The Female Force: Gender Salience and Political Interests in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution

Katherine Meagor
Abstract

To acknowledge the role of women and their rights in Tunisian society, the 2011 Tunisian Revolution offers a case study for the multi-faceted dimensions of political movements that affect civil society. With the understanding that women exercised political agency differently and were affected by the changing political opportunity structure, this study aims to address the following questions: how did women navigate their female gender identity and political interests during the 2011 Tunisian Revolution? How did gender identity affect female participation during the Revolution? How did the Revolution prompt activism among women? How did the intersection of various identities contribute to their motivations to participate? To do so, I conduct a study through survey data with the Arab Barometer and interviews with Tunisian women to explore their perspectives on the Revolution and the examination of their political interests within their participation. I used five Arab Barometer survey data sets and interviewed five women. While the existing literature analyzes women in the Revolution generally, very few studies have focused on women’s participation regarding their political concerns through the context of their legal rights with the Code of Personal Status (CPS). Ultimately, the paper concludes that the Revolution provided a shift in mobilization and solidified gender rights for Tunisian women.

Keywords: women’s rights, participation, politics, identity, religion, political interests
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following individuals who helped make this paper a successful and complete project. Thank you to Professor Pahwa for pushing me to think critically and guiding me with feedback. I appreciate Professor Rapaport who provided a safe space for me to complain and continued to believe in me when I struggled to believe in myself. Thank you to my parents who always offered a listening ear and gave me lessons amid stress. Thank you to my boyfriend, Hunter, for being patient with me, especially when I needed to rant about the challenges. I appreciate my friends, especially Elise and Jackie, for reminding me to have fun and offering encouragement to keep me afloat. Finally, I acknowledge my respondents who shared their lives with me and trusted me with their stories.
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 5

**Review of the Literature** .................................................................................................. 7
  - **Background Information** ................................................................................................. 7
  - **Pre-Revolution** .................................................................................................................. 10
  - **During the Revolution** ...................................................................................................... 13
  - **Post-Revolution** .................................................................................................................. 18
  - **Shared Variables** ............................................................................................................... 24

**Research Methodology** .................................................................................................... 27

**Data Analysis** .................................................................................................................... 31
  - **Women’s Rights** .................................................................................................................. 32
  - **Social Media** ....................................................................................................................... 39
  - **Religion** .................................................................................................................................. 43
  - **Political Parties** .................................................................................................................... 48
  - **Change in Mobilization** ........................................................................................................ 51

**Conclusion** ......................................................................................................................... 57

**Limitations and Future Research** ....................................................................................... 60

**Research Methodology Appendix** ..................................................................................... 62

**Appendix A: Interview Guide** ............................................................................................. 63

**Appendix B: Interview Transcripts** .................................................................................... 65
  - **Interview 1: Marwa** .............................................................................................................. 65
  - **Interview 2: Rima** .................................................................................................................. 78
  - **Interview 3: Nadine** .............................................................................................................. 104
  - **Interview 4: Iobna** ................................................................................................................ 120
  - **Interview 5: Kenza** .............................................................................................................. 134

**Works Cited** ......................................................................................................................... 145
Introduction

Gender is a significant mechanism for identity because it suggests an individual’s privilege, possibilities, and power in society. It is important to understand the reality of the social dynamics that result from an individual’s identity such as gender because societal systems often use identity as a basis for how individuals are treated. This thesis seeks to explore female perspectives about identity, women’s rights, protests, and challenges in Tunisia. My research is important insofar as it will contribute to a better understanding of the role that women play in reinforcing and protecting their rights in Tunisia. Women participated in politics in a variety of ways. However, the 2011 Revolution changed the ways that women mobilized. It emphasized political representation and participation among women and sociocultural attributes that increased their visibility as women. This topic is relevant to themes of politics, religion, and civil society. Politics is pertinent because the Revolution created a shift in the political and social landscape with the overthrow of an authoritarian government to a democratic regime. Likewise, religion is important because women’s rights affected traditional Islamic views that created opposing perspectives about the mobilization of women. Finally, civil society is applicable because individuals from various backgrounds participated in the uprising and came together to challenge authority.

The Revolution in Tunisia in 2011 introduced new perspectives and strived to combat political, economic, and social challenges. It was caused by social unrest, discrimination, and the unequal distribution of wealth. Despite turmoil persisting in the country for years, the catalyst of the Revolution was when Mohamed Bouazizi, a university graduate who worked as a street vendor, set himself on fire because he could not sell produce to support his family. Individuals protested the unequal distribution of development revenues and pushed back against corruption and nepotism. Arfaouï (2012) indicated that the Tunisian Revolution was a non-violent uprising
that sparked a broad democratic movement throughout the Arab World and the global community. Women participated in a variety of ways and had different reasons that prompted their engagement.

This thesis will explore thoughts about women’s rights, activism, interactions, and identity in the context of the 2011 Tunisian Revolution. By analyzing survey data and interviewing Tunisian women, I hoped to find out about the effects of their gender identity during a major uprising in an Arab country. My research is important to consider in the United States today because it illustrates the perspectives of women and their political interests around activism. It also contributes to the understanding of broader ideas within revolutions and the various topics in the study of social movements. While there is a myriad of research on Arab women and the Tunisian Revolution in general (Chomiak 2011; Hitman 2018; Masri 2017), there are limited studies that focus on female experiences and their navigation of gender identity within individual and collective activism during the Revolution.

This thesis is divided into four parts. First, I will assess the body of literature contributing to the understanding of women’s roles and perspectives in society about the Revolution. Then, I will discuss the methodology I used during my four months of research and specify the characteristics of my sample and data. Next, I will compare my findings with existing literature and elaborate on the prevalent themes that emerged through the survey data and interviews with Tunisian women. Lastly, I will discuss my conclusion that addresses the role of gender and political interests for women in the Revolution. Ultimately, the primary objective of this study is to offer a more comprehensive understanding and acknowledgment of the diverse range of political interests that drove women’s participation, as well as the transformative shift in mobilization strategies during the 2011 Tunisian Revolution.
Review of the Literature

The literature review is divided into five parts with the first part focusing on additional background information of the Revolution and the start of Tunisian feminism. Second, I will examine the literature between 1960 and 2010, identified as pre-Revolution, focusing on the influence of political Islam and female oppression. Next, I discuss the scholarship on inclusivity among Tunisian citizens and their challenges during the Revolution. Then, I engage with literature regarding the post-Revolution era with the establishment of the 2014 Constitution and their lack of representation through state feminism and transitional justice. Finally, I examine the shared variables among all eras, explaining the theories of collective identity and political opportunity structure.

Background Information

During the Revolution, Tunisia operated as an authoritarian regime, signifying a higher anticipated risk of involvement in the uprising. Motives of participation are imperative because the nature of a strict regime tends to limit individual agency. Chomiak (2011) contributes to the conversation about the relationship between authoritarian narrative and the opposition that it develops through emphasizing the importance of Tunisia’s political history. Authoritarian regimes prevail in eliminating oppositional politics, but the controversial events in Tunisia had their origins in the pervasive and long-standing feelings of oppression that Tunisians had been living with and navigating for more than twenty years (Chomiak 2011). For instance, the party-state suppressed any protests not sanctioned by its own authority and power flowed from a small party elite within the regime. The feelings of oppression were primarily socioeconomic but also political and symbolic. Because of this, young democracies like Tunisia must overcome the
remnants of authoritarianism (Cimin 2022). Following a regime change, like the aftermath of the 2011 Tunisian Revolution, it is anticipated that the policies, structure, and elite personnel will also change.

Likewise, participation often leads to a challenge of the regime based on conditions and situations of involvement including “socioprofessional conditions, prospects of upward mobility, neighborhood and family ties, generational issues, memories of past protests and/or experience with police repression” (Allal 2013:203). Even in authoritarian regimes, individuals can express criticism in public settings without fear of repression if they are aware that others share their sentiments, even if they do not show it in the same way (Allal 2013). I seek to explore why women participated and how their political interests were demonstrated. Individuals participated because they were excluded and dissatisfied with the regime, but I hope to figure out if women had the same reasons for participation.

Popular participation among the Tunisian community was the key to change because women were included in the protests. Women mattered during the Revolution, contributing to the progression of women outside the family and traditional gender norms. The authoritarian regime in Tunisia had expressed support for secularism and women’s rights, while the opposition maintained a significant Islamist movement. Subsequently, this movement gained influential positions in the post-Revolution political landscape, causing concerns about potential restrictions on women’s participation. Thus, the framing of the Revolution provides context for mobilization because frames differ in their approaches to religion with Muslim viewpoints. These different frames pose discrepancies in motives for participation and encourage various perspectives. I expect to find that the uprising changed mobilization for women because it encouraged individual participation through their desired status change.
A history of women’s rights is necessary to understand the context of the Tunisian Revolution and women’s contribution to the making of Tunisian society. Revolutions can happen without popular pressure to collaborate and mobilize (Masri 2017). Tunisian feminism started in the 1920s with demonstrations for their rights, as female activists fought against the hijab and demanded liberation (Masri 2017). Additionally, in the 1950s, Neo-Destour, a nationalist political party, understood that women were seen as the repository of Tunisian identity, national values, and traditions that needed to be preserved (Masri 2017). This belief shows that gender is an important consideration in Tunisian politics because women represent family values through motherhood, and their gender identity offers opinions that need to be protected. Moreover, Booley (2019) argues that Tunisia should be the vanguard of legislation regarding women’s rights in the world. Booley (2019) explains the history of women’s rights in Tunisia and the influences of Islam. Prior to Tunisia’s independence, the traditional family was at the center of society as “the group to which the individual owed life, identity, and social legitimacy” (Booley 2019:2). Despite Tunisia’s preservation of women’s rights in marriage and divorce, the family remains at the heart of society. Due to the significant role of family within patriarchal systems, women are anticipated to maintain their subordinate familial responsibilities even after attaining public recognition as individuals (Joseph 1996:7).

Furthermore, the status of women is acknowledged in the Code of Personal Status (CPS), which has been vital to granting women’s rights in Tunisia. The improvement of women’s rights is attributed to President Habib Bourguiba, the first President of Tunisia after independence from France (Booley 2019). Bourguiba enacted the Code of Personal Status (CPS) on August 13, 1956, which modernized women’s rights in marriage, divorce, polygamy, alimony, child custody, determination of parenthood, abandoned children, missing persons, and inheritance
(Booley 2019). As a foundation for the CPS, scholars in the 19th century sought to reform Islamic structures that placed women in an inferior position to men (Khedher 1956). They did not want to forsake the Islamic texts, *Quran and Sunna*, so they modernized and reinterpreted the Islamic legal system, *Sharia*. Many of these radical articles were written by Tahar Haddad, who argued that Islam does not oppress women, but rather defends their fundamental rights.

Bourguiba believed that the first step to advance Tunisia after colonization was to transform people’s consciousness through religion, education, and the status of women, prioritizing women’s rights over the drafting of the Constitution. The first President understood the importance of women in society and strived to give them more rights. Bourguiba believed that development would be unattainable without the emancipation of women (Arfaoui 2012).

Originally, the *Code of Personal Status* (CPS) focused on traditional gender dynamics. However, the CPS was improved to include additional rights for women. Some of these amendments grant women access to the courts with divorce and ensures their equality in terms of employment and education outside of the home (Arfaoui 2012). Although women have been given more rights in theory, their minority status continued into the Revolution and prompted them to advocate for further legitimacy in practice. Even though women had legal rights, their separate identities and backgrounds often clashed. As such, the post-Ben Ali era was the first time in Tunisia’s independent history where women did not endure authoritarian obstacles to participating in public life, so they had feelings of greater agency (Debuysere 2018).

*Pre-Revolution*

Before the Revolution, women came from different backgrounds and had various identities outside of their gender, which created conflict and allowed scholars to synthesize these
differences. Precisely, secular and Islamist women often had opposing views about women’s rights and the Revolution. Arfaoui (2012) specifies that the 1956 version of the Code of Personal Status (CPS) was rooted in Muslim traditions, which historically favor the interests of men. This foundation in Muslim traditions angered secular women, who wanted more rights outside of religious boundaries. Despite Tunisian women having the CPS for more than 50 years in the early twenty-first century, some women had concerns that the religious groups in control of the country’s political system may restrict their rights. Because of Bourguiba’s efforts regarding women’s rights, Islamists viewed the CPS as an assault on Islam due to its challenge to Islamic family law, considered the final defender of Islamic law called Sharia (Tripp 2019:239). On the other side, non-Islamist women strived to voice their desires for equality and obtain freedom because of the fear that their rights would be taken away (Arfaoui 2012). Both Islamists and non-Islamists perceived a threat to their rights and ways of living based on the values of the opposing side. However, tensions increased between secularists and Islamists due to conflicting views of women’s roles in society and their accompanying rights.

Leftist women opposed religious political parties like Ennahda because of their extreme gender views and unrealistic expectations of religion as a prominent power in the government. Ennahda started as the Islamic Tendency Movement in 1981 with traditions in Islamic Jama’ah, a radical Muslim ideology from Egypt, to preserve Muslim beliefs (Yildirim 2017). This movement gained political party status under their leader, Rached Ghannouchi, at the beginning of President Zine al-Ben Ali’s reign because they aimed to attract opposition parties (Yildirim 2017). The middle class in Tunisia was cautious of Ennahda’s extremism, and many women were concerned that if Ennahda came into power, their legal status would be in jeopardy (Angrist 2013). Hamza (2016) echoes the perceived threats that Ennahda had on the secular feminist
community. Ennahda’s conservative agenda was viewed as a threat to women’s rights, especially after the contributions to women’s rights from the CPS in 1956. Hamza (2016) argues that the coming years will serve as a gauge of the fundamental shifts brought about in Tunisian women’s status regarding gender equality.

Before the Revolution, women who had various identities strived to promote their interests, which mostly involved working conditions as poorly treated laborers. For example, lower-class women worked in the textile industry and rural women often worked in agriculture fields often performing informal labor that was driven by profit and patriarchal values (Debuysere 2018:29). State repression limited direct forms of contention that engaged or even challenged the state under Ben Ali (Chomiak 2011). Prior to the Revolution, economic protests questioned societal worker norms. For example, the protests in a mine basin in Gafsa in 2008 explained support based on worker identity that encouraged rebellion against the Ben Ali regime’s neglect, repression, social justice, and unemployment (Chomiak 2011). Women were the “avant-garde” of the mine basin movement during these protests after their husbands and children were detained (Debuysere 2018:26).

Feminist organizations were prominent figures before 2011, and they continued to bring women together during the Revolution. Tunisian feminists created a social feminism that emphasizes the modernization of family laws and the rights of female workers (Moghadam 2003:74). Social feminism is attributed to its history of trade unionism and female laborers. It is often demonstrated through organizations. Feminist organizations and NGOs in the region united women to modernize women’s rights (Moghadam 2003:81). Tunisian women supported Ben Ali, Tunisia’s President during the Revolution, towards the beginning of his rule because they thought he would uphold the Code of Personal Status (CPS), but after the emergence of
Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates or Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) to secularize Tunisian organizations and advocate for women’s rights, they contributed to the resistance of Ben Ali’s regime in the 1990s and 2000s (Angrist 2013:551). The ATFD opposed the control over reproductive rights and regime’s lack of democratic governance with the prominence of corruption. Consequently, women’s organizations actively defended women’s rights during the Revolution (Benstead 2019:517).

Labor unions also brought women together based on their shared identity of workers regardless of their religious backgrounds. Labor protests in Egypt and Tunisia foreshadowed the 2011 Revolution because workers turned on the leadership and forced them to take on a more militant stance instead of leaving the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail or Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) to start their own union (Hartshorn 2017:411). The regime then fired the union leadership, but it was unable to reach the organizations members from below. Many protests before 2011 brought women together to advocate for certain interests.

*During the Revolution*

Towards the beginning of the Revolution, the differences in women’s identity often created points of contention. Tazi (2021) claims that political Islam was a threat to women’s rights at the beginning of the uprising. She argues that a backlash against women’s rights manifested with the emergence of the Islamist party who were firmly opposed to women’s legal and sociopolitical rights. Muslim ideals and women’s rights were viewed in opposition, which created conflict throughout the Revolution. Political Islam led by Ennahda often provoked feminists who strongly desired the implementation of more rights through the Revolution. Tripp (2019) also addresses the effects of Ennahda on women’s rights. She asserts that secular
feminists were worried that Ennahda’s power would take away the progress they had made regarding women’s rights. At the beginning of the Revolution, Ennahda remained relatively silent on their opinions about women’s rights, suggesting a lack of eagerness to make advancements in this domain.

The Revolution era was further identified with the interests of feminists. Moghadam (2003) argues that women in the Middle East and North Africa desire more rights because of the institutionalized patriarchal family laws that are embedded because of Muslim belief systems as well as social norms in the country. Contrary to conservative Islamists, feminists in Tunisia align more with democracy and modernity and are against fundamentalism (Hitman 2018:173). Because Islamists during the Revolution were focused on tradition based on family values, they tended to associate more with upholding practices that had roots in religion rather than starting a new form of government.

In addition to religious differences among women, social class discrepancies in the Revolution caused disarray, though to a lesser extent than religion. Debuysere (2018) argues that rural women were not accounted for during the Revolution. She claims that the representation of working-class women in Tunisia’s fledgling democracy is hindered by the non-intersecting and narrow feminist and unionist struggle (Debuysere 2018:40). Working-class women were often ignored during the Revolution because their interests did not align with those of wealthier individuals, and they did not have groups where they felt comfortable voicing their demands. As a result, the demands of working-class individuals and those who lived in rural areas were also significant because they include much of Tunisia’s population. However, there is a puzzle with the salience of identities in the Revolution including laborers and women.
Despite identity differences regarding social class with privileged and oppressed workers, the UGTT united citizens and encouraged union members to participate in the uprising due to their foundation in the nationalist movement in pre-independence Tunisia despite limited focus on women (Angrist 2013). The protests of the 2011 Revolution in Tunisia rapidly spread to UGTT offices. Likewise, the actions of the UGTT initiated protests across the nation, revealing their immense influence on civil society. The UGTT showed human agency that inspired union members to protest. Union members united to invalidate Bouazizi’s death as a suicide brought on by socioeconomic hardship but rather portray it as a “political assassination: they cast Bouazizi as a victim of a regime that had neglected its own” (Angrist 2013:560). The UGTT hoped to illuminate the neglect that the regime inflicted upon its own citizens. Institutional opportunities for political participation were presented by the UGTT leadership because they resisted the protest movement and adopted the position of ‘loyal opposition,’ assisting in the formation of a transitional government with Ben Ali’s supporters (Hartshorn 2017:411). Because the UGTT concentrated on resolving internal conflicts and increasing street power, activists used the opportunity presented by the more liberal environment to organize strikes (Hartshorn 2017:415).

Eventually, women collaborated with each other and supported one another during the Revolution because of the lack of clear institutional structures. The alliances among women provided them with encouragement to continue their activism, which created an optimistic environment for the uprising. Women had a variety of roles in the Revolution and accepted numerous tasks to participate. Women from all walks of life regardless of their religious practices and leanings protested in headscarves and “stood side-by-side with Tunisian men” (Arfaoui 2012:16). Tunisian women were committed to protesting in the uprising and strived to show that they were just as capable as men (Arfaoui 2012). Women marched down the streets
with their echoed voices and presented “a coalition that no one expected was there and
challenged the old impression that Arab women are passive and submissive” (Boussedra
2011:5).

Social media offered alternatives for women to participate in political activism because it
provided further accessibility regardless of location. Public spaces were not as welcoming to
women as they were to men, and older media was no longer reliable, so women depended on
social media. Photos and videos circulated on social media, documenting women’s participation
in the Revolution (Khalil 2014). They showed live coverage of speeches, demonstrations, and
police brutality in dispersing protests. The uprisings in Tunisia were extensively documented and
called for support on platforms run by Tunisian women, where the demonstrations were captured
on cell phones and uploaded to many social networking sites (Tazi 2021). This online female
activism resulted in “greater geographic mobility, better access to the public sphere, and
improved social status” (Tazi 2021:303). Digital technologies allowed women of all social
classes to participate because of confidentiality, uncostliness, and anonymity (Tazi 2021:304).

Women participated as citizens alongside men and were not defined by their gender
identity (Boussedra 2011). They desired the same right of dignity as men and other Tunisian
citizens. Islamist and secularist women came together to protest. Even though women protested
for rights, their participation “was aimed at universal rights, not just women’s rights in
particular” (Khalil 2014:189). Female representation in the Revolution and the changed
government conveys the more recent ideas of feminism based on adequate depiction in political
and civil life. Women from all backgrounds protested using the slogan “No democracy without
equality” to fight for the end of the dictatorship and demand more rights (Hamza 2016:214).
Women formed alliances with each other during the Revolution. Islamist gender activism switched from an opposition position to a developing form at the center of politics (Khalil 2014:187). In other words, the opinions of Islamist women shifted from minimizing women’s rights to desiring collaboration among women even though that meant the contradiction of some Islamist beliefs. Despite the relative silence from Ennahda on women’s rights at the beginning of the Revolution, they supported the Organic Law, which mandates the investigation of human rights violations such as rape and breaches of rights that the previous regime committed, and this law also established the Truth and Dignity Commission (Tripp 2019:257). The Organic Law limited the pointage system, in which wives of incarcerated men had to visit the police station five times a day, restricting their ability to go to school and get a job. Ennahda’s support of this law somewhat improved women’s perceptions of political Islam. Some women remained skeptical of these Ennahda alliances, while others had more positive responses.

Female Islamic activists remained active during the democratic transition in Tunisia (Youssef 2022). Tounissiet, also known as “Tunisian Women,” is an Islamist women’s rights organization that started in 2011 during the Arab Spring uprisings to advocate for women’s rights (Youssef 2022:837). Despite the push back in Tunisia from non-Muslim individuals, this organization made decisions that prompted their survival (Youssef 2022). Conservative women in Tounissiet fought for gender reform as the democratic transition and universal human rights standards advanced, including ending gender-based violence and increasing gender equality (Youssef 2022:838). Secularist and Islamist women collaborated through protests to emphasize the importance of the CPS (Khalil 2014). Islamist women stated that their religion motivated them to participate in the Revolution. However, Islamist people were persecuted “because of their religious practice, and women suffered especially under Ben Ali’s secularist policies.
because of the female Islamic identity made visible by the veil” (Khalil 2014:190).

Consequently, the ‘Arab-Muslim woman’ was the symbol and support for the Revolution because these women were oppressed by the dictatorship as human beings, Islamists, and women (Khalil 2014:190). In other words, Khalil (2014) argues that Muslim women comprised the least accepted group under Ben Ali because of the minority identities, which motivated them to mobilize for recognition.

Post-Revolution

The aftermath of the Revolution created disagreements over the draft of the 2014 Constitution, but it ultimately brought women together to cooperate. The conflict over the Constitution progressed tensions between secularists and Islamists over the concept of complementary (Tripp 2019). There was a controversial clause that was proposed for adoption into the Constitution, stating that “woman is the complement of man” (Tripp 2019:249). Islamists wanted to preserve the Muslim tradition of women as inferior to men in both civil and family life. The desire to enact this clause in the Constitution reflected conservative Islamist influence.

Moreover, the Constituent Assembly, the governmental body that drafted the 2014 Constitution, had limited diversity regarding gender and religious representation. Although 49 out of 217 elected assembly leaders in the Constituent Assembly were women in 2011, 42 of them were members of the Islamic political party Ennahda (Arfaoui 2012:20). This represents a lack of progressive activist women who tend to lean towards further gender equality. Because of most women being members of Ennahda, women had further distrust in their interests being added to the Constitution and perceived a greater threat to women’s rights (Arfaoui 2012:20).
Women came together to combat social discontent and demand political change to improve their living situations. Khalil (2014) claims that female participation was not surprising because women contributed to Tunisian social and economic life. The Constituent Assembly was founded from early elections, and parties were represented in it. As a result, it may have been an early signal to women about the chances that new institutions and parties could represent them effectively. The involvement of women in social and economic spheres prior to the Revolution laid a foundation for their subsequent engagement in political activism. Women were successful in their mobilization efforts to achieve political change.

Despite the initial controversial clause that positioned women as “complementary” to men, collaboration and acceptance of women is demonstrated through the 2014 Constitution. Organizations and unions, such as the UGTT, were involved in the process of drafting the new Constitution. Even though the UGTT did not have a presence in the Constituent Assembly, they voiced desires about labor issues and protested the article of the draft constitution that described women as “complementary” to men (Hartshorn 2017:413). The UGTT successfully assembled individuals with different ideas and from different political parties to ratify the Constitution, which was the first time in Tunisia’s post-independence history where the trade union had made such a strong impact on policy (Hartshorn 2017:415). The UGTT efforts show that organized representative bodies were successful in pushing back against the controversial clause and policy more broadly. Even though secular and Islamist women originally disagreed about women being the complement of men, the UGTT organized women to come together to oppose submission of being claimed as inferior to their male counterparts.

Ennahda reframed their perspectives, accommodating to most reforms in women’s rights and “the strategic need to compromise on women’s rights in order to remain politically relevant.”
The Islamist political party chose to appeal to popular opinion and civil society regarding women’s rights even though the ideas pushed back against their traditional familial ideals.

Because of this newly formed appreciation, Islamists and secularist feminist organizations and political parties formed coalitions after the 2011 Revolution, which had never occurred before in Tunisia’s history (Youssef 2023). Despite years of mistrust and wariness between Muslim women and secular women, many women put their differences aside and prioritized their similarities of obtaining gender equality (Youssef 2023). Women trusted each other because of the shared interests of women’s rights, which encouraged their solidarity and overcame the built-up tensions between religion and secularism. This trust was a result of women taking a step back to look at the bigger picture regarding gender equality and their strength together rather than as Islamists and secularists separately. Tounissiet did not question rights ingrained in Islamic law, particularly inequality in inheritance, and they did not challenge conservatives (Youssef 2022). They also agreed with liberal feminists when it was their advantage. Tounissiet’s position on gender concerns reflected Ennahda’s, emphasizing the decision not to question Islamists, conservatives, or religious leaders (Youssef 2022:850).

Through a comparison of the Tunisian Constitutions of 1959 and 2014, Hitman (2018) concludes that Tunisian women have experienced greater rights and status compared to before the Revolution. Thus, women seemed to trust that their rights would continue to improve. As a result of the unification of Tunisian women, they protested fearlessly alongside their peers. Women even “took part in fights for freedom and political struggles, but once the goal was achieved, women were sent back to their homes” (Hamza 2016:214). This exhibits the inferiority that women faced because of their gender identity and the lack of legitimacy that individuals
believed them to embody due to not needing their full participation. It also displays that institutionalized pathways for participation mattered for women because they were only recognized for their participation when it was needed. Hamza (2016) focuses on the October 26, 2014 elections as a key step in the country’s transition to democracy. The aftermath of the Constitution’s implementation unified citizens, especially advocating for female representation in the newly formed government.

Female representation in politics is significant because it demonstrates the modernization of women’s rights and equal opportunity that women strived to achieve with the Revolution. Khalil (2014) argues that women were diminished in the media, governmental positions, and post-Revolutionary transitional committees. Women lacked representation in all areas of society. There were more urban, educated women that were represented in leadership roles, which demonstrates a “much greater exclusion of poorer, rural women, who often have few opportunities in the public or private sector” (Benstead 2019:528). The fight for political representation centers on questions of membership and procedure because it is about who is eliminated from recognition and distribution, so “representation thus requires democracy” (Debuysere 2018:27).

Female workers did not experience empowerment after the Revolution due to the lack of perspectives from workers during the Constituent Assembly. Thus, the representation of working-class women in formal politics and civil society was very limited at the time of the Revolution in 2011 (Debuysere 2018). After the Revolution, women continued to utilize their coalitions to protest for other interests. For example, in 2016, female textile workers in Mahdia went on strike because management did not pay their wages, so they seized control of the factory
(Debuysere 2018). Class and gender pose challenges about which identity would take priority regarding women’s rights and the protests.

In Tunisia, state feminism posed advantages and challenges for women in their organizational efforts to mobilize. State feminism proposed opportunities for women to participate in grassroots organizations, which furthered female political representation during and after the Tunisian Revolution (Benstead 2019). ‘State feminism’ has contributed to improvements of gender equality because “women in Tunisia enjoy a relatively advanced status; they are more represented in the public sphere than elsewhere in the Arab world, constituting 26.6 % of the labor force and 27.6% (59 out of 214) of the members of parliament” (Hamza 2016:214). Comparatively, women represented 27% of elected parliamentarians in 2009 under Ben Ali, suggesting no real advances in women’s political participation from before the Revolution to after the Revolution (Hamza 2016).

Even though some scholars consider state feminism to have advantages, other scholars suggest detriments of state feminism. As the Revolution progressed, Tunisia’s gender politics experienced a substantial shift from the “state feminist” ideology of the pre-Revolutionary era to the decentralized gender advocacy of the post-Revolutionary era (Khalil 2014). Gender activism in the post-Revolutionary period aimed to reestablish the truth of basic ethical teachings such as Islamist standards or secular human rights (Khalil 2014). More specifically, the idea of “state feminism” was challenged because it meant that women’s participation was limited and channeled in certain ways, extending only to handpicked women who were loyal to the regime (Zaki 2018). The regime’s support for women’s rights was explained as democratic effort and expressed as “state feminism,” but this support was only provided when it served the regime’s
interests (Tripp 2019:240). Political contention ensued because the Tunisian government used sexual violence for political aims, which challenged the project of “state feminism” (Zaki 2018).

In addition to state feminism, transitional justice offers explanations for the lack of institutional and social change after the Revolution. According to Collins (2011), revolutions are structural opportunities and “a rendering of the fabric of the old regime to open the possibilities of putting many different kinds of regimes in its place” (177). In other words, the nature of transitions changes institutional opportunities for political agency because there is an expectation of an immense change. The Revolution, as a transition, constituted the change in regime.

Transitional justice in terms of religious salience explains the diminished secular state. The Arab Spring contributed to “a backlash against women’s political rights in terms of their access to decision-making” (Tazi 2021:308). This backlash is connected to the women’s lower levels of political representation after the Revolution because Ennahda used elected Tunisian women as political props to demonstrate and boast about gender parity, but they lacked the necessary gender-sensitively training to effectively advocate for women’s rights (Tazi 2021:308).

However, since democracy was so new to Tunisia, all the political parties in the country lacked the skills to reach out to constituencies. Additionally, religious ideologies dominated the political sphere when Ennahda won the presidential election after the Tunisian Revolution (Tazi 2021). Ennahda supported the notion that politics holds onto particular interests or individuals while the authoritarian regime still had fragmented power, demonstrating an opposition to transitional justice (Cimini 2022:288). The benefits of the Revolution were symbolically diminished.

Transitional justice is explained in terms of reconciliation law and lustration provisions, which demonstrates the transparency within change (Cimini 2022:288). Transitional justice and concerns about building community and consensus often dismissed women’s rights because the
truth and reconciliation process hesitated to use criminal punishments. Moreover, many women experienced torture and sexual abuse under Ben Ali, so they were angry about the process (Destrooper and Belghith 2023:184). As a result of the resistance to transitional justice, the shortcomings of the transitional justice mechanism make them less effective because they do not ensure accountability by considering the legacy of widespread past abuses (Cimini 2022:289).

Transitional justice explores the mechanisms for women’s mobilization during the Revolution regarding their protection of women’s rights and efforts to define their own agency. According to Zaki (2018), Tunisia’s process of transitional justice introduced new obstacles regarding the state taking accountability for their violation of women’s rights after the Revolution. Zaki (2018) explores the mechanisms of gender-based violence that are formally included in the Truth and Dignity Commission and the extent to which women’s perspectives were integrated in procedures relating to recovery and compensation to victims of gender-based violence. Zaki (2018) investigates stories of gender-based violence executed by the state and how those stories reveal the state’s priority to preserve its power over the well-being of its citizens. Gender inequality in Tunisia was a goal of their democratic transition (Zaki 2018).

Shared Variables

The variables that matter in explaining women’s mobilization in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution are collective identity and political opportunity structure. Hunt and Benford (2004) analyze collective identity in the framework of micromobilization of participation with connections to commitment and solidarity. Collective identity acknowledges that a group of individuals with similar goals, values, feelings, and interests continue in space and time beyond the present (Hunt and Benford 2004:450). The collective identity framework also suggests that
people develop stable identities as seekers of certain goals, which was more prominent towards the beginning of the Revolution with the differences between Islamists and secularists. Using this definition, women in the 2011 Revolution share the collective identity of gender. Hitman (2018) explains the collective identity as opponents of Ben Ali’s regime because they disapproved of the government under Ben Ali because of increased unemployment and lack of dignity. Their collective identity “crystallized around demands for human rights and democratization” (Hitman 2018:170). Youssef (2023) utilizes the term “unlikely feminist coalitions” to analyze the conditions that encouraged feminists from various backgrounds and with different ideological beliefs, especially Islamists and secularists to unite for women’s rights (2). Youssef (2023) claims that “unlikely feminist coalitions” are formed when women have a shared feminist identity, experienced similar hardships, worked on related tasks prior to the emergence of the coalition, and encountered analogous threats (16). These coalitions included feminists who worried that progress on women’s issues might be retracted. The existing collaboration among these women on similar matters facilitated the formation of coalitions. The collective identity as feminists encouraged the collaboration among women during the Revolution.

Political opportunity structure is significant in explaining collective action within social movements (Tarrow 1996). Political opportunity structure is “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements” (Tarrow 1996:54). Individuals often seize opportunities to form alliances to demand change when the government weakens. These alliances were formed within networks and feminist organizations, which gave women the opportunity to discuss gender equality during the Revolution (Hitman 2018). Furthermore, women in Tunisia might be seen as free riders who took advantage of the public
sphere to call for significant social and political change (Hitman 2018). Changes in a group’s social standing also have an impact on their capacity for collective action, which can either be positive or negative based on the changing policy environment (Tarrow 1996). The most prominent signals in determining political opportunity structure are “the opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, the availability of influential elites, and cleavages among elites” (Tarrow 1996:54). Gender roles emphasized the positions that women had during the Revolution and the challenges they faced.

The literature indicates that potential pathways of mobilization for women are determined by their networks and agency. Personal identities including religion and economic status also affected mobilization. The importance of state feminism and transitional justice framed state perspectives regarding the advancement of women’s rights. While the literature does not point to one singular reason for female participation in the Revolution, the fact that Tunisian women chose to participate and be involved in public discourse raises questions about the salience of their gender identity in the demonstrations. With these topics in mind, we must ask these questions to analyze the pathways of mobilization for women and the intersection of political interests and gender: to what extent did their female gender identity play a role in their participation in the Revolution? How did their group membership affect their participation? What strategies did they utilize to remain relevant in the political and social spheres? How did women acknowledge their political interests in their participation in the Revolution?
Research Methodology

My research methodology consists of one-on-one interviews with five Tunisian women as well as data from the Arab Barometer between 2018 and 2022. In order to understand the process of change in mobilization during the Revolution and female experiences, it is useful to establish a multiple methods approach. Survey data helps to understand the puzzles regarding the different approaches to political participation and agency after 2011 through asking specific questions that demonstrate trends. The Arab Barometer provided statistical data that yielded substantial figures and a more expansive understanding of the Tunisian population as a whole. The larger sample size of thousands of respondents helped me synthesize the changes in mobilization over time and general attitudes about the Revolution, which provided context for the interviews.

The interviews provide a micro perspective through the individual stories, and the Arab Barometer survey data provides a macro perspective through the broader political and social trends throughout Tunisia. Because of the level of analysis in the data, these methods build on one another. Using interviews and the Arab Barometer, I was able to use two methods of data to synthesize an argument regarding the salience of gender and women’s perspectives during the Revolution. The reports provide a broader context for the responses of the participants and a more comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and trends in Tunisia. It is imperative to develop an awareness of the context of women’s perspectives to better appreciate and acknowledge individual experiences from the interviews.

The interviews provided an exploration of perspectives through asking open-ended questions to understand participants’ decision-making processes. They also captured the nuances of participants’ experiences through the exploration of situational factors, constraints, and
opportunities that guided their political participation. These approaches reiterate that the
Revolution was not only a collaborative effort and movement but also an individual set of
experiences. Despite the limited interviews I conducted, the data provided more insight into the
life trajectories of Tunisian women. Interview data is not to be undervalued because it may
challenge the large survey data, contributing to a greater conversation that the Arab Barometer
does not expose. I chose interviews as a research method to compare the data from the Arab
Barometer and share their own stories to promote their attitudes and contributions to the wider
conversation of the uprising.

The Arab Barometer conducts face-to-face surveys to adult citizens in Arab countries in
the Middle East and North Africa about different topics. These reports analyze the percentages of
people they surveyed who indicated that they agree or strongly agree with certain statements. I
focused on the following reports: Gender Attitudes and Trends in MENA (September 2022),
Democracy in the Middle East and North Africa (July 2022), Politics and Social Media in the
Middle East and North Africa: Trends and Trust in Online Information (October 2019),
Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa (August 2019), and Civic Engagement in
the Middle East and North Africa (October 2018). The report from 2018 includes a random
sample of 1,200 respondents, and the reports from both 2019 and 2022 include a random sample
of 2,400 citizens from all governorates, or states, in Tunisia. The reports selected for this study
delve into various crucial aspects such as political perspectives, gender contexts, civic
engagement, and the influences of social media. These themes were chosen deliberately as they
align with the specific areas of inquiry I explore in my research. By analyzing these reports, I
gain valuable context that enriches my understanding of the individual experiences and diverse
perspectives captured in the interviews conducted for this study. In essence, these reports serve
as foundational pillars that support and contextualize the broader themes and narratives emerging from the interviews. Despite these reports analyzing percentages in the Middle East and North Africa, they separate the data by country, so I utilized the data from Tunisia to formulate my argument.

Interviews took place over Zoom, and they were recorded with electronic signature consent on Qualtrics and verbal consent from the interviewee. The interviews ranged from 45 to 120 minutes with the comprehensive interviews enduring longer. The interviews were structured with a list of prepared questions (see Appendix A), but I strived to follow a conversation-like format to allow women to explain their personal experiences and perspectives. As a result, I bounced around questions depending on the flow of the interview. One respondent engaged in the interview in her own way by speaking freely and sharing her life before and during the Revolution. Then, I asked her questions about topics she did not address. The interview questions I asked first were centered on the woman as an individual and her background including her age, social class, occupation, and religious and political leanings. Next, I asked sets of questions divided into four parts: before the Revolution, during the Revolution, after the Revolution, and the future. I have changed the names of the respondents whom I interviewed and have given them aliases to protect their identity and integrity. I transcribed each of the interviews in their entirety (see Appendix B) so that I could accurately refer to them during my data analysis. I made minor edits to the direct quotes from respondents to make it clearer and more readable. For instance, I removed the “um’s” and repetitive language. Additionally, English is not the first language of any of my respondents, so some of the quotations may have slight differences in language than a native English speaker.
The sample consists of women: Ilobna, Marwa, Rima, Nadine, and Kenza. Overall, I interviewed five women whose ages range from 29 to 48 with most women being in their early 30s. At the very least, the women I interviewed were transitioning into adulthood, prompting contemplation on their societal roles and involvement in politics. Three of the women currently reside in the United States, and the other two live in Tunisia. The women were eager to explain their political perspectives and experiences regarding the Revolution. They mostly enjoyed disclosing aspects of their roles as women and the challenges they faced during the Revolution. Each of them contributed personal anecdotes that demonstrated their role in the Revolution and attitudes about women’s rights in Tunisia.

I got respondents through joining Facebook groups. I posted about my thesis topic in Facebook groups including Tunisians who reside in the United States and asked if anyone is interested in being interviewed. The respondents cover different profiles especially regarding age and occupation. I also interviewed a woman who had a mutual connection to one of my study abroad friends in Tunisia as well as one woman I had met in Tunisia. I acknowledge that my interview sample lacked representation as it comprised of elites and English-speakers.

A major obstacle I had was finding respondents. Because I did not get pre-approval from the Scripps Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting research in Tunisia for my Independent Study Project (ISP), I needed to go through the initial IRB process and conduct interviews again. I could not use previous data collected that I had collected in Tunisia. Previous interviews led me to recognize a trend in women’s political participation and agency, prompting me to delve deeper into the topic through the interviews. Despite my initial frustration, I needed to get creative, so I decided to use social media to broadcast my project. Thus, I joined Facebook groups to ask women about their experiences during the Revolution.
Data Analysis

The following data analysis reveals various trends and stories of Tunisian women regarding the 2011 Tunisian Revolution. I found that Tunisian women have changed their perceptions about politics based on their experiences with the Revolution and the ways that the uprising helped solidify their identities. It is important to keep in mind that the ways women participated in the Revolution and their subsequent attitudes result from their prior perspectives of mobilization and community.

The Revolution marked a complex and multifaceted series of events that impacted different aspects of Tunisian society. The Revolution was not just a political event but a transformative moment that touched on multiple facets of life, shaping the political landscape and the country's social fabric. The experiences these women encountered were shaped by their political interests, or lack thereof. One woman described herself as very politically active when she was living in Tunisia during and after the Revolution prior to moving to the United States to start a family, but she has since given up. She mentioned:

I give up maybe it's not good to say that, maybe I should not give up. You understand? I don't feel like look at me I give up no, I'm not proud of myself to give up. But, I don't want to be a follower either. I don't want to do things that. I told you they took advantage of me, and I hated that. Those are people that I know I respected so much, and I don't hate them, but I don't respect them anymore. And I lost a big, let's say, a nice part of my life because those people have very good memories with them as a colleague, as a friends as, you know, kind of that… they I don't know. So, I don't want to have that experience. Okay, no, well, it's a mess because whatever is happening in politics affects the social. People they don't trust since not today. No, I'm not saying today since a while, they don't trust the political people. And especially those faces that we know. They’re still there. You understand? Does mean, the same faces are still there.

One woman in Tunisia considers herself politically engaged and active on the sidelines. The other woman in Tunisia does not consider herself to be politically engaged because she feels like
she has little impact on politics. The other two women living in the United States were politically engaged when they were in Tunisia, but they are no longer active. A few different themes were prominent throughout my research including women’s rights, social media, religion, and the change in activism.

Women’s Rights

Because women’s rights are mainly protected in Tunisia, women chose to participate in the Revolution in solidarity with other citizens. Respondents did not feel the need to protest for their rights as women because they were generally satisfied with their implementation. For example, basic family laws like divorce are widely accepted in Tunisia, yet inheritance is less supported. The Arab Barometer surveyed male and female attitudes about women’s rights. Specifically, 79% of the 2,400 Tunisians surveyed think that there is an equal right to divorce with 74% of men and 83% of women (Thomas 2019). Out of the twelve countries represented, Tunisia is the third most accepting country of divorce rights with Lebanon at 88% of respondents saying that there is an equal right to divorce and Iraq at 80%. This data reveals that Tunisia is a strong defender of divorce rights compared to other countries with similar cultural norms and traditions. Additionally, 28% of Tunisians believe in an equal share of inheritance with 21% of men and 34% of women (Thomas 2019). Like the first statistic about divorce rights, Tunisia is the country with the third highest percentage of respondents who think that there is an equal share of inheritance. Lebanon has the higher percentage with 65% and Iraq is second with 29%. It can be concluded that most Tunisians surveyed in the Arab Barometer think that women have almost equal rights compared to their male counterparts and substantial rights as women compared to those in other Arab countries.
However, according to this data, women are more likely to worry about religious and societal pushback against inheritance than divorce because of Muslim tradition that often favors sons in a family. Tunisia welcomes new ideas and progress that may conflict with traditional Arab perspectives. Rima’s experience with her twin brothers following their mother’s passing a couple of months ago supports the observation that a smaller percentage of surveyed Tunisians believe in equal inheritance compared to the acceptance of divorce. She described:

So I went to Tunis. I went visit, but she passed away the same day. And I met my two brothers. The third date was 17, 18, 19. One of my brothers, the most liberal one, he told me, look straight in my face, “Religion first, will split two parts, one part for you.” But when it was time because I told you the 3rd day for the day 1, 2, 3 because we spent a lot of money, you know a lot of money for to fix everything. I was the one who’s paying. Whenever it’s time for paying he comes to me, and says, “Oh. Do you know what? I don't have cash. Can you give them, this guy, I don't know because we took a lot it's, another one, another sorry, when it's time to pay. He put me to pay. Yeah, be careful. Yeah, this is Tunisia. We are schizophrenic. This is typically Tunisian. We are schizophrenic. You know, schizophrenic? We are double faced. My brother, the same one, he have a daughter and a son. I told him, “You know what? Religion is first Skina which is the name of his daughter we have half of the part of your when you passed away.” Guess what was his answer. “Never my daughter.” Excuses, excuses. But, our parents passed away, and you applied because by law, I told you it’s a choice. In Tunisia, it’s a choice. Nothing like the other countries, a choice. So, you decide that will be done to religion way. Perfect. Now when it's your son and your daughter and it's your daughter involved, another your daughter, bye bye. Okay, so I have two options. I'm a feminist, two options. I fight and I lose a brother. I let it go and I keep my brother. I choose the second one. But I told him in his case that he worked for me. 100,000 dinar, and I put him on the market. That is this part, the part of the money that you would have extra. I told him I bought you like a slave for 100,000 dinars which is less than, let’s say $35,000. I took you to the market, and I... this is the way to do it. As a woman, if you are in my place what you can do? I told you there's a couple of things that as outsider, you can't get them. You can't. For example, another thing another face of this double face. It's, not double face. We don't kind of... we don't know what to do. We don't know if we have to be open 100% or we have to keep our culture. So we're in the middle of the road. We're kind of lost. For example, if you are some brothers, some brothers with his wife, he allow his wife to not to put the veil. If it’s his sister, he'll force her to put the veil. You understand? Kind of this... we're still looking for ourselves. You know? Me, I'm declared in in my country like a fake Muslim, really I'm not kidding. Not, I broke all the social, culture, name it, things by getting married with a stranger. First, not Muslim. Second, doesn’t speak Arabic. The third, so it's the list is long, but I was 100% accepted. I was not
rejected. What they talked about behind my back. I don't want to hear about. They accept my husband 100%.

Rima’s experience with inheritance as the only daughter among twin brothers demonstrates that the equal share of inheritance is often perceived as a choice that mainly men have the privilege to make. The equal share of inheritance is a law within the CPS, but not in practice. Rima described that her family does not practice Islam, indicating that her brothers’ choice to split the inheritance unevenly is not solely based on religion but also cultural values that are instilled in Tunisia.

These attitudes are expanded upon with the interviews because women are mostly satisfied with their rights because of the *Code of Personal Status* (CPS). The women indicated that the CPS protests and uplifts women in Tunisian society and gives them agency in their life. For example, Iobna indicated that she is happy to be Tunisian because of the rights and freedoms that are given to women. When asked about her thoughts about the CPS prior to the Revolution and its implementation, Iobna stated:

I don't belong to any association. But I'm feminist. Yes, and Tunisia women is very protect. Women have all the rights. And we have also many associations against hurting woman, against… law protect women in Tunisia. As hell, they protect woman as hell. And this is a special thing in Tunisia as Arab country. Bourguiba give many advantages to women and to the country and to the education, and Bourguiba he do many things who change the position, the geopolitic[al] position of Tunisia from the world.

Iobna appreciates the achievements of Bourguiba to create a more equal country among men and women. She values the rights that the CPS has provided to women and the progress that Bourguiba initiated in the country to improve the system and expose Tunisia to the world. Iobna’s perspective about Bourguiba changing the position of Tunisian women in the world
suggests ambivalence between democracy and authoritarian state feminism because Bourguiba, as an authoritarian, used his power to enhance the position of women. Similarly, Marwa thinks that Tunisia is the most progressive Arab country regarding women’s rights. Marwa stated:

**We have the right for education. We have the right to vote. We have the right to drive because I know that sounds like something obvious, but in Saudi Arabia, the woman they didn’t have the right to drive like for recently. So, comparing to this country, Tunisia was okay because I am thankful to Bourguiba, the President because he gave the woman, a lot of rights.**

These sentiments echo Booley’s (2019) claim that Tunisia should be the forefront of women’s rights in the world, setting an example for other Arab countries. Tunisia has provided women with rights that protect their authority as individuals that remain lacking in other Arab countries. Generally, respondents in the interviews and the Arab Barometer are happy about their rights as women and think that the Revolution upheld those rights, validating Chazli’s (2020) assertion that “feminist mobilizations around gender have been one of the central successes of the Arab Spring as well as a sphere in which change is still being fought for” (5). Additionally, the respondents’ satisfaction of their rights as women and understanding of Tunisia’s progressive advancements supports Moghadam’s (2019) assertion that “Tunisia was long known in the region for its liberal family law” (335). Respondents recognize the advancement of women’s rights compared to other Arab countries. Kenza stated that “women are more protected than men” after the Revolution because:

**They like they install more… It's not more rules, but more decisions and they are more protected than men by the President and the Ministry. Yeah, and also we have many womens in some ministries. So yeah, they are protected.**
According to Kenza, not only did the Revolution uphold women’s rights, but they also increased the protection of those rights. Kenza also alluded to the shift in political regime after the Revolution with the fall of Ben Ali that contributed to this increase in protection. She stated, “It changed like not a lot, but like let's say 20% change after the Revolution,” revealing the positive changes to women’s rights in Tunisia after Ben Ali fled. Kenza mentioned that female representation in governmental ministries empowered women and gave them a voice to solidify their rights.

Kenza’s appreciation of female representation in politics relates to female participation in the 2008 Gafsa protests in Redeyef. During these protests, women started to participate on the third day of the protests, putting aside traditional gender roles in support of the men who were imprisoned because of their mobilization efforts (Cursed be the Phosphate 2012). As a result of the novelty of the movement, women discovered their power of resistance, which encouraged their bravery and challenged gender norms of women being passive and compliant, concurring with Debuysere’s (2018) claim that women were the “avant-guard” of the movement. Women participated in protests like the Gafsa protests through the power of resistance.

This power of resistance is further demonstrated through the women’s section in the UGTT to advocate for female workers’ rights at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and female lawyers advocated for women’s rights (Moghadam 2019:333). According to Moghadam (2019), women in various associations chose to collaborate to defend women’s rights before and after the Revolution. AFTURD and ATFD organized protests in 2011 and 2012 demanding “liberty, dignity, and equality.” Additionally, women of various ages held placards reading Ne touche pas à mes acquis (Hands off my rights) (Moghadam 2019:335). Many women, especially
in organizations, voiced their political interest with women’s rights because they felt that their rights would be stripped away during the Revolution.

In addition to women’s rights, participation in the uprising as women was another theme that was highlighted in my study. The women I interviewed indicated that they did not participate in the Revolution solely for women’s rights. Rather, they participated with other Tunisians to demand a better life with more opportunities under a new regime that did not involve a dictator as the leader. They protested in solidarity, contrasting with Moghadam’s claims that women protested for their rights. Marwa described:

Just solidarity. And it just came. It was not even settled from before. It was not planned. It came like that. Yeah, you understand? It was not planned like a natural thing. You understand? Like the door of your house fell and your father, your brother is standing there and for him not to move from his spot, you just help him to give him to drink to give him to eat. It's not only me. It was nothing related to politics. No, neither to religion, neither to feminism. No, no, no.

Marwa did not protest for religion or feminism, showing that women protested in support of other Tunisian citizens. Respondents support state feminism in line with Benstead (2019), in which women increased their political participation during the Revolution due to their advanced status. State feminism encouraged female participation because women mobilized to obtain the same desires as their male counterparts. Female participation was instituted by women collaborating and all Tunisians working together regardless of gender identity. State feminism explains why women protested alongside men in solidarity. Expectations and gains from the pre-Revolution era made women more inclined to fight to preserve their rights later. However, the lack of political opportunity with the rigidity of Ben Ali’s regime discouraged participation at the start of the Revolution before he fled the country.
Respondents participated in the Revolution for human rights and democracy. To explain her motivations for participating in the Revolution, Marwa stated:

I think human rights in general because I thought like we are not free to talk about nothing. So, we said like we wanna change. We want democracy. So, democracy was the thing that motivate me to go on the street and to participate.

Marwa protested for all human rights and did not feel confined to only protesting for the protection of women’s rights. She valued the idea of democracy and believed that freedom of speech and expression would be given under a democratic regime. Women’s experience before the Revolution made them feel like they needed to keep fighting as citizens because their voices were ignored and invalidated. Their role as citizens encouraged them to continue their fight for a democracy with all citizens together without desires based on gender identity. When asked if her participation mattered as a woman, she said:

So, as a Tunisian woman, I always think that yes. I think that yes, we always want to be present in everything. So, Tunisian women, they have a pride to show to the Arab World like we are present on the street. We are present everywhere. So, we wanna be always be the first Arab woman in everything, so we have the first female doctor in the Arab World. We wanna we have the first pilot in the Arab World. We are the first women who vote. So, we always wanna be the first woman in something. So, being present there yes, we knew that we wanna be there for our country. So, we said Tunisia based on women, because Bourguiba he said, “In Tunisia, I believe in women.” And in Tunisia, we love Bourguiba because he is the one who gave us the rights for a lot of things.

Marwa’s response relates to Tunisia being a progressive Arab country that prioritizes the interests of women to help modern the country, as Arfaoui (2012) asserts. According to Marwa, Tunisians want to lead the Arab World in advancements and pride themselves on their
modernization. Not to mention, Marwa’s experience with activism as a woman supports Boussedra’s (2011) claim that female participation in the Revolution challenged traditional family norms and society’s perception that women are compliant and uninvolved because typically women are to obey their husbands and stay at home. Despite not participating for women’s rights, their participation as women mattered for representations of an Arab country with female engagement and contribution. Hence, the topic of feminism and women’s rights has been an ongoing discussion in Arab countries because of the influence of Islam and more traditional gender views.

Social Media

Social media provided a pathway of mobilization that was accessible. It was a resource for women to participate without needing to mobilize in the streets. Social media affected the pathways of mobilization because it was used as a resource to broadcast the Revolution and contribute to solidarity among Tunisians. Social media changed the course of mobilization because it allowed women to participate in the Revolution online, which resulted in increased participation and political awareness. According to the Arab Barometer, television was the main source of information for political events among individuals in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region at 44%, and social media was at second place with 36% of respondents indicating that they use social media as their main source of information for political events (Wee and Li 2019). Even though this data looks at broader MENA perspectives, it can be applied to Tunisia because Tunisian individuals are included in the sample. As such, it can be concluded that Tunisians trust television and social media. Marwa expressed that Facebook spread awareness of events and television broadcasted those events. She asserted:
I remember the Facebook that time like people they make events on Facebook all the time, and they share all the news and there was a TV that was recorded everything 24/7. It’s called, Hannibal, and it was like there’s something happening here.

Marwa found spaces to express her views and exercise political activism on social media. She watched news channels to obtain information and use that to communicate with other women on Facebook. Women used social media as a resource to be politically engaged in the Revolution. Furthermore, 85% of respondents in the Arab Barometer indicated that they actively use Facebook, which is the most used form of social media in Tunisia (Wee and Li 2019). This statistic shows that the majority of Tunisians use Facebook, affirming Marwa’s sentiment that individuals frequently used Facebook as a resource during the Revolution. Facebook, in particular, was used to participate online. It provided an outlet for women to participate in the Revolution without needing to protest in public spaces, affirming Tazi’s (2021) claim that social media provided a free way for women to participate. Nadine would affirm the sentiment of Marwa because she discussed videos of protests circulating through social media, revealing that individuals were in the uprising together. Despite not having a direct connection to online activism, Marwa and Nadine were drawn to participate because social media was accessible and available to them. Marwa said that the videos did not necessarily encourage individuals to protest, but they showed that Tunisians must support one another. Respondents trusted social media for political information and used it to engage in the Revolution.

The use of social media was an act of resistance to disregard state media. Despite the documentation of the protests, the media reflected political interests of the regime. Women used to identify with the image of the Tunisian woman displayed in the media, but they started to feel that life was not accurately represented, so they looked for other ways to show their identity and
political interests. The freedom that social media provided from the government after Ben Ali fled Tunisia demonstrates political opportunity structure. Specifically, political opportunity structure can be an explanation for the increased use of social media because it was more accessible after Ben Ali left the country. Citizens were able to post on Facebook and share perspectives that would have been punished under the Ben Ali regime.

The women I interviewed indicated that they formed networks on social media during the Revolution. Nadine stated, “I was only participating like and seeing stuff online and you know on my laptop and social media for sharing stuff,” which affirms Hitman’s (2018) claim that women had opportunities to talk about gender equality. The circulation of news and events on social media allowed women to connect with others and develop friendships. Social media served as “an important medium for information dissemination outside of state-controlled channels” (Wee and Li 2019), which supports the argument that Tarrow (1996) provided about political opportunity structure involving the expansion of power access and changes in alliances.

Women relied on social media to participate in the Revolution and document its events (Tazi 2021:299). For example, Rima indicated that the information on the news was fake during the Revolution. She said that the news conveyed that strangers are seen stealing in houses, but that later she found out that it was fake because the government wanted to scare people. Likewise, Marwa revealed that before the Revolution during Ben Ali’s reign, there were restrictions on social media regarding free speech like the blocking of YouTube. According to the Arab Barometer, 27% of respondents in Tunisia actively use YouTube, which is the second most popular form of social media in the country (Wee and Li 2019). She said that the Revolution gave more freedom, especially freedom of speech. Marwa elaborated:
The freedom we saw it on like social media, on TV in general. So, now we can watch, people discussing facts, not saying all the time that this person is the best President. So, now we can discuss all the subjects. We can make critics about the President.

Media was censored at the beginning of the Revolution, but once freedom was given at the end of Ben Ali’s reign, the media made it possible for individuals to develop political views and obtain more widespread political news (Allal 2013:203). Freedom of speech was a product of political opportunity structure when the authoritarian government collapsed. Due to the increased freedom of speech during the Revolution, social media aligns with El Chazli’s (2020) argument that social media facilitates the analysis of societal issues and the instruction of necessary actions (4). Kenza also expressed the significance of social media saying that “the social media done a big role to protest and to be more safe to say everything about Ben Ali regime about the media like they always talk the good stuff about Ben Ali.” Women experienced new political opportunities and issues to mobilize on social media. For example, Kenza was more comfortable expressing her opinions on social media compared to in the streets. Likewise, Nadine only participated online with social media because her mother did not let her and her brother go out and participate in person. But, she regrets it, as she stated:

Because it was a big moment and because it was a huge change that happened, you know? And yeah. Why not like it's a when it's a moment like that is, yeah, you you’d rather like participate and I could not. Yeah, if I did that, I would be proud by myself.

Nadine wished she would have been allowed to participate, but she is glad that there were opportunities to engage with the Revolution online through social media, supporting Khalil’s (2014) claim that social media documented women’s participation in the Revolution and allowed all individuals to participate. Social media was used as a resource to spread knowledge about the
Revolution and convey personal opinions about political systems and greater society. It was a pathway of mobilization that allowed women to participate in the Revolution without needing to mobilize in the streets. Marwa indicated that social media framed the Revolution in terms of women taking the jobs of men. She stated:

We're not talking about people that talking right and left, we're talking about people that they have the influence and they're talking on the media, how one of the reasons, for example, these are most debated one of the reasons of a non employment, which is general all over the world is because women are working. So if women doesn't work, men will find jobs which is not true. So, we got even to that level.

Marwa disagreed with this framing, prompting her to express her opinions on social media to clarify that men and women can work alongside each other. The framing from social media created a community of solidarity and a widespread desire for change. Women wanted to clarify that they are not the reason for widespread unemployment; instead, they hold the regime responsible. Social media provided a way for women to express their opinions and converse with others about the Revolution.

Religion

Political Islam influences the sphere of politics by challenging the secular state. After the Revolution, religion had a more prominent role in Tunisian politics in the form of political Islam, advocating for traditional Muslim beliefs in the government and daily life. Ennahda and other Islamist movements had a long-established presence in Tunisia, though they were suppressed during Ben Ali’s regime because of his desire for a modern secular state. Their return to the public sphere after 2011 sparked concerns among women who viewed religious norms as challenging their rights and aspirations for equality. Three out of the five women I interviewed
perceived political Islam as religious extremism. The Arab Barometer classified the rise of Ennahda as religious extremism but did not frame direct statements about Ennahda. According to the Arab Barometer, 34% of respondents say that religious extremism is one of the two biggest problems facing Tunisia, following economic situation at 75% and corruption at 47% (Robbins 2016). These respondents experienced Ennahda’s conservative agenda, which was viewed as a threat to women’s rights (Hamza 2016). The 2014 election process did not signify more opportunities for everyone; instead, it instilled concerns among certain women about the potential of an Islamist resurgence in elections to undermine their interests. Hence, political liberation affects them differently. Ennahda gave more freedoms for jihadi groups to participate in more violent actions because Ennahda’s legalization encouraged jihadis to feel that they should not be punished for working in public (Lounnas 2018:8). Two women indicated that these political changes were threatening to them because of Ennahda’s conservative agenda. Most of the respondents that I interviewed expressed strong dislike towards Ennahda, indicating that Ennahda’s interests took away from the progress that the country had made regarding modernization and women’s rights. They indicated that political Islam undermined their rights.

Respondents believed that Ennahda’s religious ideologies could take away their rights as women, which had taken years to obtain through the CPS. This relates to relative deprivation, where an individual perceives a discrepancy between their expectations of what they should have (value expectations) and their actual access to resources and opportunities in life (value capabilities) (Gurr 1970:24). Respondents believed that they should have equal rights compared to men, which aligns with value expectations. However, the role of Ennahda with religious extremism demonstrates value capabilities because of the possibility that Ennahda would diminish women’s rights. Women had rights in place because of the CPS, and they were worried...
that religious extremism through Ennahda would take those rights away after the Revolution.

Marwa emphasized the impact of Ennahda on modernization within women’s rights:

I hate Rached Ghannouchi. I hate how he thinks about woman, especially when he were trying to discuss like to go back to those black old ages where women should wear the hijab and stay at home and he start talking about marrying four women. Like we are not going back to for those times. Uh, this is why I hate him. This is why I hate his party and because we already we're talking about being like as I mentioned it before we are we were the first Arabic country where woman became powerful woman. They have the right to vote. All these things and we are not going back to woman staying at home. No, no way. So, this is why I hate him. So, he’s not taken us to better positions. He's taken us backwards.

Marwa’s perspective furthers the idea of relative deprivation because she did not want to go “backwards” in terms of women’s rights. She wanted to protect her rights, and she felt like Ennahda was doing the opposite. Marwa’s statement also connects to Zaki’s (2018) discussion about transitional justice, in which Ennahda elected Tunisian women for gender parity, yet lacked the ideology for effective women’s rights advocacy. Transitional justice explains the interests of Ennahda to advocate for religion in politics but appeal to feminists through supporting female political participation. According to Tazi (2021), Ennahda’s emphasis on religious ideas within the political sphere demonstrates the lesser secular state that many respondents advocated for either during the Revolution or in its aftermath. Marwa described a personal experience after the Revolution where she felt threatened based on what she was wearing:

I thought that all of our freedom are in danger. So I thought that I don't at a certain time I was scared that maybe I won't have the right to wear what I want. Oh. And now I remembered something happened to me just after the Revolution with Ennahda. I was walking. I was walking with my friend on the beach, and the police came to me and asked me why I'm walking in my swimsuit why I'm not wearing anything to cover
myself. And I said, “Well, I'm swimming here,” and he said, “Yeah, but you're not in the sea. You are outside of the sea.” And I told him, “Well, I'm free to wear what I want. And then my dad, he saw him talking to me and my dad came to him, and he started fighting with him, telling him that he doesn't have the right to tell me what I'm wearing. So, at that time, I felt like everything is being like questioned in my freedom, the way we wear, where we go, what time I have to go out, what time I have to come back home. So yeah. And even for security because that time like I was scared to go out alone night because we thought that there are not a lot of security outside. There are not a lot of police like the time of Ben Ali. During the time of Ben Ali, there were a lot of security. If you go out at anytime there are a lot of police, and it's secure, but after the Revolution there weren’t a lot of security outside.

After the Revolution, Marwa felt unsafe because of Ennahda’s conservative ideas and lack of freedom of dress for women. Marwa felt like her rights as a woman were under attack because of Ennahda’s growing popularity. Some women felt uncomfortable being outdoors and in public due to the lack of security, which was exacerbated by the absence of police presence. Rima elaborated on the absence of police presence saying, “So, the first people who give up on us is the police. They gave their arms back, and they went home. So, we spent maybe I'm telling you maybe almost a year without police.” Women often felt unsafe being alone at night because of the changing environment regarding public safety. Marwa’s experience shows us that women often hesitated to politically participate because of the importance of their safety, stemming from their perceived threat of Ennahda and the lack of police protection. Religious extremism with Ennahda gave women fear over their rights and safety.

On the other hand, one respondent trusted Ennahda more than the other political parties because they protected her choice to wear the hijab, whereas other political parties disregarded religious clothing. Nadine expressed that she wanted to give Ennahda a chance during the Revolution because she thought that society’s oppression of their ideologies was disapproved. She indicated that she was not allowed to wear the hijab in public before or during the
Revolution because people feared that it was a form of religious extremism rather than a personal preference of dress. Specifically, Nadine expressed:

The government sees that these people who want to practice like religion or to show their I mean to show like some religious aspects in their, how they dress, they are from certain groups that are the opposite like the or they're not with the party like that is leading the country the RCD.

The RCD is the Democratic Constitutional Rally political party that valued secular Tunisia and strived to eliminate Islamist ideas and the outwardly presence of Islam (Wolf 2018:157). Women experienced democratization differently depending on their multiple identities. Experiences about democratization were affected by religious identity like the differences between Marwa’s and Nadine’s experiences regarding the influence of policies regarding dress according to the extent of Muslim lifestyle and ideals in their daily life. Nadine’s identity as a Muslim woman who valued wearing the hijab encouraged her support for Ennahda because of the significance of religion in her life. Nadine felt like her identities as a practicing Muslim and a woman who advocates for women’s rights can co-exist. She believed that they did not have to oppose each other. Similar to how other women were threatened by the increased presence of political Islam, Nadine felt that her freedoms as a Muslim woman were getting taken away.

These perspectives indicate that religious beliefs greatly affected mobilization and political activism in Tunisia because of the cultural importance of Islam, but the extent to which individuals utilized religion for political interests was subjective. Ennahda’s status as the primary opposition party was new due to its religious orientation, contrasting with previous winning parties that had origins in pre-revolutionary leadership. Furthermore, religion was used as a tool
to increase political activism after the Revolution, emphasizing cultural beliefs in the form of Islam.

**Political Parties**

Most citizens in Tunisia do not trust political parties, leading to the lack of political engagement. Towards the end of the Revolution and afterward, Ennahda, as the majority political party, affected the sphere of politics. Even though Ennahda has many followers, the majority of Tunisians lack trust in political parties and the government. Interviews indicated that participation in institutional and extra-institutional politics pre-2011 did not make Tunisian women trust the new electoral system and parties because they did not align with their interests and were viewed as systems for the ruling class to gain more power. According to the Arab Barometer, “Just 12 percent of Tunisians say that they trust political parties to a great or medium extent. Moreover, about two-thirds say that they do not closely identify with any existing party” (Robbins 2016).

Political parties are a form of political participation that is open to women, so the lack of interest and trust is significant because it demonstrates the systematic lack of engagement. Benstead (2019) explains that women in civil society and Parliament actively influenced the formulation of gender rights within the Constitution through their participation in debates (524). Three out of the 107 political parties legalized in August 2011 were led by women (Benstead 2019; Moghadam 2019). Only 2% of women are members of political parties, compared to 4% of men (Benstead 2019:526). Even still, politics seems distant for most Tunisians because they do not align with any interests of the political parties. Because the development of political parties takes time, they must build trust among its members. Oppositional parties, specifically,
are “tiny groups with only shallow roots in society” (Allal 2013:186). When political parties emerge, they need time to grow and gather members to form a community. In times of transition such as the Revolution, individuals harbor high expectations for change, and their interests may not completely coincide with any single political party. Rima said that members of Ennahda “get to a level, by the way that they said if you choose no Islamist party politique, you'd be going straight to Hell.” In other words, Rima thought that Ennahda gave into extreme measures by conveying that individuals had to join their political party to go to Heaven. In Rima’s perspective, this ideology discouraged her membership rather than inspiring it. Furthermore, Rima indicated, “I believe more than 90% [of associations], they were the undercover for some party politique.” Rima is skeptical of associations and political parties because of her own experiences about her association. She started an association in her village during the Revolution giving school supplies to children, but she had to shut it down because political party representatives volunteered to distribute supplies undercover but aggressively promoted their political parties to children instead. Rima was discouraged to be involved in political parties due to being manipulated by them in the past.

Nadine explained that she does not consider herself engaged with politics or align with any political parties in Tunisia. She stated:

Okay like myself, I see like I think I am more honestly, you know, like I hate politics. I hate like, you know, I don't consider myself like went into any of the political waves or political parties in Tunisia.

Nadine does not think that any of the political parties fully represent her interests. As a result, she is not involved in politics, but she considers herself to have perspectives that lean towards the middle because of her background as a journalist. However, there are not many political
parties that encompass the middle of the political spectrum or offer perspectives that consider both sides of a political event. She explained:

    I want to be in the middle when I can, you know, if someone if any party, they make mistakes or things that are I don't agree with, I will just go right away, and I will like I say it, you know, so that's, why and I'm a journalist as well. So like, it's not it's not good like my background I mean. I have like a background in journalism, so I don't think, it's good to be two in one in one side and one side and being in the middle is the best for me.

With a master’s degree in Investigative Journalism, Nadine values unbiased perspectives and strives to understand all sides to the same story. She thinks that political topics expose deep perspectives that often create conflict between individuals. Rima agrees that politics causes fights. She does not discuss religion or politics, as she stated, “It’s a decision. Does mean two subjects that I don't want fights with anybody.” Both Nadine and Rima think that politics develop conflict because of the sensitivity and opposing viewpoints. Discussions of political parties are vehicles where conflict is inevitable because of the continuous conversations of conflict.

    Not only do respondents not trust political parties, but they also think that political leaders are insufficient and incompetent. Many Tunisians do not trust political leaders and believe they are not equipped to lead the country. Iobna conveyed that she thinks Tunisia needs more competent people to govern the country after the Revolution. She expanded:

    Maybe now it's the best, the best period because the President we choose now is a very good person. But, the truth is this country need more and more competence. So, okay he is a good person, but it’s not enough. Maybe we need some a few other years to fix the situation.

Women have not been socialized to trust political parties, decreasing their political participation. Despite the political climate changing after the Revolution, concerns regarding political activism
remains low. Mobilization occurred to remove Ben Ali as the leader and absolve the country from a dictatorship, but the distrust in the government and political parties contributes to the continuous aftermath of the Revolution and the progress that many Tunisians await. The mobilization to achieve dignity among individuals represents the importance of inclusion for all Tunisians to set aside their differences and come together to enact change in the country (Masri 2017:11). Respondents are representative of these greater claims because of their skepticism of political parties and the need to express solidarity.

*Change in Mobilization*

Prior to the Revolution, mobilization regarding social protests was more sporadic and involved isolated events and interests. Mobilization occurred regarding specific interests with certain individuals. However, the Revolution mobilized all individuals throughout Tunisia to fight for dignity and equality. According to the Arab Barometer, 65% of Tunisian respondents say that freedom to protest is guaranteed to a great or medium extent (Thomas 2018). Additionally, 72% of Tunisian respondents say that freedom of expression is guaranteed to a great or medium extent (Thomas 2018). Even though this data collection was a few years after the Revolution, it remains applicable because more than half of the respondents think that they have the freedom to protest and the freedom of expression. In other words, they feel comfortable voicing their perspectives and desires in public settings to encourage further mobilization. Respondents would concur that freedom of expression is given, especially because others were participating in the protests and online activism. Because of the widespread nature of the Revolution, it involved all Tunisians.
On the other hand, the 2008 protests in Redeyef demonstrated the punishment because of the expression of opinion. Participants in these protests were sent to prison and punished because of their mobilization for employment (Cursed be the Phosphate 2012). Specifically, one protester stated:

In 2008, we put our unionist convictions into practice, our true role! In other words, we defend social justice, development, and the right to employment. That’s the unionist duty. Whether it went against the general management of the Union or not was the least of our worries” (Cursed be the Phosphate 2012).

Even though the UGTT did not support their protests, they remained strong in their efforts and strived to have their claims be heard. The same individuals who protested for employment rights in Redeyef remain unsatisfied after the Revolution. One protester indicated that she is unable to celebrate the fall of Ben Ali, as she stated, “I still have pain. I still suffer and it makes my life difficult” (Cursed by the Phosphate 2012). In the Redeyef protests, women understood their political agency through their participation as workers economically. These protests displayed a non-gendered form of political participation as unionists, emphasizing their primary identification with their worker identity. During the years before the Revolution, protests were unaccepted and punished. Freedom of speech was limited, so protests were a risk. Individuals were aware of the risk that protests reflecting broader economic and social desires provided, but they had no other choice but to act on their concerns for change.

Nadine recalled that she did not participate in protests prior to the Revolution unless they were about Palestine. She stated:
I was a rebel. Yeah, somehow. But like I went to protests about Palestine. We always have that, you know, like things like that…We just hear about it. We hear that there is people are killed or stuff like that. You know, so we wanted to show support them.

Nadine participated in protests regarding distinct topics like Palestine. She used her voice to protest in support of Palestine at school with her classmates and teachers. Additionally, Iobna indicated that she also participated in protests for Palestine. However, she stated that there were no consequences for publicly supporting Palestine since “Tunisia are the brothers of Palestinians so even Ben Ali support Palestinians so there is no problem we support Palestinians.” Before the Revolution, there were smaller protests about specific topics like Palestine and teachers, but protests about the government or economic situations were often punished, showing that freedom of political expression was limited for citizens.

As a teacher, Rima explained that the teacher’s union in Tunisia helped promote and expand mobilization about certain events like Palestine. She stated:

I remember because we have a very strong union. We, the teachers the strongest one in the whole country. We are able to stop the whole economy in one day. You know? Yes, when the boss of our union says tomorrow no school for the whole country means no school for the whole country. Name it. Call it. You know? They're very strong, the strongest one. Does mean you have unions for all the sections or that the teacher’s one is the strongest one because first we are a lot. The number is huge. Second, imagine how many kids involved? How many families involved? So, does mean if we stop one day, the whole economy will stop. The whole parents have to take off from work to take care of the kids. Imagine. So, it's a mess. So, I remember we, but as teachers, we support the big things that happen in the world, especially in the Arab countries. For example, when it's something happening in Palestine, we stop. We do kind of… how to call it? There's a… we call it… Does mean we don't work, but because we are solely there, we want our voice to be heard, you know? It's not for our situation as teachers, for example, something for money, but it's we are supporting something happening.
Rima’s connection to the teachers’ union exposed her to mobilization prior to the Revolution. Through the protests, she experienced the power in numbers and the acceptance of social protests with a large number of participants. She explained the power of the union because of the scope of its influence with many individuals being affected by the education system and the opportunities they possess to control daily life.

Pre-uprising activism was generally safe if it did not critique the Ben Ali regime. Women participated in these protests because there were limited consequences for participation. Respondents participated in the Revolution that stray from their pre-Revolution habits because of the increased risk of participation with the criticism of the regime.

This idea demonstrates low-risk and high-risk activism, in which individuals determine if they are going to participate in activism based on the risk factor and possibilities of consequences. McAdam (1986) indicates that “each succeeding foray into safe forms of activism increases the recruit’s network integration, ideological affinity with the movement, and the commitment to an activist identity, as well as his receptivity to more costly forms of participation” (70). Using this framework, protesting in support of Palestine is considered low-risk activism because many Tunisians, including the Ben Ali regime aligned with the activism. Protests in support of Palestine were a starting point for individuals to be exposed to networks for their own interests, increasing their activist connections. However, protests involving the denouncement of the government are classified as high-risk activism because participants often face legal consequences, risk their safety, or endure social stigma. Analyzing participation in the Revolution through McAdam’s (1986) discussion of low-risk and high-risk activism reveals that activism is a linear process involving prior experience that led individuals to become activists,
thereby creating strong social ties. Freedom of speech and expression increased during the Revolution because of community involvement. Iobna stated:

No person have a mind can do this because it's a the most easy thing that all this family who govern Tunisia can put you in jail, can hurt you even if you tell a song, even if, you... no there is a there is no, no, no, never. You cannot even to do a song or an art.

Tunisians could not denounce the government or Ben Ali’s family because it was viewed as ungracious and criminal. Even singing and music was banned. Individuals who disliked Ben Ali participated in the freedom of expression after 2011 because the regime change provided them with the space to voice their perspectives, otherwise known as political opportunity structure.

The Revolution can be considered high-risk activism at the beginning, but as citizens started to participate, it changed to low-risk due to solidarity of all citizens. Solidarity was demonstrated because the Revolution involved everyone in the country. The entire country came together to mobilize, demonstrating collective identity as Tunisians. Rima expressed that individuals throughout the country participated as men protected the buildings and women cooked. Rima indicated that she did not know about politics or involve herself in politics but states that towards the beginning of the Revolution:

And then we started talking, they start talking politics. I remember, and I get involved. How? I don't know. I find myself kind of it's an avalanche. Even if it's not a choice, I promise you every single body becomes a politician. Everybody. Whoever has school, whoever doesn't have school, whoever heard about policies before, whoever never heard. Everybody is talking politics.

Rima did not want to participate in the Revolution, but the nature of the uprising with the involvement of all people in the country forced her participation. Rima’s experience aligns with
Hunt and Benford’s (2004) definition of collective identity in terms of being a Tunisian citizen and opponent of Ben Ali’s regime, prompting her participation in the Revolution. Rima indicated that her gender identity as a woman did not matter in her participation because the Revolution provided a space for all individuals to voice their interests. Prior to the Revolution, Rima did not discuss politics with anyone due to fear of disagreement, but the Revolution created solidarity among individuals and encouraged support for others. She was pressured to participate and talk about politics, suggesting that women who were not participants before were swept into participation in 2011. Likewise, Nadine’s mother did not let her join protests in the street, but she participated online and indicated that “we need all to be on the same, you know, on the same path, and we need all to move forward and to, you know, continue it together into that.” Despite not participating in person, Nadine was aware of the solidarity that the Revolution needed to be successful. As a result, she posted on Facebook and shared her opinions with her friends. Like Nadine, Kenza indicated that everyone joined together during the Revolution as she indicated, “So it was every age and male, female, children, young people, old people. So everyone who can go to protest they will go.” Despite being too young to participate in the protests, Kenza experienced the solidarity among Tunisians and felt the community of supporters.

The Revolution created a supportive community where women felt listened to and understood. The Revolution brought individuals together from all backgrounds and identities because they desired the same change, which supports Arfaoui’s (2012) and Boussedra’s (2011) claims about women protesting alongside men as Tunisian citizens to demand the same dignity. Women had the same desires of men regarding dignity and a more fulfilling life not suppressed by the political regime.
Conclusion

This research explored the domains of political interests using the 2011 Tunisian Revolution as a case study to analyze the relationship between activism and identity. I anticipated discovering that the Revolution altered women’s mobilization by prompting their active involvement in achieving desired changes in their status. However, women participated in the Revolution with other citizens to contribute to solidarity and support the political interests of the general population. Their collective identity as Tunisian citizens and opponents of the authoritarian Ben Ali regime created this solidarity. Despite the initial concern about women’s rights under Ennahda, women prioritized solidarity with fellow Tunisians and were keen on participating in the uprising. This involvement took various forms including physical or online participation, supporting others, making personal statements, and whether religiously motivated or not. The Revolution changed women’s mobilization by demonstrating that their participation matters because they brought diverse perspectives and created a sense of unity among Tunisians. Their efforts to mobilize contribute to the wider conversation that women are not confined to traditional roles such as caregiver and nurturer. Women are activists. Women are professionals. Women are individuals whose interests are important.

The significance of prior participation helped to determine activism during the Revolution through their history of mobilization. Various factors also determined whether or not an individual would participate in the protests, such as age and specific political interest. Furthermore, these factors contribute to the conversation of the change in political activism and different perspectives of politics because of the Revolution, which supports Hamza’s (2016) claim that the Revolution provided solidarity among all Tunisians including women. However, perspectives regarding the aftermath of the Revolution reveal the dismissal of political concern
and minimization of political interests because respondents indicated that their voices do not make a difference, or they have given up.

Before the Revolution, women participated in politics voluntarily, though their activism was limited to interests of the Ben Ali regime. Since Ben Ali prohibited activism that criticized the regime, women were often hesitant to participate in protests that directly went against the regime. However, women felt more comfortable with participating if there were others active in their participation. The Revolution created a shift in female participation because women were brought in to participate regardless of their wants. Political Islam through Ennahda encouraged women to fight back because of their perceived threat that their rights would be taken away.

After the Revolution, women were active in the Constituent Assembly and strived to obtain further female representation. The significance of gender identity came in waves depending on political interests and the current environment. During the Revolution, gender identity was perceived as less significant compared to the post-Revolution period. Respondents indicated that women did not perceive a threat to their rights during the uprising, but the initial period after the uprising marking a crucial period of perceived threat because of Ennahda’s religious extremism. Women mobilized with men through their collective identity as opponents of the Ben Ali regime. The political opportunity structure for women provided an encouraging environment for them to mobilize.

These findings are significant because they illuminate the force of gender within activism and the power of political interests. These findings reveal that the 2011 Tunisian Revolution was so much more than a change in political, economic, and social power. The Revolution was a movement that cultivated collaboration and awareness among the Tunisian population. An avenue of this collaboration was social media, which gave women access to voice their
personalized opinions and participate online. The Revolution challenged preexisting perspectives and seemed to uphold women’s rights, even increasing their rights from before the Revolution (Hitman 2018). Despite most women feeling hopeful for the future of women’s rights in Tunisia, they believe that female representation remains limited, supporting Debuysere’s (2018) argument that women are not recognized in formal leadership positions. Moreover, the Revolution sparked a change in activism about social protests, shifting from isolated events addressing one topic to the inclusion of many individuals to protest about endless interests. My study analyses my respondents’ experiences during the Revolution and their perspectives about gender in Tunisia more broadly.
Limitations and Future Research

Since the Tunisian Revolution initiated the Arab Spring in 2011, scholars have studied this social movement as a case study for democratic transition. Through the lens of gender, researchers have provided explanations for the emergence of the movement including collective identity and political opportunity structure. Many scholars note that women protested alongside men and demanded the same rights as them. However, others suggest that women wanted to amend the *Code of Personal Status* (CPS), in order to promote their rights in practice. With these conflicting views, there are gaps in scholarship regarding the extent to which political interests matter to individuals who consider themselves activists, as well as the roles that their other identities played in their involvement. In addition to there being limited discussion of the role of working-class women and laborers who participated in the Revolution, there is also no scholarship about how activists mobilized individuals.

The gender enigma displays the combating notions of gendered politics within representation and social implications. The revival of the fundamental rights of Tunisia and the Third World nationalist narrative revealed the continuity of a gender puzzle in which the social struggles of Tunisian women coincided with male-gendered politics (Khalil 2014). Since the gender puzzle poses questions about the consequences of political regime on its citizens and their rights, there are gaps in the literature about the motives for female participation, especially looking at how different actors affected mobilization. I was unable to find respondents who were active in feminist organizations, so I am left wondering about the role of feminist organizations within mobilization.

Another limitation remains in the methodological approach, especially with the lack of representation in my respondents. Thus, the lack of this data might be due to the sensitive nature
of protests in an authoritarian regime and the limited access and knowledge I have with scholarship in Arabic or French. Scholars looked at databases and online bloggers or women activists who had a social media presence during the Revolution to analyze their posts and discuss the influences they had upon others. By incorporating qualitative data through interviews with women who participated in the Revolution, we learn more about their experiences and the various identities that they had to navigate during their activism.

There were several limitations in this study that could be focused on in the future. The main limitation was the lack of representation within respondents. I was only able to conduct interview with Tunisian women who are fluent in English because of my inability to speak Arabic and my weak French skills. This limitation narrowed down who would be able to communicate with me, decreasing the number of perspectives included in this study because only educated women have the opportunity to learn English. This narrow scope of respondents hindered the range of perspectives that may have been addressed from women who are less educated and have different identities.

As minorities in Tunisian and traditionally Muslim communities, women often struggle to find their voices especially when their political and social desires do not align with public opinion; yet how did women mobilize within organizations regarding their political interests and identities? Societal norms and extreme religious beliefs affected the views that women displayed and challenged their progress in advancing women’s rights and achieving political representation.
Research Methodology Appendix

Last Spring I studied abroad in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia and Palermo, Italy through School for International Training (SIT) in their program titled “Political and Religious Integration in the Mediterranean.” I learned about the phenomenon of migration across the Mediterranean, the democratic transition following the Revolution, and the religious attitudes that were prominent throughout Tunisia. Towards the end of the program, we were required to do a four-week internship or complete the Independent Study Project (ISP). I decided to complete the ISP about the role of women in the Revolution. I conducted interviews and had an anonymous online questionnaire that women could complete. I specially wanted to study women because of their advanced status compared to women in other Arab countries. I wanted to explore gender as a significant determinant of individual identity. Thus, I used this research as a starting point for this paper to gain preliminary knowledge on the topic.

This study has given me insight into my own identity as a woman. I felt privileged living in the United States because of the freedom for women regarding dress and expression. At the same time, I feel empowered to share my perspectives based on the bravery of these women. The women I interviewed endured experiences that inflicted fear and contempt. However, they remained strong and persistent in their efforts to embody change in their country. They stood up for what they believe is right and challenged society’s norms about women being less powerful than their male counterparts. Through this research process, I have gained an understanding of Tunisian women through the lens of political participation and identity.
Appendix A: Interview Guide

Part I: Background

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your marital status?
4. What is your education level?
5. What is your occupation?
6. What is your social class?
7. How would you describe your political leanings?
8. How would you describe your religious leanings?

Part II: Before the Revolution

10. What are your thoughts regarding the Code of Personal Status (CPS)? Please explain.
11. Do you think that Ben Ali continued to support women’s rights after Bourguiba? Please explain.
12. How would you describe the implementation of women’s rights prior to the Revolution? For example, were you satisfied with your rights? Please explain.
14. Why did you participate or not participate (religious, political, other)?
15. If you did participate, how do you feel about your participation as a woman? Did your identity as a woman matter?

Part III: During the Revolution

15. Did you participate in any form of protest during the Revolution? Please explain.
16. Why did you participate (religious, political, other)?
17. Did you participate individually or with an organization? Please explain.
18. Did you use any form of media for your participation? Please explain.
19. Did you prepare for the demonstrations? If yes, please explain how. If no, please explain why not.
20. How would you describe the role of organizations (labor, feminist, other) in the Revolution? Please explain.
22. Do you have any other identities that affected your participation? Please explain.
23. Did you face any challenges because of your gender identity during your participation. Please explain.
24. Did those challenges, if any, hinder your participation as a woman. Or did they encourage you to do more?

Part IV: After the Revolution
25. How were you affected by the 2011 Revolution (socially, politically, morally)? Please explain.
26. Did you feel that women’s rights were at risk during the Revolution? Please explain.
27. Were there specific rights that came under attack? Did you change your behaviors for those reasons?
28. How would you describe the changes to women’s rights (positive or negative)? Please explain.

Part V: Now/The Future

29. Do you think the current political climate constitutes a threat to women’s rights?
30. How do you feel about the appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia’s first female Prime Minister?
31. How would you describe the future of women’s status in Tunisia?
Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

Interview 1: Marwa

Researcher: Alright thank you. Awesome so just to get started with the questions. Um, so it's split up into just a few sections. First, we're gonna go over like your personal background just so that I can get to know you a little bit better. And then it's gonna be before the Resolution, during the Revolution, after the Resolution and then now, and then the future like, how you perceive everything that happened.

Marwa: Okay.

Researcher: But just to get started, what is your age?

Marwa: I'm 29. So I was in high school during the Revolution.

Researcher: Got it awesome. And then what is your gender like how do you identify your gender?

Marwa: I was born a female and I identify as a female.

Researcher: Awesome, thank you. And what is your marital status?

Marwa: I'm married.

Researcher: How long have you been married?

Marwa: Um so two years on the papers, but one year because I was waiting for my papers for the U.S. so I got married in Tunisia because I like the law there how they protect the woman, and then I moved with my husband to the U.S. My husband he's American.

Researcher: Awesome. How’d you meet if you don't mind me asking?

Marwa: Yeah, he was working in Tunisia, and I was, I was in a hotel there and so we met in the hotel.

Researcher: Aw that’s so sweet. That’s awesome. What is your education level?

Marwa: I have a master’s degree. So I studied accounting. I have a business degree in accounting. Then I started working as a corporate banker with the French International Bank,
then I decided to go back to school. So I so I finished my master’s degree in management, Quality Management to be more specific.

Researcher: Awesome that's so cool. And what do you do now? What is your occupation?

Marwa: Now I work with the trust administrators. So, I work in accounting and more administrative stuff with them.

Researcher: And where is this? Do you live like on the West Coast? East Coast? Midwest?

Marwa: I moved to San Diego in May.

Researcher: Oh wow. That’s pretty new. Where did you live before that?

Marwa: Tunisia. I have lived all my life in Tunisia. However, I traveled a lot to Europe, but I always lived in Tunisia.

Researcher: Cool and then just out of curiosity, how did you learn English? Was in school? Was it traveling?

Marwa: Yeah, it was at school. So I still make a lot of mistakes in English because it's my 3rd language.

Researcher: Oh my gosh. That’s so cool.

Marwa: That's I'm, trying to you know.

Researcher: So you do you speak Arabic, French, and then English?

Marwa: Yes, I speak Arabic, then French, then English, then Spanish, then a little bit of Turkish.

Researcher: Oh my gosh, Marwa, that’s so cool! I just speak English.

Marwa: Yeah, I think in Tunisia every speaks a minimum of four languages.

Researcher: Yeah, that's so awesome. When I was with my host family, they spoke a lot of languages too. French, English, and of course Arabic too. So that's so cool. I love that. How would you describe your social class?

Marwa: In the U.S. or in Tunisia?
Researcher: Let's say in Tunisia, and then if you don't mind in the U.S. as well.

Marwa: How do you classify that? Like poor?

Researcher: You can say poor. You could say lower class, middle class, upper class, upper middle class.

Marwa: So in Tunisia I consider myself between upper and middle class. So banking in Tunisia is considered as a good job with a lot of advantages. And I used to live with my parents so rent, and no bills exedra. But when I moved to the U.S. especially in San Diego like everything is expensive so let’s say middle class. Then maybe in the future poor.

Resarcher: Yes, the U.S. is very expensive, especially in California and San Diego truly. Yes, how would you describe your political leanings?

Marwa: In the U.S. or in Tunisia?

Researcher: In Tunisia.

Marwa: Okay, so in Tunisia honestly, I don't like anyone. But I’m okay with Kais Siad now the President. I’m okay, but I'm not very satisfied with him. So let's say I'm more like in the middle. So not right. I'm not left. So middle.

Researcher: Got it. Perfect. How would you describe your religious leanings?

Marwa: I’m Muslim, but I'm not very conservative. So like all the Tunisians a light Muslim.

Researcher: Okay, and then last question in the background. Are you associated with any feminist organizations in Tunisia or were you when you were there when you were living in Tunisia.

Marwa: No.

Researcher: Okay perfect. And then now before the Revolution, what are your thoughts regarding the Code of Personal Status and please explain?

Marwa: Personal Status?

Researcher: Yes, the CPS: Code of Personal Status.
Marwa: So, before the Resolution like for me, I was okay, but for like seeing my classmates, not having a lot of rights because they were wearing a hijab or things like that. So, or for the uses of the Internet. So, we didn't have the right to use the Internet, but not only for females, but just for everyone.

Researcher: And do you think the Code of Personal Status gave woman more rights just generally or do you think it didn't really do a lot?

Marwa: So compared to the Arab World, I think it did a lot to Tunisian women, but comparing to the other world I think we still don't have a lot, a lot of rights. For example, for the pay, we don't have equal pay at the man, but with the man, but for the other rights, I think comparing to the Arab World, I will give you an example. Tunisia is the only Arab/Muslim country where the man don't have the right to marry four women.

Researcher: Yes polygamy.

Marwa: So that's considered a good thing. We have the right for education. We have the right to vote. We have the right to drive because I know that sounds like something obvious, but in Saudi Arabia, the woman they didn't have the right to drive like for recently. So, comparing to this country, Tunisia was okay because I am thankful to Bourguiba, the President because he gave the woman, a lot of rights.

Researcher: Got it. That was a great answer. Thank you so much. Do you think that Ben Ali continued to support women’s rights after Bourguiba?

Marwa: Yes, I think so. I think that Ben Ali he liked women. Well, maybe the woman they weren't present in his government. So, they weren't present in his government, but I believe that he tracked women and he was asking them for advice. So they were so they were a behind the scene.

Researcher: Yeah, so you think that they did have women representation in the government, but not like facing forward. It was more as you said behind the scenes like they didn't have like formal positions in the government, but they still advised Ben Ali?

Marwa: Uh huh, and I believe that it's not Ben Ali's fault, but maybe it's his wife's fault because she wanted to be the one in the like the first one in the scene. She wanna be the first lady of Tunisia and it's only her. She likes to be exposed. So maybe it's not him, but it's her. I know he's the President, so he's responsible on that, but her family is corrupted, so she is corrupted.
Researcher: Yes, yes totally. And can you give a little bit more background on did she contribute to the to the government in either a positive or a negative way when her husband Ben Ali was President or was she just, she just wanted the influence of being the first lady of Tunisia?

Marwa: Well, I think she likes the influence being the first lady of Tunisia. She wants to travel with them everywhere to show that she's the first lady to talk. She makes speeches and talking every occasion. She was studying. She had a degree in law. She had PhD, but she always wanna mention that like I have a good degree exedra, but I don't think she did good things for Tunisian women. I don't think she cared about them. She only cared about her family.

Researcher: Got it. That makes sense. Yes. How would you describe the implementation of woman's rights prior to the Resolution?

Marwa: Um, prior to the resolution I don't think that woman they had the right to fight for their rights. For example, they had a lot of a feminist activist where oppressed. Uh, I would give you an example. Lina Ben Mhenni, have you heard about her?

Researcher: Who? Sorry

Marwa: Lina Ben Mhenni.

Researcher: Yes, yes, yes. The social media activist and blogger?

Marwa: Yes, she was like oppressed and aggressed. All of that. So, there is no freedom of speech. There is no freedom to make strikes or to make any events for feminist woman just because they are scared that they are against the regime.

Researcher: Yes, I see.

Marwa: I also when I mention that woman who where's hijab they didn't have the right to wear their hijab during Ben Ali regime so I used to study with a lot of girls who we're wearing hijab and then the administration don't let them go to the class just because they are wearing their hijab. So, they asked them to remove their head scarf, their hijab because it's illegal. And the girls, they were crying because they are missing their classes and they asked them to wear a hat and show their ears.

Researcher: Oh. my gosh.

Marwa: Yeah, so I had a lot of classmates who were suffering because of that. The woman also wore the long dresses abaya. So, they don't have the right to go to work wearing these dresses or
they don't have the right to go to school wearing these dresses. They considered that as like it's a religious clothes and school or jobs are not places for that.

Researcher: Wow, that's so difficult to hear. I can't imagine having…

Marwa: So for a girl, like me. I'm not wearing a hijab. I was okay, but seeing other girls who choose to wear it how they suffered.

Researcher: Especially because religion is a big part of their life, you know. And so, it seems very difficult to have even a government or say that you can't even go to class when you're wearing something that points to who you are too.

Marwa: And I think that's a that's hypo how do you say that?

Researcher: Hypocritical?

Marwa: Hypocritical because there's an article in the law saying that Tunisia is a Muslim/Arab country that speaks Arabic and Islam is their religion. So if you put that article in the law then you don't allow your people to wear what they want then? I think it doesn't make sense. So if you wanna, if you wanna be a country that doesn't allow people to show their religion just put that in your constitution.

Researcher: Yes, totally. Did you participate in any form of protest prior to the Revolution? I know you said that you were in high school during the Revolution, but do you know from either your own personal experience or just based on who you know, and Tunisia like did they participate in any protests prior to the Revolution or was the Revolution solely like an isolated protest?

Marwa: Yes, so I was in high school, and my high school was in downtown. So, I was near all I was already there like even when I don't decide to go on strike, I was there. In the beginning, I was scared and my family, they were scared because it's Ben Ali, so we can't go on strikes. We can't go on manifestations. So, my parents they were asking me to stay away from those strikes and manifestations. But then the 13th of January like no one was scared and we were I was there. So, I was on the street. I was with my mom, the one who was asking me to not go to those strikes she was with me. And yes, I went to a lot of strikes.

Researcher: And what do you think was there a an event or was it just a personal feeling when you felt like no one was scared anymore? Like what caused people to start protesting when they were originally scared at first?
Marwa: So yeah, at the beginning, we were scared because he’s Ben Ali. He’s a dictator, so we don't wanna go to jail. We wanna have jobs in the future and we just don't wanna be involved in that political thing. But then we thought like, okay, it's an opportunity to change and after his speech of 13th of January, he looked very scared and his speech doesn't make sense. And I remember that day my brother, he was at the airport and he called, he called, he called our family and he said Ben Ali is not going to last. He said I was looking at the police faces and something is going to happen. Something is going to change in Tunisia, and that day we decided to go out to the street because we said, okay, it's now or never, so this is why we said we are going to join the people and to go out in the street.

Researcher: Yes, totally. Wow, that's an incredible story. I think it’s very interesting to hear how you all came together despite having, as you said, a dictator and how you all came together to cultivate change you know. So, I really like that. You said that you did participate in the Revolution. Do what were your motives for participating? Was it religious? Political? For woman’s rights? Specifically what motivated you to participate in the Revolution?

Marwa: I think human rights in general because I thought like we are not free to talk about nothing. So, we said like we wanna change. We want democracy. So, democracy was the thing that motivate me to go on the street and to participate.

Researcher: And then this is the last question for the section. How did you feel about your participation as a woman? Did your identity as a woman matter in your participation?

Marwa: So, as a Tunisian woman, I always think that yes. I think that yes, we always want to be present in everything. So, Tunisian women, they have a pride to show to the Arab World like we are present on the street. We are present everywhere. So, we wanna be always be the first Arab woman in everything, so we have the first female doctor in the Arab World. We wanna we have the first pilot in the Arab World. We are the first women who vote. So, we always wanna be the first woman in something. So, being present there yes, we knew that we wanna be there for our country. So, we said Tunisia based on women, because Bourguiba he said, “In Tunisia, I believe in women.” And in Tunisia, we love Bourguiba because he is the one who gave us the rights for a lot of things. I don't know if you saw the video of Bourguiba when he was in the street with all the women and then he took the veil of the woman who was wearing the veil. Have you seen that video?

Researcher: I have not seen that video.

Marwa: Okay, there is a famous of Bourguiba when he went to the street and because before the women, so before 1956 the woman don't have the right to go out on the street without her veil and then Bourguiba, he said, “If you wanna wear it wear it, if you don't wanna wear it, you don't
wear it. And then Ben Ali he doesn't want us to wear it? So, he's the one who gave us a lot of rights. So being present there for manifestation is like saying we still believe that we have to be there for you and for us.

Researcher: Yes. That's awesome. It goes back to definitely it seems like the solidarity among among all of you not only just women, but also all people in Tunisia too. So that's amazing. I know you said you weren't involved in any feminist organizations, but did you by any chance participate or protest in the Revolution with any organizations or did you do it as an individual and with your family?

Marwa: I did it as an individual, like there's no political background. No feminist backgrounds. Just as a Tunisian woman who wants freedom and democracy.

Researcher: Yes, awesome. Did you use any form of media for your participation or did you see any media during the Revolution?

Marwa: Yes, I remember there was a media who came a TV channel who came to our streets to record how we were. So, during the Revolution, there were a lot of theft and people who steal things. So, the man they go to a protect the street, and with the women we help them by cooking for them because they spend all the night out to watch us. So, we try to help them like with food or take them things to help them spend all that the night out. So yes, there were a TV’s were recording our street.

Researcher: Oh wow, that's wow. Did you prepare for the demonstrations at all? And then if yes, can you explain how? If you didn't that's totally too

Marwa: I'm. sorry. What is the demonstrations?

Researcher: The protests. Did you prepare for the protests or did you just kinda go along with it?

Marwa: I just woke show up there and see what like talk with people or as they are saying things, we just discuss and then we protect.

Researcher: Got it. Yes. How would you describe the role of organizations in the Revolution? Just from your own knowledge like were there organizations that kind of helped to create a following in the protests or was it just kind of mainly individuals and families who protested?

Marwa: I think in the beginning there were just families and just people protested. But then, some organizations and political parties they started making these protests.
Researcher: And did they utilize social media at all to gather people to join the protests? Or do you know how that worked at all?

Marwa: Yes, I remember the Facebook that time like people they make events on Facebook all the time, and they share all the news and there was a TV that was recorded everything 24/7, it's called, Hannibal, and it was like there's something happening here. Then tomorrow there are going to be protests that TV channel was famous, but a lot of Facebook at that time.

Researcher: Awesome. Did you have any other identities that affected your participation such as your religious leanings, political leanings, gender identity?

Marwa: No, that time I don't really think that a lot of people they were thinking about political things because there's only Ben Ali. We never thought that one day will come when we'll discuss, politics. Yes, there are some people, but not the majority of people. Religious things not for me because I consider myself, not very conservative. But yes, there are a lot of people who are protesting because of political reasons. Sorry, religious reasons.

Researcher: Do you think because I know the Revolution started when a university or not started, but kinda it became a catalyst when a university student set himself on fire because he couldn't get a job? So, do you think that people participated because like economic reasons as well? Or do you think it was for like more just overall wellbeing rights and things like that?

Marwa: I think in the beginning it started because we went to rights. But after Ben Ali is gone, I believe that the people they started, joining political parties, strikes, and manifestations to get jobs or to be friends with those parties to be friends with that organization and then get jobs. So, in the in the beginning, it was more independent more spontaneous, but then they started to make it more political, more religious, especially when Ennahda came. That was the worst period of Tunisia from my point of view.

Researcher: And can you explain a little bit more about that?

Marwa: Well, I hate Rached Ghannouchi. I hate how he thinks about woman, especially when he were trying to discuss like to go back to those black old ages where women should wear the hijab and stay at home and he start talking about marrying four women. Like we are not going back to for those times. Uh, I hate him. This is why I hate his party and because we already we're talking about being like as I mentioned it before we are we were the first Arabic country where woman became powerful woman. They have the right to vote. All these things and we are not going back to woman staying at home. No, no way. So, this is why I hate him. So, he’s not taken us to better positions. He's taken us backwards.
Researcher: Yes, and do you think that his kind of mindset especially when with Ennahda kind of affected the progression of the Revolution at all?

Marwa: Oh yeah. Yes, I think he is responsible on everything in economy, in politics in everything. Like that man I can even accuse him for climate change. He's responsible and everything. Yeah, because he was living all his life in London. People that were frightened me doing making that a Revolution, people they lost their families, they lost their friends. They lost… Then, he took that for granted, then he came back and he started he started working and taking advantage of everything. He just shows up to say I was a not able to stay in my country, but where were you? you weren't imprisoned. You were in London, and he came back, and he started taking advantage of everything. Well, I can't remember anything good he did for Tunisia. I can't.

Researcher: Oh wow.

Marwa: Maybe he did. Maybe I ignored that, but I can't remember he did anything for Tunisia. Yeah, especially for women like he spent all the time instead of making like I don't know how to say that like projects for women or nothing. As least Kais Siad discussed the law of, for example, a Muslim woman who can marry a non-Muslim man. He gave us the right to do that. And this is why I'm married to my husband now. Uh, he gave us. He was talking about a project of the, how do you say that? Inharence?

Researcher: Inheritance.

Marwa: Because he wanted the woman to be equal of man not follow the Islam for that. He was talking about that project, then unfortunately he died.

Researcher: Well, yes, that's it's very interesting to see how political and religious ideologies and political parties can greatly affect a society and even an entire country too.

Marwa: Yeah, it's very sad.

Researcher: Yeah, that's pretty it's very intense. Do you think you faced any challenges because of your gender identity during the Revolution?

Marwa: Uh, well, I don't think so. No.

Researcher: Perfect. Okay, now is ‘After the Revolution’ section. How do you think you were affected by the 2011 Revolution either socially, politically, morally exedera?
Marwa: So the first thing is that when I have to go to vote, I don't have to be scared who I'm going to vote. I have I can vote for anyone that I like. Because before, but only if I have to go to vote, I have to go to vote for him. So that was the first thing then, we had a lot of freedom of speech, freedom on social media. Because before Ben Ali, we don't have even the right to watch YouTube. There were the 404. Whenever you use the Internet there is 404 forbidden. Yes, we call it 404 amar. So, more freedom, more… freedom. Freedom like in one word freedom in everything.

Researcher: Yes. Awesome. Do you feel that woman's rights were at risk during the Revolution?

Marwa: I think not. I think they were at risk not during the Revolution but after the Revolution. So, with Ennahda, that's when we felt to risk when they were discussing things that they are weird. That's when that's when we felt the risk.

Researcher: Oh wow. Yes. And do you think there were any specific rights that were that were under attack because of Ennahda after the Revolution?

Marwa: Yes. For example, for me, I thought that all of our freedom are in danger. So I thought that I don't at a certain time I was scared that maybe I won't have the right to wear what I want. Oh. And now I remembered something happened to me just after the Revolution with Ennahda. I was walking. I was walking with my friend on the beach, and the police came to me and asked me why I'm walking in my swimsuit why I'm not wearing anything to cover myself. And I said, “Well, I'm swimming here,” and he said, “Yeah, but you're not in the sea. You are outside of the sea.” And I told him, “Well, I'm free to wear what I want. And then my dad, he saw him talking to me and my dad came to him, and he started fighting with him, telling him that he doesn't have the right to tell me what I'm wearing. So, at that time, I felt like everything is being like questioned in my freedom, the way we wear, where we go, what time I have to go out, what time I have to come back home. So yeah. And even for security because that time like I was scared to go out alone night because we thought that there are not a lot of security outside. There are not a lot of police like the time of Ben Ali. During the time of Ben Ali, there were a lot of security. If you go out at anytime there are a lot of police, and it's secure, but after the Revolution there weren’t a lot of security outside.

Research: Oh wow, and do you think what would you say was that kind of transition where you felt that the Revolution started to make a more positive impact in Tunisian society? Because I know you mentioned right after the Revolution, there was as you said that story and then where certain rights were under attack, but then where do you think when do you think that kind of transitioned into more freedom for everyone?
Marwa: The freedom we saw it on like social media, on TV in general. So, now we can watch, people discussing a facts, not saying all the time that this person is the best President. So, now we can discuss all the subjects. We can make critics about the President. We can say, “Oh. He was supposed to do that. Well, it's a mistake.” We can say anything about the President or the Parliament, and there is a Parliament, which is on TV or 2424, so we can watch what they are doing. Before that, there is a Parliament, but we never know what they are doing. We don't know what they’re discussing. They can make any law, and we won't be aware of it. So, after the Revolution, there's a Parliament, which is on TV all the time. Everyone can talk about politics. Everyone can discuss politics. Everyone can make an opinion. Yeah, so.

Researcher: Got it, yes, it's very interesting. Would you describe the changes to woman's rights as positive or negative after the Revolution or do you think they pretty much stayed the same?

Marwa: Well, I think this is first period with Ennahda, they were negative. But then with the new President I think now, they are becoming positive. And I think it was positive and it's getting better more and more.

Researcher: Yes. Totally. Awesome. And then the last section “Now and the Future.” Do you think that the current political climate constitutes a threat to woman's rights?

Marwa: Honestly, I don't think that. I don't think that. Of course there is a minority of people who still think that women are not equal as man, but I think that the majority of people they don't represent threat and so in Tunisia was there was the first minister she was a woman. Yeah, and she was the first woman in our country. So, the woman that were present in the government, they were ministers, they were a advisors for the President. They were first ministers, so I don't think there are threats for woman. And I always believe that depends on your personality because the law is here for you, so if you wanna protect yourself, if you wanna be more feminist or if you wanna be just scared and say, “Oh. I'm, a woman. That's your choice, not the fault of the country.”

Researcher: Awesome, yes, and that was actually my next question was about the appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia’s first female prime minister. How do you feel about that?

Marwa: Well, I like the idea of her like she's a woman, but I don't think that she was very successful. She was doing a good job, but I don't think she had the good education to make her that person for that position. She wasn't a good person to that position. However, I think that's Bien Mossed. She is a very good example to woman in the government. She was in the Parliament and she was always there to like she was always there against Ennahda. Wherever they said, she spent nights out. She spends all her time doing strikes and manifestations. Unfortunately now, she's in the in jail, but as a woman, I think she represented the Tunisian
woman like she was a very strong woman and she did a great job. Doesn't mean that, um, like I agree with all her point of views, but I think she was a strong woman in the Parliament.

Researcher: Yes, totally. And then the last question. How would you describe the future of woman status in Tunisia and the effects of the Revolution now?

Marwa: Well, I'm, very optimistic very very optimistic. I think there are always things to do and things to improve for woman's rights. And and I think they're doing a good job on that. There are a lot of activities there. There are a good old woman who are like… There are a lot of woman who are doing great jobs there. So, I'm very optimistic, and I believe that Tunisian woman are going to be always the first in our countries too in all fields. So, and maybe we'll see a Tunisian President a Tunisian woman as President. I hope so.

Researcher: That would be so cool. I would love that. Maybe even probably even before the U.S. honestly. We'll see. That'll be very inspiring too.

Marwa: Yeah, because as I mentioned it before Habib Bourguiba he always trusted Tunisian woman. He always said like, “The future in Tunisia is a woman.” So, and I used to work in a bank where 58% of managers are women, and they were always happy with that like they always when I mentioned that. So they were always happy to have woman on top of things.

Researcher: That's so awesome. That's incredibly inspiring.

Marwa: I like the way that they give the, um, the holidays for maternity too in Tunsisia. It's two months then half today working. Well, I hope they will give paternity leaves too. They are only 15 days for now. But yeah, like there are a lot of advantages for women. They still have work to work to do. But for now, they're doing good.

Researcher: That’s awesome. And just bear with me while I have to read this little ending blurb. I just wanna again say thank you. Thank you so much for participating in my research examining the role of women in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and women’s rights. Please do not discuss the study or experience with others outside of the myself and the IRB, which I attatched to the email, otherwise you could be affecting the responses of potential participants.

This study researches how women participated in the 2011 Revolution and how they navigated their various identities and group memberships. It also investigates perspectives on women’s rights. For you participation in the study, you were interviewed online and answered honestly, which I greatly appreciate. So thank you, thank you so much. I also have a little infographic if you wanted to send to your friends too. I would love to interview them, but again, no pressure. It's just a little blurb as well. But, thank you, thank you, thank you again so much. It has been a pleasure talking with you getting to know you. And if you are interested, my final research
project will be posted online, so once I finish that I can definitely send you that link as well. And then just for research purposes as well, your name will be an alias name to protect your identity too.

Marwa: Okay, thank you so much for your time and thank you again for choosing this subject about Tunisia. But, I have a question for you. So, are you interviewing only women or both?

Researcher: I'm interested in mainly focusing on woman. However, if there were men or other people who identify as different genders who wanted to participate, I would love to discuss with them, especially if they are, if they do study the Tunisian Revolution too, so I'm open to at this point interviewing anyone, however, I am specifically focusing on woman.

Marwa: Okay. I would share that with my friends and I will give you all their information.

Researcher: Awesome, thank you thank you.

Marwa: Good luck for your thesis and I’m looking to see your thesis when it’s done.

Researcher: Thank you so much. I will send you that infographic as soon as we end the meeting.

Marwa: Thank you so much.

Researcher: Thank you. Have a good day.


*Interview 2: Rima*

Researcher: Sounds good. Awesome okay.

Rima: Okay. I’m Rima Benmessaoud. I’m Tunisian. I’m born in Tunisia, raised in Tunisia, so I have been through Bourguiba, Ben Ali, the whole Revolution. So, I’m a history and geography teacher in Tunisia I was until 2017 in high school. I have a master's in history, and I was teaching in public school for over 20 years in Tunis. Not Tunis, I mean Nabeul and then Tunis, the capital. So, I was part of the Revolution. I was a witness of the Revolution and whatever you want to know. So, that's it, this is me.

Researcher: Awesome, great. Well, thanks for that little introduction. I also have a couple of background questions as well. It's pretty much split up into just a few different sections specifically like background, then before the Revolution, and during the Revolution, after the
Revolution, and then now, and the future. So, but just a little bit of background on the project too. So, as you saw in the post though, I'm a senior at Scripps College, which is a small liberal arts historically woman's college in Claremont, California, so super super close to Los Angeles. But, I'm very interested in the role of woman in the 2011 Revolution and whether or not gender identity played a role in woman's participation in the Revolution. So, I'm just interviewing as many people as I can to try and come up with an answer to those questions.

Rima: Okay. I can refer you to some friends, but the issue that is the language as long as like you speak French or you use Google translator. I have... I was active yes, but not as active as a lot of women that I know. But, we have the handicap over language for your case, you know, for your case. If you have a translator, I can refer you to a lot of women. You know, so I'll give you whatever I have as information because I can tell you about me as a Tunisian regular woman home how it worked because that solidarity back at the time the woman played a lot. Let’s say you can see them on the front maybe but they're there. You understand?

Researcher: Yes.

Rima: Like that I don't want to spread you. If you give me a questions I’ll try to answer because I talk a lot because I’m a teacher.

Researcher: I love it. I love it. That's what I like honestly. So, just getting started on a little bit more about your background. What is your age and marital status?

Rima: Okay, so I'm 48 years old. I'm born in 1975. So, what is the other word that you use? The second part of the question?

Researcher: Marital status. Married?

Rima: Married now yes. That's my mistake.

Researcher: How long have you been married?

Rima: Since 2018. My husband is not Tunisian by the way. And this is part of the Tunisian Revolution that he's not even Muslim.

Researcher: Whoa.

Rima: But, I'm assuming you know a little bit about Tunisian laws. Women in Tunisia are not women in any other Arab country because we are a little bit different. We are not an Islamic country. We are a civil country, and it's not because of the Revolution. Marrying Tunisian girls,
woman, married to non-Tunisian there are a lot. Even before the Revolution, but there is a clause that to be married in Tunisia he has to be Muslim. If he’s not, you sign the contract out of the country but you are allowed to put it in the civil in Tunis. You can’t sign the contract in Tunisia, but now with... After the Revolution, a law was signed any Tunisian woman can marry non-Muslim and sign the contract in Tunisia. It was not my case, by the way. But it was not planned, but here I am. You know? So, my husband is originally from Romania. Oh nice mixture.

Researcher: I love it! That’s so cool!

Rima: You know, Africa, Europe, and we live in the United States. We live in New York. Voila, what I realize I talk a lot. Here when I moved here a lot of people they don't know anything about Africa by the way. And then when I asked me, “Where are you from?” “Tunisia” “Oh Indonesia” “Not it’s not. It’s Tunisia.” “Where is that?” “Africa” They look at me and I said, and they say, “But you are not black.” I say, “You know what, North Africa we are not black. We are mixture. You can find white. You can find dark skin, name it. But, this is something that I noticed, this a lot in here. They don't know, first, and for them Africa we have to be black or not. Well, I'm African 100%, but we are a little bit of a mixture too. My grandma is Italian. So, but we are mixed. So, that is it. Voila. And I have son, who’s six years old, and he's in first grade. And, uh, yeah. And I’m still, for about me. Yeah, so I have my master's and now, I started my PhD, had stopped it when I moved here when I got pregnant, you know, and now I'm back. Finaly, yes! Yeah, but it's about Europe. It's not about Africa, no. History.

Researcher: History of Europe is specifically what your PhD is in?

Rima: Yes about. Do you speak French a little bit?

Researcher: I do speak French a little bit. I understand a little bit.

Rima: So the people in Paris in 18th century.

Researcher: Oh okay.

Rima: The people. It's the micro history.

Researcher: Interesting, that's so cool. Yes, I know. When I when I told my friends and even some of my family members too that I was studying abroad into Tunisia, they did not know where it was. They were like where is that? What is that? It was so interesting and then as I was sending the pictures of you know, Sidi Bou Said and La Marsa, they were wow’ed and they were like , “We need to, we need to go here.” You know?
Rima: Yeah, a little bit scary for people who doesn't know, it's an Arab country, an African country, Muslim country. This mixture is a little bit scary for people who doesn't really know. And even I don't know what the media... maybe you will tell me what the media were saying about our Revolution. Oh, I'm a historian. I don't call it a revolution anymore. Sorry, we'll get there one day, but no, no, something was wrong somewhere. I don't know what is that. Let me be... how to call that? Deviation. You were in a way. And then boom, we found ourselves somewhere in the space. We are spread all over. So we'll get there. I'm assuming I don't know what is. Can I ask you a question? What is the exact subject that you're working? I'm so happy that it's an outsider is interested about our tiny country. You know, I'm assuming that that Revolution because it's spread all over does not mean that it’s not Tunisian anymore. It's something else bigger than that. Maybe you're looking for the beginning for I don't know what you are exactly working on, what is the exact subject. The I'm assuming, you're in some way that mean you're focusing on specific things, right?

Researcher: Yeah. So, my majors are politics, so political science as well as sociology. So, with that I'm focusing on people's and specifically women's perspectives on the political climate during that time of 2011 when all of the protests were happening and there were demonstrations and just complete change of the political region, but also from a social side as well looking at the specific group of woman in society who contributed. Some didn't contribute why they didn't contribute, kind of picking their brain about that aspect regarding their gender identity as a woman.

Rima: I can help you from my side. But, yeah.

Researcher: Awesome. And then the next background question is what would you say as your social class?

Rima: Medium.

Researcher: Got it. Okay, yeah, middle class. Cool.

Rima: I'm talking about the class of my family. My background we are medium. That's mean we're not very high level. I'm raised in a village. Do you know Nabeul? Hammamet?


Rima: That does mean that knows of Nabeul. We call it the nose. Nabeul. I'm from Menzil Tamim. You ever been to Kelibia?

Researcher: No.

Researcher: I’m sorry. It was very limited travel in Tunisia.

Rima: Before you go, I went to the Bahamas, and I was expecting myself to be wow’ed. But I thought, “What is this?” Our beaches are nicer than that. Stop it. You know. Okay, so I’m raised in a village. I did all my school already in the village. But village, it's a village. My father is French teacher. My mom is a couturiere, how do you call it? She's making sweaters and things. That does mean we are really medium class. Not poor, but not high level either. I’m not raised in the city.

Researcher: Got it. I understand. Yes. How would you describe your political leanings and your religious leanings?

Rima: I’m born Muslim. I’m still Muslim. I’m not practical, that means I don't practice prayers, but I’m Muslim, and I was raised in a Muslim family. I’m a believer. I believe in God. I’m Muslim. That's it. This is my religion. And what was the other part?

Researcher: Political leanings.

Rima: Okay, so until the Revolution, I’m at zero politics. Two subjects that I don’t touch ever as a teacher. We don't talk politics by the way until it's… I didn't see it as a restriction, but after the Revolution, they keep saying that it's despotic it's I don't know what. For me, for example, I don't know what are the information. I'm telling you my opinion. So for Bourguiba, you know, you heard about Bourguiba. When he was moved, I was young. I was still in elementary school. So, I don't remember much. The only thing I remember that he used to stop by my village because one of the old people that they are in from my village, he was part of that they called la colonisation of Tunisia. And Bourguiba every year, he stopped to say hello to that guy. And I remember when we are small in elementary school, they take us kind of to say hello to wave This is what I remember. Nothing else. I remember my grandma when they destitute Bourguiba, destitute him, she was crying until she passed away in 2000. She was crying Bourguiba like it's, her father who passed away. Every single day she remember why she never seen him. While back at the time, I'm talking about eighties, nineties, we don't have TV'S. That’s mean we have a TV. We have Tunisian channels, only one that's open from 5 pm I think until 9 pm something like that, cartoon for one hour or two. There are the news and goodbye. That’s it. That's mean we don't have access to the information. We don't know what is going on outside of that. You know? And then, it was the second level. I was still young. I can't tell you much about that. The only politics thing that I remember was nineties. It’s just the period of time of the Gulf War a little bit. I remember back at the time, I'm at high school. I was maybe 15 years old something like that. We are not in
politics, zero. I'm not talking but maybe the teachers. I have no idea, but I'm talking about myself. And I remember back at the time that it was the first boussay of Islamists that came. I remember a lot of my classmates, they start putting the veil while we never had that available. Nothing, nada, zero. I don't remember it. Even my mom, she never wear veil. Even my grandma. That thing, never. They cover their head, yes, but not that way that you know now that you see it now. And it didn't take long it takes maybe a couple of months, and then they disappear. I heard later because still we don't have access to the information or Internet, nothing. You know, even the news you hear only the good things “Oh the President did that.” And I'm not open. I don't remember back at the time there is any association, for example, in my village. I don't remember that. Maybe it existed. I don't remember it. You know? And then even when I was a student, does mean, I moved to the city. I moved to Tunis because we don't have college in Nabeul in the whole area. So, I have to go, and I'm a historian, and I went to, I don't know if you know about that, but we have two big colleges in Tunis, which is Manouba and … I don’t know how to translate that. I'm sorry, they are only two. So, I'm in the further one, and later on, I was never politics for four years in college and never ever ever ever get involved with any politics. Zero. I was not scared. I don't even know about it's not a decision coming from my person that I decided not to. It's nobody teached me about that. Nobody talked to me about politics. Nothing. While I'm historian, I still say I’m a historian means I'm in the field, but it's we touch the polices. It's supposed to be, but no and then later on it looks like there is a big UGTT students. It's not like here the word is that I have to be in college. This is the first issue that I had in U.S, when I said college into college. In Tunisia, the college it's, the middle school. University is a college. So, it takes me a while. So, when I say students, I'm not talking I'm talking about les etudiants means in college. It looks like there is a big kind of students association on that, and they are involved with politics. I swear I never heard about until the Revolution. I never ever heard about it while I was in the university. But, I was kind of that student that I don't have let's say it clear, I don’t have the luxury because I have the welfare of the state that mean the government gave me some money for my status and in Tunisia until now the universities for free. For everybody, universities are for free, free, free. You know? Now, since maybe 10 years, they open the new, owners their owners that you have to pay, but still let me see… they're not allowed to be private, zero. And everything is free. Even the, for me, for example, I was lucky enough, we have kind of buildings for students to live in there, and it's special for girls. I never for four years. I spent four years. Does mean it's a special building where the student girls live together. I never heard about politics for four years. Now, you're… Now, I realize that I really never heard about politics. Now maybe now with… I back up a little bit maybe we are scared. I never heard about. Not I'm not involved because I didn't want to. But when I went to Tunis for studying. I have one goal, one. I have to finish the four years in four years. I can't allow myself to fail because if I fail, I will lose the where I sleep where I live for free. Not for free, it was for 60 dinars, which is let’s say $1 or 2 per month and the offer has food too for 10 cents. And I got two books from the government 40 dinars, which it's enough back at that time. Now, prices change a little bit, but still very affordable. You know? So even in le foyer universitaire, does mean we are I think 1000 girl
together. It's, not one or two. Hundreds. I never ever ever for four years. I'm trying to remember, never talk politics. Never did politics. I never heard about associations. Maybe because I'm close to my own self, and I have to focus on my studies because I don't allow myself to fail. But still even the echoes you can hear something sometimes even in the restaurant because we eat altogether. Imagine hundreds of girls together. No, I don't remember. Really, I don't remember. And we are a mixture. That’s mean, it's not only my university. We are a big mixture of girls. That’s mean you have the arts. You have the, I think we have some from a section medicin. Yeah, we are a big mixture of girls together. Different levels. Maybe because the rich people, they will never go to sleep with us. You know they will rent they can't afford to rent. I'm talking about our level. So, until then I never heard about anything. I'm sorry. I didn't. I don't know. I don't remember myself. I don't remember that we talked politics home or even with my neighbors or with my friends. That we are almost, we are in the same level, in the same. You know, I don't remember really. Zero. The only thing that we remember that my village played a big role for de colonizaion tunisie. In the fifty's a lot of people from village were dead. The French colonizer. They kill them. You know that is the thing, but anything else? Zero. Personally, I don't remember. I was not active. Not even passive by the way because I don't even think while I become a grown up. So, and then I finished my studies in ‘97. And then everybody will tell you, but because now even if you tell me it's despotism, it’s name it, you call it. I do remember really I was with Ben Ali from the beginning until the end. Ben Ali I'm not with him first. That’s mean under the region. I don't remember one day being bothered, for example, by a policeman. Never ever even they stopped me for to check papers or something. Nobody nobody asked me, for example, to give him tips or to give him… name it. Even, you know, when I hear after that what's going on, I said, “Okay, I'm living in another country or another world.” I don't remember. Back at the time, they said… they said that, for example, like me, I got my my la maîtrise. I finish my studies and to get the job, you have even to have somebody that you know that will help you because I was teaching in public school. Public school is not as easy as private school. You know? They said later on that even you have somebody that you know that is highly placed and they can help you to get the job or you have to pay money. For my case, it was neither this neither that. I finished my studies in June of ‘97. By the end of August, I received a letter. Je suis affecte. Does mean they choose me. Back at my time, we don't even get through. You don't need the certification. We go by... Does mean they check we deposit our… The university deposit our graduation to the… cause my grade is a teacher. I can't be something else. I'm a teacher, history teacher, you know? So, and that was affected not because when they send you to a school, you don't choose. They choose for you. They give you the la gouvernal. How do you know? Does mean la gouvernal? Does mean whole Tunisia is spread to 24 sections let's say. Not states here like United States, but it's a smaller version. You know? Like I don't know like New York, we say North Brooklyn. You have the city, you have kind of this. So, they and you don't know where you are affected when they send you to teach. You can be on the mountain. You can be in the desert. You know? And they keep saying later on, I hear that if you don't know somebody that it's in the Minister of the Education, they can send you, I don't know,
to the mountain, for example, to teach. And you can’t say no, because if you refuse, they will never call you again. You'll be completely out. You'll be erased from the register. Hello, mama. Oh. We have a guest. Hello!

Researcher: Hi!

Rima: By the way, he refused to speak Tunisian.

Researcher: Oh.


*To son: I don't know. And you can’t stay with me asking me those questions that I don't have answers for them. I'm a good mom.*

*To son: May I ask that? I’m sure Tata have it. Tata is how to say “daddy” in Romanian. This is the only word that he speaks in Romanian, not English. Nothing else. Back at my story. So, I received.. just to let you know that I don't know. I was shocked when they said that it's despotic thing, politics thing. So, I was they choose me not me only. Does mean, I'm talking about myself, and I was affected to work in my governeral. Does mean Nabeul. And I know a lot of friends. A lot of people that I know that I spent years and years away, not away from the country, but to go to teach in really, not bad areas, but very difficult areas. For example, there's no electricity. There is no water. There is no transportation. There is no… you know? Some kind of it's a nightmare for them. I didn't get through that. Well, I don't know anybody, and I didn't pay one cent for anybody to give me the position. I'm talking about myself. Then, the only thing that I can tell you that I remember, there is a guy that for years he was with us in the school. I moved from for one school to maybe five schools high schools. I moved, I moved the last one was in Tunis. That is another story. This is another story. It's coming. So, I remember there's a guy. I thought for years that he is a colleague, that he's teaching with us. I guess who was he? He was one of the ministre de l’interieur. Yep, Ministry of the Interior. But I don't know how if… So does mean his job is we have in Tunisia two things that we don't know: la B loi, B number three, which says if you applied for, if you have a fractions, if you have a money to pay, if you did anything, it shows in there. Okay? Back at the time, there's, another one. We call it B2. It's stop secret. We are not even allowed to apply for and to see what is in there. That guy is.. his job, he's a police man. He's never in uniform. He's with us. He will hear even the words that you say and take notes and send them. So, by the way, he's a very good friend. I like that person. He passed away, by the way, but he's a very good person, but it looks like the worst because it looks like there are some of them that they don't like you, for example, they can write whatever whatever, and you'll find yourself in jail. Never happened to me, by the way. Yeah, because he's a reporter. For example, he can say that you have politics things, that you have… I don't know that maybe I'm saying maybe that's what I
heard later what can happen. And they told me about examples of colleagues that they were
fired. They were in jail because of those reports. You know? I remember because we had as we
have a very strong union. We, the teachers the strongest one in the whole country. We are able to
stop the whole economy in one day. You know? Yes, when the boss of our union says tomorrow
no school for the whole country means no school for the whole country. Name it. Call it. You
know? They're very strong, the strongest one. Does mean you have unions for all the sections or
that the teacher’s one is the strongest one because first we are a lot. The number is huge. Second,
imagine how many kids involved? How many families involved? So, does mean if we stop one
day, the whole economy will stop. The whole parents have to take off from work to take care of
the kids. Imagine. So, it's a mess. So, I remember we, but as teachers, we support the big things
that happen in the world, especially in the Arab countries. For example, when it's something
happening in Palestine, we stop. We do kind of… how to call it? There's a… we call it… Does
mean we don't work, but because we are solely there, we want our voice to be heard, you know?
It's not for our situation as teachers, for example, something for money, but it's we are supporting
something happening. I remember happens in 2008 about Palestine, a lot of times by the way,
not only one time. So many times I remember it happened the biggest one that I assisted to and
kind of here they are strong in a way that you are forced, they force you, even if you don't agree,
you are forced to be part of it. And if you don't, then you'll be kind of put on the side. For
example, I remember. I remember that. It was in 2000 I don't remember exactly which 2009? We
had Tunisia was selected to be the city of culture of the whole Mediterranean. And but I don't
know if you know or not, we have the one of the oldest Jewish community of the world. And it
happened back at that time I think the Minister of Culture in Israel is Tunisian. Okay. It
happened that at the same moment. I think that he's coming visiting his family or something, and
they make it a big deal. Kind of a he's not kind of, not not allowed, but they call it if you allow
him as for his title, not because he's Jewish, no, for his title as a Minister in Israel, kind of we are
not supporting the Palestinian story anymore. And which became kind of a shame. So, I
remember that time we are kind of splitting too because as a Tunisian is allowed to come to
Tunisia and other side, no, we don't take him as a Tunisian. We take him as a minister in Israel,
which is so, but I remember in those big days, we don't have only one policeman around us
where that it's a we call it hidden. How to call it? There's a specific word. Does mean we have a
lot of police with us that they don't show you don't know that their police anymore. They don't
know that their police, but they are inside of our meetings, and they are taking notes of whoever
says whatever you know? So that I remember it. It never happened anything to me, but it looks
like it happened to a lot of people that they went to jail just for their whatever they say even in
the classroom because those people that I'm telling you about they're not only in the teacher
room. They don't get to your classroom, but when you are teaching, you don't know who is
outside listening to you. You understand what I mean? So, my case I didn't see anything coming.
Nada. Zero. This is until let's say the Revolution. 100% security. I don't remember. I was
traveling. I have my own car. I live in Tunis. And let's say popular area. Does mean not a fancy
area. I never had any issue with anybody. I never had any problem with anybody. Wherever I go,
for example, to have my passport done or my ID done. For me, nothing happened to my person. While I was in let's say in a very, not critical, as the teacher is always…. It’s not a critical. How to call? Does mean it's sensitive position. You know? You can… the influence that you have on your students is a huge. That’s why they have double eyes on us. But, me, the only thing that I remember. The two subjects during 20 years I never ever ever talk about politics and religion. Why I took that decision? I don't know. I was not scared, by the way. No, it's not that I'm scared that somebody will report me. I don't remember that, no. It’s a decision. Does mean two subjects that I don't want fights with anybody. And most of the time because I was and working and studying too, does mean you don't have that time to hang out with teachers. You understand? And to sit and talk and discuss. I work. I finish my hours, and I run to do something else, which is related to studies and things. You know? Does mean that's it. That's it. They, I stopped at the last end of the Revolution. Now I'm gonna stop. I stopped at the last end. You know? So, and then I remember the day of the Revolution. I remember that day. So, it happens that I still I'm telling you that we don't have access to the information. Does mean the news you don't see anything on the news, you know, besides the President did this, the President did that. Everything is positive. You don't see anything negative. And then I remember that ends that 2010/11. Was it 11 girl?


Rima: Yes, I remember I was working in Tunis. And I have a friend she's a neighbor, she's was my teacher before. She’s French teacher. And we heard in the news that somebody burned himself, put fire on himself, but we took it just flat. Does mean, nothing else. Me, personally, I didn't see things coming. Zero, zero. Absolute zero. I never tried to check politics or even we have access to Internet back at the time already we have Internet. I don't remember myself going to check anything. Maybe it's me as a person. I don't know. And then I remember that day. It was the middle of the week. I finish school at 12 I think. And me and that teacher, French teacher and her daughter that she's student in psychology in Tunis. We went outside. Now, before that couple of songs that we got through Internet for those rap men, things that they're talking about politics. I remember that we are in her house this teacher, and I put the song, and she said, “You have to cut off that now.” I said, “What? We are listening to a song, and you are dancing like crazy.” You know, I remember that night. She said, “You don't know. You never been there.” Because she was part of what was happening in Tunisia. It looks like in '82. I didn't see it. She's from Tunis. Does mean she knows. I remember what she was telling us that you don't know what does need a tank in the middle of the road. And the Army in the middle of the road. And you can’t do anything. You’re stuck. As long as you've never been there. And you don't know that you have to cut off with that music. Now! I remember that happened a couple of days in a row, and then we went to have a coffee in the cafe. Because in Tunisia we are open. Still, I'm telling you, we, Tunisian, we're open. I mean women can go out to hang out in cafes by themselves without a man to take care of them. This, you don't find it anywhere else until, back at that time, you
know? Maybe now, yes, but back at that time, you don't see that in other Arab countries. But, you have to know that Lebanon, for example, is Arab country but they are not Muslim so they are a little bit different. You know? So, we went to café. It was maybe 6/7 pm. And then we just get there. We didn't even order, and they told us to leave because something is happening. Okay? So, I didn't even have time to go back to my house. We spend the night in there, and we are listening to the news, and they said that the airport is closed. The first thing that we did that we leave from Tunis early in the morning, and I went back home. And that's it and you're the only thing that we are doing. We are on the news. Like this, holding our phones, holding our the TV's on, and it starts the nightmare. It's was a real nightmare. The only news that you hear is there are people who are killing people. We don't see, we hear. So, everybody kind of get reasons here of his house. We are scared. And I remember, I have even a neighbor. We are raised together. Does mean not a regular neighbor. Our neighborhood because it's a small village. We are raised together. Does mean they're considered as family. He's part of the police. And I saw him the following day. I said, “What are you doing here?” He said, “I gave up my arm. And I gave up my job. I will never do that. Until everything is set, I have a family to protect.” So, the first people who give up on us is the police. They gave their arms back, and they went home. So, we spent maybe I'm telling you maybe almost a year without police. So, because the first reaction was against the police because I keep saying, “I'm reporting what I heard because I was stuck home.” We don't go anywhere. Everything was shut down for I think a month. No schools, nothing. Nada. Zero. We don't go anywhere. Even the transportation from village to village is cut. Nothing. They kind of, and they said that there is whatever you saw on Internet what was recorded. I was not a witness. I saw it like you see it now through the TV, and Tunisian TV is not showing anything. Everything was passing to us from Algeria or La Arabia, which are not local. You know? They locals, they are just… So, I remember that was scary. Scary period of time. We don't know what's going on, and then we start talking politics. That was the first time in my life I heard that besides the party. The party politics that we know. You know party politique? Does mean the one that is the politique party. I heard that there are more than one. I never heard about them. I promise you. And back at the time, I was in my thirties. I was not more. It was 2000. Oh, 35 years old, by the way, or more. Does mean I was not young. I think that I have more experience, but I never heard about those. Oh, I remember that before the Revolution that found two or three magazines and newspapers that if you buy them, the seller, which is selling magazines and newspapers he write down your name. But, I don't remember anything else related to politics. So, and then we start talking politics. And then, the solidarity here I don't know if you heard about that was the big solidarity between us. Does mean whoever doesn't have food, it was kind of a similar war. Does mean because there's no police. So, all the men of the cities of the villages, they are trying to protect. They don't sleep at night. They're trying to protect their houses and their village and their areas. They got whoever get whatever you know, or whatever you have a broom or someone have a broom. Someone have a small… for whatever they have to protect us. And women behind, we are cooking. And giving food to them. Me, I'm in the village with my mom and… but my brother who's in the city, in Tunis. It was the same
everywhere. In the city, everybody the men, they're protecting that side, the buildings. And then we started talking, they start talking politics. I remember, and I get involved. How? I don't know? I find myself kind of it's an avalanche. Even if it's not a choice, I promise you every single body becomes a politician. Everybody. Whoever has school, whoever doesn't have school, whoever heard about policies before, whoever never heard. Everybody is talking politics. In his way, whatever his level is. You know? And I remember back at that time, a lot of associations shows up. A lot. The number was huge, huge. The first association that I get in. Uh, because we don't have a local, it was in my mom's house. By the way, the local was my house. It's mostly solidarity. Does mean need to have the.. because then really, it's I'm telling you from my position, the end of something was covered. We don't know under the cover what is in there. When it was uncovered, we realized me personally, I realize that a lot of people are living having very hard life. A lot of regions in Tunis… Back at that time, I don't know that there are people that don't have electricity, even my brain doesn't got it. And do we realize that it's a mess. Socially, let’s talk social. It's a mess. A lot of poor people that you never heard about. But we realized that.. Does mean the number of poor, let's say in my brain is 10%. I realize that it's 70% and it's kind of a shock for everybody. Not only for me, for a lot of people because it's the lack of information. So, I remember that first one it was, and again we don't have that segregation, men/women. I'm also not the leader, but I was an active part. And you don't have that issue even my mom that she is very practical, does mean very Muslim. She opened her house to strangers. They are men, normal. So, our meetings, but the goal of our association was to help the kids at school. We provide them school supplies let's say. So, we collect the money, we buy. That in the beginning for let's say six months, we worked on that the next summer that school year starting from let's say June/July, and then we went back to school by the way. It was February. We went back to school, normal and everybody's talking politics We went, and I forgot to tell you back at the time, the school that where I was working. For sure you heard about because it was the central of the Islamists. It was one of the poorest quartier in the whole Tunisia. I don't know if you ever heard about Douar Hicher. That's where the Islamists spread their politics stuff and got it. I was there. I was a woman, a teacher in an area that we didn't see anything coming, by the way. Nothing until they start talking politics. They start talking party politique back at the time. They start, but we didn't hear about the Islamists yet. Those nice people? They're working under the ground. We didn't see it coming. Personally, I didn't see it coming because I believe they teach us they, they raise us like we are… Does mean we don’t mix. We are a civil country. They're not Islamic country. So, I don't see it coming. I never heard about those people that they were out of the country that I came back after that Revolution coming back with their background and that were… they run away from the country because they're persecuted. I never heard about them before the Revolution. Nada. Zero. So, I had that association that we created. It was not my idea, by the way. I'm telling you it was not coming from me. It was people that I know. I told you it's in our village, I'm talking about my village, and then, my teacher one of my old teacher. She's not old, by the way she's my Arab teacher, and she was involved in politics, but I didn't know about that. And then she created an association citoyennete. How do you say
Citoyennete in English? Citizenship? Yes, so I was part of it that one. We were not too many people. Citoyennete. Does means she tried to teach us as a citizen, what we are supposed to do, how we are supposed to educate. Does mean to help let's say. It was still in my village. And then I get involved in politics because I told you it's an avalanche. It’s not a choice anymore. You'd find yourself with everybody. You understand? I don't know if I explain it. Well to you the associations, I choose them. I choose to be part of it. So, but politics it's an avalanche, and you have to set up yourself. You have to be to have a position. You have to, you can. Everybody have a position. You understand? Does mean it's kind of you find yourself going, and then I remember, I talked to people that I trust, and I become a part of a party politique. Part means I was not really active. I got the membership. I went to two or three meetings.

Researcher: Wait, what is this organization called? Sorry.

Rima: Wait a second. Let me remember the name because I become too many by a sudden from zero. We end up having hundreds. No, it's still alive. By the way, whenever I remember the name, I message you. It's Democratic. Until then the Islamists, I don't have them in my brain. I never ever ever thought. And that was the big slap in my face, but they made it. I don't know. I still don't believe. I still don't believe that. Okay, so and then they were… I was still a teacher, and I realized some changes because back at that time too a lot of Facebook pages shows up. As let's say, me I'm from Menzel Tamim. It’s the name of my village. It’s always young of this. And I was part of all of them. It's on Facebook, and I was shocked to remember I unliked the page after one week or two. I was expecting my brain was telling me because I still believe that we are a civil country. We are very open. We are very open to Europe. We are very open to human rights. We are very open country. You know? I believed in that. And then I see the discussion ending up. God. What is God doing here? Really, I'm not kidding I'm very Muslim means a big believer it's not kind of half/half or I have ducks or no, no. Those students there my students, five years ago, they were in my classroom, and I know them. You know? That is the big slap in the face that you believe that you know those people and they are in their twenties. What the heck? What are they talking about? And here, we're not talking religion only. The women was pointed. Oh, they realize that the woman is over. She's not protecting her bok, let’s say. I'm saying bad words that she's very free more free than she's supposed to be? Kind of those things that you said, “Okay, we didn't do this for that.” This Revolution is supposed to be to change for better things. Not to back up. And the backing up started and here, now. I'm telling you this is the job of the Islamists. They catch those. They spread those ideas, and the young kids, back at the time, I mean, whoever they’re in their twenties that they are going to be the big force of politics. They're not in politics. They’re debating the woman position in the society, applying and saying that men, they don't have jobs because the women take their job, kind of those discussions. And we never stopped it until today. We got stuck in there. You know? So, I can’t give you numbers on how many young girls are involved in politics, but I remember in my side, and then when I went to Tunis, I end up with another association still for citizenship. And I still, we cut off it. We
made it maybe for one year. It was very interesting and strict. Does mean I learned a lot from them because they're from the city. Does mean another point of view. That one was 90% women. The reverse of the one that I have in my village. I was, I think the only woman in there. The one that I have in my house almost the only woman. A lot of young girls, a lot and they did a very young nice job until we got the big slap of the Islamists that they win the elections. That’s a real nightmare. Me, personally, I gave up after that straight. So, and then when they were a planning the to vote. How to say it? The elections? A lot of women was involved. Our job was to be part of the vote sections. And in the beginning, it was for free. And a lot, a lot, a lot of women, get involved included, me. And that was one of the best days of my entire life. Does mean, I was really active in politics. Does mean while I'm not. But, still when I made it, it's for free, but then they end up, they pay us, but in the beginning, nobody say that we are, they we get to training. How to be confidential to confidentiality whatever. So, I'm telling you whatever they said later that I and then they changed the votes or something. I’m telling you from my side. Maybe in a higher level, yes. In the basics, does mean in the villages and then the centers of vote. Never. Zero. And that day the Islamists won and the liberal party they got zero point zero zero I don’t know what. And it really it was a slap from my… I still believe on them. By the way, I said, “Okay. I said democracy is democracy. Whoever win, good luck!” You know? And then they won. Me, I'm saying clear and you record it, I put you my name in there. I hate I hate… I hate to use the word hate. If there is a stronger one, teach me that word. No, the Islamists as a party politique. Are the social effects that happened in that year? I told you I'm teaching in very very poor the poorest quartier in the whole Tunisia. Let's say Tunis have three millions, two millions in that quartier where I teach. Okay? By a sudden 2011 does mean the school year ended in June. When I went back in September, I don't recognize my kids. All my kids becomes imam. All my girls become wearing niqab. I don’t recognize them. All of them they're talking, “Allah, religion, woman, man.” Anything else is not. Nothing about real politics. Everything was put on the side. And you have those. To make it shorter for you, I lost five teenagers that they were sent to Syria. And they, they never came back.

Researcher: Oh my gosh.

Rima: Now, tell me if I have to love them or I'm not. I hated them like hell. Girls that were sent to Syria. How? I don't know because they are 15/16 years old and by law, they are not even allowed to have a passport. And I tried my best. I don't know if I saved any. I don't remember. I'm a history teacher, and for my luck the program for the first grade is not the first grade that means first grade in high school, which is let's say 10th grade here, 11th grade it's Islamic history. I don't remember when I was saying because part of the Islamic history is based on the Quran because this is the source. When I start… I have that from the beginning like I'm saying about the Bible, but I said from the beginning, “Look, this we are going to use it not as a religion, but as history, a resource” because we don't have resources for back at the time, and I have to stop my lesson because I have that my classroom 40 kids, by the way. 40 per class. So, it was a
social destruction. This is the first slap that I got. And I remember. We were almost dead. I remember because they're still young and still love me. They told me, “I love you.” I remembered the discussion that I got with the ones that they’re blind. They don’t hear you. They don’t hear you. And if they tell you, I remember his name. His name is Jihed, by the way. He’s one of the ones he died in Syria. I heard later. And I'm saying and if they told you… you said that you like me and you respect me and you love me as your mom and if they tell you to put a bomb that's cool and I die. Oh, they have an answer for anything. Believe it or not. Oh, but you would be lucky. How comes I will be lucky when I'm dead? Oh, because God will choose you. He choose you to die, and then you don't go to hell. You'll go to Heaven. Okay, what about your mom if they tell you to put a bomb in your house. Oh, that would be good for my mom and my dad they'll go straight to Heaven. Imagine you have to deal with that daily. Every single day for over a year. And you are a woman. And I refused to put the veil. This is me. And to show you how those kids are in between when there is an imam, and they know that the Islamists are coming from the mosque straight to the school. They notify us. I remember three or four times. They saved my life. They escort me to my car and from my car to take me out from the city from the whole quartier. Otherwise, I would be dead. Long time ago. Not only me as a person. A lot of teachers too. They saved us, but in the meantime, you go everyday to work. I'm talking about myself. You don't know if you are going back home or not. And no police, by the way. Zero. No police. You don’t call because nobody’s there to protect you. Protect yourself. Do it. So, I believe that whatever happened in the middle of everything and without police, we made it work. You know? We really made it work, and then the second slap that I had. I told you from the beginning, for over a year, I was very active in my that I consider my association that I created home. The name is Amel. We call it Amel means “hope” for better word for those students that I can't afford. And we were maybe 10 people. Ten, and I know all of them, by the way. Some of them are my closest people that I know since ever. Some of them were in college together, but all of them are from my village. I realized after one year or more that I was working so hard. I do it with my heart that each one of them when you was giving the things for the kids as help, they were part of parties politique that they never said about. And they were the advertising for the politic parties covered with my association. Do you understand what I mean? Does mean when we started it was clear none of us is allowed when we give those because you go to schools, and the director of the school give us the list of the students that are in need. When you go to give them, you give to the director and you make a U-turn, and you go back home. You don't give to the kids one by one. That was what we set it up. We realized me and one of them that is both of us we give up. You know? We close it. We realize that others when they go to the school, they make a meeting and they advertise for their party politique, and they will say that those gifts are coming from the party politique. You know? So, my association was only one year old, and we close it. Definitive ma'am. I continue to have on my own as a person. Not as an association. And then the one in Tunis that I told you we did a great job for over a year. I'm still in touch with everybody, but all of us, we gave up when the Islamists. The power was huge, not their power not their political power. Their social power. Remember when I told you in the beginning that
something was covered. I thought that let's say 10% are poor. I realize that they're 70 or 80. Their work they did the hard job with those poor people. Those poor people that I have hope only in God. You understand what I mean? I feel like maybe you understand, maybe not because we are in from another culture. You know? So, it's not easy for you to understand meanings of things because they're completely different. Does mean when you don't have hope anything, only hope is on God, right? So, they go to those people and they offer them God. They offer them Heaven.

Researcher: This is the… the Islamists offer them Heaven?

Rima: Yeah, but when they go, and they have the biggest power walls. They have the mosques. Not under control. I'm not saying that they took them, but the imam that he sees hundreds imagine, how many mosques?

Researcher: A lot.

Rima: Imagine how many Fridays on the week and in the month and the year. And imagine all of them are talking about the war. They get to a level, by the way that they said if you choose no Islamist party politique, you'd be going straight to Hell. And they were not controlled because they were not police for over two years. Conclusion is from democratic Revolution, peaceful Revolution, we end up something that doesn't have any doesn't make any sense. We back up. We start talking about women. Whenever you open your mouth… women. And you talk to. You know? So that's, this is my experience. And again, I shut down as a person even before I moved to us. I moved in 2017, by the way. I shut down again. Since the first time that I went that big first election that we did, I refused to go to elections anymore. I didn't participate. Zero. I cut off with all what they call it politics because it becomes a mess. It becomes something dirty. I call it dirty. Pure dirt. I prefer to focus on social to work on my even that was the second slap. I can't tell you from my position now I don't believe, I don't believe that's the whole association that you worked on about all you heard about that none of them is free of politics. None of them. No. A lot of them. That's why I give up on associations too because a lot…. I'm, not going to say 100% I'm, not going to be as bad as that, but I'm telling you a maybe. I believe more than 90%, they were the undercover for some party politique. You understand what I mean? Does mean it's announced that it's not a politics association because as a politics party you can have your associated that is fair, right? But no, they play dirty. And they create associations, right and left. I don't know your statistics what about your I'm asking you now. What are your statistics about the associations? Do you have any idea about the number? I feel like it's an explosion. It's another avalanche about the number. I don't know the number, but I'm sure that they become like mushrooms like the party politique like the associations. Does mean a lot, a lot, a lot. I don't know. Do you have statistics about the number or something or not really?
Researcher: I haven't specifically looked into that. I am really interested in it though. I mean, definitely the numbers, but also certain experiences of woman. So, it was very empowering and interesting to hear your story about your association too and your home village as well. But regarding specific number, I don't have… I haven't looked into that as much.

Rima: I'm telling you. They're a lot. Thousands and thousands and thousands and whoever you ask they will tell you, “Oh, it's, not politics association.” Like exactly like the party politique. There's thousands. I remember the party politique that I was associated to… I'll find the name. I'll find the exact title, and then I'll send it to you. But, it was in his beginnings. And I get to that one specially that one because the husband knows my auntie that I consider as… My father was part of it. And I went by trust. Does mean the big idea, the big lines. I didn't get through details. I told you I was for two or three meetings. And then that one spread minimum 10 parties each one of the leaders end up having his own a party politique. But the Islamists on the other side, they never split. Never while they have a lot of divisions inside of them, a lot between the extreme ones, between the medium one, between the light ones they never ever ever ever spread. There's still one party one. Clear. The other ones, I told you they become like… And this is the power of the Islamists too. I'm saying their name. It’s not an insult, by the way. It's not, does mean it's not, I'm not trying to degrade them. No. Ennahda. They're the Islamist party. Does mean I'm not trying giving them names. That is them. It’s not the name that I'm giving them. I'm not saying that they took, they have to take advantage. I'm sorry because the Democrats and the gauche does mean social party politique. They continue, for example, me and you we are on the same party, and we are fighting for the same thing, but the minimum of we don't agree about each one of us will create his own stuff. You understand? And it happened and it's still happening. That's why the politics today in Tunisia it’s that way that you see it right now. But it will never work that way. It can't, doesn't work and people now like me a lot of people. They don't trust politics anymore. Zero. Even this, the husband of my auntie. I love her a lot. I respect a lot. I trust him more than you can ever imagine. He's not his party. Does mean he become member of the Parliament. I didn't want to vote for him, not for anybody. No, I'm not wasting my time anymore. And it looks like the last elections that are doing elections. I don't know for what. The number of people that they attend oh no it's not even 1%. Everybody up on politics. No, it looks like me I gave up long time ago. Maybe let’s say I'm. I was saying 2013 I gave up completely. I don't want even it in 2013. I erased all the Facebook page is related to politics related to associations related to anything. You can name it. I erased the TV from my house. I don't have TV anymore. I don't want to see. I don't want to hear. I cut off with that thing. While I told you the first year was real hope, big hope. I still have women and friends that are still fighting. I give up maybe it's not good to say that, maybe I should not give up. You understand? I don't feel like look at me I give up no, I'm not proud of myself to give up. But, I don't want to be a follower either. I don't want to do things that. I told you they took advantage of me, and I hated that. Those are people that I know I respected so much, and I don't hate them, but I don't respect them anymore. And I lost a big, let's say, a nice part of my life because those people have very good memories with them as
a colleague, as a friend, you know, kind of that… they I don't know. So, I don't want to have that experience. Okay, no, no, well, it's a mess because whatever is happening in politics affects the social. People they don't trust since not today. No, I'm not saying today since a while, they don't trust the political people. And especially those faces that we know. They're still there. You understand? Does mean, the same faces are still there. They didn't give up, not give up at least show that you have young behind you. But, you have young people that can't take it after you know they're still hanging on the kursium, we call it on the of course, on the chair. They're hanging on the chair and they don't care about whatever is happening in the country. You know? So, you put me back to… You send me back to you to memory. Some of them are very good memories very nice memories. Some of them are kind of a nightmare that I feel it as a nightmare. You know? A lot of bad things happened girl. But still, the woman is still there. You know? I have some pictures. I don't know if I can find them for… I have some pictures. I don't mind for you to use them because they're not really. I have pictures with this party politique that I was telling you about or one of the meetings that you can see or check the number of women in there if you want. I remember, we participate for that first year to a lot of manifestations. Does mean we go on the street. Women are in the first line. You know? I don't know how I can help you. If you have specific questions. I don't know if I said if you got something from me, you know? I hope that I answered some of your questions. The only thing that I'm sure about that thousands and thousands of associations. Some of them are pure fake. Does mean there's nothing behind, just the cover for some party politique because they need to be undercover. I don't know how many are left. How many are the only one that I know that my teacher, she still has her association for a citizenship in my village. I don't know how active she is if you have specific questions you can send them to me, and I ask her. I'm sure about… Now the new thing. It's a new association that was created in my village for singing. It's a young lady, young girl. She graduated maybe five years ago from as a singer, as music teacher, and she decided to engage the retired mostly the retired ladies to be singer, and they just made their first show last week as singers which is still I'm telling you. We are a small village. After those Islamists, everything becomes kind of haram. Haram is forbidden by religion. Singing is one of them. You understand? And now you'lls ee in that group woman with veil. Oh, another thing that happened too. A lot of associated related to Quran to teach… You know Quran right?

Researcher: The Quran? Yeah.

Rima: A lot of associations. A lot, even now there’s still those ones, they never gave up. They're a lot of associations to teach Quran to woman. Because here there's another why I'm saying that. So, in our culture and religion, women when we read the Quran or whatever, we have to read it silent, mute or a low voice. There is a specific way to read it, but it's mostly for man, because I kind of allowed by religion to raise their voice. So, now women, they took it over them, which is kind of form of resistance. You can take it a sociologie must find kind of a form of resistance. Yes, we women too will read the Quran loud. It's kind of singing it. It's not the song. It's a way of
reading it that was for centuries only for men. Women took it away, took it took it out. Does mean I don't know how to explain that to you. If it's interesting for you or not, but there are lots of those that they're teaching woman, not al Quran as al Quran, but how to read it loud and to kind of singing which for centuries was only for men.

Researcher: And was after the Revolution that women started singing and reading it out loud? Y

Rima: Yep, and that'll becoming more and more and more and more and more and still more. You know? Even it used to be for kids. For kids, there's still those schools, but now, it's for adults for woman adults. You know? Voila, I talk a lot I know. I give you headache, right?

Researcher: No, no that's very interesting. It's very interesting. You answered a lot of my questions as you were speaking, but I just have a have a couple more that I wanna go back to.

Rima: Okay. Go ahead.

Researcher: Where you associated with any feminist organizations when you lived in Tunisia during or even after the Revolution?

Rima: Feminist?

Researcher: Yes, for woman's rights.

Rima: I don’t think so I don't even. I was trying to think if we have those kind of associations and of feminist means to. Oh yeah. I was not part 100%, but I was supporting them. Les Femmes Democrates.

Researcher: Yup, I was thinking that one.

Rima: Sana Ben Achour was one of my teachers in high school. I assisted before the Revolution to one of their meetings. It was just before the Revolution. Does mean maybe 2009/2010. I start getting involved with them. I love those women. They are lions, they are not women, by the way. They’re lions. I called them the lions. On that meeting, I remember the subject because those that association is woman, woman, and woman. That’s it, woman rights. No, nothing don't even talk about that. I don't know what you know about them, but I know that there are a lot of lawyers with them and they are defending woman for free. They're offering even housing for woman shelters for free. The visitor is back. Remember the subject because it was checking in my brain. I still told you we are in a lack of information, but they are more involved because they are a lot of lawyers. Does mean they go to court. I remember the subject was l'heritage. When father
Meagor

passed away, by religion laws, the boy take two parts and the girl get one part, and I remember their subject was not the egalite. This is what shocked me in the beginning. I said, “How come?”

*To son: Yes. No, I told you I can’t help you. I told you this is not here. So, you have to ask Tata. Thank you. Okay. Are you saying hello?

Researcher: Hi! So cute.

Rima: So, the subject was what shocked me. They are, they are for that. Does mean to have half, but now by the new law now is half/half for the l’heritage, but you still have the choice to do it Muslim way, religion way. And that subject for those for that association was to fight for the woman to ask for their one part. Because socially, forget about legal, forget about religion. Socially, men brothers, they don't even give their sisters that part.

Researcher: Oh my goodness.

Rima: And because socially it's not forbidden by law, but it's very bad if you take your brother to court to apply for to ask for your heritage. And I remember very well they were giving us those ladies are more than stronger than… and they were giving us numbers of woman that commit suicide that they're in psychiatric hospitals that they were fired from their family because they asked for that one-third. It was long time ago, and I'm going to tell you something. You would be shocked. You will… that happened to me. Three weeks ago, four weeks ago. We are very liberal family means all open mind. I have twin brothers twins. We are all of us Muslim, but none of us is practical. My mom passed away in December, this December.

Researcher: Oh I'm so sorry.

Rima: That’s okay, so I went to Tunis. I went visit, but she passed away the same day. And I met my two brothers. The third date was 17, 18, 19. One of my brothers, the most liberal one, he told me, look straight in my face, “Religion first, will split two parts, one part for you.” But when it was time because I told you the 3rd day for the day 1, 2, 3 because we spent a lot of money, you know a lot of money for to fix everything. I was the one who’s paying. Whenever it’s time for paying he comes to me, and says, “Oh. Do you know what? I don't have cash. Can you give them, this guy, I don't know because we took a lot it's, another one, another sorry, when it's time to pay. He put me to pay. Yeah, be careful. Yeah, this is Tunisia. We are schizophrenic. This is typically Tunisian. We are schizophrenic. You know, schizophrenic? We are double faced. My brother, the same one, he have a daughter and a son. I told him, “You know what? Religion is first Skina which is the name of his daughter we have half of the part of your when you passed away.” Guess what was his answer. “Never my daughter.” Excuses, excuses. But, our parents passed away, and you applied because by law, I told you it's a choice. In Tunisia, it’s a choice. Nothing like the other countries, a choice. So, you decide that will be done to religion way.
Perfect. Now when it's your son and your daughter and it's your daughter involved, another your daughter, bye bye. Okay, so I have two options. I'm a feminist, two options. I fight and I lose a brother. I let it go and I keep my brother. I choose the second one. But I told him in his case that he worked for me. 100,000 dinar, and I put him on the market. That is this part, the part of the money that you would have extra. I told him I bought you like a slave for 100,000 dinars which is less than, let's say $35,000. I took you to the market, and I… this is the way to do it. As a woman, if you are in my place what you can do? I told you there's a couple of things that as outsider, you can't get them. You can't. For example, another thing another face of this double face. It's, not double face. We don't kind of… we don't know what to do. We don't know if we have to be open 100% or we have to keep our culture. So we're in the middle of the road. We're kind of lost. For example, f you are some brothers, some brothers with his wife, he allow his wife to not to put the veil. If it's his sister, he'll force her to put the veil. You understand? Kind of this… we're still looking for ourselves. You know? Me, I'm declared in in my country like a fake Muslim, really I'm not kidding. Not, I broke all the social, culture, name it, things by getting married with a stranger. First, not Muslim. Second, doesn't speak Arabic. The third, so it's the list is long, but I was 100% accepted. I was not rejected. What they talked about behind my back. I don't want to hear about. They accept my husband 100%.

Researcher: That's good.

Rima: My son too. So I told you, we are schizophren. We are still looking, checking, but okay, so. I shocked you. This is what happened when you are Tunisian.

Researcher: That's… oh my gosh. I'm so sorry you had to go through that just hearing you talk about it I was getting like a little bit emotional.

Rima: That is another slap coming from reality. That... is that my brother? I don't see it as he's degrading me, no, because I know him very well. We're not religious, means we are not those we are very open mind. There's more much more. Let’s say we are European minded, Tunisian minded and you come to me and you come up with that? was shocked. It took me one week to wake up from the… I was kind of… I don't know what how to think anymore. And then I think about between me and myself it's okay these are two brothers I can give up both of them or keep them. What I want? I want to keep them. So that’s it. It's a choice that I was lucky to have to have that choice because a lot of Tunisian women, they don't even have the right. Not the right they're not in there. Does mean the boys can say we keep the heritage the way it is, and one day will split. One day, and she can die without having one cent from the money from her parents. You know? But back at your question. I don't remember that's I got to a feminist real feminist besides Les Femmes Democrates that I'm supporting them that I consider that I access to some of their meetings. Me, personally, no. I don't remember even in my village that we have a specific thing for woman besides I told you those two things one for to teach a Quran, not for kids onto to
grown ups and these new ones that are coming, especially for woman for as the singers does mean not professional, but still it's new it's, new for our culture. And I told you it looks like they're working for a couple of months or three or I don't know, new for 2023 let's say, but the first concert was last week. But me personally, no. I worked a lot of in gender studies. But, based on the sociology and whatever technically no.

Researcher: Got it okay. What are your thoughts regarding the Code of Personal Status, and how did you feel about your rights as a woman before the Revolution compared to after the Revolution?

Rima: My personal. I would talk to only about myself.

Researcher: Yes. Like what are you thoughts…

Rima: A lot of things were… My experience may be different to the from the other ones. I feel before the Revolution I didn't have any single issue. I never had that even a feeling that I put on the side because I'm a woman neither my village neither in my scholarity. I never ever ever was put in a situation that touched my feelings as a woman. No. Does mean to be degraded even by somebody or are abused verbally, physically nothing in my family neither, neither socially, neither professionally, neither using my studies. You know? Besides, if I don't know if it counts, but I remember that one of my teachers in high school, not high school in the college was trying to be tried me as a girlfriend. He didn't say it clear, by the way, but the woman feeling. I didn't get through, and it didn't affect me means because I heard later on that our teachers, for example, if he kind of try and you say no, you will fail back here, for example, you'll never succeed the exam. No, never happened to me personally. After the Revolution, I was… yes I had the opposite feeling which is it's not supposed to be. I got to the level that I was scared. About our acquisition that mean that's something you have it already. And we are still scared that we are going to lose what we gained long time ago. I'm talking as a woman. Because I start because everybody after the Revolution feels like he's free. And everybody lost his manners in the meantime. It's a we can call it I don't know if a talk as a historian now we tell you, for example, it's based on the insecurity, based on the economy that affects the person as a person you know, but everybody knows that because of this democracy or law kind of because we are new even in the meanings of words we are new. You does mean you are free. It means you're free to insult the other person which is not true. So, everybody's kind of lost. I was really scared. I was I was even thinking I remember if they put me to choose between putting the veil and giving up my job, I will give up my job. Yeah, if I give up my job I will die. Does means dying not socially dying, but what am I going to work on? What will be my job? All my life I'm a teacher, can't be something else. You know? It's not I can't. I don't want to. I can, but I can't my brain doesn't like that then you can have any other job to have money, but not that stage you. The teacher is still a teacher. I… my old students, now they are grown up. I have my age sometimes and they still call me, Madam for
example. You know a lot of them still my friends. I have some of them here in the U.S. You know? Yeah, they're big kids now with their own kids. So yes, after the Revolution, yes I was scared not scared that they will kill me now that scared that will be forced to wear veil that I told you because they get to a level that they’re talking even and it's serious. We're not talking about people that talking right and left, we're talking about people that they have the influence and they're talking on the media, how one of the reasons, for example, these are most debated one of the reasons of a non employment, which is general all over the world is because women are working. So if women doesn't work, men will find jobs which is not true. So, we got even to that level. Understand what I mean?

Researcher: Yes, completely.

Rima: So it's it never happened anything bad to me, but it's the feeling. And I have a feeling too that women let it go. Does mean a lot of women in Tunisia they’re still locked, locked like prisoner of social judgment. They’re scared to apply for divorce. The reason is, “Oh, what are they going to say about me?” They're scared to ask for their rights like to ask for their heritage from their parents. “Oh, what the society will say about me.” A lot of woman gave up the love their lives because he’s a stranger and they don't have that strength to make it and to face the whole society. A lot of them are frustrated, let’s say. Maybe that they put themselves in that position. They don't have... Well, they're a lot of laws for the woman that support woman a lot of, you know, a lot of people that they're there to help still, still I don't know how to call it. I'm a little bit far. I left, but I still feel it. I still see it. You know? We're talking about majority. We're not talking about separate cases, separate cases I’m sorry, we're talking about, but after the Revolution, it’s the reverse. This is for me, personally, and for a lot of women that I know. We have to fight again. Does means you feel like something is yours and you have to fight for it to keep it, not we were dreaming in that first year of the Revolution that we got more and we end up fighting to keep what we have already, not to lose it. And that is the real nightmare real nightmare. You know? Voila, I don’t know if I answered your question or not.

Researcher: Yes, yes, that was a great answer. Thank you. And then with within your participation in the Revolution, with a, you know, cooking, helping to cook meals when the man were having defenses and stuff to keep your neighborhood and your village safe, do you think that any other identities played into your participation? And like what were your motives for your participation? Was it more for woman's rights? Was it for a political regime change? Was it because there was a lack of economic opportunities? How did those kind of interact with each other?

Rima: Just solidarity. And it just came. It was not even settled from before. It was not planned. It came like that. Yeah, you understand? It was not planned like a natural thing. You understand? Like the door of your house fell and your father, your brother is standing there and for him not to
move from his spot, you just help him to give him to drink to give him to eat. It's not only me. It was nothing related to politics. No, neither to religion, neither to feminism. No, no, no.

Researcher: It was just helping each other?

Rima: Yes, what kind of solidarity ae have to protect each other because there's no police. Police used to protect us, and we keep hearing from the news that strangers are coming to steal. Strangers are coming. We don't know who those strangers are that the news are coming from official news. You know? And we heard later on that most of them was just fake just to make everybody scared. You know? It was all the information. The negative information, most of them were just fake information with panic and everybody else, you know, but no feminism is behind. No. No, I really I never I'm 48 years old. I never had the feeling that I have to fight for my rights as a Tunisian. My rights are there. Nobody touched them to have to get my side to the feeling to fight for them, to protect them. They're protected already. I told you the only time that I had to adapt and I was scared to lose them it's after the Revolution not before. No, I never had. My grandma, the mother of my mom, she was such a strong woman, men they can't even raise their voice in front of her. They have to put their head down when she speaks. She passed away when she was 90 years old. Until that age, nobody, nobody, her kids, her grandkids, her name it, nobody allow himself to talk before her. Oh yeah, women in Tunisia are strong very strong. Really, I'm talking about history, I'm talking about even now, they're fighters. We are big fighters. We look like kind of... but we don't let it down no no. I'm stubborn too. Give me two choices and you try to put me down to force me or to threaten me, you know, I'll give up. I don't do a just… That’s not to do what you want I'm ready for anything just not… Do you understand that? No, no, no, no, we don't let it go, no, no, no. Me, personally, I feel like we are a lot like that a lot. We have to fight against society because still, we are patriarchal society. Even woman is more free. She works, he's independent, name it. Still, she's the one we have to cook. Still, she the one who have to be the housekeeper, let's say. You understand what I mean? There's a long growth still a long growth to work on it. But, we did a lot. To understand what I'm saying, you have to be. You have to have more knowledge of how it works in our culture. You understand? Because from an outside, even you will feel shocked. If it's you are coming from the North. If you're coming from Arab country you will say, “Oh my God like it's discussing. We are over. You'll feel like we are far away, but behind the others, they see that we are further back. I feel like we are in the middle, still working hard. And we make it work. Yeah. We are strong enough to… yes.

Researcher: Yes you are! I agree with that. Awesome, and then I just have like one more final question. How do you feel about the appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia first female Prime minister?
Rima: I heard about her like that, like you. This is the other other slap that I got from politics that a lot of women worked hard for the elections from the beginning. And when it's time to have the chairs, the woman was pushed behind. You understand? So I'm a woman that I didn't participate to the election to have a past or something. But I'm telling you that we women in Tunisia we were kind of, we felt like somebody broke the trust. You understand? I did the whole job. I worked with you. We said half/half we end up having nothing. So, I feel like every a lot of people as a Prime Minister I in that period of time, she doesn't have much power because already the President get everything if I'm updated. Does mean vaguely a picture to show a picture to somebody. Did she did anything? Did you heard her? Did she got anything done? Right? So you don't have to be magician to got it. This is my feeling and they, “Oh wow!” No, I'm proud of a woman lawyers if you see if you have statistics about how many judges do we have in the country women. How many doctors? I'm telling you, for example, the last statistics about the high school studies the university almost 65% are girls, 35% are boy to finish their studies and then the first levels. We have a lot of Tunisian very high level does means they have very high position here in United States, in Europe, and all over the world. But when it becomes country thing, they put them totally on the side like yes, you are strong, yes, you can make it, but we don't give you that chance because I'm the man. You understand what I mean? Kind of. It’s not easy to explain. But it's sad. I believe if it's a woman who was the President, she make it work in no time in Tunisia. In no time, she make things work because we are more diplomat, because we are more I don't know as a woman you understand you are more flexible. I believe as a woman, I don't know, you're a woman too. We are more flexible, we are more… We know how to do it, how to do things, how to make it work our way. You know? So, they it's kind of the religion way that I told you about the heritage, something similar is in politics because they're the same people. Does mean based on the speech, they said, “Wow, they're open. They are very liberal.”

Come to the practice. No I'm the man, you forgot! And this is the woman fight all over the world. It's not typical to Tunisia. What do you think? Is it only in Tunisia or is it all over the world, universal?

Researcher: All over the world. It's universal, all over the world. I I think even in the U.S. today truly.

Rima: It’s everywhere. The only thing that I heard a lot that in Tunisia we have it long time that the pay for men and women is equal since ever. It looks like it's not the same in some countries. I don't know how it works in U.S. but for example, in Tunisia a teacher is a teacher, man or woman you will have the same pay. Doctor is a doctor, man or a woman, you have the same pay. You know? But, it looks like in a lot of countries it's not, not the same. I don’t know if I if what I heard is true or not, but I don't know. I don’t know. But as a woman in Tunisia, teacher for 20 years, I never had any issues, any segregation that you can name it. Zero. As a teacher in my job, I never applied to be a director of a school because I don't like to be administrative. I hate administrative stuff. You know? But, a lot of teachers, a lot of director of schools that are
woman. But I told you, the economy, I'm telling you the most of the Tunisian economy is based on woman. But, politics they're put in on the side, they are pushed to the side. This is a conclusion, they push to the side. You know? But, still the hard work is done by them and the shade. When it's time to get the fruit, they push you and they put themselves and they win everything again because they're failures. Oh I'm, sorry. I'm sorry, I’m not on meth, but they are. Not one other person that I don't know if I explain myself very well. I told you my English is still weird, especially with stops there's subject that I feel sometimes like I'm boiling, but sometimes I feel like I got rid of those that frustration that I had for that period of time, but now that I'm talking to you, I feel hungry, hungry again. Hungry, yes, I am. And a lot of women are angry in Tunisia. Angry, not sad or mad. No, we're angry. I'm one of them. Yes, yeah, we don't trust politics anymore. The trust is at zero level. You know? I don't know.

Researcher: Yeah, totally I get it. Well, thank you thank you. Thank you so much for sharing your stories and being open. I know this opened up some old wounds and everything, but I really really appreciate you, you taking the time out of your day to share more with me. Just bear with me as I have to read this little blurb. But again, thank you so much for participating in my research examining the role of women in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and women’s rights. Please do not discuss the study or experience with others outside of the myself and the IRB. Otherwise, you could be…

Rima: Do not discuss with my Tunisian friends? What happened to you? If you have anymore questions, you can contact me at anytime. And if you need really more that are more for two more than me. I told you my experience is really limited, but I know that a lot are they are in and they're still in does mean they're active women if you need me to translate. If you have a couple of questions, you can send me the questions, and I ask them and I give you the answers. I don't know how I can help you, but really thank you for… how to say it for your interest for our history and whatever. And at anytime if you need any help, I’m here for you.

Researcher: Great, thank you thank you so much. I have a little infographic too if any of your friends or anyone who speaks English is interested in being interviewed by me. I talk with my advisors tomorrow too to see if it's even a possibility to see if I can do like the question thing that goes through you with if it's in French, for example, if you can translate. I’m not sure exactly how that works.

Rima: I can translate your question, but it's not easy for me to translate their answers. It can take more time.

Researcher: I understand.
Rima: It's okay. I don't have the issue, but ask if you need, I told you I have active people there. I'm inactive. You know?

Researcher: Got it. Okay, I understand.

Rima: But a lot of my colleagues, my friends they are still fighting. They will never give up, by the way. Okay, good luck.

Researcher: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

Rima: And at anytime if you have any other questions, if I go to Tunis I will ask the live if you want. I'm in touch with everybody. If I find some pictures that I can send you from the Revolution. Does mean that period of time that we went on the street and took some pictures. I will have I will send you whatever I have and with those meetings just for you to have an idea about the number of women in those party politique or whatever you name it. You know, because still, it's something besides the interview, and I'm assuming pictures would work. I don't know if I find some flyers around or something. Okay?

Researcher: Awesome thank you. Thank you so much. Bye.

Rima: Bye. Good luck for everything. Keep me updated!

Researcher: I will!

Interview 3: Nadine

Researcher: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. It means a lot to me. It just like a little brief overview of my project again. So it's about the role of woman in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and whether or not their participation as women mattered in the Revolution, but also the different ways of mobilizing that changed before the Revolution compared to during the Revolution, and then of course after the Revolution. So I'm interested in a in a few things here, but I'm very interested what you have to say and any contributions that you might bring.

Nadine: I hope that my contribution is gonna be helpful for you. And yeah, of course.

Researcher: I definitely think so. So, I'm looking forward to it. So, did you receive the email with the with the questions?
Nadine: With the questions? Yeah, I just saw it when I went like to see the link, I saw the questions, but it's okay, I thought that you didn't send them, but it's okay, no problem. I read the questions, and yeah, I will answer all the questions.

Researcher: Okay cool. And then if you, of course, if you don't feel comfortable answering a question, no explanation needed. We can just move on to the next one. But the first, sorry let me put my computer on do not disturb. Yes, but so it's split up into a just a few sections. The first section is background, and then it goes into your perspectives before the Revolution, during the Revolution, and then after the Revolution/like now, in the future. So just to get started what is your age?

Nadine: I am 32.

Researcher: Yeah, awesome and what is your gender identity?

Nadine: I'm female.

Researcher: Awesome and your marital status?

Nadine: I’m single, never married before.

Researcher: What is your education level?

Nadine: I have a master's degree.

Researcher: What’s your degree in?

Nadine: Investigative journalism.

Researcher: Cool! That's so awesome. And what's your occupation?

Nadine: Right now, I do a brand…promotions.

Researcher: I'm, sorry. Promotions for what?

Nadine: For a promotions company like we have brands that we promote, you know? So we have brands.

Researcher: Oh okay. Got it. And you said you do that… you live in New York right now?
Nadine: No, I live in a Virginia.

Researcher: Oh Virginia. Awesome! That's so cool. I love. I love Virginia. I used… I lived there for a semester a couple years ago as a… during Covid so when school was online and everything, I got to stay there for a semester.

Nadine: I stayed in a home, but I loved it. I've been here for a year and a half now.

Researcher: Oh wow okay. And did you go from Tunisia to Virginia or did you go somewhere in between?

Nadine: From Tunisia to a Maryland and then from Maryland to here, which is like super close.

Researcher: Super cool. Awesome. How would you describe your social class both in Tunisia and then also in the United States?

Nadine: Like social class. I’m not sure like what do you mean by my social class.

Researcher: So like lower, low middle class. There's middle class, there's upper class depending on your family’s income.

Nadine: I see. Okay, for Tunisia, it was like middle, middle class. Here I think I'm still in the like lower, yeah, I guess.

Researcher: Got it.

Nadine: I'm just starting my life here, and it's hard start. It's not easy. Yeah.

Researcher: Yeah, and can you just elaborate a little bit more on that like why?

Nadine: Yeah, because… When I was in Tunisia, I was working like in a professional job, and I was working in an international organization. You know? But now, like this job is good still, but it's more like… it's not a full-time job, you know, it's a part time job. And then I'm not making that much money and you know, that's why. Yeah, that's why, I'm really struggling with that, but I'm good. I'm still… I'm good. I'm making my life, you know. But not that, I mean, I expected not what I expected. But still, I'm trying yeah.

Researcher: Yeah, I understand. Is your family still living in Tunisia or did they move the U.S. with you?
Nadine: No, my family is in Tunisia.

Researcher: Oh no. That's far. How would you describe your political leanings?

Nadine: Okay like myself, I see like I think I am more I'm a like honestly, you know, I'm a politics like I hate politics. I hate like, you know, I don't consider myself like went into any of the political waves or political parties in Tunisia. But I may have like a little I am… I see that the not, I mean, the Islamists they are like Islamist party like the Ennahda party is one of the parties that I like, but I'm not totally you know, like they have like so many things that they did to the to the country that I don't agree with and also like right now, you know, what's going on. So I don't know like, but also like what happened to them like before the Revolution, and how they were, you know, oppressed and things like that make me feel like a little bit that, you know, they deserve a chance they deserve like that they, you know, they have like their chance and to take, you know, to take their I mean the lead in the country and things like that. But still like, I don't know, but yeah, maybe this is this where I position myself a little bit close to, but not totally no, like I'm like, yeah, I'm a politic like as I told you like, I don't really want to position in one in one just one side, you know? I want to be in the middle when I can like, you know, if someone like if any party, if any, they make like mistakes or things that are I don't agree with, I will just go right away, and I will like I say it, you know, so that's, why and I'm a journalist as well. So like, it's not it's not good like my background I mean. I have like a background in journalism, so I don't think, it's good to be like two in one in one side and one side and being in the middle is the best for me? Yeah.

Researcher: Yeah, totally. And you mentioned a little bit about how Ennahda. There's some aspects of their policies that you agree with and some policies that you don't necessarily agree with. Can you get a little bit more on like if you, if there's even like any examples of like policies that you do agree with versus policies you don't agree with?

Nadine: This is a little bit like for me because I have worked with the some of them, and I don't want I don't wanna go into details into that? You know?

Researcher: That’s totally okay.

Sawseon: So, thank you. But, yeah okay.

Researcher: How would you describe your religious leaning?

Nadine: Oh yeah, I am Muslim practical. I'm Sunni, Muslim Sunni. And from Muslim family and yeah.
Researcher: When you were in Tunisia, were you associated with any feminist organizations?

Nadine: Yes, yeah, the organization that I was working in like I told you the international is standing for woman's rights and it's a feminist organization. Yeah.

Researcher: And what was that organization called?

Nadine: It's “Lead Initiative.”

Researcher: Lead Initiative? Cool. Yeah, what specifically did they did they advocate for, or what exactly did they do?

Nadine: Women’s rights and minorities. And minorities in the MENA region. They were doing like projects and the empowerment of feminist organization and small like grassroots and feminist organizations in North Africa and the Middle East.


Nadine: Yeah, I was doing like Project Coordinator with them and yeah Communications Officer.

Researcher: Awesome, that's so cool. Do you have favorite part of being a part of that organization?

Nadine: Yeah, of course, because like myself like since I’m since not even since I graduated, but before that like when I was studying at the university, I started to feel that I have like some feminist, you know, ideas, and I got attracted to that movement. And I felt that like one day, I'm gonna be like there, you know, I'm gonna work for, you know, women’s right, and I will fight for you know, rights so that, you know, some women and, you know, well when once I got there, I was really proud of myself. It was just a coincidence. You know, if I tell you like how I started working with them it's just, you know, I was working in a digital agency owned by a German, like he's from Germany, and he has like he likes, you know, to have like this kind of project and they get funds from the government from an office like from German office and also like culture, so many like you know, governmental, you know, but I mean, ministries and stuff like that. So yeah, and then he got the idea to build to found this organization, and like he likes me, he likes my work like in the digital agency, so he invited me to be a part of the team, and he's like in that new organization that he has built. So yeah. That's how I started.

Researcher: That’s so cool! I love that! Specifically what part of Tunisia are you from? Are you like close to Tunis or are you like outside?
Nadine: I am close to Tunis. And my city is like 35 kilometers from Tunis.

Researcher: Okay.

Nadine: I’m from Bizerte. You know Bizerte?

Researcher: Oh yes yes! Yes, I visited there! My dad actually went there. When he visited, we went there, and that was so fun. That was really fun. We went to a beach there and got some sandwiches, and yeah it was really good. But yes, I have been there.

Nadine: You visited Tunisia before? So you visited Tunisia before?

Researcher: Yes, so I study abroad there last a year ago. So I was in here for from January until like late January until mid May just studying similar things that I’m asking you about studying about the Revolution, studying about Islam, studying about immigration. But, yeah, it was a really good experience, but yeah.

Nadine: Where? Where did you study? What university?

Researcher: It was through, so it wasn't through a specific Tunisian university. It was through this American study abroad program called Schools an International Training, but the way they do it is that we had an Academic Director and then two other Tunisian staff was in charge of our home stays and then the other one was just like an administrative assistant, and we had the guest lectures from different, you know, Tunisian universities just talk about certain topics, and that's how we learned, and we would talk about in class and everything. But yeah, that was it was really fun like I'm really glad I did it.

Nadine: That’s nice.

Researcher: So that's why I'm very interested in topic and why I’ve continued to look into it. I feel connected, you know?

Nadine: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Researcher: So, that was the background section. The next section is before the Revolution. So, there's just a few questions regarding your perspectives before the Revolution. What are your thoughts regarding the Code of Personal Status or CPS?

Nadine: Okay, so that was for us like, for me like first like my ideas like about is it's something that protected the as Tunisian woman from like too many things like that I see happening in other
Arab countries like polygamy like the woman cannot choose like to be divorced or, you know, for them, it's too hard, you know, to go through that process. For us, it’s just, you know, if the woman like choose to divorce her husband or she just go like to the court and to, you know, if he treats her bad or and things like that still happening. Even, we consider like our country as you know, we have like gender quality. You know? But still like we have like too many you know, like, gender based violence still exists, so many you know, things like that. But like when we had that, at least it's less, you know, it makes like it may made the situation better for us. And what else? Yeah, those are mostly like the topics that I've been always like proud to have them and even like when I meet like some people, you know, even here in the U.S., you know, I mean some Arab people, they don't know like these things exist like for us in Tunisia. And they're surprise, “Oh why you’re talking like that? Polygamy is something that is allowed for us men, you know?” But no it's not. It's not. It’s usually not like, you know? Anyway, so yeah for me like those are my thoughts about it. And, yeah, it's a pride for us Tunisians. It's something really big like that happened back in the ’57 yeah.

Researcher: Awesome. Do you think that Ben Ali continued to support woman's rights after Bourguiba?

Nadine: Ben Ali. Yeah. Yeah, for sure. Because you know, like he has always like supported woman like to pursue like their education. We have like being always like thought like to that education is so important for woman to, you know, to have a status, good status in the in the society, and so this is something that like exists and also what else? Yeah, he didn't also like… Ben Ali didn't like the, you know, hijab and stuff like, will let woman, you know, as this is his idea it’s not mine, of course, I'm one like people who likes to… I'm like to wear hijab. But like, since I mean, this is like a part also of freedom, you know, women’s freedom. It's like they give that. He gave them like the right, you know, and he didn't like them to cover themselves, and so, yeah, yeah, I guess yeah, I mean after Bourguiba started it, and Ben Ali like continued in it, but it it's getting better like year after year. I think it's a it's also a global thing, you know. It's not just in Tunisia, but now, like the Internet and everything is changing the world. I don't think it’s really related to Revolution or Ben Ali’s time, or after the Revolution. It's more like related to a connectivity and Internet and stuff like that. Now people they know everything, you know, it's not like before. So yeah, that's. My idea about your question.

Researcher: How would you describe the implementation of woman's rights prior to the Revolution. For example, were you satisfied with your rights?

Nadine: Before the Revolution?

Researcher: Before the Revolution.
Nadine: Yeah, one thing I didn't like which also is still like they didn't want us to wear like, you know, our whatever we want, you know. So like people who wears hijab, you know, they were not allowed to wear it like in public and when you go and you look for a job with hijab you're gonna you're gonna find you're gonna find like difficulty to have a job, you know, because of your beliefs or because that you chose to wear it, you know, so this is like a topic that has two sides you know? So one is like, yes, it is, but like if you, you respect freedom of women and you want them to be free, let them also be free to choose whether to wear it or whether to not wear it. You know? So this is what happened. They were not allowing us to, and I was like also I started to wear to wear like since I was like 16. So like four years before the Revolution, I was wearing hijab and at school we got, I got like the school headmaster he was like, “Hey, don't put don't, put a black scarf, don’t do that,” like, you know, they choose like the way we put it that they, they don't, they don't let us you know, do it like the way we wanna do it, you know. So yeah, these like things I that I feel. Yeah, I mean, I don't know how to explain it, but I am sure that you know what I mean because it is like you like women or any any any like any gender like woman or man they should like, you know, have the right to choose how to dress, you know, but if you, if you, judge them or you prevent them from going to certain like, you know, positions or to work jobs in the government or anything because of their beliefs or because of their wearing. That's not something that I like, and I face it that I told you like at school also like when I was at the university, the half the first half of the year, it was before the Revolution. Was in 2010 I started to study in journalism Institute of Press and communications and science of communications, and that year like the first half of the year, I saw some students, you know, they were telling me, “Oh why. Oh yeah, we know you. You are one of the Islamist people, you know, you’re belonging to the ones that they don’t like Ben Ali’s regime.” That's how they were, but I was never, you know, I was never, I did I did never you know, had any political, you know, view or even my father like even my family you know, we are not, but we just want to practice. We believe in these things, you know, that's what how we want to do it. But yeah, like even like students and colleagues, you know, at school, they were also they were like they gave themselves the like the right to talk from their government prospectus, you know. The government sees that these people who wants to practice like religion or to show there like I mean to show like some like a religious aspects in there in there, how the way how they dress. They are from certain groups that are up like opposite like the or they're not they're not like with the with the the party like that is leading the country, the RCD yeah, the RCD party. So yeah, that's my yeah.

Researcher: I'm sorry you had to go through that. That sounds really tough, especially because it seems it kinda seems like the opposite of what Ben Ali was advocating for was…

Nadine: Exactly. It is it is, but yeah, it's not from any political of view. Like for me, as I told you it was just something like from myself, and I didn't but like I'm telling you like even like they judge you, you know. There was this judgment. Some like I saw some people, my friends and who also wears it, they got caught by cops, you know, police like stops them. It tells them to not
to wear that even in the street, you know, even on the street. They were like, you know, students at high school at the age of 17/16. He stops them in his car and, you know, take it off. Tells them, “Oh no. No you're a real kid. Why why do you wear that?” Nowhere, you know, this happened. Yeah, so this is something that it's also part of, for me, it's a part of women's rights to let them wear whatever or practice or do. It is from not just women's right, but it's from, you know, humans’ rights. If you respect like people, you let them practice or do whatever they, you know. They wanted to dress or they want, so yeah, it don't make it like a big deal or don't judge someone just because of the way he's... So yeah, even my parent. I remember that my father when I started to wear it, the first thing he told me, “Oh. Now you want to ruin your future. I wanted you to be a to be something like a lawyer. But now as you did that, you will never get there because Ben Ali’s regime.” Yeah, it was that bad. It was that bad. Yeah and at the end like this happened like the Revolution happened, and I went to journalism school. Even like journalism school is known like that time, it's known that it was led by the other… the left. The left parties, they were all like, you know, from the left side like parties like I don't know like what parties, but yeah, it was like some of them were from of course, the one Ben Ali’s party. With most of them like let's say 70%, you know, they were all like with Ben Ali’s regime, and maybe like 25% like of the teachers and like people like professors in the institute were from the left side, so they're all like they all they don't hijab. And I chose to go there and then I this happened like the Revolution happened and yeah. It was better like this from this prospective from this like from this for this like thing, for me like after the Revolution is better than before than how it was before.

Researcher: Yes, I'll definitely have some follow up questions in a little bit regarding… Prior to the Revolution, did you protest in any way?

Nadine: Okay, I started to hear about what's going on like before the Revolution. Before you mean before like, before years or before like just some days? What do you mean like before the Revolution? What where like before like years or before like just prior to the Revolution like a month before, for example?

Researcher: Like years before.

Nadine: Years before. Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I was a rebel. Yeah, somehow. But like I went to protests about like Palestine. We always have that, you know, like things like that. Yeah, we go like at school. We go to or… Yeah, sometimes also when we don't like things like in education or some new things that happen like that we don't like, so we go in on strike and we don't want like to go to school or we want things like to change. I forgot like exactly dates or but yeah, like years like maybe two or three years before yeah, when I was in high school. Yeah, I did that.
Researcher: And your reasons for participating were like more based on like your own your own desires for change like politically and socially it seems like or why did you participate in these in these protests?

Nadine: Because I mean, because I shared the same ideas, you know, because I found that myself, but you know, it's all from my from my own. I was not like pulled from anybody or anyone like told me to come to join those, but like, you know, the full when it happened like you find yourself there even without without you want to like sometimes, you know, like you're just hear hear like some voices or things like some that you believe in or like thoughts that you share or you're gonna go and participate, you know. Yeah, it well, it was not of course, like after but like, because the freedom also of protesting, it was kind of like it was like it was there we can't protest, but but like not in things like that are really in big topics or stuff like, as I told you like stuff that are not really related to Tunisia like from abroad, you know, like Palestine. We just hear about it. We hear that there is people are killed or stuff like that. You know, so we wanted to show support them. Yeah.

Researcher: Totally yes. How did you feel about your participation as a woman? Did your identity as a woman matter in your participation?

Nadine: Well, it doesn't matter. Didn't matter like that time. It didn't matter like whether a girl or like a man or a girl, boy, but as is the same, you know, we were all young, we were all wanting like the same things. And no, yeah, you don't really feel the difference, you know? You don't feel the difference of gender differences. You need the same for us.

Researcher: And then the next section “During the Revolution.” Did you participate in any form of process during the Revolution?

Nadine: Okay, no, not really because I remember that when things started like to get really bad, it was, we had the vacation. Yeah, we didn't… we were not at school.

Researcher: This is your family had a vacation?

Nadine: So no, no, my just my family, but like we have like a 15 days in December, you know.

Researcher: Ah I see, I see. Okay. Like no one was in school?

Nadine: Yeah, no one was in school. Exactly. So I was at home. I was at home, and my mom was worried, was really worried about like me going out and participating in the protests happening and she didn't let me do that. She didn't get not just me, but me and brother as well. She didn't let us to go out and to participate. I was only participating like and seeing stuff online
and you know on my laptop and social media for sharing stuff and yeah, that's it. But no, I didn't go in protest during the days of the Revolution and I regret it. I wish I could. I wish I did, you know?

Researcher: And why do you regret it?

Nadine: Because it was a big moment and because it was a huge change that happened, you know? And yeah. Why not like it's a, it's a when a when it's a moment like that that is, yeah, you you'd rather like participate and I could not. Yeah, if I did that, I would I would be, I would be proud by myself. You know, like saying, “Oh okay, I did it. I was there.” Just say, “Degage, Ben Ali, degage.” You know, it's like, yeah. I would like it if I did it.

Researcher: And can you explain a little bit more about what you saw online like did was it videos? Was it more like people encouraging people other people to protest? Was it your friends reaching out? Did you see anything about feminine organizations? Like what exactly did you see regarding the media?

Nadine: Okay, we saw videos like protests like what is happening that were, you know, people encouraging? I don't remember that I saw, yeah, yeah, yeah, so many, so many videos like people like not not encouraging, but they were talking about what is going on that what is going on is not like the normal things that always happen and this is the moment that we need all to be on the same, you know, on the same path, and we need all to like to move forward and to, you know, to continue it together into that. And yeah, I saw some videos like that. I saw also the protests or itself like when some figures of people, you know, protesting in Tunisia and also other cities like Sidi Bou Zid, where it started. It was really like huge there, You know, too many people participated there. So yeah.

Researcher: Great. Did you at all see any organizations encourage or discourage participation in the Revolution? Like what was the role of organizations whether that was like labor organizations, feminist organizations, other types of organizations?

Nadine: Okay, yeah, a feminist organization? I don't remember, honestly like that time… yeah, maybe Bochra Belhaj Hmida [co-founded the Democrat Tunisian Women Association], which is the organization that she has. I'm not sure about the name in English. Yeah, it's a big women organization. Let me search it to her to tell you like the right name, but yeah, that one. Yeah, it has, it has participated, and of course, the one it's the the Union and the Union of uh… one second, please.

Researcher: You're all good, no worries.
Nadine: Is it the UGTT? That one and the other one is… Have you ever heard about Bochra
Belhaj Hmida? I forgot. I forgot the organization that she had. Have you ever heard about the
organization?

Researcher: I think I recognize that name, yes.

Nadine: I forgot.

Researcher: Do you mind putting her name in the chat if possible?

Nadine: Of course, yeah so you can check it later. I couldn't find the chat.

Researcher: Okay maybe.

Nadine: Now I found it.

Researcher: And she started she has a feminist organization is that what type of organization she
has?

Nadine: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you know any like, did any of your friends or even like extended family
participate in the Revolution at all?

Nadine: Family? I don't think so. No, I don't think so yeah, but friends yes, I had some friends
Yeah, I have some friends that they went like, but not that many. We were all like we're like
young. We were scared me a little bit. You know, I was 19. I was 19. So, like I mean, my
friends, my age like people were like we were together in like in the university or yeah, so I think
the same situation that happened to me happened to many other people, you know, so yeah, so
many we were scared. Yeah. Family? I'm not sure. I'm not sure, but family, yeah, but maybe
extended family like, yeah, I'm not sure. I don't think so.

Researcher: And from your perspective, why did people participate?

Nadine: Okay. Yep, it's too many reasons, it's not just what happened to Bouzizi. Like that time.,
we had like a bad… not just us, but the world had a bad crisis in in 20… in 2008, you know?
And after 2008, people started to feel the inflation like and the prices go… went like too high
like what ones and people were so stressed about it like and what else? Yeah, yeah, yeah. We
hear a lot about what Laila like Laila’s, the first, the first woman, I mean the first lady, Laila Ben
Ali’s brothers were doing we hear a lot about that. Like things like, you know, everywhere like
everywhere, in every city, even like small cities like where I was living. We hear like, you know, stories and people who got problems, you know, with the government or like that they were stealing their properties or stuff like that, you know? So we hear about these things like, but just you know, we talked. You know? We talk about it like between like, you know, between in between the walls of your house just there, you talk to your kid like you talk about it and, you know, it was these are these are the main reasons, you know, they got like it's an accumulation of all these like problems and mostly it's an economy and it's an economy problem, and we saw that the government was not doing anything at all. So and… What else? Yeah, because there is no there was no like democracy, you know? We have, we have every four year four years, we have the election, but we know we all know that it's all just something that is like it's not really no it's not really it's just… so yeah, those are these are the reasons I think that people went to protest to protest for and yeah. Killing also, killing people of course, like at the end like the last things are were, you know, the police started to kill to shoot people like civilians. And yeah, there were people like stop like said like “Stop!” to all of that. Yeah mhm.

Researcher: Was there any protests for like increase an increase in woman's rights or was that not even a topic of conversation at all?

Nadine: Dignity, in general but not women. But this is I think, yeah, dignity that was like the main things that were people telling like about food. Food first, dignity, and work. Yeah work to everyone like and a equality of course, equality between the between regions because, you know, we have we have regionality there, and they have some regions that were that had like a big part of the, you know, the government money and they got like investments, they bring money into those regions and other regions that were under, you know. So yeah.

Researcher: Yeah totally. Great and then it's the section “After the Revolution.” How were you affected by the 2011 Revolution, socially, politically, morally? I know you said earlier that after the Revolution was better than before the Revolution, but can you explain a little bit more about that?

Nadine: Okay. Yeah, definitely what's what's better after the Revolution is better for me. Like the freedom, of course, of speech, the freedom of talking about things that are not going well for like on you can see debates on the television now talking about what the government is doing or what the President himself like is doing wrong or if he’s, you know? This is for me like is so important that. Yeah, for women like as a woman, I told you about the hijab. This is a part. As a woman. Also and now, yeah, the Parliament like the Parliament after the Revolution, they got like a law to let the woman a be on the top of the list parliamentary lists, you know, in like equal like 50/50 you know, 50/50. And the participation of woman in political life is a way better after the Revolution yeah. We always had these smart woman, you know, but they don't put them in the on the front, they want them always to be, you know, and all you see is, you know, men. You
only see the achievements and stuff, but woman were always there, you know? Uh, so yeah, this is a something that got better. Women empowerment, it’s not just that but when also to have your representatives more representatives in the Parliament is a thing, but also I mean uh, what else? Like, for example, like before even if you get you get like degrees that allow you to apply for a position to be like a President of the company like what? Like Tunis Air, which is like the airline, Tunisian airlines, you know. Like having a woman on the President like position was never a topic like before the Revolution, you know, this would never happen. I don't… I don't have really an explanation for why or why was that, but yeah, and then after like we got that when we saw that you know, we saw a woman. Oh, we saw UGTT as well. Yeah UGTT. We saw women yeah in the Parliament [unknown] leading the Parliament. Who else? Yeah, like you know these things like we didn't have that before, so you feel there… It got better like women's rights and women empowerment like was a little better after the Revolution. Yeah, I told you it may it may not have a really relation with the Revolution itself, maybe it was… but yeah, if you if you want to relate it to the Revolution, yeah, you can. You can say up before the Revolution, after the Revolution.

Researcher: That kinda segways into the next question. How do you feel about the appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia is first female prime minister?

Nadine: Yeah, it's something that it was… She was the first even in Arab World like to have like a President of the government, you know? I don't really know her before, you know, but when this happened, I was really happy. I was so happy. Yeah, just then I'm not sure if she's like really doing… I'm not really if she did like good or you know anything, but the fact is that there is a woman there in that in that, you know, in that part of the world, where, you know, we have patriarchy like we have like more, you know, into like we like more like to see male power, you know, into woman, you know, more, you know, that woman and having a lady on that position is great like it's great. It's something amazing, you know, for me to see, you know. Yeah, that's what I can say about it. Yeah in regardless of if she's like completely competent or not, as I told you or if she's like the right person to have that position or not, but like as a woman, I'm proud of what happened and to have her as a prime minister. Yeah mhm.

Researcher: Awesome. Did you feel that woman's rights were at risk during the Revolution at all?

Nadine: During the Revolution? No, honestly. No, I didn't feel any risks like if you may like explain more like why you asked this question like because like what kind of risks can happen during the Revolution women’s rights, you know, like, yeah, you know what I mean like?
Researcher: So like for example, you mentioned earlier that your mom didn't let you or your brother participate in the Revolution, the demonstrations. Do you think that had anything to do with like you being a woman or was it just generally like she was just scared that her like…

Nadine: Yeah I remember what I went and how I said it. I said “me and my brother” like because I knew that you might, I understand it as a gender pin, but it's not it's, just you know everyone, yeah, whoever like has like fear from police from things like that. Mom, she has that, you know, she doesn't want us to be like in trouble with police or like… And it was bad like we I let her see like some videos on my phone or on my laptop, and she was like worried, you know, about like having us participate in the protests. So yeah, but it's not related like to any gender or no. And even like I've been always like in my family, sometimes I feel that I have more freedom than my my brother, you know? They don't let him go out. They don't, you know, it's the same like I'm not talking about everyone. If you want me like to talk in general, I can, but right now, I'm talking just as me as a person. I'm personally, like my personal experience, you know, in my home, but in general it's a little different. Yeah, we got we have gender inequality. We still have any inequality gender, inequality in Tunisia. We still have that. Yeah, that's unfortunate. Yeah.

Researcher: Yeah, no I completely. I think it is like even in the U.S. I feel like there's inequality. No, I think that's pretty universal like I feel like it's a constant challenge to a certain extent

Nadine: Yeah exactly.

Researcher: How would you describe the changes to woman's rights? If there were any changes after the Revolution to woman's rights or did it stay the same?

Nadine: Um, yeah, not just the women's rights, but in general like civil life got better in Tunisia, you know? I mean, civil life like our organizations, building, and founding organizations, and, you know, and associations related to women or kids or families or in general, it was like a boom like civil society. So as this got actively like, and we got too many and situations like that, so it would, you will feel the change, of course, like if you were in there, you're gonna feel the change a little bit even if even if it's not huge even like just a little bit, you know? It's not a huge impact, but maybe a little change. Yeah, it's got… Yeah, and that's the reason I'm telling you like because the civil society was not was not that good. Before we had we had like too many restrictions to open associations or organizations or… and situations like that. And after the Revolution, like it was, of course, better as, you know, we got the freedom to have those things and yeah, that's why.

Researcher: Awesome! Do you think the current political climate constitutes a threat to like a just a threat to civil life in general or woman's rights?
Nadine: Again. Say it again so I can yeah think about it.

Researcher: Do you think the current political climate constitutes a threat to woman's rights or even civil life in general?

Nadine: A threat to women’s rights or civil life? No, not really. I don't consider it as a threat.

Researcher: Cool. Yeah, and then the last question. How would you describe the future of women's status in Tunisia and just the trajectory of democracy in Tunisia?

Nadine: The future of women’s rights? From what I see right now, women’s rights there will be always… There will be always challenges regarding, you know, women’s rights in any Arab country, you know? But like to have to I mean, to get to get like full rights is something possible. I see it in Tunisia like to get like the full rights and to it is possible as we are already. We go already like good steps, you know, towards, you know, having like I mean we can like we can still get better, but it's not bad, right now already, you know. But yeah, I'm sure that there will be more and better changes on the future regarding like woman's rights.

Researcher: And how about how do you see the future of democracy in Tunisia?

Nadine: Okay, unfortunately the democracy right now with Kais Said it… I thought like first that like, you know, it is it is good. It is good and that he is like a good a good leader, you know, and he… But right now, I feel that he's in he's going into like dictatorship. I don't know, but that's what I feel, and it is a little bit like threatening democracy. What is going on right now. Like people are in prison, some other like, you know, they have open cases and we don't even know like why, or, you know, what exact like the exact problems or crimes that they committed and that they are in prison for. So yeah, I don't know, how is this gonna be like the future of the democracy, but I hope I hope it gets better and for sure, I support like what he's doing if he's doing it right, you know, but if he is just, you know, without no reason, so why did we even do the Revolution. You know? These things were happening before during Ben Ali’s regime, we hear about people got arrested because of their political opinion or because of their, what they what they consider as a crime, but it's not, you know, because it's their opinion. Yeah. I hope these things like gets better in the future and I don't know how but yeah. We still, we always hope for the better for the best for my country.

Researcher: Totally yeah. Great. That was the last question. So I just have a little blurb, so bear with me as I have to read this as protocol, but thank you so so much for participating in my research examining the role of women in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and women’s rights. Please do not discuss the study or experience with others outside of the myself and the IRB, otherwise you could be affecting the responses of potential participants, excuse me. This study
researches how women participated in the 2011 Revolution and how they navigated their various identities and group memberships. It also investigates perspectives on women's rights. For you participation in the study, you were interviewed online and answered honestly, which I greatly appreciate so thank you so much. I do have if you do know anyone, no pressure at all, but if you do know anyone who would be interested in being interviewed and who speaks English, I do have a little like a flyer that I can just send to you on Messenger so that you could just forward that and that has my contact information too. Because I'm trying to get as many people as I can to be interviewed just to increase the sample size, but also to just hear as many perspectives as I can because even conversations like this are really helpful.

Nadine: Of course, I know, but yeah, like my question is like, do you prefer like people who were over like in Tunisia during the Revolution or are you okay like with people who were like living in the U.S.?

Researcher: Both is fine. Yes.

Nadine: Okay, yeah, I have some people who might be interested. Yeah, well I will send them.

Researcher: Awesome! Thank you so much, and I will send that to you shortly on messenger, but thank you so much. I really really appreciate it.

Nadine: No problem. Thank you so much for your interest and yeah, the topic is really nice and good luck okay!

Researcher: Thank you so much! Bye, have a good day!

Nadine: Bye! You too!

*Interview 4: Iobna*

Iobna: That's no problem.

Researcher: Okay awesome. So I just wanna say thank you, thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed.

Iobna: Thank you.

Researcher: Basically I'm just gonna ask you some questions that are split up into a few different sections based on your perspective, but you do not have to answer the questions if you do not feel comfortable. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you can just say like “I
Meagor 121

don't feel comfortable,” and then I can move on to the next question. But this is for my senior thesis, so it basically looks at the role of woman in the 2011 Revolution and different ways that people have mobilized throughout Tunisian history.

Iobna: Okay okay.

Researcher: So just the first part is just the background. Do you have any questions at all?

Iobna: Uh, no no.

Researcher: Okay perfect just want to make sure. So, the first part is just the background. So, I'll be asking about like your demographic basically. The first question: what is your age?

Iobna: My age is 32.

Researcher: Awesome.

Iobna: Years old.

Researcher: Yeah, that is not old, Iobna. That is not old.

Iobna: No, I’m 32 years old… that's that's…

Researcher: Okay, sorry. And what is your gender?

Iobna: My gender?

Researcher: Yes.

Iobna: A woman. It's not clear that I am a woman?

Researcher: No it is, it is, it is, but just wanted to make sure because people have different gender identities. What is your marital status?

Iobna: What is what sorry?

Researcher: Your marital status. Are you single? Married? In a relationship?

Iobna: I am single right now. I have a boyfriend.
Researcher: Got it. How long have you been together?

Iobna: Uh, maybe two years.

Researcher: Okay, cool. I think I remember talking to you about this when you did my eyebrows and nails.

Iobna: Yes yea.

Researcher: What is your education level?

Iobna: Uh high school, university. I learned civil engineering, but I convert my career to learn aesthetics, and you know the rest.

Researcher: Yes. What is your occupation? Your job.

Iobna: Uh, my job is in aesthetics. I have a salon and I do like makeup artists or a permanent makeup artist too, I think aesthetics services.

Researcher: And you’re so good at it. I loved it. I kept getting compliments too. Everyone in my program was like, “Where did you get your nails done. Where'd you get your eyebrows done and your eyelashes?” They kept asking where I did it ‘cause they loved it so much.

Iobna: Yeah. Thank you!

Researcher: Of course! What is your social class?

Iobna: Uh medium.

Researcher: Perfect.

Iobna: Medium yeah. We have the necessary I think to have a comfortable life. That's it.

Researcher: Totally and did you grow up middle class as well?

Iobna: Yes, my parents are… they have a good job. My mother is a teacher, and my father is an agricultural engineer. So yeah.

Researcher: Awesome and did you grow up in La Marsa or did you grow up in another town?
Iobna: In another country, or another department in the northwest of Tunisia. Uh, the place that called Jendouba.

Researcher: Oh cool. Okay awesome. Yes, and when did you move to La Marsa?

Iobna: Uh, because when I get my baccalaureate's degree, I should move to the capital to learn or to continue my education in civil engineering.

Researcher: Awesome. How would you describe your political leanings?

Iobna: Political?

Researcher: Mhm, political.

Iobna: When?

Researcher: How would you describe your political leanings? Like how would you describe your political opinions?

Iobna: Uh, my opinions about politics situation now?

Researcher: Just generally like and now I guess like what do you think about politics right now?

Iobna: Oh. I think that we have a very beautiful country. You had all the advantage, geography and on our position and in the maps of the word, but we don't explore well, what we have. Tunisia should be one of the most rich country in the world in the world because population are not too much. We talk about a 11 million person or maybe 12 million person and we have a 1000-216 kilometer of the Mediterranean and we have a little of patrol, little of phosphate, little of many resources. We have a very beautiful very good whether, a very good nature, very good production of olive oil of [unknown] of what you called the… we have many many we have a good agriculture. So we should we what I cannot understand why is my country don't have like a strong social life. For example, France. Why Tunisia cannot explore all those beautiful point. Uh, this is the question I… This is the question I asked myself always. Why we uh, this county such a beautiful country, but the level of life is very down.

Researcher: And why do you think that is? Why do you think Tunisia’s level is very down compared to other countries?

Iobna: No, maybe because we don't have a good person who governs, a good government to govern us maybe.
Researcher: Totally. How would you describe your religious leanings or your religious opinions?

Iobna: Uh, I think I…. my religion is Islam. And I think about this religion in my heart and when I born what I find, but I use my brain also. And I'm very convinced about my religion.

Researcher: Do you practice Islam? Like do you do you pray and do you go to the mosque or is it more cultural?

Iobna: Sometimes not regular. The truth not… let me say as the most people, let me say the most people in Tunisia it's more open minded than other Islamic countries, so we are not very practice. Uh, I talk about maybe a 50%, 15%, 50%, the half that's it. But we do Ramadan. We… we… maybe some people don't pray regularly, but all them are convinced by Islam and love their religion.

Researcher: Mhm, yes. Are you associated with any feminist organizations? Please explain.

Iobna: To be associated with the association it's not enough to practice. Maybe I'm associated with, for example, association of protecting the animal, but I don't protect animal already. So, the more important for me is to believe on this, to believe on the thing not to… Maybe yes, it maybe to practice with association okay, it's a give more importance and you have all the actuality, but for me, I don't belong to any association. But I'm feminist. Yes, and Tunisia women is very protect. Womens have all the rights. And we have also many association against hurting woman, against… law protect women in Tunisia. As hell, they protect woman as hell. And this is a special thing in Tunisia as Arab country. This is the special.... I think Tunisia and maybe the next one is Lebanaon. Tunisia, let me talk about my country because I know rules. Tunisia is the most country who protect womans. Women have the right to divorce, women uh, we don't have polygamy. All abuse against the woman, will be considerate it as a crime. Uh, not just women, women and kids. We have many associations to protect womens and kids in Tunisia. And in Tunisia, you can even in the lifestyle, you can wear you want. I don't said that every place is safe. No, uh, as any country like any country you find some dangerous place, but what I think: I feel free to live here. I don't have… who want pray, he she pray. She won't go to the disco. She go to the disco. No one no one can touch your freedom or your style or yeah.

Researcher: That's so good to hear. Yes, and that actually leads me to my next question because I know you were talking about the law protecting woman's rights in Tunisia, and I was just wondering about your thoughts about the Code of Personal Status.

Iobna: My thoughts about the?
Researcher: Code of Personal Status, the CPS that Bourguiba enacted in 1956.

Iobna: Yes, I don't very well have exactly the date and the... but you mean the, you mean the destour in Arabic? You mean the... just wait. I don’t... my English is not very... You mean the Constitution that Bourguiba made?

Researcher: Yes, yes.

Iobna: Yeah? Yeah, uh all women love Bourguiba in Tunisia. All women love Bourguiba in Tunisia. Bourguiba give many advantages to women and to the country and to the education and Bourguiba he do many things who change the position, the geopolitic position of Tunisia from the world. So, uh, yeah.

Researcher: Do you think that Ben Ali continued to support women's rights after Bourguiba?

Iobna: Yes, yes.

Researcher: And how so?

Iobna: Yes. Yes, there is probably say, we never changed a team who win so many, the most of the of people like what Bourguiba did, so he don't have another device, Ben Ali. So Ben Ali, he did some wrong things. But he did never touch the right of women, the right of the childs, the he never, he never touched the old rules. And maybe he I'm not a lawyer, but maybe Ben Ali, I mean ameliorate or do better or do something better to fix some issue was not very complete in the old Constitution. No, he never touched the roots, the law, and the Constitution who protect women and children.

Researcher: How would you describe the implementation of woman's rights prior to the Revolution? For example, were you satisfied with your rights? Please explain.

Iobna: I didn't understand your question.

Researcher: How would you describe the implementation of woman's rights prior to the Revolution? Like were you satisfied with your rights before the Revolution or were you not satisfied with your rights before the Revolution?

Iobna: Um, uh. Here I cannot separate man to woman. Revolution is a... I don't find really, uh, the word to explain. First, we don't know if this is a Revolution or this is something out some out political who don't a treat Ben Ali like oh okay, you are not a good boy, so we will take your, we will take your shears. So, we till this time we don't know if it's really a Revolution or it's... I don't know how or this is a plane, an external plane for Tunisia because they refused some to do
some things political. So, okay, people was angry. People was very hungry and there's many things, especially economy things who doesn't work and the family of Ben Ali have many corruption who make people very angry and disappointed, but what happened in all I cannot, exactly tell women do that or men do that. Now we are moved like a one man. All people was hungry and all people refused to stay as a President, but you should know that now many people regret it. After not now, but after others President to take the chairs, the Presidency, many people said, “Oh my God, if Ben Ali stayed it was better.” And even the dinar. The dinar when Ben Ali govern was I think 1.7 or 2. After the Revolution, the dinar was down to 3. So economically, this country don't support Revolution in the system and anti-system. Yeah. Please, Kate, try to understand me and write what I said because I cannot explain very well. I do my best to transform the idea for you.

Researcher: Yes, no, I completely get it. And your English is very good, so I appreciate you trying. Yes, I completely understand what you're saying, so this is good. Okay, I do have more questions about during the… I'm gonna refer to it as the Revolution just cause it's a little bit easier than saying a political like uprising. But continuing on before the Revolution, did you participate in any form of protests prior to 2011? And please explain.

Iobna: Me?

Researcher: Yes, like did you participate in any protests prior to the Revolution?

Iobna: I think I was young. I have just 18 years old, so I think, yeah, I think yes I think because all of people are out, all people. Yes, but maybe not… at for example, I wrote something on Facebook: Oh, the freedom. We are now free. Oh, I forget people hate Ben Ali because Ben Ali do discrimination. He don't believe on the free opinion and free speaking. So people was like and press… Okay, so me even I don't was hungry or poor when Ben Ali, but we cannot talk about the politics situation? We cannot we cannot say so we cannot, we cannot, we cannot critique the government. We cannot even talk about the name, cannot if you said Ben Ali, you should you are obliged to tell something. Well, if you criticized the President, you go to the prison. So, for this reason, I was young, and yeah. Sweet breeze, freedom. Yes, we are free. Yes, we can talk. We can do so… I don't remember exactly, but yes, I remember that I was so exciting on the social media and I wrote: Tunisia is free. Express our opinion freely and… something like this.

Researcher: And that was you posted on Facebook during the Revolution of 2011 or was this before the Revolution started?

Iobna: No, before the Revolution, before Ben Ali go to Saudi Arabia, all people are scared because Ben Ali even before the Revolution, Ben Ali all people took in the risk, and even our parents, “Please don't do that. Don't to post anything. Don't do that because it can be… it can…
we don't know that they will leave? And we will get the country free. So, many many many people, many people are scared. I put something and uh, but this is a few days before the Revolution after all people are against the system. So, he cannot put every people to the prison. You understand? To the jail. I said the prison in Francais, on prison means the jail. Yeah, that's what it means, the jail.

Researcher: Yes, and even before the Revolution like years before the Revolution, did you participate in any form of protest? Like whether that was like as a student or like other...

Iobna: Like to support the system? No never.

Researcher: Like for before the Revolution for years. years before the Revolution, did you like protest or anything?

Iobna: Protest? What does it mean protest?

Researcher: Um, go against something like speak out about it on social media or be in a group of people. You did not?

Iobna: Never. No person have a mind can do this because it's a the most easy thing that all this family who govern Tunisia can put you in jail, can hurt you even if you tell a song, even if, you... no there is a there is no, no, no, never. You cannot even to do a song or an art. Uh, you said the name. You don't say the name. Never no person in a TV or in media can talk about this thing, just have the right to tell them, “Okay, our President, we are proud of him. He's well, he's good, he's the hero.” That's it, but you cannot tell anything else. Even when we talk in privacy, people close their phone, close their phone to can speak freedomly about the situation, the political situation. No one can stand against Ben Ali.

Researcher: And even with, let's say, speaking or gathering in large groups about something not political like let's say economic or about like foreign international affairs, whether that's like Palestine or whether that's as students and you're upset with like the school would that also be punished too?

Iobna: Uh, no, you can, first of all, Tunisia are the brothers of Palestinians so even Ben Ali support Palestinians so there is no problem we support Palestinians. But, you can talk about, for example, yes, yes, don't touch the family, the President’s family and talk on what you want. That's it. You can participate associations, you can speak on all... and if you want to criticalize, for example, the Minister of Education I mean, you should, you should choose your your words. You should choose well, and you should be qualified to, for example, I cannot tell all the government X who choose the Minister of the Education is bad and Ben Ali choose a very bad
one. No, if there is a problem and listen. Okay, the bad things when Ben Ali govern as okay, we cannot speak freely, but everything was better than now, you know? If you have anything or in the past, he's not as bad as he did. He did wrong thing okay, but he was a very [unknown] President. So Ben Ali checkup always the minister, checkup the country. He do many good things in country too. It is not the default or the okay... Okay, you don't let people speak free, maybe it's a very big mistake. But he do many other good things. A country was a more clean than now, things was more cheaper before than now, all people scared the of Ben Ali and no one can fuck with him. No minister can let him job or do something as bad things or do the past. No. And okay that Ben Ali... Some people of her family don't do a thing, but I did never. Listen. About Ben Ali that one of his family gave him a post on a minister or something. Maybe he he gives him credits to do some project. Maybe we talk about corruption, but Ben Ali never gave a sensitive post on a government as a minister or director of I don't know to his family, but there is a corruption on the credit and banking. That’s it.

Researcher: Yes, totally. I know you said that right before the Revolution you posted on Facebook saying like “freedom” and glorifying freedom. Did you ever go out in the streets in protest during the Revolution or was it solely like on social media?

Iobna: Uh, I don't remember really. I don't. I don't remember. I don't remember if I go out or not. Believe me, mhm. Maybe yes, because even when. Listen, when the Revolution is here, there are many bad boys who do some groups and they stole, they killed, they do, so I was with my family in Jendouba and because, the street was not safe. Understand? But when things go well and he leaves, I came back to continue that I learn. And I don't really remember if I go to maybe because I think that Tunisia duparty like party, but I did not go... Okay, I understand your question. You mean that I protest out before that Ben Ali go?

Researcher: Yes, yes.

Iobna: No, no, no.

Researcher: And did you did you go out after Ben Ali left?

Iobna: Even after no, but when I, for example, I go to the university or I... many people are here, so I moved as a normal person, but there is a some... I find some people who said they're not protests but they do party. They are happy.

Researcher: Yes, yes, and do you do you have friends who went out in the streets to go out before Ben Ali left, or did they only like participate on Facebook?

Iobna: A friend who go to protest? Yes, many people who live there in capital. Yes, they go out.
Researcher: And if... you said you were in Jendouba. Is that how you say your home city?

Iobna: Uh, some people go out, some, but all people are like I told you, there is many. It will not safe, the few days before Ben Ali’s gone, it’s not safe. So the most of people are in their home, but in the capital there is a big movement.

Researcher: If you were in the capital where it was where there was more people going out, do you think you would have gone out also or do you think you would have stayed home?

Iobna: No, I don't think that I go. I don't I'm not very social and listen. It's a character. For example, when I need to eat and I go somewhere to eat something, and I found many people, I go back to my home. Okay? so I cannot support a very people. I think that I just one time when I was in the school. Yes, I think we do a poll?. What did you call it?

Researcher: Protest.

Iobna: Protest to support Palestinians. Yes, I go on this, and it was not very big one, yes. But, I guess, Ben Ali no. And I don't think, I don't think I will go because my problem with him was just the speech of freedom, the freedom of speech. I didn't see something else matter, so I'm not the victim of what... Maybe there is other people who are victims, so they have a reason to go out and to take him down, but not me really.

Researcher: Yes, and about your participation on Facebook. Did you post about like your own opinions about like Ben Ali or you exactly post on Facebook?

Iobna: Listen. The what world discover in Tunisian people, and I think Obama said the same thing. We are funny, and we have many fun things that, uh, we don't even discover it about us. So in Facebook, there is a black comedy. You find some songs and some pretty calls the how Tunisia can criticize. And it's very very very funny and very dramatic. So, there is a cartoon there is all accounts apps who... As the marketing of this Revolution, many critics many people who a get out a government paper. Look at this look. Look what he did. Look what dug him on. So it was very different, the content of Facebook. So, all people are connecting, all people are sharing, all people are “Oh yes. Look at this post. He said that he stole a 3,000,000 a dollar at well, I don't know why he stole... He have a castle. Uh, they found on his castles. Uh, um, $20,000,000 his wife have a...” So, it was very actuality and people paused before and after and the red line, the red line. Uh, he who is more important than Ben Ali was his wife. Yeah, yeah, his wife is a red, a line, and before the Revolution, no one can speak about his wife and after the
Revolution, all people talk about her, talk about what she did for herself and her brother. So yeah.

Researcher: What do you mean by Bel Ali’s wife was a red line? Like she was like, does that mean she like wasn't a good person or what does that exactly mean?

Iobna: No, I mean, no it’s, not a good person. I told you about before the Revolution, we don't have the freedom of speech, especially about his wife, especially okay, I understand? So a after the Revolution, many people want to. Ben Ali was like a black box. So Ben Ali was more exposed to the light. So, well all people know what he did, what he not did, but Laila Ben Ali was in the dark and when the Revolution is coming? So, uh many people especially who was near this a woman start to get out this black box and talk about what she what she did. And many people told I think his wife is the reason of the Revolution because Ben Ali this is what I listened people said because I was young. So people said, “Okay, he's a good President, but when he married to Laila Ben Ali, he make him bad, her family do many corruptions. I think like that, so people maybe wait to divorce Laila Ben Ali to forgive him maybe. But he escape with her. He love her. He love her, his wife. He loved her yes. Yes.

Researcher: Now going to after the Revolution. I know you said that you liked Tunisia before the Revolution happened when Ben Ali was the President. How were you affected by the 2011 Revolution like politically, socially, morally, how did it affect you?

Iobna: The first time at all people because we don't have politics knowledge. We are very basic. “Oh, the big master is gone. We are free. We will live in the paradise. Oh, the power of the people is here.” We was very proud as Tunisian. Yes, we have we are the first Arab country. Who do a Revolution. So, the first time yes, all people was happy. All people was happy. Maybe there is 5% who were not happy in the big family all the all the person who had benefits with Ben Ali. But all people was very happy and it's not still too long. Researcher: Yes, and then you said that you… Are you still happy right now like with the Revolution happening or do you wish that Ben Ali was still President?

Iobna: Ben Ali, any way, Ben Ali will not be a immortal. No, I'm not happy now. No. No it's truth no. I'm not. I'm a very positive person. Just to know, but there is something, there's something wrong. Together, you should have experience in government. You should just not be an honest person. Ben Ali was a good government, but he did very big mistakes. It was not very diplomatic with people. But okay, Ben Ali is gone. No one can… Tunisia is like a horse. Okay? And no, no, no, President no one of President who can… They [unknown] well. I can't say that after Ben Ali is gone, maybe now it's the best, the best period because the President we choose now is a very good person. But, the truth is this country need more and more competence. So,
okay he is a good person, but it’s not enough. Maybe we need some a few other years to fix to fix the situation.

Research: Yes. Do you think that that any of your rights as a woman were under attack during the Revolution or do you think that that was not an issue at all?

Iobna: Please repeat. I didn’t understand.

Researcher: No worries. Do you think that any of your rights as a woman were under attack during the Revolution or do you think that was not an issue at all?

Iobna: No, no, but after the Revolution when Islamic people take… Islamics is not Islam please. Islamics it’s not Muslim peoples. So, maybe it was temptation to have the last the rights of a woman's, but never. People who come after Revolution want to make Tunisia down want to take Tunisian into the dark cycles and desired want to all women to be with Afganic clothes want to come back to… Mary errors, cycles of years, but they don't success to this and there you'll revolt again against the those people and we put something who have a good mind because we need economy, we need the religion. Everyone is free to practice what he wants. I never said the country who's very developed would take the region. Okay, well our Muslim country. Okay, but we need a technocrat person to govern our to govern the country. I don't need a prior or something in the mosques to govern because it doesn't do well, so the people of Ennahda who come they were all in the jail and the walls in other countries. And they don't have, they are not qualified to govern. They are not never qualified to be President or minister or something. It should be the high level of education and very high level education. So we see a taxi driver in the Parliament. Yes, a taxi driver was never even know to write his name who is a elected by people and not even not even elected? I don't know how really he's in Parliament and he choose my future and he affects my destiny. So no people refuse that and a revolt against those people and now we are with our President Kais Said. He's very honest person. No, I'm sorry. He’s a very good person, but Tunisia need time to be to be to be fixed.

Researcher: Yes, totally. Do you think that after the Revolution there were positive or negative changes to women's rights? Or did they say the same?

Iobna: Um, I see the same. I see the same.

Researcher: And can you explain a little bit more about Kais Said and how like your perspectives on him? Do you think that that he was a good choice for President after the Revolution?

Iobna: Kais Said all people look at him that he is the he's one of us, one of the people. You understand me? He's not like the other President who never… we never a listen about them and
they come with many fortune, and he’s a very modest person who's come in the heart of people, who's come and the and a place, a popular place, so he know, are painful. And he is an professor. Many thousands of students learned with him, be educated by him. So, he is someone close to us. We feel that he, you know, that, for example, pepper is expensive. He know how cost eggs. He know what is our problem and against him it was something, it was a it was a person who are not qualified who's declined with corruption things and he want to be President to clean his for to do things for him to clean some and he have some problems in in the tribunal. So, we have we have to choose between a mafia person and a professor person which we, of course, Tunisian choose Kais Said, and they love him so much.

Researcher: Awesome. How do you feel about the appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia’s first female Prime Minister?

Iobna: Repeat please.

Researcher: How do you feel about the appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia’s is first female Prime Minister?

Iobna: Yes, it's a good thing. Yeah, and this is not something to surprise us because woman are everywhere. It's a good thing, but it's, not historical. We are, we know that the woman can be a minister can be even President if you want so it's not something that surprised us, but it's good. Okay, it's fine.

Researcher: Do you think there should be more female representation in the government.

Iobna: Yes, maybe. But uh, I want more competent people, men or women I don't care, but I need efficace person to do something better for this country and if yes, there is many women qualified then maybe yes I support that women could be it because between woman, don't think like men and I think it it's very complIobnatary. For example, women will think about the maternity rights of a woman who work, she will think about this more than a man so yes, yes, I support that the woman should share with man those, this authority.

Researcher: And you think competence is measured by education or how do you think people would gain competence to be involved in the government?

Iobna: Competence is the result of many failures. Competence it's when I put you on something and you do well, and you come with a very good result. This is this is what means. For example, Bouden, I don't know exactly what this was is her [unknown]. But I think that she done before something good to qualify her to be in this position now.
Researcher: Totally. Yes, and then the last question: how would you describe the feature of Tunisia specifically regarding woman's rights, but also the political climate.

Iobna: I describe the?

Researcher: Future of Tunisia regarding woman's rights and the political climate.

Iobna: Uh, yes, Tunisia it's very like I told you, I expect that future will be more more and more better than now because the rules protect woman. Uh, yes, I think it will be better with the when the economy will be fixed. I think, for example, if Tunisia do something well in an economy and it will be a rich country, I think common will benefit for more and more than advantage, for example, for maternity. She can stay home and she gets salary from even maybe when you born a child, for recovering medical recovering, many things will be better I think. But now we are poor. Now we are poor help me, please. The government is poor now. So, when the government is poor, it will be difficult. Even animals, they suffer. In which country even the animals they feel comfortable. They have the associations, they are you know. So yes, I think I think yes it will be better in future. I’m always positive and optimistic.

Researcher: Totally great. Well, just bear with me after I as I have to read this little like ending blurb, but I just wanted to say thank you. Thank you so much for participating in my research examining the role of women in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and women’s rights. Please do not discuss the study or experience with others outside of the myself and the IRB. This study researches how women participated in the 2011 Revolution and how they navigated their various identities and group memberships. It also investigates perspectives on women’s rights. For you participation in the study, you were interviewed online and answered honestly, which I appreciate so thank you thank you so much. I also have a little like graphic if you do know any other Tunisian woman, who do speak English who would be willing to be interviewed. I would love if you could just pass that just send them the infographic and then they can reach out to me if they are interested in being interviewed. But I just wanted to say thank you so much and once I finish this project, it will, I can send it to you online, so you can feel free to read it if you want to as well.

Iobna: Okay, yes, yes, I want. I hope for your all success, Katie and I was blessed with this conversation. I'm sorry I didn't practice English since the since a long time, so I forget many words. I have a good action accent, yes, but I don't have a vocabulary, necessary vocabulary. So, I hope that it was easy to you to understand me. Thank you so much and I'm here if you need, but you need I'm here. Yes.

Researcher: Great, thank you! Your English is great like I understand it, and you are amazing at English, a lot better than I am at French. So, you are amazing. Thank you so so so so much. Do
you happen to know me anyone who speaks who speaks English whether that's like friends or family or anything like that who would even possibly be interested in being interviewed or do they only speak Arabic or French?

Iobna: Yes, I will see. I promise you that I will see.

Researcher: Okay.

Iobna: I will give you the contact maybe. Okay, maybe their contact, and you do your investigation. And good luck.

Researcher: Thank you so much. It means a lot to me.

Iobna: Thank you!

Researcher: Have a good night. Bye!

Iobna: Goodnight. Bye!

Interview 5: Kenza

Researcher: Cool! Thank you! Well, I just wanna say thank you. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. It’s so nice meeting you too because I was one of Mary’s close friends in Tunisia, so it's so nice to have a face to the name, which is awesome.

Kenza: Thank you.

Researcher: But thank you. Thank you so much. So just a brief little overview. As you read in the little like blurb thing, it's about the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and just your perspectives on that, but also your perspective about woman's rights as well. So it's split up into just a couple of sections, just your background and then your perspectives before the Revolution, during the Revolution, and then after the Revolution. So just split up very much based on the timeline. Ah, do you have any questions about that? Concerns?

Kenza: Uh, yeah, so my question was… and how did you like, why did you choose Tunisian Revolution? Did you come to Tunis?

Researcher: Yes.

Kenza: Do you know about this kind of stuff?
Researcher: So before prior to studying abroad in Tunisia last spring, I didn't know a lot of information about the Revolution or the Arab Spring for that matter. So when I was there, I learned a lot more, and I was very interested in why people participated, how they participated, like how it got started, and the aftermath of the resolution. And so that's why I have decided to focus on the Revolution as a starting point in my thesis just to understand more broadly protests in general, especially in an Arab country like Tunisia and so I'm very interested in especially the role of women and how they kind of contributed or how they perceived the Revolution overall. So, I'm just very interested in in the broad trends of the Revolution because when I was in Tunisia, I was very intrigued as well.

Kenza: Okay, and you are you going to use this video to your like a university or for your work?

Researcher: It's for my university. Yes for my thesis. So, it's a paper that I'm writing. So, of course, I'll explain a little bit more about this at the end too, but just briefly, it's for my senior thesis. So, it's a paper that I'm focusing on about a topic that I'm interested in and it's for my majors of Sociology and Politics, so I'm combining those two majors into this one paper and interviewing as many women as I can understand their perspective. But, it will be, of course, if I do use some of the quotes and perspective that you say, I will not use your actual name. I'll use an alias so that people cannot trace anything back to you of what you say. But, at the same time too, if there are any questions that I ask that you were uncomfortable answering, please just let me know and then you don't have to answer and we can move onto the next question. So, there's no pressure at all to answer all of these questions, so hopefully it's a little bit lighthearted, but…

Kenza: Yeah, that's okay.

Researcher: I totally get it. So just to get started this is the background section. What is your age?

Kenza: So my age is 31.

Researcher: 31. Awesome, and what is your marital status?

Kenza: I’m engaged.

Researcher: Okay. How long have you been engaged?

Kenza: Two months now.

Researcher: Okay, wait that's so exciting! Wait, cause okay, I think Mary told me that you were like seeing this guy or something, but is it like how long have you been together like overall?
Kenza: So one year.

Researcher: Wait that's so cool! How’d you meet?

Kenza: So in work. We are working together. We are colleagues. So we started as a friend and after we are like a couple, and after we engaged since 20 like 26th of January.

Researcher: That's so awesome! Congrats! That's so exciting. Do you have a date planned for the wedding?

Kenza: Yeah, by October this year.

Researcher: Awesome! So by the end of 2024 you'll be married. That's so exciting!

Kenza: Yeah.

Researcher: That is so cool. Awesome!

Kenza: Thank you.

Researcher: What is your education level?

Kenza: So, I've done on my baccalaureate of arts and after three years and a half of university and after I'm working. Now I'm working like…

Researcher: And where do you work? What is your occupation?

Kenza: So, I’m administrative assistant.

Researcher: For where?

Kenza: Can I? Can I not say the place where I work?

Researcher: Of course. Yes, that's totally fine. How would you describe your social class?

Kenza: Let's say middle.

Researcher: Awesome. And how would you describe your political leanings?
Kenza: So, I'm not that much of political news or political update or everything like I'm not following everything.

Researcher: And is there a specific reason why you're not following or is it just…

Kenza: So for me there is a change, but I don't think it's gonna be done during one year or two. It's need time to do everything. Yep.

Researcher: Awesome. How would you describe your religious leanings?

Kenza: So I’m Muslim, but I'm doing Ramadan, but I'm not practicing like too much.

Researcher: Awesome. Are you associated with any feminist organizations? And please explain.

Kenza: No.

Researcher: Great. So that was the first section. And now, it's just your perspective is about before the Revolution. So what are your thoughts regarding the Code of Personal Status (CPS) and please explain.

Kenza: So can you explain more the question?

Researcher: Yes, what are your thoughts regarding the Code of Personal Status. Like what do you think about the Code of Personal Status. Do you think that helped regarding women's rights? It was the legislature that Bourguiba enacted to help with increase woman's rights like it got rid of polygamy, it got rid of… like it helped women have more opportunities to ask for divorce things like that. So, it definitely increased woman's rights, but what do you what do you think about that? Do you think it actually did or was it just in the law and it wasn't…

Kenza: So it was during Bourguiba?

Researcher: Yes, it was during Bourguiba when it was enacted.

Kenza: So, I wasn't born there, but I think it helps very much for women as they are more… they have more liberty to be more like let's… how I can explain it… like to be… like they can go out, they can say anything, they can live alone, they can go to the school and so they are… How do you call it in English like they can do everything alone. They don't need like a man or husband like to go like for shopping and everything else. Before Bourguiba, they were at home doing homework, not like homework, but the take care of children and everything and they need to be with their husband.
Researcher: I see totally.

Kenza: So for me yeah. So yeah, it helps a lot.

Researcher: And do you think that Ben Ali continued to support woman's rights after Bourgiba?

Kenza: Yes.

Researcher: And how so?

Kenza: So, I think they have more like a feminist organization. We have the Ministry of Children like Ministry of Women and Children. Like if they have a problem, they can go there. Uh, they put some rules in our… how do you call it when there is a lot of rules in the… They can they can go to the, like they can ask for everything. So yeah, he continue about women's situation and everything.

Researcher: Totally. How would you describe the implementation of women's rights prior to the Revolution? Like were you satisfied with your rights before the Revolution?

Kenza: So, I can't explain more because I was child when Ben Ali was here. So, I don't know about women's rights and everything, but I think, uh, I think yeah.

Researcher: That's good. Awesome. Did you participate in any form of process prior to the Revolution. Like in schools or anything like that, did you participate in any protects?

Kenza: So during Ben Ali?

Researcher: Yes, during Ben Ali’s regime.

Kenza: No. So I think for Ben Ali regime, we don't have the right to protect. It was this kind of stuff as… Yeah, we were safe. We can like do everything, but we can’t protest about the regime and everything was about Ben Ali. So if you have something it's related to Ben Ali nothing else. So I can say that we protest about things.

Researcher: So do you think that Ben Ali didn't allow any type of protest or just he didn't allow protest about him?
Kenza: He didn't want protect about him or about his regime or something he said or yeah, so everything else like let's say something like the factory they are protesting about the director, he can like for that, but I don't think that someone can protest about his regime.

Researcher: Got it. Okay. Awesome and then the next section is during the Revolution. I know you said you were a little bit on the younger side during the Revolution, but did you participate in any form of protest during the 2011 Revolution at all?

Kenza: So if I was like if I had 20, I can go like to do the protest and everything, but I was child so I can't.

Researcher: And how old were you during the Revolution?

Kenza: Uh, I was in school. Because of, uh, I was like doing my baccalaureate in 2012. So, let's say 17.

Researcher: Okay. Totally. Do you know anyone else who participated like family or friends at all?

Kenza: So about my family. No, no one's going to like to protect by. I know friends. I know like some people from our neighbor and they, they went to do the protect.

Researcher: Totally and did you see anything on social media about the protests like on Facebook or television or anything like that?

Kenza: So before he went abroad, Ben Ali, everything was closed like Internet, Facebook. We didn't have access to anything. But after he flight to Saudi Arabia, everything was open like YouTube, Facebook. It was Skype during this period. So we saw some invitation to protest or they show video of the protests. Uh, but they didn't invite like if you want to go to protest you can you can come as no one was there from Ben Ali family. He like he was not here.

Researcher: Totally. And do you think when you... Sorry, go ahead.

Kenza: So I don't think if he was like in Tunisia we didn't have access to anything.

Researcher: Totally. And do you think that like social media played a role a bigger role or do you think like television and news played a bigger role which one do you think was...

Kenza: No, no, the social media like I've done a big role like to protest and to like to be more safe to say everything about Ben Ali regime about the media like they always talk the good stuff
about Ben Ali. So no, like they can say like no nothing has happened like he stayed in Tunis, don't go to protest and everything. So, the social media played like a big role in the protests.

Researcher: And on social media was it more like invitations of like we’re protesting here like please join if you can or was it more like actual pictures and videos of people protesting or do you think it was a combination of both?

Kenza: So I think it was only a video about the protests about like they are fortunate their houses. They're trying to stole their houses because they have a big parts of money taken from many citizens in Tunis. So, I think it's only the video to show everything about the protest and the their houses and the news about the new former President.

Researcher: Totally. How would you describe the role of organizations in the Revolution or any were there any associations that you think played a big role in the Revolution?

Kenza: For me, no I don't think. They so I can say something wrong, but I don't think they play the big role. Maybe after? I don't know.

Researcher: Totally. Do you think that the mobilization of protest changes before the Revolution to during the Revolution like do you think people collaborated differently in protest before the Revolution and then during the Revolution?

Kenza: Yeah, because before the Revolution, they can do it, but after the Revolution, they were safe to do like they protest to say whatever they want and they're almost say like in the street and they have, they are protected from the police, so yeah it changed it before to after.

Researcher: Totally. And based on what you know of people who you know that participated, do you think that their role as or their gender identity, whether as like male, female, or other genders played a role into their participation.

Kenza: So it was every age and male, female, children, young people, old people. So everyone who can go to protest they will go.

Researcher: And do you think there were different roles for men and women and children or do you think everybody all had like a similar role in the protest?

Kenza: I don't think, that's… that what do you mean, they have similar role?

Researcher: Like do you think they all did the same things in the Revolution or did like men do one thing, women do another thing, and then children do a separate thing?
Kenza: No, everyone will be together and that's it.

Researcher: Awesome and then the next section after the Revolution. How were you affected by the Revolution? Socially, politically, morally, and please explain.

Kenza: So socially, I can say that we are in the same area. We are in the middle of social life. It’s.. we have the same house. We can go to work by car. Uh, we can afford to buy like meals and everything, to go out, to travel. Politically, the new President has done many change in Tunis and he stopped the corruption and everything, so it changed lots after the Revolution there is many rules many there is many… But there's many changes in the ministries and that's it. And the other? Politically? Socially?

Researcher: Morally.

Kenza: Morally. So I think everyone is affected about after the Revolution everything it's expensive now as we don't, especially after Ukraine so we so during the before the Ukraine, we was importing, everything like the flour, the rice, and everything, so everything now is expensive. And when you import stuff, it affects, our like a cost of living. So yeah, it affected our life morally. But, I can say that we are not safe anymore because there is a lot of theft and everything.

Researcher: Do you think that's because of the Revolution like the Revolution increased theft or is that a totally separate issue?

Kenza: Yeah, I think it's separate issue as everything would be expensive. They can't afford to buy some stuff, so they are obligated to do…. So, and after it also have the migration, the immigration, so yeah, it's affected.

Researcher: Yeah. Do you feel that women's rights were at risk during the Revolution?

Kenza: Risk?

Researcher: Yes, like do you think they were they would be taken away at any point during the Revolution?

Kenza: No, no it's the same rules. It's the same thing. So women are more protected than men.

Researcher: And how so?
Kenza: They like they install more more more… It's, not more rules, but more decision and they are more protected by the President and the Ministry. Yeah, and also we have many womens in some ministries. So yeah, they are protected.

Researcher: How would you describe the changes to women's rights after the Revolution? Do you think there were positive changes, negative changes, or do you think it pretty much stayed the same?

Kenza: It changed like not a lot, but like let's say 20% change after the Revolution. They install some other rules, but it didn't change a lot.

Researcher: And do you think it changed in a positive way or a negative way?

Kenza: No a positive way.

Researcher: Oh a positive way, okay. And what do you think about the rise of Ennahda after the Revolution?

Kenza: The rise?

Researcher: The.. how the political part… the Islamic political party Ennahda came in to being after the Revolution.

Kenza: I think that it's increased a lot there is nothing about the Islam. Everything is related to the new regime and the new decision maked by the President. So there is no Islamic part or… especially after the 25th of July since two years, I think.

Researcher: And what happened on that day?

Kenza: He changed the for parliamentary uh, the Parliament staff.

Researcher: Like change the different people in Parliament?

Kenza: Yeah, yeah, they they were like from the Islamic part, so now they are from other parties, different parties and not from Islam.

Researcher: Got it, okay. And are there any political parties that that you align with after the Revolution or does that not playing at all?

Kenza: No. No.
Researcher: Does that kind of go back to you not participating in politics because you think it'll take a lot of lot of time to get it to where you want it to be?

Kenza: And to be honest, like in my opinion, but. If I will participate, it's not, it's not going to change anything if I like, if I say something or if I participate. So my voice will not change anything. So no, I prefer to stay quiet.

Researcher: I totally get that. And then the last section now and the future. Do you think the current political climate constitutes a threat to women's rights or Tunisia as a country?

Kenza: No, it will not present this right to women's. I think it will help. So because we have election in December this year, so maybe they will help it will help like for women's rights and everything.

Researcher: Totally. How do you feel about the appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia’s first female Prime Minister?
Kenza: It was good news for me as I didn't expect a woman in the Prime Ministry. So I was happy when she was appointed. She changing some something like about women, but women, can take the leads and they can be a leadership and everything.

Researcher: Totally.

Kenza: And we like that that's why I said like they we have more women in the some Ministries. And maybe it will be a new female President.

Researcher: Totally. Maybe even before the U.S. you never know. Yeah, that’s crazy. And then how would you describe the future of women's status in Tunisia?

Kenza: Can you repeat please?

Researcher: How would you describe the future of women's status in Tunisia?

Kenza: More free. More… They will be like more free to be and some important position and more secure. And more… Yeah, that's it.

Researcher: Totally. Awesome. Well, thank you so much. That wraps us up to the end of the interview. Um, bear with me as I have to read this little blurb, but again, thank you thank you so much for participating in my research examining the role of women in the 2011 Revolution and women’s rights. Please do not discuss the study or experience with others outside of the myself and the IRB, otherwise you could be affecting the responses of potential participants. Just as an
overview: this study researches how women participated in the 2011 Revolution and how they navigated their various identities and group memberships. It also investigates perspectives on women’s rights. For your participation in the study, you were interviewed online and answered honestly, which I appreciate. And then also just to reiterate to this is for my senior thesis, so it will be for my school as my final senior project to wrap up my college degree. And there will be a big long paper at the end of this, so hopefully…

Kenza: Good luck with that.

Researcher: I know, I'm like that's crazy, but once that is finished, I can definitely send it to you if you want to read it, you can have a copy of that too.

Kenza: Um please.

Researcher: And, of course, your name will be a different name, so people will not know that it's it's you who I interviewed. Um, but thank you thank you so much. Do you have any last minute questions or comments or anything?

Kenza: No, no, that’s it.

Researcher: Awesome, thank you so much.

Kenza: Thank you so much.

Researcher: I appreciate it a lot.

Kenza: Thank you.

Researcher: Bye.

Kenza: Bye. Have a good evening.

Researcher: Thank you, you too! Bye.

Kenza: Bye.
Works Cited


Robbins, Michael. 2016. Tunisia Five Years after the Revolution.


Stephan, Rita, and Mounira M. Charrad. 2020. Women Rising: In and Beyond the Arab Spring. NYU Press.


