneurship within the Muslim community (MCB, April 2013). The MCB’s interest in Business and economics is not only about empowering Muslim young entrepreneurs, but it is also about showing various ways of Muslim contributions in their larger society. For instance, the Muslim Pound is a comprehensive report, highlighted on the homepage through a banner, documents the participation of MCB at the 9th World Islamic Economic Forum 2013 by celebrating the Muslim Contribution to the UK Economy. The report includes infograph by MCB to show how the British Muslims and the Muslim World add to the prosperity of UK. The infograph illustrates the size of the halal food and lifestyle industry, how British Muslims are the top online charity givers and how UK is one of the biggest trading partners to many Muslim countries. Generally, the report indicates how the British Muslims can act as a bridge to the Muslim World through trade and prosperity. Muslim Pound can be considered as an innovative way of engaging with the larger society especially among businessmen and elites from the economic sectors. (MCB, 2013)
Education is among the major fields of interests on MCB’s website. This interest may take many forms including monitoring the existing systems and initiating new methods and experiences to modify and develop the current situation especially by focusing on the status of Muslim students and children. At the time of writing, MCB published a press release stated how every British child (including the Muslims) deserves to relate to Britain’s history. The press release criticized ignoring the history of Islam and Muslims in school curricula. (MBC, 2013)

On the other hand, a community news story was about launching `Books for Schools' in Solihull. According to MCB’s website `Books for Schools' is a project aims to provide mainstream schools with high-quality Islamic resources (including books, custom made teacher notes, pupil activities, worksheets, CD, DVD and accompanying teaching aids) in order to promote harmony and respect amongst Britain's diverse communities.(MCB,2011)

MCB has a Research and Documentation Committee aiming to create a resource centre for researchers, students and journalists. The resources cover the themes of Islamophobia, multiculturalism, Muslim integration …etc. There is a possibility, through the work of this committee, to develop new communities of interpretation among researchers and journalists who can break the cycle of misinformation and simplicity caused by some media coverage. In addition MCB’s allows the users to send letters to the Editor/Producer in response to any kind of misrepresentation or misunderstanding and publishes these letters chronologically. (MCB, n.d.)
The voices of the younger generations can be heard at MBC’s website through *The Platform*. It is a free space for opinion pieces and commentaries published in the blog format. MCB announces it host platform without being responsible for its continents. (the-platform, n.d.)

**Muslim Association of Britain – MAB**

Muslim Association of Britain – MAB is a member of the Muslim Council of Britain MCB. The website of MAB (www.mabonline.net) highlights the news, events, press release and activities organizing by the members of MAB.

Generally, some observers pointed to MAB as a more Arab-orientation organization that focuses more on the Palestinian issue and the Middle East affairs. On the ground MAB has been concerned with motivating Muslims and sometimes mobilizing them in a political sense, especially through the previous anti-war marches, and activities flourishing after the war against Iraq on 2003.

Although MAB’s vision indicates its role in representing British Muslims on all levels including educational, spiritual, scientific, academic, social and political, MAB’s website does not demonstrate diversely updated content covering all these levels. MAB’s website document different offline activities especially in photos and sometimes in videos. The website also announces new events and workshops. Sometimes, the layouts and the editorial choices set MAB as a classical Islamic or Dawah (propagation) group. For instance, and at the time of writing, there was coverage of a day activity organized by Women Section “for the sisters and their children during the Easter holidays.” (MAB, 2013)
Another section is “About Islam” which is mainly a description of information pack dealing with misconception and prejudice. The pack has information on Islam, Prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him), Quran, Jesus (peace be upon him) in Islam and women in Islam. Strangely, and rather than utilizing the internet tools to demonstrate the information pack in an interactive way, users need to call MAB office, or email it to have the pack. (MAB, n.d.)

In the article section, there is the press release subsection, but it is not updated. There are also two major articles one is titled Jerusalem highlighting the Muslim Arab heritage of the city, and the other titled Neighbor discussing the concept of integration and social cohesion on the micro level. (MAB, n.d.)

The interest in following an engaging with the Muslim World, especially the Arab World can be observed: There is a video documenting MAB conference on Arab spring and it is in Arabic. In the same context, and at the time of writing (April 2013), there was coverage of a demonstration to show solidarity with the Syrian revolution. The demonstration held in London in March, 2013.

Index, mabonline.net, December 2013
According to the website, one of MAB's missions is to take the initiative by leading the way in Islamic public work and opening doors to more efficient, constructive and appropriate relationships with the wider non-Muslim community (MAB, n.d.). The different initiatives to fulfill this vision are not quite visible on the website. However, the researcher found republished episode of Channel Islam program discussing a Muslim initiative to face child grooming and child abuse. The contributors to the initiatives were from MCB, MAB and a grass root Muslim initiative called UK Street. One of the significant attempts to adjust Muslims positions in their society was MAB organization of a Media Training Day that covered the reach and influence of the Media, regulating and challenging Media output and Media engagement. The website published a short report featuring the training day.

*Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB)*

Establishing European seminaries for Muslim Imams is a concern among the European Muslim communities to localize adequately their religious discourse in their European societies. The independence of the Muslim mosques and centers is a complex issue reveals the controversies of funding and shaping religious knowledge production.

In light of these complexities, the launching of Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) looks inevitable to make the balance between indecency and localization. In addition, MINAB focuses on the standardization and transparency of administering mosques and Islamic centers by imams. According to its website, MINAB is an advisory and facilitatory body providing services to mosques and Islamic training institutions in the UK who join its membership (MINAB, 2013).

Through the website, it seems that MINAB works in a decentralized manner by publishing self-regulation standards. For membership, self certification form should be filled...
and sent to MINAB office. The standards observed by the members reflect MINAB self-identification of its role to fit in the European Muslim context.

At the time of writing, and as an example of civic engagement, an announcement highlighted how Leicester Central Mosque marked the Climate week and how Imam Shahid Raza Imam of Leicester delivered a sermon on Friday 8th March 2013 on the topic (MINAB, 2013).

The previous section tackled different models of European and British Muslim organizations. It discussed how they illustrated and managed their contributions via online representations. The previous section focused on European Muslims, on the collective level. However, the European and British Muslim online expressions need also to be observed on the individual level. The following section will tackle briefly some online experiences to address social and individual concerns of European and British Muslims.

**Personal Voices and Needs: Searching for Humane Tones**

Tackling the problematic macro issues of European and British Muslims can obscure the facts that Muslims are like any other groups who seek happiness and love. One of the techniques in countering the dehumanizing of Muslims in the European societies could be activated through looking into both the individual and group tones and voices searching for their social and personal needs. It is not a coincidence that one of the most popular United Kingdom (UK) websites is *singlemuslim.com*. In April 2013, the website celebrated its reaching One Million Members. The *singlemuslim.com* is introduced as a safe interactive environment using digital tools to facilitate marriage and as having daily stories of success.
The popularity of the website reflects the criteria of the younger generations of British and European Muslims who cannot adhere to the model of arranged marriages like their older parents by going back to their countries of origins or easily finding their partners in their larger societies that could have different social codes. (SingleMuslim.com,n.d.)

Index, SingleMuslim.com, April 2013

The organizational characteristics of single muslim.com echoed the individual tone in Shelina Janmohamed’s famous blog Love in Headscarf: the perfect gift at www.spirit21.co.uk/ where a female British Muslim has written in a creative humorous sense about her journey to find love while keeping her faith. The content of Janmohamed’s personal experience on the Internet has been published and translated globally to indicate the interest in finding and hearing different genuine first-hand narrations.

Muslim Community Helpline & Cyber Counseling

Engaging with the social and marital problems within the British Muslim communities that are not immune from serious behavior and psychological malpractices, the muslimcommunityhelpline.co.uk has emerged. The Muslim Community Helpline is developed and managed by the same group who started the Muslim Women Helpline in UK (MWHL) in 1989. Both the Muslim Community Helpline and the former MWHL are designed to work as independent organizations which provide confidential counseling service
by professional members of a group who are aware of the problems facing the Muslims and their families in the UK. It provides a telephone services, and where appropriate, face-to-face counseling services to the members of the Muslim communities regardless of their cultural, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds. (Muslim Community Helpline, n.d.)

Although the above analyses of some European and British Muslim websites do not present the whole larger picture, this analysis can contribute to form a set of basic indicators and features. There are different online experiences of European and British Muslims in addressing their concerns and ambitions. The administrative and the legal frameworks, in the European countries, might help the European Muslims in developing their online and offline organizational work. However, and after 9/11, these frameworks can be modified to narrow the opportunities of the European Muslim communities. Additionally, the financial crises and the political rise of the right wing, in some European countries, can have negative impacts on European Muslims. Most of the studied European Muslim websites attempt to engage with the larger society, but there are no enough indications in terms of content and design of targeting the audience of these larger societies.

The output of this chapter indicates how the position of the European Muslims could help them to work as a catalyst in intellectual and structural senses for both the European societies as well as the Muslim majorities. Subsequently, and by considering the peculiarities
of each case, the case study, tackled in the next chapters, readdresses the role of the Coptic Christians in advancing certain debates and responses to different social, political and legislative questions.

Some thematic patterns of this chapter are adopted in discussing the status of Coptic Christians including the role of the mainstream media, and the interrelation between the digital and mainstream media. Inspired by the offline and online experiences tackled in this chapter, different conceptual and organizational debates are re-examined through the next chapters including the challenges of (under) representations, religious symbols in the public space, as well as the philosophical and operational definitions of identity.
V. COPTIC CHRISTIAN IN CYBERSPACE

There are different reactions and engagements with the questions of identity and citizenships among the Coptic intellectuals and activists. This study explored, through the interviews and other primary sources, how these different complicated tendencies could have their extensions in cyberspace. Partially, the study used secondary sources to reflect theoretical significant propositions. Generally, some modern historians and researchers assumed that “the interwar period (1918–1939) was a golden age for Copts, in part because of its secular atmosphere‖ (Scott, 2010, p.166). But this assumption does not mean that Copts have the same stance towards the State, the Church, identities circles …, etc. Copts’ stances could be diverse and sometimes contradictory. In her book *The Challenge of Political Islam: Non Muslims and the Egyptian State*, Rachel Scott (2010) reviewed some of these different positions, especially towards political Islam, from her point of view

There are Coptic radicals and some human rights activists who tend to be uncompromising about Islam and believe that change from within Arab-Islamic society is impossible. Such Copts often employ varying types of polemical discourse. This uncompromising position can be found among the Coptic clergy and Coptic expatriates. There are also Copts who emphasize the importance of dialogue with Muslims and participate in all political parties, although they tend to be secular Copts. There are still other Copts, many of them members of the Coptic Church, who believe that the future of Oriental Christians lies in the Islamic world and reject the secular atmosphere of the West. Copts also share some common issues. For example, they are united in their concern about political Islam, the establishment of an Islamic state, and
the application of Islamic law. However, they hold varying views on how these concerns should be addressed. (p.66)

As this study used the in-depth interview qualitative method, Scott’s work, and different earlier theoretical propositions helped in forming some of the pre-planned questions of these interviews. Among these questions was the examination of a suggested categorization of major Coptic stances or traditions and if they can be represented through three trends. The categorization of these trends could be based on defining the Coptic identity and its relation to the circle of Islamic civilization and the Muslim majority. Approximately, three tendencies could be found in

- A monolithic Coptic identity constitutes an isolation tendency,
- Greater openness and cultural assimilation tendency,
- A more complex model of cultural citizenship constitutes an integration tendency

However, these above mentioned tendencies cannot explain all the complications of reality and cannot reflect the ideological, political, social and generational differences among the Egyptian Coptic Christians. In this study, the in-depth interviews aimed to show the intra group differences among the Egyptian Coptic Christians and to discuss their diverse stances with special focus on the stances of the youth. The study considered the emergent contexts after the Egyptian Revolution and the subsequent transitional phases with their perspectives and uncertainties. Additionally, the study discussed how the political mobilization after the Egyptian Revolution influenced models of activism among the young Christian Copts.
a. In-depth Interview Analysis

Fourteen semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted from February 15 to April 22, 2013. Based on the previous chapters of literature reviews and studying the European Muslims case, some pre-planned questions were asked to gain information about the respondents’ perspectives on managing the majority- minority sameness and difference, the role of the different actors including the Church, the State and the Society, the differences within the Coptic communities, socio-economic issues, and the intragroup mechanisms, the structures and the impacts of the mainstream media versus the Internet and the new social media. Some other interview questions are naturally generated, and allowed for more dialectical interactions and fresh remarks.

Among the people interviewed are intellectuals, researchers, activists and Web journalists. The major characteristics of the respondents are their involvement in managing, producing, analyzing and /or consuming the online discourses as well as their awareness of the offline contexts and backgrounds. The selection of the respondents combined well-known experts on the one hand, and new voices and actors on the other. Most of the respondents come from urban districts, mostly in Cairo, but two of them were from Alexandria. One of these respondents was originally form Upper Egypt while the other was from the countryside east of the Delta. Three out of fourteen respondents are not Coptic Christians or have direct attachment, but they were selected for being knowledgeable or well-informed about the phenomenon in question (and/or) its surrounding contexts. Three out of fourteen respondents are females. Almost all of the respondents belong to middle and low middle class. The interviews were conducted in Arabic.
Names and positions of the in-depth interview respondents are listed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ishaq Ibrahim</td>
<td>Researcher at the <em>Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamei Assad</td>
<td>Activist, blogger and the author of “<em>Christian Alley</em>” (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdelrahman Hamdy</td>
<td>Researcher and ex-member of the National Committee for Justice and Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basant Mosa</td>
<td>Managing Editor of the <a href="http://www.unitedcopts.org">www.unitedcopts.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emad Thomas</td>
<td>Journalist and activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdy Saber</td>
<td>A Spokesman for Maspero Youth Union (MYU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Sabri</td>
<td>Activist and Editor at <a href="http://www.christian-dogma.com">www.christian-dogma.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mina Samir</td>
<td>Activist and founding member of the Maspero Youth Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisham Gaafar</td>
<td>Former Editor-in-chief of <a href="http://www.islamonline.net">www.islamonline.net</a> and a contributor to the initiative of the Early Warning and Rapid Response Mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sameh Fawzi</td>
<td>Researcher and Journalist, and an ex-member of the Shura Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samir Morcos</td>
<td>Prominent intellectual and writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdullah El Tahawi</td>
<td>Researcher in the affairs of Egyptian Muslim-Christian relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evronia Azer</td>
<td>Blogger and activist at No to Military Trials for Civilians group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Hanna Grace</td>
<td>The researcher benefited from the narrations and the views of the politician and researcher, Dr. Hanna Grace in the context of attending a round-table discussion on “Christian Coptic Youth and the Egyptian Revolution” organized by MADA Foundation for Media Development on April 13, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The transcribed in-depth interviews were analyzed and categorized thematically. According to Jensen (1982), thematic qualitative analysis can be described as “a loosely inductive categorization of interviews and observational extracts with reference to various concepts, headings, or themes” (p.247). In addition, some open-ended answers helped in building this explanatory case. Thus, the transcribed interviews occurred in almost a narrative, sometimes iterative, form. The analysis was also related to the concept of agency and social change by highlighting the major actors and their roles in different contexts.

A. Revisiting Concepts & Contexts: Interview Analysis

In defining and sensing the concept of “minority,” activist and key member of the Maspero Youth Union, Mina Samir, does not see himself as a member of a minority group even on a demographics level. “Some statistics say that Copts are 15 million, this is not a number of a minority. Egyptians (both Muslims and Christians) have no ethnic or cultural differences” he insisted. For Samir, being a Christian Copt is something like being male or female and this does not make for a majority/minority or core/marginalized categorization.

On a micro-level, Researcher Abdelahman Hamdy discusses how the concept of ‘minority’ is not an absolute one and links it to various social and cultural factors. Being a member of the demographic majority does not make you automatically immune to the feelings of being a minority, as he explains. “I experienced the status of being minority. I’m from Upper Egypt, I can see how, for instance, both an urban Christian and Muslim from Cairo cannot understand me as I might have different behaviors or lifestyle,” suggests Hamdy.
According to journalist and researcher Sameh Fawzi, the feeling of being a minority is a complex one. In his view, the cultural environment in Egypt is common to a large extent (e.g. the marital relations in the popular areas …). Highlighting these similarities, he wrote an article titled “United in Marriage” that revealed how the traditions for celebrating and arranging for marriage are similar among both Muslims and Christians in Egypt. “There is no vertical divide, the socio-economic dimension could be more influential in creating divides among the Egyptians … tension could be caused by the conflict over rights, obligations and participations.” added Fawzi.

**Concept of Minority: Between Rejection and Utilization**

Despite the rejection of the “minority” term or at least the reservation about it, the term is utilized to a certain level, domestically or internationally, to advance the concerns of Copts. A discussion of a possible paradox between rejecting and utilizing the term is found in the work of Saba Mahmood (2012) and Lise Galal (2010) where they questioned whether Copts should meet the requirements and should adopt the international language of “minority rights” to counter any kind of discrimination.

Magdy Saber, a spokesman of the Maspero Youth Union, believes that democratic measures should determine how to deal with a minority, in a political sense, and how problems originate, as he elaborates, “from being marginalized, not from being a minority.” On handling the issue, on the international level, Saber emphasizes his personal stances and views: “I’m against immigration and denounce the offer of some countries to provide Copts with asylum … But we [Coptic activists] are defending our cause using the Internet and different tools for pressure, internationally, the same way we use them to counter sexual harassment.”
Activist Samir was more stringent in refusing the term “minority”: “I could not see myself as a minority … culturally and demographically … Maybe some people used the term of “minority” for pragmatic reasons and I disagree with them, but even when we thought of internationalizing some causes, we were thinking of ourselves as oppressed citizens who seek justice,” Samir stressed. Coming from a different background than Samir’s, researcher and former editor of islamOnline.net Gafaar also rejects the term ‘minority’ as an expression of the status of Copts which he believes should be discussed within the ground of citizenship. “The minority-majority categorization can only be used in the political processes [meaning the electoral findings] and not in discussing the issues of identity,” says Gafaar. “When the Coptic intellectual and politician Dr. Hanna Grace was a member of the National Council of Human Rights (NCHR), he insisted on discussing the issues of the Copts on the ground of citizenship rather than on the ground of human rights,” Gafaar affirms.

On the other hand, researcher and writer Abdullah ElTahawi explains how the Copts are a demographic minority, but agrees with Samir that Copts are spreading vertically and horizontally with no ethnic peculiarities. Instead, and on the psychological level, ElTahawi explains:

They could have a kind of common memory that might be activated in certain moments. The activation of such a memory depends on the context: at moments of openness and the active larger public space (e.g. the early days of the 25 January revolution, the 1919 revolution) this common Coptic memory and conscience tends to shrink, but when there is a condition of closure and isolation from the larger public sphere (e.g. in response to sectarian attacks
against the churches in the 70s and 90s), these memory cells tend to congregate and do not allow any different view to penetrate their solid perceptions.

**Marginalizing Copts between the Media and the Public Sphere**

As apparently most of the respondents criticized - or at least questioned - theoretically, the concept of minority, the question is how any actual manifestations of isolation, tension and discrimination can be interpreted. Blogger and activist Shamei Assad states clearly that the Copts cannot be blamed for their isolation. Back to the usage of “minority” term, he explains: “no minority will isolate itself by choice. In Christianity, someone who wants to be isolated could become a monk. External factors, not internal factors, are responsible for creating integration or isolation.”

Assad stretched his perception of marginalization to explain how the Copts suffered, in many cases, from media underrepresentation and from being attacked without having the right to reply. For example, and according to Assad, *Al Ahram* (a wide-spread state-owned newspaper funded by the taxes paid by all the Egyptians) used to publish what Assad considers a criticism of the Christian dogma. “Scholars should focus more on the ethical side of religions rather than criticizing religions for dogmatic reasons”. When Assad was younger, he was sensitive towards insulting his religion especially in the public space. Gradually, his views and stances matured as he believes that Prophets themselves were insulted, but Assad's tolerance does not include burning churches and/or threatening people.
Moreover, and shedding more light on the minority-majority switching positions, Assad considers getting used to these kinds of verbal assaults as an advantage for the minority in comparison to the Muslim majority who feel seriously hurt if they face any similar situation. “If someone offends Islam, the Muslim majority will suffer more as they will experience something new to them, while the Coptic minority has immunity against these kinds of insults,” he argued.

The Maspero Youth Union (MYU) Spokesman and Coptic activist Magdy Saber describes MYU’s activism against the state-owned TV as a way to unmask what he described as the fakeness of the state media coverage and its stance towards the Copts. “If the media officials are sincere in addressing Coptic problems of under-representations, they could have produced a program where a priest could discuss the ethics of Christianity and/or could have allow a permanent celebration of the Coptic culture … and not only focus on Copts after any sectarian attack or crisis” Saber argues.

As a point of transition, the emergence of the Egyptian satellite channels, in the early 1990s, broke the monopoly of the state-owned TV and allowed some voiceless groups to be heard. Assad traces the utility of the satellite channel by the Copts as they used to have no space in public service broadcasting. El Hayat TV was one of the first Coptic satellite channels and the priest Zakaria Botros was well-known for his criticism of the *Quran* and the Islamic creed. Assad does not support Botros’ approach, but he understands why he got some popularity among the Copts. “There was no space given for Copts in state-owned TV and in the public sphere. Botros’ popularity could be perceived as a kind of revenge from the larger public space where there was no justice and/or right to respond,” Assad adds. Explaining his own complicated position Assad says: “I’m not supporting Zakaria Botros with his sense of
sectarianism, but also I did not accept the previous phase where I was speechless … with the Zakria Botros model, one could be appeased as he teased those who oppressed him, but he is only a consumer or audience-oriented producer, not an active producer.”

Similar to the satellite channels, the Internet witnessed this phase of revenge by allowing Copts to have their own platforms and free space to express their anger and frustration. Assad experienced how the Internet was used by all the voiceless groups, not only the Copts but even atheists, homosexuals, Nubians, women .“Relatively, and for the masses, all these marginalized voices become a monolithic group, but they are not. The one thing they had in common was their old silence and their being marginalized” he suggests.

After the phase of revenge, and especially with the further development in Web 2.0 social network tools, there was another phase representing Assad and other Coptic youth and activists which was the era of “Blogging.” One of the most outstanding examples of this phase is the female activist and blogger Evronia Azer and is also a daughter of a Priest. Azer’s Blog, Evronia’s world, has a mixture of different cultural, political and humanitarian interests. “I’m Coptic and human and I’m interested in music and art. I love God through loving people …” she explained. Azer considers herself as a minority of a minority. She is a daughter of a priest, an activist in the Human Rights field, and she serves at the Church by educating young girls.

Assad noted how blogging was a light at the end of the dark tunnel of the mainstream media through which he can even overcome the difficulties of publishing in the official and popular media. Cyberspace can reflect the diverse voices and tones among the Copts. Assad analyzes how a Coptic blogger can write in a sectarian sense, while another one could write
in a more tolerant way…. In addition, blogging has sharpened Assad’s tools. He describes how his approach developed as he directed his message to Muslims and not only to Christians. This development is due to the interaction and the discussions on the Internet and on Assad’s blog.

On the contrary, and for researcher and journalist Sameh Fawzi, these kinds of online interactions do not always look productive. For instance, when Fawzi reads the comments of some of the youth on the websites that cover a Christian issue or Muslim – Christian tensions, he finds a series of exchanging insults and indecency.

For El Tahawi, the Internet is a place for expression and for showing differences where there is a parallel relation (not a contradictory one) with reality: whenever there is a moment of crisis or discrimination on the ground, it is reflected with all its intensity and pessimism on the web. If there is a moment of liberation, things will be different. These different views of assessing the role of the online interactions in developing a more productive and mature discourses were refuted by generally discussing the role of the Internet and specifically the Coptic website in shaping the Egyptian Muslim – Christian relations and in increasing or decreasing the sectarian tensions and whether the Coptic Website can help to integrate the Copts in their society rather than to isolate them.

The Internet and the Sectarian Tensions

Basically, Samir considers the Internet as a major tool for searching for information. As Egypt is a country most populated by youth, the importance of the Internet is increasing. On the other hand, and for Samir, the impact of the Internet in increasing or decreasing the sectarian tensions is not that significant. For Samir, the influence of the Internet can be
determined by the location and the level of education … the Internet can cause a change for the more cultured, educated people, but not in the rural areas where things are changing because of the actual incidents of sectarian violence.

While activist Samir does not see a significant role of the Internet in increasing or decreasing the sectarian tensions, human rights researcher and activist Ishaq Ibrahim cannot see the Internet as an exception in this respect. “A rumor or a speech by an imam might also provoke sectarianism …” Ibrahim noted what happened during the catastrophic Maspero incidents (October 2011) when an Egyptian public TV presenter called for help and asked the people to save the Egyptian Army from “Christians” and some people responded by going downtown and attacking people based on their religious identities (i.e., for being Christians). Ibrahim concludes that this inflammatory, disastrous language had not been broadcasted via the Internet, but through the public TV. He explains how this incident can clearly show that the Internet cannot be considered a genuine factor in increasing or decreasing the sectarian tensions. Ibrahim emphasizes how the Internet is important in informing the people about the issues that are not covered by the mainstream media especially in the rural and marginalized areas.

The Internet can also show how a statesman could misinform the people as it happened during the incidents of the destruction and burning of Mar Girgis Church in the village of El-Marinab, Edfu in Aswan on 30 September, 2011. The governor misinformed the public by claiming that there is no “church.” In countering the governor’s allegation, the people used the audio-visual characteristics of the Internet and published photos of the church. According to Ibrahim, the Internet could also put pressure on officials or whoever is in charge by transferring the issue from its local level into the national and international
levels. “The Internet can be seen as a double-edged tool. If we are in a healthy environment where the role of the law will be activated, the negativities of the tool will decrease,” Ibrahim confirms.

**Coptic Websites: The Emergence and the Interactions**

Both researcher Ishaq Ibrahim and blogger Shamei Assad have secular tendencies and hold a critical viewpoint on the relationship between religion, state and public sphere. On the other hand, both of them introduce a more complex viewpoint and acceptance of the emergence and the characteristics of the Coptic websites. Ishaq Ibrahim set his position as a secular researcher interested in civil and human rights and within this interest he focused on “individual rights.” Based on this fact, a more cautious stance towards Coptic websites (for involving religious aspects) might be expected from Ibrahim's side. Yet, on the contrary, he has a positive stance towards them. “Being secular does not mean refusing these modes of expressions as long as it is a personal choice …

We, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, supported Munqabat (face-covered women) in Fayoum University to be allowed to study and take their exams” Ibrahim affirms. Ibrahim confidently explains how the human rights perspective does not make them take stances for religious reasons.

Blogger Assad who has rejected the visibility of religious symbols in the public sphere has no problem with Coptic websites. Assad thinks that banning these websites could actually cause a counter impact. “These websites and media outlets may tend to be extreme at the beginning, but gradually they could be more balanced,” Assad predicts. Assad explains why
Copts use or refer to the Coptic websites during the sectarian tensions: “They usually use Coptic websites as they expect the mainstream media to beautify or soften the ugliness of the sectarian incidents.” On the other hand, Assad admits that some of these websites exaggerate and publish inaccurate news stories as long as they depend more on oral testimonies and rumors. For Assad, the more professional websites support the Copts, the more these websites become interested in Coptic issues from the social and not the sectarian perspective. Assad devoted an entire chapter in his book Christian’s Alley to the misrepresentations of the Copts in the media. But on the other hand, he criticizes how some Coptic media outlets and activists may frame any Muslim-Christian regular or social tension as a sectarian one. Assad highlights how he, himself, acquired the skill of filtering the different incidents to decide what could be categorized as a sectarian incident and what is not. For instance, and out of his own personal experience of coverage, the reason behind Al-Ameriya incidents in Alexandria (February 2012) did not emerge at the beginning as a sectarian cause, but was transformed into a sectarian one after the eviction of eight Coptic families in Nahda village, Al-Ameriya district of Alexandria. For Assad, it is important to have a national sense and not to seek fame by fabricating news stories.

**Criticizing the Experience of Coptic Websites**

Activist Samir has a negative attitude towards the Coptic websites. According to Samir, most of these websites have pessimistic and depressing views and their target is to create anger. Samir agrees on their lack of professionalism on the editorial level, and according to him, the same materials on one of these websites could be republished by most of the other websites as there is not enough fresh accurate materials. “A Muslim cannot see himself (through these websites) except as an offender” Samir suggests. For him, these kinds of
Websites are a reflection of superficial religiosity and they think that they are serving the cause, but they do not show enough signs of coexistence. “Recently and after the Revolution, they started tackling politics, but before that they would only show that they are a group of persecuted Christian Copts” he confirms.

Female blogger Evronia Azer has different concerns against these websites as she is worried about possible security interference within these websites reflected sometimes in exaggeration or fabrication of some news. Azer thinks that these outlets started to lose their influence by exaggerating, screaming and yelling, but on the other hand, Azer admits that these media outlets are covering the sectarian incidents in a thorough way that cannot be found in the mainstream media.

Intellectual Samir Morcos also marks the shallowness and the lack of diversity or openness in most of the Coptic websites. Morcos attributes their simplified and narrow-minded approach to extremism. He explains how fanatic websites, and not the moderate ones, are more active and better financed. Morcos prefers to have no widespread Coptic websites as he thinks the normal case is to find the moderate Egyptians, both Muslims and Christians, in the public sphere with no divides. Journalist Sameh Fawzi who has studied different Coptic media outlets thoroughly understands how the conflict over identity obscures all the serious structural issues. For him, all religious media claim to be professional, but Fawzi can see how shallow they are. Fawzi assumes that if the religious media, in general, broke free from the “identity war,” they could develop an important discourse of liberation.
Coptic Websites: Behind the Scenes

Obviously, there are different, sometimes conflicting views on the role of the Coptic websites and the diverse stances of encouraging or criticizing these websites. On another level, we should consider how these websites do not work in the vacuum and how certain administrative, professional and financial structures could determine their outputs and type of engagement with the larger contexts. Three respondents manage and edit Coptic websites and their input and views might bring to the discussion different outlooks.

Journalist at coptsunited website Emad Thomas responds to the criticism of the Coptic websites tendencies for isolation and victimization. “We [Egyptian Copts] are interested in the Egyptian issues, in general, but this does not mean that we do not support the Coptic issue,” Thomas confirms. In the same context, Managing Editor of coptsunited website Basant Mosa is fully convinced that defending powerless Copts is a humane issue. “We need qualified people to support the Copts, but when those people quit, we open the door for the inefficient intruder,” she suggests.

Mosa links the lack of surveillance on the Internet to their capability to set their own editorial policies. Mosa discusses how sensitive issues such as the Personal Status Law for Copts are discussed openly via the Internet. Mosa discusses how among the advantages of the Internet is its being a medium of interaction and reflecting the diversity within a certain social group (e.g. Coptic Christian women in whose issues and civil freedoms she is interested). Mosa believes that people have to know the context of the sacred text as it could be understood in different ways.
Not that we are sufficient with ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6)

According to editor Mosa, coptsunited was founded by Adli Abadir at the “Minorities in the Middle East Zurich conference” in 2004. “The website focused on the Coptic issue, but it has started to tackle general political topics, especially at the current time and after the revolution,” she adds. Mosa claims that coptsunited is the only professional Coptic website using journalistic tools, while most of the other websites are, basically, forums. According to Mosa, the website has a network of Muslim and Christian correspondents in different places in Egypt, but she complains about marginalization by the mainstream media. “They viewed us as a “Christian” website and when we explained how “Copts” stands for all Egyptians, they do not take it into the consideration, while they can cooperate with ikhwan online as a general media outlet …” she claims.

Mosa does not consider the Internet as capable of changing the mindset of the receivers compared to more other effective means such as mass communication and education. On the other hand, she believes that the Internet can inform the Egyptian Muslim majority about the Copts’ suffering and encourage the Copts to be more interactive. Mosa shows reservations towards the expansions of the fields of interests of coptsunited website to include social and cultural issues while there have been what Mosa describes as increasing threats of attacks and kidnapping …” she insists.

Activist Tony Sabri belongs to a younger generation of Coptic activists. He started his interest in the Coptic issue Al- Omraneyya’s 9 protests in November 2010. At the same time, Sabri was responsible for the “Special Reports” section at christian-dogma website. Sabri

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9 Nearly one thousand Coptic Christians staged protests in Al-Omraneyya, a poor neighborhood south of Cairo, after police halted construction of a new church (Almasry Alyoum, 2010)
describes Christian-dogma as a website that focuses on Coptic issues, but has other broader fields of interests including any kind of persecution against any minority. For instance, and based on this concept, christian-dogma website published about Muslims in Burma and in Nigeria. According to Sabri, christian-dogma was launched in 2007 and it faces the lack of financial resources. Despite the financial and administrative difficulties, Sabri explains how he hates agitators, those who “invest in persecution” by asking people to donate and support their media outlets.

Unlike coptunited website, christian-dogma website has no headquarters, but it works through a group of youth who have time and access to the Internet from anywhere. “The rule is to update the website with a new story every minute. What makes Christian-dogma website distinguished is the immediate response” Sabri says. But actually, the researcher observed how most of the materials are republished from other sources whether mainstream media or comments from Facebook and Twitter written by public figures. Sabri admits they are criticized for the catchy hot titles with short trivial news stories and how they try to respond positively to these complaints. But he also talks about what he considers as achievements including coverage of the Maspero tragic incidents around the hour. Sabri clarifies how they are working towards having headquarters, and registering themselves as members of the Journalists Syndicate and setting a legal framework as a professional media outlet. “Currently, 90% of the staff are Christians and how do not mind to have only 40% Christian staff and the rest could be Muslims as long as they adopt the same vision and editorial policies” Sabri suggests. Despite its name and that christian-dogma has many sections for sacred texts and sermons; Sabri refuses to describe it as a religious website and considers it more as a social one.
The Church and the Coptic Websites

Highlighting the controversial relation between the Church and the Coptic online platforms, especially in earlier times, editor Mosa claims that the courage and the openness that characterizes the Internet pushed the Church to take a conservative stance by excluding the Journalists of Coptsunited, sometimes, from covering the Church events and ceremonies. For Mosa, the manifestations of this conservative attitude of the Church towards them had ended by March 17, 2012 which marks the date of the death of Pope Shenouda. “We published opinion pieces reflecting the diverse voices of the Copts especially after the death of Pope Shenouda as people have expressed their views more openly,” asserts Mosa.

“Pope Tawadros II is different … now the Church allows our journalists and any other journalist to cover the events as long as he/she sends a request for media coverage to the Church administration,” Mosa confirms. On the other hand, activist and reporter Tony Sabri disagrees with Pope Shenouda politically, but he describes himself as deeply influenced by Pope Shenouda on the religious level: “I consider him my Patron Saint,” Sabri insists.

The complex relations between the Church and the Coptic youth played, to a large extent, a major role in forming their stances and reactions towards the Egyptian Revolution and the succeeding periods of transition. In parallel, the utilization of the social network sites (SNSs) especially the Facebook and Twitter, compared with other web platforms as discussion forums and blogging marked this important stage. For the Copts, as for all Egyptians, and according to El Tahawi, blogging was a way to show anger as well as emotional and individual interests, while the phase of Facebook has supported more collective forms and engagement with the question of “what to do?”
**Egyptian Revolution and the Coptic Youth**

Considering all these views and stances of the Coptic youth towards the state and the society, how were their perceptions and participation during the January 25 Revolution? Samir does not define the Jan. 25 Revolution as a turning point in the scenario of what he called a “possible civil war” caused by Muslim - Christian tension and the growing parallel role of the Church, but the tragic incident of *al-Qeddisin* Church bombing was. According to Samir, the Church used to ask the youth to be silent against all earlier attacks. “The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:13) But *al-Qeddisin* was a really severe and hurtful incident; the youth did not agree or obey… In those protests after *al-Qeddisin*, the front line conscript soldier of Central Security Forces was beaten, even before the revolution. The Church started to lose its authority in controlling the Copts …the Copts went to protest in the streets, and the Coptic activists started to know each other …

According to Samir, during the January 25 Jan. 25 Revolution, the participation of the Copts (against the Pope’s will) was strong. “When the SCAF came to power, the Maspero massacre, for me, was expected. They [the authorities] were used to the idea that those people [the Copts] should be only inside the Church and not on the streets. Maspero had to happen … but this is also another form of stupidity as the massacre would not push the youth back to the Church. The anger was too great to be controlled by the Church,” said Samir.

*From El Tahrir to Maspero …?*

But why had the Coptic protest moved from *El Tahrir* Square as a symbolic assembly place for all Egyptians against Mubarak regime to *Maspero* as a space for the Copts’ protest
against discrimination? What does this move show in terms of the relations between the Coptic youth, the State-owned media and the Church?

Discussing the move from Tahrir to Maspero, Samir thinks Tahrir was the symbol of the revolution: “We [Coptic youth] went to Maspero after the attack on Atfeeh\textsuperscript{10} Church and this was not an issue for the whole revolution,” he said. Being the Egyptian Radio and Television building, Maspero could have been chosen by the Coptic youth as their spot for protest and sit-in for the purpose of “visibility,” but activist Samir refuses this assumption. “If it were about the visibility, we could go to the airport or the Media Production City, but Maspero was near El Tahrir Square and helped us coordinate with the different activists at that time...” Samir says. Samir refuses to consider announcing the “Maspero Youth Union” an indication or sign of fragmentation among the different Egyptian youth revolutionary powers, but he describes it as sign of specification:

At that time, we decided to start an entity, a revolutionary one with a peculiarity and an interest in the Coptic cause. We started Maspero Youth Union in its primary form. The union was not a sign of exclusion or isolation from the revolution. On the contrary, at the beginning, different revolutionary powers and groups were interested in talking to us and knowing our vision and mission.

Commenting on the move from El Tahrir to Maspero, researcher Ibrahim has a more specific cause and version of narration

In March 2011, there was the event of International Women’s Day at El Tahrir and Copts wanted to attract the attention of the state TV to reveal how the governor misinformed the public about destroying Atfeeh church. At the same time, the Coptic Youth wanted to keep pressuring the Church. Despite all the negativities, the Atfeeh

\textsuperscript{10} Atfeeh is a district in Helwan south of Cairo
church was reconstructed. Although the people who were involved in deconstructing the Church were not tried at court and the Church was built through the SCAF and in cooperation with Salafi Sheikhs, the final result was positive by having the Church rebuilt. This was the first time to solve this kind of a problem outside the Church and to overrule the closed-doors negotiations between the Church and the State. The place, the media pressure, the result… encouraged the Copts to re-use this spot [Maspero].

Activist Magdi Saber describes how the Copts were in the street from day one of the Revolution. “We said NO to the Church before the revolution …” Saber declares. Saber used to think that all the attacks against the Churches were arranged by the security and the state. “We were shocked after the revolution; the first problem was the church of Atfeeh that was deconstructed for 22 hours. The entire incident was documented by photos and videos,” he says. Saber thinks Maspero was chosen because the State TV adopted certain narration showing that no change had taken place after the revolution. According to Saber, the first Coptic union after the revolution was the “Maspero Youth Union” and many Coptic unions emerged out of it in addition to other different movements.

From Isolation to Solidarity: The Question of Representation

One of major movements that most closely embodied the spirit of the revolution and its new social contract is the movement of Mina Danial who was an Egyptian Coptic activist interested in social justice and labor rights, and who was killed in the Maspero massacre and became one of the famous icons of the Egyptian revolution. Danial and many others set a model of a new generation of activists who could have a long list of causes they support and promote and who can move, smoothly, between different circles of solidarity.
According to activist Tony Sabri, Copts always use the verse: "Do not be afraid. Standstill, and see the salvation of the Lord…” [Exodus 14] “We reinterpret this verse, and there are also other verses and situations that could encourage resistance” Sabri argues. He explains the difference between the Mina Danial Movement and the Maspero Youth Union. The first focuses on the right and the revenge of Mina, with a socialist view. “The Mina Danial movement is anti-SCAF and not specific for Copts, while the Maspero Yoth Union is more for Copts,” Sabri says.

But not all the Coptic youth hold this inclusive and optimistic view of the Revolution. Journalist at UnitedCopts, Emad Thomas, wrote about the revolution and the sectarianism where he expected that revolution will not end sectarianism. According to Thomas, the revolution revealed the worst within us. In this context, Thomas reintroduces the concept of sectarianism and put it as a form of advocacy. “We have to differentiate between sectarianism and racism: I’m a sectarian, but not a racist; I’m interested in the concerns and the issues of a certain sect just like the labor activist who supports the workers,” Thomas says.

Contrary to Thomas’s opinion, intellectual Samir Morcos advances an important question: “Is it possible that a group could be in a better status in isolation from their larger social reality? For Morcos, it is important to create a trend of solidarity with all the oppressed people from other religious and social backgrounds to solve even your personal and group problems. “I can see how the privileges, provided as favors by any regime to a certain group could be taken back, while the rights could not be taken back … Similar to what we have gained out of the revolution. Despite all the difficulties, now we have some rights through the national struggle and they will not be taken back,” he adds.
Morcos points to the movements of young Copts in the context of an attempt to create solidarity movements. In the same context, activist Samir discusses how he and other activists are working on restructuring the Maspero Youth Union. “The model of Mina Danial is one of the bases of such restructuring,” Samir confirms. Samir aims to make it a Union for Monadleen “Strugglers” not “Activists.” According to him, the activist is working on certain issue, while the struggler is defending and supporting all the oppressed people regardless of their backgrounds. Samir works to turn the Union into a platform for any oppressed person or group (including Baha’is, Nubians …). According to him, the Maspero Youth Union could include hardliners who want it to be a Coptic entity, but Samir aims to restructure the Union on different levels, including the intellectual and cultural levels, by recommending, for instance, reading “The Prophet” by Gobran Khalil Gobran. “I want the members to quit their sectarianism…The people who came to join us wanted to defend Christianity and I want them to defend all the human beings … ‘the other’ …you defend him today, he will defend you tomorrow,” Samir argues.

On the other hand, female blogger, human rights activist and a daughter of a Priest Evronia Azer has some concerns regarding the Maspero Youth Union as “it does not represent all the Copts in the revolution; other independent activists could be more representative.” Azer describes how they [the Union] protested in a sectarian way as she is against raising the cross in the marches, and also as they [the Union] are suffering from security breach.

Female activist Azer adopts a Human Rights approach and explains that “Copts used to work for charity only, but I also work for human rights. My approach is dialogue, convincing people …We are rejected at the first level, but gradually some people have started
to accept us” Azer asserts. She has reasons to continue; after two years of the revolution, the number of the Human Rights activists among the Copts increased, people who wanted to help and change increased.” You need the public space to help you increase this impact not the other way round,” she says. According to blogger Assad the changes after the Egyptian Revolution were not only among the young Coptic activist. He suggests that even the revolutionary voices within the Church were heard. “In the past, you could see those as elites, well-educated persons isolated from the laymen, but now it is different. There are internal revolutions within Copts, especially after the Egyptian revolution. During the presidential elections, there was a divide within the Church that is similar to the divide in the larger society. The Church and the Copts are not monolithic blocs, as the Media has shown,” Assad confirms.

For Azer, the Church should have an open stance towards society. On the state level, there should be actual equality but Copts have a “glass ceiling” hindering their full representation and promotion, as Azer explains. “The regime used to hire corrupted Christians who did not represent the Copts. Also the Media and religious discourses should be reformed … the security should be restructured.” In this context, both Assad and Azer admit how they have a kind of double discourse: they blame the Church and the Copts for not being that active and positive, but they notices that the majority are responsible, to a large extent, for different levels of discriminations.“We have witnessed many discriminative disgusting situations, whether on the state or on the society levels….”Azer asserts. Blogger Assad believes that the best model can be achieved through Muslims’ defense of Copts’rights. “The balance could be achieved through Muslims, and not only the Christians, showing their solidarity, against discrimination,” says Assad.
The analysis of the interviews shows stances in perceiving the concept of minority and the impact of dealing with marginality and under-representation in media and public sphere with special focus on utilizing the Internet. The Coptic youth diverse engagements with the State, the mainstream media and the Church created the major arguments in discussing the status of the Copts in their larger society and the intradialogue among the different Egyptian Copts youth and activists in general.

B. Copts Online: Descriptive and Thematic Analyses

In this study, engaging with the offline contexts was combined by exploring online expressions and representations of the Copts, by using descriptive and thematic analysis methods. Individual, collective and institutional levels and voices were tackled through analyzing a selected number of websites and Facebook groups. The analysis of the Coptic website should allow us to examine if the online Egyptian Christian environments show these complex relations, if they host significant debates and discussions, if they help the Copts to advance their causes, and /or if they encourage them to fit in within their larger society and integrate adequately.

1. Coptic Websites: An Analysis

Basically, the researcher typed in the words 'Coptic' and 'Egyptian Christian' using the Google search engine. After browsing and scanning different findings, a prioritized shorter list was produced. The researcher used Alexa.com to rank results of the short list (Alexa.com is a website traffic–ranking service that provides the ranking of any site based on the total number of visits over a three-month period which ended by April 2013).
The critical analysis of selected websites and Facebook pages were conducted in March- April 2013. The analysis illustrates different statistical, geographical and ethnographic features provided by traffic-ranking website Alexa.com, using them to shed more light on the selected websites’ content and performance. Moreover, the analysis tackles various aspects including the visual characteristics, content (through highlighting taxonomy), and interactivity...etc.

The diverse views and stances, discussed in the in-depth interviews and the theoretical propositions sections, are re-examined through tackling how the selected websites are covering and portraying the State, Church, Coptic Youth, Islamists, and other political and social movements.

The selected Websites can be listed as follows

- www.coptstoday.com
- www.freecopts.net
- www.copts-united.com
- www.coptreal.com
- www.st-takla.org
- www.copts.com
- www.youthbishopric.com
- www.christian-dogma.com
## Features’ Summary Table (three-month global Alexa.com traffic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Statistical Features</th>
<th>Geographic Features</th>
<th>Ethnographic Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.coptstoday.com">www.coptstoday.com</a></td>
<td>Ranked #106,459</td>
<td>Based in Egypt, ranked (#261) in the cities of Asyut and (#859) in Cairo.</td>
<td>Audience tends to be college-educated, women aged 25–45 and 55–65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.freecopts.net">www.freecopts.net</a></td>
<td>ranked #446,967</td>
<td><a href="http://www.freecopts.net">www.freecopts.net</a> has a relatively good traffic rank in the cities of Mississauga (Canada) (#4,600) and Alexandria (#4,624).</td>
<td><a href="http://www.freecopts.net">www.freecopts.net</a> tends to be college-educated, women aged 25–45 and 55–65 who have incomes over $30,000 and browse from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.copts-united.com">www.copts-united.com</a></td>
<td>There are 33,618 sites with a better three-month global Alexa traffic rank</td>
<td>Based in Switzerland; roughly 46% of visitors come from Egypt</td>
<td>Audience tends to be college-educated men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Traffic Rank</td>
<td>Visitors Location</td>
<td>Audience Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.coptreal.com">www.coptreal.com</a></td>
<td>1,934</td>
<td>59% in Egypt</td>
<td>59% of visitors are in Egypt. <a href="http://www.coptreal.com's">www.coptreal.com's</a> audience tends to be college-educated men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.st-takla.org">www.st-takla.org</a></td>
<td>20,195</td>
<td>45% in Egypt</td>
<td>Located in Egypt where 45% of its audience live. St-takla.org (an Ethiopian Saint) appeals more to Africans; its visitors also tend to consist of less affluent women under the age of 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.copts.com">www.copts.com</a></td>
<td>2,015,183</td>
<td></td>
<td>Founded by Michael Munir in 1996 as a non-profit organization in the U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.youthbishopric.com">www.youthbishopric.com</a></td>
<td>2,416,375</td>
<td>75% in Egypt</td>
<td>75% of visitors come from Egypt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Language

Five out of the eight websites are in both in the Arabic and English languages, while the rest are only in the Arabic Language. Although www.freecopts.net has both Arabic and English pages, the English version has not been updated since July 2011. www.copts-united.com shows some differences between its Arabic and English versions.

Descriptive and Thematic Analysis

In this sub-section, a more comprehensive descriptive thematic analysis is conducted. Each website is thoroughly tackled by looking into its taxonomy, interactivity and multimedia utilization. Throughout the analysis of the under study websites, the roles of the different actors including the State, Church, youth, Islamists, and other political and social movements are reexamined.
www.coptstoday.com

There are eleven main sections demonstrated horizontally at the top of the home page of www.coptstoday.com. Six of them are supposed to be news sections:

A. Urgent news
B. Copts news
C. Egypt news: It contains news stories that are republished
D. Accidents News
E. World news
F. Hot issues: Most of the content is covering news stories although it is expected to have in-depth reports and analyses.

There are an Entertainment, Family, Health and Miscellaneous sections where related news stories are selected and republished. Sections with religious content can be found as follows:

A. Masihiat: It has videos, albums of hymns, and extracts on various issues and misconceptions.
B. Sacred Jesus: It has republished videos and texts about Jesus.

For the Homepage, there is a marquee and a banner for installing a toolbar to show the urgent news alerts. The major part (the heart) of the home page has highlights from the different news sections. There is an obvious interest in showing the instant updates. Videos and audio clips are also selected and highlighted. There are special corners to highlight a verse from the bible and a word of wisdom. These corners are updated on a
regular basis. Generally, most of the materials on www.coptstoday.com are republished news stories and selected religious texts.

There is no discussion forum section at www.coptstoday.com, but there is an option to send complaints, news stories or articles to the website administrator through an email. Sending news stories and articles can be done through filling out a form that does not mention any editorial policies or requirements. However, www.coptstoday.com has no section dedicated to publishing the users’ contributions and there are no manifestations of users’ feedback except through publishing a few comments in the different sections.

There is a photo and comment section, at www.coptstoday.com, where captioned still images are published to illustrate a certain message. For instance, and at the time of writing, there was an image showing the difference between love and racism and there was another one celebrating Sinai Liberation day (April, 2013). Additionally, www.coptstoday.com has many other photos highlighting the Coptic heritage and honoring the clergy. Although there are many videos and images published on the websites, none of them are first-hand and there are no galleries, flash files or any more advanced visual items. There is a live stream section from 20 television channels (six of them are Coptic Christian channels), but most of the links are broken. Generally, there is a lack of professionalism and quality control. For example, some photos and news highlights are linked to wrong news stories. The website has a Facebook page where the same news stories from the website, are highlighted without starting a new line of discussions. The page created in June 2011, got more than 54,000 likes (last access was in April 2013). There are also links to Twitter and YouTube with the similar material. There is no calendar to announce new events or activities.
As most of the materials are republished from mainstream newspapers, TV channels and tweets of public figures, the reader can hardly find alternative diverse tones in terms of voices and communities of interpretations. Although the website focuses on the Coptic issues, republishing the materials from different traditional mainstream sources does not assist in developing solid new approaches or discourse in tackling the issue but is a process of recycling the old interpretations. On the other hand, certain points of view might be reflected through the process of selectivity. This process could reveal the stances towards different actors including:

- **The State:** It is introduced negatively and appears to be uninterested in protecting Copts.
- **The Church:** It is introduced in a respectful way with all due appreciation by focusing more on honoring the high-ranking clergy. The Church is imaged in a monolithic way and without showing any of its institutional dynamics.
- **The Islamists:** They are negatively introduced as one bloc, but not frequently.
- **Other social and political movements (including the Coptic youth):** The stances towards these movements are not clear or do not seem as a field of interest.
In terms of finding any special features, a subtle sense of relative tolerance can be seen by the publishing of some videos or materials showing the good relations between Muslims and Christians.

- www.freecopts.net

The head of www.freecopts.net has a slogan “Keeping an Eye on the Coptic Issue.” There is an emphasis on the cultural peculiarities by writing the name of the website in the Coptic language. The logo at the head is two lotus flowers hugging the Nile River and the Cross. The website has different sections including:

A. News Coverage
B. Today’s Article
C. Opinion Editorials

Opinion pieces: Most of these pieces are highlighting the suffering of the Copts and criticizing Islamists, and the USA. Sometimes, even the defendants of the Copts, including the Church, are criticized for their leniency but in a respectful way.

A. Cartoons
B. Have Your Say

Latest News under which there are follow-up stories titled:

A. Human Rights: It has republished materials from other mainstream news papers
B. Coptic Affairs
C. Lies in Journalism: it is an interesting sub-section where a kind of media monitoring is done, but some of this news is published without clarifying why they are considered
to be lies. There are no published criteria specifying the way of spotting or countering these lies.

There are two sections tackling current and historical manifestations of discrimination:

A. The Minorities of the East: Basically, it focuses on the religious minorities. Reports and news stories covering the status of Christians in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq are republished in this section.

B. Blue Bone: Historically, Blue Bone is considered to be a term of abuse used in Egypt against Coptic Christians and which refers to the bruises they bore on their bodies in the course of history. For many Copts, the word has mixed connotation of insult and painful experiences of persecution through times. The section presents the history of Copts where some selective historical Coptic incidents and characters are introduced and sometimes they are linked to current events. The section tends to promote the morals of patriotism adopted by the Copts and highlights the kinds of oppression they went through.

Generally, most of the materials are news, reports and press releases covering the activities organized by some Coptic organizations domestically and internationally. Although there is a marquee and different news sections, the updates are not very frequent, and the English version has not been updated since July 2012.

There are considerable numbers of audio and video religious materials. The website has a video section divided into different sub-sections including news, reports and Coptic sermons and hymns. There are republished cartoons. There is a live streaming section from general and Coptic TV channels, but most of the links are broken. On the homepage, the
different sections are highlighted in a balanced way and there is a special highlight in the left bar of the Blue bone section. There is a corner of polls, and at the time of writing (April 2013), the question was:

After the bloody events of *el Tahrir* Square, are you sure that the Brotherhood were involved in the “Battle of the Camel?”

Yes

No

In terms of interactivity, the website has a huge section of discussion forums categorized into different topics where articles and news reports are republished. In the Special forums, the most popular forum is the Christian one, while there are others for science, economy, sports, women & children, society, arts and computer. There are also forum sections dealing with misconceptions about Christianity and countering atheism a dialogue with atheists.

The website has a link to its Facebook page (launched in March 2010) and has around 69,000 likes. The Facebook page highlights news, different press releases and announcements of events and activities. Links to Twitter and YouTube channel are highlighted on the homepage.

The attitudes towards the different actors can be observed as follows:

A. The Church: There is a mixture of respect and accusation of protecting the Copts verbally and not by taking firm stances.

B. The State is accused of persecution whether through neglect or involvement.
C. The representatives of the new youth movements cannot be found, but the well-known activists and Human Rights organizations representatives interested in the Copts issues can be found.

A kind of geographical diversity can be found in tackling the discrimination against the Copts in some rural areas especially in Upper Egypt, but there is no indication of real diversity in the published opinions or perspectives whether on the ideological or the political levels. In terms of in-depth coverage or discussing issues, the website focuses on Coptic activism domestically and overseas, but in a traditional way. Culture and historical representations of the Copts and the regular religious sections can be found. The suffering and the peculiarities of the Copts in Egypt has been highlighted in the English website. There is a fragmented but visible interest in different minorities and sub groups including Sufis, Baha’is, and Bedouins … etc to show how they suffer under the regime and especially after the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Both Blue Bone and Lies in Journalism sections can be considered as special features of the website. Another special feature of www.freecopts.com is being a bilingual website, but the English version has not been updated. Additionally, the English version has described the issues through conflict frames by discussing the significance of a Coptic Flag, the hearing sessions in the Congress about the persecution of the Copts in Egypt, and the threat of Islamic propagation in Africa.
The main titles on the home page of www.copts-united.net, such as Today’s Issue and the Main Page of Today’s Issue, gives the feeling that it is an online magazine.

There is a News section, under which there are different sub-sections including:

A. Egyptian News: There are republished materials from different newspapers and websites. There is a disclaimer declaring that the website is not responsible for the content, but it is republished to have a complementary news service.

B. World in Lines: It has republished international news stories.

C. From our Correspondents: It is supposed to have first-hand reports and news stories.

D. Copts and Political Islam: It publishes news stories and reports focusing on of different Islamist groups towards the Copts and vice versa. There is News and the Official: It relates the news to certain statement by an official or a public figure, but it is not an updated section.

E. Free Opinions: It publishes opinion pieces from different sources

F. Opinion Space: It publishes opinion pieces written by the writers of www.copts-united.net. At the time of writing, there was an article discussed the threats against the Coptic Christians in El Wasta, a small town 80 km south of Cairo, after spreading rumors claimed that a Muslim young lady disappeared because of her conversion to Christianity. The comments on the article included exchanging claims by Muslims and Copts that each group is privileged and overprotected by the security forces (Thomas, 2013)

There are also two sections to publish the contributors of the users as follows:

A. With the readers: It publishes the contributions of the users, but the section is not updated.
B. *El Tahrir* Square: It is not an updated section, and this could be partially related to the changing stance against the January Revolution expressed by the Managing Editor Basant Mosa who described the Egyptian Revolution as a “defeat” causing the political rise of the Muslim Brotherhood.

C. Columns: They are written by the Editor-in-chief (Ezzat Polis) and the Managing Editor (Basant Mosa) where you can find focus on women’s rights, personal freedoms and confronting “political Islam” and the model of the “religious state”. For instance, and at the time of writing there was an article that reviewed the role of the Clergy in the Church (Mosa, 2011).

Other sections utilizing visual and audio tools can be found as follows:

D. Photo Coverage (updated till March 2011): Most of the photos in this section cover the attacks against the Churches and the Copts.

E. Web TV: It has 13 different web programs produced by unitedcopts. In addition, there is also a live streaming section from different Arab and international television channels. Many incidents and activities are covered mainly through photo and video files.

F. Coptsunited Seminars: It publishes video records of offline culture events organized by coptsunited.

A specialized section stating the stances of the website can also be found:

G. Campaigns and Press Releases: It includes announcements from the website staff to clarify their views on the feedback or criticisms received
Additionally, there is a Miscellaneous section and it has various sub-sections but most of them are not updated including cinema critiques, profiles for public figures in modern history, both Muslims and Non-Muslims, science, literature and a section publishing different “sarcastic” texts by the staff writers. An Obituary service for Copts can also be found.

Index, copt-united.com, December 2014

Generally, the content is diverse, but most of it is made up of news and opinion pieces. The same content could be published in more than one section, and some other sections are not updated. The website follows up on current events with special focus on the status of the Copts on different levels. There is a kind of monitoring of the various attacks and violations against the Copts. The website is updated on a regular basis, but different sections and sub-sections are not updated. Both first hand and republished materials can be found, but there is a policy in differentiating between them through accurate titles and disclaimers.

For the homepage, highlights and banners: The head of the Home Page has the Crown of King Mina who unified ancient Egypt. There is also a photo of Adli Abadir (the founder and owner) of coptsunited. On the homepage, there are highlights of the recent news and
opinion pieces, video feedback from public figures, cartoons and there was a poll (on April 26, 2013) questioning the impact on the popularity of the Satirist Basem Youssef, who hosts the satirical news program *El Bernameg*, after criticizing the ex-presidential candidate General Ahmed Shafiq. There is a banner for uploading the tool bar with the website’s latest news.

There are links to Facebook and Twitter. A Facebook page with the logo of the website has 25,000 likes and most of the posts are cartoons and jokes criticizing the Muslim Brotherhood. The Twitter account is used to highlight the latest news stories and sometimes photos and features are also shared.

There is a certain kind of diversity on the religious and generational levels, but ideologically, there was an expected dominance of secular and liberal tendencies. Concerning the stances towards the different actors, they can be observed as follows:

- The State is criticized especially after the Muslim Brotherhood came to power.

- The Church: The website shows respect towards the Church, but it has different levels of criticism, especially of the Church’s stance towards some social and women-oriented issues.

- The Youth are represented in the staff writers and, to a certain degree, through publishing news stories about their activities.
• Society: Through the discourses of www.coptsunited.net, the society is accused of being sectarian or helpless.

• Political and Social movements and Groups: There is a support of different civil oppositional, to the Muslim Brotherhood’s regime, parties and groups can be found.

• Islamists: The news and the stances of Islamists are covered, different oppositional stances against the Muslim Brotherhood even from the Salafis or the ex-Islamists are highlighted. The coverage of these stances might show a degree of dynamics among the different Islamic trends.

In terms of Special Features, there is a visible degree of professionalism compared to other websites including having full-time editors, Web TV, good visual and technological tools. It is also a bilingual website with some differences between the Arabic and the English versions. There is a kind of geographical diversity among the different Egyptian governorates, especially in Upper Egypt.

• www.coptreal.com

The homepage of www.coptreal.com is divided into three vertical columns; the middle column is the major one and is titled News. The left column highlights urgent news and the right one highlights the videos. The material was organized chronologically and depended on republished news and videos from Coptic mainstream websites on the issues of Copts and the attacks against them, and it is frequently updated.
The logo of www.coptreal.com is a microphone that could also be seen as a Cross and the slogan of the website is “Coptreal, the news network.” There is a marquee but it highlights republished news stories from other sources. There is no sign of interaction on www.coptreal.com, but there is only the option of registration to be on the website mailing list. Visually, it has only a number of republished videos, still images. Most of the materials are recycled from other sources, thus no special features can be found.

www.st-takla.org

In www.st-takla.org, the sections are listed in both vertical and horizontal ways including: Jesus, Churches, e-Cards, Gallery, Multimedia, Directory, Archive for books, melodies and hymns, The Bible, The Pope, Live streaming… and most of the materials are selected from the religious sources. The major focus is religious, cultural and historical items. There are updated Q&A sections, but some other sections are not.

For the homepage, highlights and banners, the design and the technical properties are relatively primitive. The head has a dome, image of Jesus and the Egyptian flag. The website has Send a Comment section, but they are no comments published on the website.

An added value can be found in the Q&A section on religious issues (a kind of database started since 2000). The websites seems to receive a lot of questions on religious issues, but there is no visible way to assess the feedback in a quantitative or qualitative way. The website partly uses multimedia and visual tools, but it uses older software programs. The kids’ section has coloring files and games, e-cards and a huge gallery including images of Coptic icons, Churches, documentation of historical incidents and locations. There is also a
library of different Coptic religious books. The most significant feature of the www.st-takla.org website is having a cultural, historical and apolitical nature.

- www.copts.org

The Arabic page of the www.copts.org is different from the English one. The Arabic page has many different sections including news, reports, Coptic public figures, sarcastic section and sports news. The English page has a limited number of sections including: Coptic News, Latest News World News, Opinion and Latest Videos. Most of the online materials are republished news. In the case of (the English page, the news are republished stories on Copts’ issues from Egypt Independent). Additionally, the website has opinion pieces and comments.

The mission of the website is defined, by its founders, as a Coptic Digest reflecting the persecution of the Copts and their earlier historical roots and rights in Egypt. There have been no updates since September 2012. Most of the news stories and reports are republished, while there are some fresh materials especially in the sections on the interviews and the opinion pieces. In the English section, the last updates are Christmas greetings to the Copts in the USA (April 26, 2013).

The Arabic homepage of www.copts.org has a special design at the head of the page narrating different turning points in Egyptian modern history from the viewpoint of the creators of www.copts.org. This special design is illustrated by using the mouse over. At the homepage, and at the time of writing, there were highlights from the different sections, and a poll asking whether the appearance of veiled women on the TV is the starting point in Islamizing the country.
The English website has no special design on the head, but it has a Flash file of features the latest stories. In www.copts.org, there is a whole section of *montada forum*) which started on 2000, with 49,940 members, 338,089 entries and 31,733 topics. Some comments on the published articles can be found on the website where even the Church is criticized. At www.copts.org, there is almost no diversity in terms of religious or ideological levels.

In terms of the stances towards different actors at www.copts.org, they can be observed as follows:

- **The State:** It is accused and criticized.
- **The Church:** The website hosts some voices represent the Church, while other voices, and based on their support of the civil secular State model, criticize the Church.
- **The Islamists:** www.copts.org framed the islamist as a serious danger. Titles like Egypt’s Islamic Tsunami, Egypt’s shameful elections, Egypt’s Christians worried about the Islamic surge …etc are frequently used. In the English version, the opinions and features are framed by comparing anti-Coptic tendencies in Egypt to anti-Semitism in Europe, and of highlighting the warnings against how Islamists can become a danger within the Western Public sphere. In terms of special features, and based in the USA, Michel Munir states that he started using the website since 1996. This fact can reflect the phase of the Copts Diaspora and how they tackled the Coptic issues before the emergence of TV satellite channels and blogging.
• **www.youthbishopric.com**

In www.youthbishopric.com, library, articles, comments, news, and conference sections can be found. Most of the materials are first-hand coverage of the activities and the services of the bishopric. It is mainly a Religious, frequently updated, website and focused on youth activities and services.

The homepage highlights and banners are well designed, and all the sections are highlighted properly and in a balanced way. There are many forums at youthbishopric.com including Pray Request and Q&A sections. In youthbishopric.com, and at the time of writing, the total visits were 3295716 and that day’s visits were 882 (April 26, 2013). The website has a Facebook page (with more than 40,000 likes) and a Twitter account. Books, video and audio files can also be downloaded through the website. The website is supported by the charismatic Youth Archbishop Mosa.

• **www.Christian-dogma.com**

Basically, www.christian-dogma.com is a series of forums where the different materials are categorized and comments can be highlighted. There are nine sections (or forums) at www.christian-dogma.com including: news, video, audio and reports divided between Christian and general pages. Most of the materials are news or maybe very short comments and news with very casual and hot titles that could entail misinformation or exaggeration. Most of the threads are titled “urrrrrrgent or imporrrrrtant or ….,” and even the comments on Facebook and Twitter by the public figures are highlighted. The website has a very high frequency of updates. Most of the materials are republished, and there is a certain topic for Special Reports. The head has a design of a Sheikh and Priest and the symbol of national unity.
The website uses numeral indications to show their popularity and viewership. The number of downloads are shown on the homepage of each item. It constantly used second-hand and republished audio and video materials. At www.christian-dogma.com, there are different specialized sections where various videos and audio files are selected and categorized whether they are general or Christian files. There is a link to a Facebook group (launched in 2012) with 233,000 likes and a Twitter account. The website covers diverse geographic areas. Some topics of superstition, miracles and superpower are tackled. Basically, www.christian-dogma.com focuses on the news stories about the current events, while there is no specific space to show diverse opinions. The major concern about www.christian-dogma.com is the instant coverage that might lead to publishing inaccurate stories and information.

**Concluding Remarks**

In most cases, and despite the differences between the selected websites, there is a lack of editorial policies and criteria to guarantee the required degree of professionalism. Many of the selected websites tend to use republished materials, and this could be attributed to different financial and structural problems. Most of the content can be categorized as news stories with surface-level coverage. A more in-depth coverage and analysis can hardly be found.

In many cases, the vision and the mission of the websites are dominated by monitoring persecution and discrimination in their various forms and levels. This tendency can be understood in light of the lack of interest in the mainstream media to show cultural and religious diversity, address the manifestations of discrimination or have a more multi-
perspective in-depth coverage of sectarian tensions or Muslim – Christian relations in general. Visually, and in different cases, there is the usage of different logos and symbols to indicate and confirm the Pharaonic prioritized identity which combines (in harmony) with the Coptic primary one. Zeidan (1999:54) states that Copts could aspire to equality as an authentic part of the prioritized identity during the periods when mainly Pharaonic, liberal and secular Arab identities prevailed. Copts were relegated to a secondary status when Arab-Islamic and pan-Islamic identity were present (quoted in Kalliny, 2010, p.11).

2. Coptic Facebook Pages: An Analysis

Studying the Facebook pages and groups might reveal more dimensions and improve our understanding of the Coptic online expressions as well as re-examine the offline contexts. The different characteristics of Facebook including networking, self - and collective representation, and visual aids …etc show additional dynamics of the social groups under study. Social identity theories have interpretations of the prototypes of different social groups. Additionally, social identity theoretical propositions can explain the salience of the individual and the collective identities under certain circumstances and can work as a proper frame to analyze social networking sites, including Facebook groups.

The relative strength of collective associations within the group, as evidenced through density, linking, and bridging, associates individual activity with collective (group) level properties. Through this process, further detail of group prototypes and the salient characteristics that define a typical member of that group can be identified, and additional ‘narratives’ can be developed that further understanding of social identity and group dynamics at the micro (i.e. individual) and macro (i.e. community) levels (Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p.92)
Additionally, visual characteristics including profile picture, logos, and covers of the selected Facebook groups are considered. According to Heer (2006), “the visualization was particularly useful in confirming the ethnographic observations concerning the presence and composition of network clusters which allowed the researchers to develop additional narratives” (quoted in Code & Zaparyniuk, 2009, p.95).

Unlike the websites, most of the selected Facebook pages have been launched after the Egyptian revolution. Being more action-oriented, more youth groups and movements tend to utilize the Facebook tools of networking. This study re-examines the different narrations of Coptic Christians in developing their models of identity and citizenship where special focus is given to the Coptic youth stances and views.

Subsequently, and based on previous literature reviews and the in-depth interviews, different Coptic youth Facebook pages were chosen to reflect diverse approaches including:

- The Masbero Youth Union Facebook page
- The Mina Daniel Movement Facebook page
- The Christian Egyptian Civil Rights Movement (CECRM)

With its central role, one of largest Facebook pages of the Orthodox Coptic Church was selected as follows:

- The History of the Orthodox Church Facebook page

On the conceptual levels, critiques of the Church and the actual socio-economic structures were demonstrated through

- The Egyptian Christian Liberation Theology Facebook page

And the narrations of persecution and discrimination were re-addressed through

- Blue Bone: The History of Copts Facebook page
New group dealing with media issues was also introduced through

- Journalists for the Coptic File Facebook page

A descriptive thematic analysis of these Facebook pages can be demonstrated as follows

- Masbero Youth Union (Official Page)


Although there are other Facebook pages with the same title and softer or harder tone, this page is titled as “the official Page for the Maspero Youth Union.” The page was launched on 20/03/2011 in parallel or immediately after the first Maspero sit-in in March 2011 which is described by the page as turning point in the whole history of Copts and of Egypt.

Apparently, the purpose of the page is to network among the young activists who participated in the sit-in and even those who did not participate. The Union believes that justice for Copts will be achieved through establishing a “civil state” that protects the rights of all Egyptians. The basic information about the page includes an answer to an expected paradoxical question: “Why do you organize a Coptic union to help establishing a civil state?” The answer discuss how the issue is about coordinating the efforts and the experiences of the young Copts particularly those who were in Masperoto defend Egyptian Copts as citizens who they are entitled to have all the rights and all the duties, they are entitled to. The page states how the Union is going to work through committees such as organization and Membership committee, and a Cultural committee responsible for the cultural awareness and for explaining the history of the Egyptian Coptic culture
The communication with the moderators can be done through emails and the published mobile telephone numbers of some coordinators. The page has more than 61,000 likes and the main topics of the page are a follow-up of the sectarian tensions and attacks, in addition to organizing activities and demonstrations against such attacks. Visually, the profile photo is the name of Maspero Youth both in Arabic and English and one of the Arabic letters is turned into a Red Cross. Colors are red, white and black with the dominance of the black color (last access was in April 26, 2013).

Unlike most of the selected Facebook pages, this page has the peculiarity of starting by on- the- ground activities and then moving to utilize the Facebook characteristics. There are diverse attitudes within and outside the Union. While it is accused of being sectarian by some Coptic activists, others believe that it is not welcomed by some groups within the Church. There are several organizational complications and challenges that are reflected through the attempts of restructuring the Union. According to most of its members, the Union could be introduced as a monitoring, mediating and lobbying group to balance the role of the Church in the political life of the Copts.

- Mina Daniel’s Movement


Mina Daniel turned to be one of the major icons of the Egyptian Revolution. His martyrdom in the Maspero massacre shocked many of his friends regardless of their religious and ideological backgrounds. Daniel could represent a new dynamic concept of solidarity of a youth activist who could support different causes of social justice and civil rights. Mina
Daniel’s model could help in disassociating between supporting the Coptic issues and sectarianism. Activist Mina Samir told the researcher how he attempted to restructure the Maspero Youth Union in a manner inspired by the model of Mina Daniel. One of the important pages that could reflect a significant trend among the new Coptic youth is the Mina Daniel’s Movement page, where there is an indication of having other pages launched from Alexandria and Luxor.

The page was launched on October 27, 2011 after Mina’s martyrdom. Supposedly, the purpose of the page is not a mere memorial one, but it’s a link between the martyrdom of Mina and his aspirations and dreams to help people to live better. The page adopts Mina’s stance by resisting all the forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination rather than focusing only on the Coptic issues. The page highlights how Mina was killed by the SCAF with his dream of having a civil state where everyone lives in justice and freedom and are able to achieve their dreams for improved education, health, housing and employment. Mina Daniel was the voice of the voiceless and the page aims to complete his work through a political movement that reflects his aspirations and dreams.
The page that has more than 10,000 likes motivates the users by explaining how everyone collaborated to kill Mina including the media, political parties, the elite, the military, and also “your silence” (the user’s silence). The topics of the page focus on labor rights, social justice materials and activities. There are also many materials showing opposition to the SCAF and then the new regime of the Muslim Brotherhood. Visually, the profile picture is a painting of Mina as the revolutionary icon Guevara (last access was in April 26, 2013). Among the special features of the page is its interest in a job and housing initiative, revenge from SCAF, as well as the socialist and leftist tendency.

- The Egyptian Christian Liberation Theology

http://www.Facebook.com/lahot.elta7rer?fref=ts

Discussing the possibility of creating and supporting an Egyptian “Liberation Theology,” in the interviews section, activist Samir shows his concern over achieving the liberation through the Church as in the experience of Catholic Latin America. Instead of both the Church and the Mosque, Samir wants the platform of the Egyptian Revolution el Tahrirsquare to achieve the Liberation. “Activists could lead this path and not the religious clergy” Samir insists. Searching the Facebook pages by the keyword of “Liberation Theology,” the researcher finds the most updated and related page titled “Egyptian Christian Liberation Theology.” The page was launched in September 2011, after the revolution. The major philosophy of the page is about how God will not accept anyone’s attending Sunday sermon and then accepting injustice through the week. The page emphasizes that the mission of the Church in every age is the victory of justice, and the fight against injustice, and everything that is not human, as well as standing beside the poor and the marginalized.
The page founder attempts to re-read the religious concepts and their connotations. He defines Sin as the product of social and historical absence of brotherhood and love among humans, and the negative position of the forces of oppression and marginalization. According to him, Salvation should not be limited to statements relating to life after death only, but should include the concept of the kingdom of God as a reality now. This kingdom is a new social system which ensures equality for all. This does not mean ignoring the meaning of eternal dimension of “life after death,” but it connects the two together. If history and eternal linked together, the salvation will be achieved (last access was on April 26, 2013)

Index, the Egyptian Christian Liberation Theology Facebookpage, December 2013

The page has only 206 likes, which might be attributed to the heavy criticism of the Priests and the Clergy. The page emphasizes, on every occasion, its support for freedom and social justice. There is a tendency to monitor the Church performance and a re-reading (interpretation) of the religious texts. The page has a “revolutionary” system on a socio-
cultural level and encourages the believers to resist everything opposed to this system. Visually, the profile photo is an eagle with the Egyptian flag colors with the name of the group.

- The History of the Orthodox Church
  https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9/79769673555

  Unlike the websites, there is no official page on Facebook for the Egyptian Orthodox Church, but “The History of the Orthodox Church” could be one of the pages that reflect the conservative ceremonial historical spirit of the Cathedral. Unlike most of the Facebook pages, this page was founded on May 2009, before the Egyptian Revolution. The profile image is a painting for the Coptic Cathedral and it has more than 19,000 likes. Most of the statues and the comments could be categorized as religious and spiritual materials. These materials might include press releases (related to the Pope and the Priests), announcements about TV interviews with the Pope, etc. The albums of the page illustrate many images of Coptic religious occasions.

- Blue Bone: The History of Copts
  https://www.Facebook.com/3adma.Zar2a

  This page is characterized by tackling the “untold stories” of the Coptic history from the point of view of its administrator. The page was launched on June 8, 2011 and has more than 40,000 likes. The page tends to link the past to the present and focuses on the peculiarities of the Coptic experience.
Similar to the title of the page, the description in the “About us” section reflects the pivotal status of the concept of persecution in the course of Coptic history. The description of the vision of the page reveals the connotation of the “blue bone” metaphor and its historical origins. Moreover, it refers to the persisting nature of persecution through the contemporary manifestations of socio-cultural discrimination:

The Coptic name is Abu Cross, the description is “blue bone” and the swearword does not matter because we are used to such insults. The name is Egyptian, the description is Nasrani (Christian) and Oh Egypt! Why your people are scattered. AdmaZarka (or blue bone) means Copts, and it is an exclusive epithet of the Copts in Egypt that has different connotations and tales. This epithet could be used for ridiculing Copts like other titles, such as arbah reshah (four blades) or Coffes, which make fun of Coptic Christians in Egypt. But uh, ifyou know what is behind this title; it portrays, honestly, the history of the Copts. The Coptic Church is the only Church in the world to chronicle its days by the Calendar of the martyrs. The Adma Zarkaoor blue bone title goes back to distant days when the sixth Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi AmrAllāh ordered the Copts to wear a wooden cross weighing not less than five pounds and sealed hanging around the necks with a rope. The frequent wearing of the Cross caused the blue color of the neck vertebrae. The page is relating history to the future through encouraging educating the children about the untold history of the Copts in the present. Hence, we launched Adma Zarka (or blue bone) page. This page is about the history of the Copts that we do not know or we know it, but we are not proud of it or do not teach it to our children.

The mission of the page can be defined through the different fields of interests including General Knowledge, Coptic History, Tales from Christians’ Alley and our unknown history sections.
The Christian Egyptian Civil Rights Movement (CECRM)

https://www.Facebook.com/cecrm?filter=1

Although Christian Egyptian Civil Rights Movement (CECRM) is similar to Blue Bone in tackling the persecution of the Copts in Egypt, it deals with the cause in a more provocative way. The CECRM adopts activism rather than the educational cultural tools of the “Blue Bone.” The page was launched in 2011, but it seems to be shaped by opposing the rise of the Islamists especially after the Presidential elections. In the basic information section about the group, a certain level of tolerance is shown towards the different political affiliations apart from Islamists’. The group is described as youth civil social secular rights group; the members “may be liberal or leftist but certainly not Muslim Brotherhood.” The administrators specify the motives for developing the page as follows

We believe that there is discrimination on the basis of religion against Egyptian Christians and see that there is a marginalization of the role of Christians when it comes to participating in the governance of the country and see that a lot of Christians are subjected to extreme types of physical violence and oppression.

The founders of the page highlight their provocative interactive attitude that encapsulates a re-introduction of the Christian dogma and refuse to see a contradiction between the message of “Love” in Christianity and confronting injustices.

We believe that someone who has a certain right should claim to take it back and not wait for anyone to call for his right on his behalf. Christians donot demand their rights and do not wait for someone to call for their rights on their behalf… Rights are not granted, but they are extracted… tyrants on earth will not give you your rights as long as
they can enjoy their dominance and exploit your needs… you have to force them to stop hurting you and to become free and not a slave.

We consider the protest of the poor and the oppressed is the voice of God on earth … to keep praying without interfering, to prevent the occurrence of injustice before us is not faith at all. In fact, it is the epitome of infidelity to the teachings of Christ, who never hesitated to attack the oppressors.

Christ is a revolutionary figure of leadership who can forgive the adulterous woman and can forgive publican thief, but he could not forgive the Pharisees for their oppression and arrogance… We defend our rights at our Egyptian homeland, defend our rights to live in dignity and freedom.

The page raises the repeated controversies and contradictions associated to issues of supporting the model of the Civil State on the one hand, and protecting the religious group on the other.

Our hope is to see Egypt a free secular state based on humanitarian principles of freedom, peace, dignity and equality between human beings. Our cause that we defend is the freedom of thought and conscience, equality and justice for Christian citizens in Egypt. The page mentions various principles of the movement’s work emphasizing the “rules of civility with friend and foe,” serving the people in need, and the avoidance of verbal and physical violence and being committed to purity of the heart.
On the other side, and according to the page, these idealistic spiritual principles should be combined with other more realistic organizational principles including admitting how “political action needs sacrifice, because freedom has a price” and how the members of the movement are willing to sacrifice “in order to liberate Egypt and the entire human race from injustice.” Subsequently, the members are required to take care of their “spiritual and physical health” as they are “very important for political action in the group.”

The hierarchical characteristic is revealed through recommending that “everyone in the group follow the guidance of the leader of the group responsible for ensuring security and safety.” But these governing principles have not resisted the rage and frustration in various cases through the page comments and discussions. At the time of analysis (last access was in April 24, 2013), a psychological stance of protest and anger was dominated and the Peshmuran revolutionary experience was brought to the contexts in many ways. In rejecting discrimination and violation of the Copts’ rights, a certain slogan was chosen:

We do not forgive … we do not forget … New Peshmuran

Different manifestations of anger and frustration were found, and against different actors including the negativity of the Copts themselves. In this context, a member of the page mentioned a meaningful story full of bitterness and guilt: at the beginning of my work in the Coptic human rights field, I asked a monk why the Copts did not resist the Arabs and other occupiers. He told me the Copts are not able to live as masters, but they are always happy to act as slaves.

11Peshmurians revolt (PeshmuriansCopts) who live in the North Nile Delta around year 832, revolted against the Abbasid rule, where they expel the state workers and raised the banner of rebellion and refused to pay tribute (special tax called the jizya). In the reign of Caliph Al-Ma'mun who arrested and killed large numbers of Copts and their dependents (Wikipedia, n.d.)
Another meaningful reaction was against the sense of “inferiority” and the rarity of the influencing “leadership” according to some of the members. A comment on a news story (or an interview) indicated that the leader of the Black Bloc is Muslim: even in the ranks of the opposition we should be in the second row and always play the role of assistant as if it is forbidden for us to be heroes!!!

We are tired of you and so on we will be separated from the national community because of their perception of us as inferiors

And in a challenging comment signed by ibn el Peshurian (or Peshurian’s son)

For the information, most of the youth in the field now and the participants in the ground events are Christians and are really playing the main role.

Glory to the heroes

The page has 1307 likes. Despite opposing the model of the Muslim Brotherhood MB, there is an attempt to imitate the model of the MB subtly and in a visible way. For instance, the cover image of the page is a fish with Kimit Brotherhood slogan. There is a utilization of the audio and video tools. The page has a video promoting the cause of equality and anti-discrimination, especially, by focusing on the lack of having Coptic Christians in high ranking posts in the Egyptian State including the posts of Presidency and Prime ministry.

The young activists in the videos are wearing T-shirts with the Movement’s logo and are filming in the desert. The video is short and each activist is giving a direct message indicating a manifestation of injustice and/or asking for a right or making a demand. The page has various stories and experiences that could be considered as a kind of monitoring effort of persecution on daily and personal levels.
Supposedly, the page should be considered as a specialized Facebook page if it is compared to the other pages of movements and groups. This page represents the efforts by a group of Coptic journalists interested in covering the issues of the Copts topped by the news and the developments of the Church. The page, angrily, describes the attack against them from the Church young scouts while covering one of the events. The members of the group show their resentment, and others call for the head of the Journalists’ Syndicate to interfere.

The comments of some viewers reflect the gaps and the sectarian tensions among even a supposedly well-cultured group such as the journalists. The comments and replies included sectarian expressions such as

Oh Allah destroy oppressors by oppressors
Or four blades (meaning the Cross and referring to the Copts) fighting four blades

Both expressions have sectarian implications as they are referring to the intra-group conflict and the satisfactions gained from seeing the troubles that could arise among the Copts.

**General Remarks**

The selected Facebook pages show how certain discourses and tools can be utilized in different ways by Christian Coptic movements and groups as follows:

- The Historical incidents and narrations are used in different ways and for various purposes. For instance, and in the CECRM page, the *Peshmurian* revolution is tackled
to mark a history of resistance. The same incident is brought for educational reasons and for memory preservation in Blue Bone or *Adma Zarka* page. Associated historical images and symbols were used to reflect different connotations including the persecution, resistance and particularity (e.g. *kimit, Peshmurian, blue bone*).

- The CECRM page believes in the power of politics and activism, and the Blue Bone page believes in and the power of meanings. The discourse of resistance could be established on general and/or ideological values as in The Mina Daniel movement or on religious values as in the Egyptian Liberation of Theology.

- The different pages reveal the complicated relations between the new young Coptic movements and groups on the one hand, and the Church on the other hand. Heavy criticism of the financial and administrative performance could be found in Egyptian Liberation Theology page. An attempt at reducing the influence and the dominance of the Church in the Coptic political life could be found in Masbero Youth Union page. Breaking the cycle of information monopoly can be found in Journalists for the Coptic File.

- Some pages encapsulate attempts to re-read and re-interpret different religious texts and concepts as it can be found in the Egyptian Liberation Theology concerning the social injustices and the obligatory task of facing them. Re-interpret sacred texts to

- Face negativities and to take the initiatives can be found in the Civil Rights Movement for Copts.
The Apolitical Sense of the History of the Coptic Church page could be found in other different Facebook pages of different groups representing collective and individual initiatives. These groups are seeking more constructive attitudes and working hard to overcome the sectarian tensions through adopting more humanitarian relaxed discourses. Sometimes these initiatives overlap with activities of the Church and/or other groups and movements.
VI. CONCLUSION

This study provides an explanation of how (European) British Muslims and Egyptian Coptic Christians utilize the Internet to negotiate regarding their hybrid identities and adjust their positions within their larger societies. In this context, relying on different primary and secondary sources, the study shows how the minority-majority categorization may not be sufficient in addressing the socio-cultural and political differences and complications among the different social groups, but on the other hand, this categorization could help in sketching and guiding the analysis of these social groups with their perceptual and actual positions. Despite the disparity among the online platforms studied regarding the levels of vision and content, the study showed how most of these minorities’ online platforms need to develop their discourses and tools in order to address the offline complexities and the diverse stances of major actors. They also need to play a more prominent role in framing issues of citizenship and integration.

Studying the models of identities and citizenship of these social groups in cyberspace contributes to crystallizing different propositions and defining actors. Among of the key actors are the youth. Subsequently, and through our journey of analyzing the various “online expressions and representations” of European and British Muslims and the Egyptian Coptic Christians, a significant role of the new generations is found. Generally, younger generations perceive their positions as citizens through a mixture of anger and search for a better place in societies. Despite the intragroup differences, British Muslim youth are interacting by ending the “myth of return” that might influence the discourses and the attitudes of the older generations, while the Coptic youth (and also despite their intragroup differences) attempt to
reconsider their relations with the State and the Church by getting involved in new movements and practices.

The engagement of the first research question on utilizing the Internet to manage the hybrid identities helps in understanding how the younger generations use the social networking sites, especially the Facebook, rather than the institutional traditional websites. Being action-oriented and requiring no financial and administrative resources, Facebook witnesses diverse snapshots of youth activism and dynamics. Generally, the study observes emigration from the websites to Facebook (even by some organizations) whether for financial reasons or for seeking more interactivity with their target audiences.

Both European British Muslims and the Egyptian Coptic Christians encounter the question of prioritized identities and the different circles of affiliations in forming and framing their representations on the web. In this context, some differences and similarities between the two cases under study can be observed. For instance, in both cases, attempts at re-visiting religious texts interpretations are observed. Moreover, and although the characteristics and the roles of the mainstream media in these two cases are quite different, the interrelations between the mainstream media and the alternative digital media, of both British Muslims and the Copts, are likely to show some similarities. In both cases, the limited impact of the minorities’ alternative platforms in cyberspace can be amplified whenever they are quoted and hosted by the mainstream media, especially during moments of tensions, e.g. the sectarian attacks in the Coptic case or after 9/11 or 7/7 bombings in the case of British Muslims.
On the other hand, different historical and structural contexts of the two cases determine, to a certain extent, their online representations. For instance, British Muslims have no central body of representation (like the Church), while the Copts have quite the opposite position. Thus, websites of different bodies and organizations seeking to represent British Muslims can be found. Another point of difference can be identified as the Copts constitute a central group in both social and geographical senses and have their on-the-ground social network and circles, while British Muslims are interacting in more scattered and fragmented social circles and groups. Subsequently, and due to an advanced technological infrastructure, British websites for matrimonial services, women, and family help lines can be found among the most popular digital platforms. In terms of using online facilities, the European Muslim websites look relatively more successful in organizing campaign and activities whether for the purposes of advocacy or integration. This relative success, compared to the Coptic Christian websites, can be understood in light of the availability of better legal and administrative frameworks allowed the European Muslims to manage and develop their activities in a reasonable degree of freedom and transparency.

A major part of the study, using primary analysis, is dedicated to deal with the second research question and to find out if the Internet reveals the Coptic Christian diverse voices, actors and the motivations of identity salience. The study also confirms how a salient activated identity does not operate only as a cognitive perceptual process but also as a social process in which people may compete or negotiate over category salience. The study indicates how moments of tension tend to encourage the models of isolation and segregation when a certain social group tends to go closer to the extreme within the intergroup, while its members tend to see the outer-group members in a more homogeneous and uniform way (Turner, 1999, p.11). Thus, the mode of isolation can feed the cycle of stereotyping and misunderstanding. In this study, the engagement with the respondents of the in-depth
interviews brings the actual historical and structural contexts into the discussion. The outputs of both the literature reviews and the in-depth interviews show how the Christian Copts cannot be described as a monolithic bloc due to their diverse stances and views. A series of diverse perceptions of various concepts and actors adopted by Coptic Christians and through different points of time can be demonstrated as follows:

**Egyptian Revolution: Between Customization and Continuation**

Basically, most of the respondents, especially the youth, tackled the incidents sketched below and marked by the major turning point of the Egyptian revolution to show the impact of these incidents on understanding citizenship and identity. *El Tahrir* model and the Egyptian Revolution slogan of ‘Bread, Freedom and Social Justice’ looked promising as if it inaugurated a new social contract overcoming the injustices of the regimes and the stupidities of polarization which characterized the pre-revolution phase. Gradually, and with the difficulties and the failures of the transitional phases, many groups among the Coptic Christian youth tended to focus more on arranging activities and building organizations to defend their own causes.

- **Pre-revolution**
  - *Al-Omraneyya* protest
  - *Al Qeddisin* bombings

- **Revolution**
  - *El Tahrir* Model

- **Post-revolution**
  - *Maspero* sit-in
From *El Tahrir* to *Maspero* (and vice versa)

The Coptic Christians, like many other Egyptians, are facing new and old challenges. Different contexts interact and could cause the salience of certain identities. Coptic Christian youth activism might contribute to determining the choices of further integration or isolation.

Out of the previous literature and interviews, the diverse attitudes towards the Church, especially among the youth, could be categorized as the tendency towards neutralizing the influence of the Church, especially in the political sense, reforming the Church by enhancing its role as a platform for various activities including political awareness or the tendency to capitalizing the role of the Church in the public, and political life to face the fear from perceptual and actual threats.
Diverse Attitudes towards the State

Coptic Christians have diverse attitudes towards the State. These attitudes might be reduced to two major categories, especially among the youth: seeking protection as a high priority, or dreaming of a different model of State where a new model and a more comprehensive concept of justice prevail.

Diverse Attitudes towards the Society can be described as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share the stance of the State</th>
<th>• Discrimination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sectarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin of Sectarianism</td>
<td>• Back from the Gulf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pan-Arab to islamism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeds of change</td>
<td>• Social and humane activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Solidarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Defining Identity

In discussing the definition of identity, some of the respondents showed their concern against possible assimilation of the Egyptian identity in the Arab and/or Islamic circles.

Other models

Other respondents excluded the idea of conflicting identities and introduced different and more sophisticated models of incubator, overlapping or contiguous circles of different identities.

The detailed output of the above-mentioned diverse attitudes guided the attempt to analyze selected Coptic Christian online expressions including websites and Facebook pages. Compared to the previous literature and the interviews, most of the online expressions, especially on the websites, seem to adopt relative reductionist and uni-dimensional
approaches. Most of the online platforms focus mainly on actual threats or difficulties, and revolve around central narrations of earlier roots and persecution which might hinder the emergence of more diverse and relaxed Coptic Christian self-expressions and representations in cyberspace and the enlargement of their scope to include a more thorough, lifelike coverage of politics, culture and different social interactions. More culture-focused and/or apolitical expressions are confined to websites of a more isolated nature developed by Churches and the clergy. Thus, content that has the power to attract other social groups or general audience, with different religious backgrounds, cannot be found in these online experiences.

**Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research**

The study adopts the Case Study method with its internal validity strengthened by the immersion into the contexts of the case and deepened understanding of the field. On the other hand, “the unit under the special focus in the case study is not considered a perfect representation of the population” and hence the findings cannot be generalized (Hidalgo-Tenorio, 2011, p.16). More triangulated studies should be conducted to verify the case study assumptions and conclusion. Studying two different communities with various historical and conceptual backgrounds was a worthy attempt, but the broad areas of analyses and comparisons required a longer time frame and possibly a joint research team among the countries understudy. Moreover, the study was conducted during the continuing phases of transition after the Egyptian Revolution which may influence the researcher, respondents, and online discourses. Thus, continuing research and a revisiting of the conceptual and theoretical frames of this study can limit any possible negativity caused by these unavoidable influences.
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Bill Gent. University of Warwick, UK


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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

**Introductory Questions**

Education

Political Affiliation (if there is any)

Geographical (Urban / Rural) Affiliation

**Pre-planned questions**

- Narrations and Discourses of Minority / Majority Sameness and Differences
- Narrations of Coptic firstness and persecution
- The role of the Church as an Alternative Public Sphere
- Experiences of European Muslims : Differences and Inspirations
- Coptic Intergroup Relations
- Roles and Characteristics of the Internet vs. the mainstream media

**Finishing Questions**

Anything to add?

Tips for other respondents?

Recommendation of Coptic websites and /or Facebook pages
### Appendix B

**Websites Code Scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Website</th>
<th>coptstoday</th>
<th><a href="http://www.freecopts.netw">www.freecopts.netw</a></th>
<th>Coptsunited</th>
<th>Coptreal</th>
<th>St-takla</th>
<th>Copts</th>
<th>Youthbishopric</th>
<th>Christian-dogma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Analysis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics Summary</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Alexa info)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Multimedia, social media and / or Media Convergence</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxonomy of the content (sections)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature of content</td>
<td>(news, analysis,</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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156
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope of interest (thematic analysis)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Voices (religion, ideology, political, gender, geography ‘rural or urban’ …)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of updates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firsthand or republished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback and viewership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peculiarities and added values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homepage, highlights and banners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horizontal analysis:</strong> (attitudes toward: state, Church, youth, Islamists, other political and social movements …)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical analysis:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( certain cases,</td>
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<tr>
<td>coverage,</td>
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<tr>
<td>examples, quotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>…)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General remark</th>
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<tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>other</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>
## Appendix C: Coptic Facebook Pages Code Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose /Definition</th>
<th>Members (likes)</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Visuals</th>
<th>General remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Masbero Youth Union</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Mina Daniel Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Egyptian Christian Liberation Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>The History of the Orthodox Church</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B3%D9%A8%A9/79769673555">https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B3%D9%A8%A9/79769673555</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Christian Egyptian Civil Rights Movement (CECRM)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Bone: The History of Copts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.Facebook.com/3adma.Za2a">https://www.Facebook.com/3adma.Za2a</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists for the Coptic File</td>
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</table>